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Oral history interview with Graham Beal, 2016 April 6-7

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Graham Beal on April 6 and 7, 2016. The interview took place at Graham Beal's home in Detroit, Michigan, and was conducted by James McElhinney for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Graham Beal 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.

Interview

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking, with Graham Beal at his home in Michigan—in Detroit, Michigan, on April the 6th, 2016. Good morning.

GRAHAM BEAL: Good morning.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What was the first recollection you have of being in the presence of a work of art?

GRAHAM BEAL: My first clear recollection—I mean, I got involved with art because of my father, who was a wounded vet, and he was dying, took up painting. So, my earliest memories to do with art are actually to do with watching art being made, and making it myself. But my father used to go up to London on the—all paid for by the National Health—to see specialists. And every so often, he would take my sister or me out of school for the day, and we would go up with him. And so, my first clear recollection is going to the Tate Gallery, and looking at Constable and Turner. And then, on one—there weren't very many of those trips, but a few. On one of them, in the Tate, you know, you wander from historical British painting into contemporary—the old Tate. But confronting a Ben Nicholson relief, white plaster relief, and asking my father, why was this art? And without any defensiveness or anything, my father just said "I don't know." You know, it doesn't mean—I forget his exact words. But you know, that's—that was sort of the first moment that I asked a question about something that looked interesting, but in—what I'd discovered, what I'd experienced previously didn't make a great deal of sense. So, you know, a little provincial boy from the south of England, going up to London, going to the free museums, went to the National Gallery and the Tate, is where my father used to take us.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. There's a scene in a recent play called the *Pitmen Painters*, which was about a group of coal miners in the north of England, who were taking an art appreciation class. Not having access to a museum, their art history teacher decided to ask them to paint, so they would have things to talk about. And in it, there's an encounter between one of these miners, one of these coal miners, and Ben Nicholson. And he's shocked when he learns what Nicholson sells his work for, as opposed to the work that, you know—as opposed to the prices the miners are able to get. And the collector patron who's sponsoring all of this says, "The value has nothing to do with the price." Sort of a nice quote—

GRAHAM BEAL Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —as a way to connect—I often ask narrators what was their first encounter with a work of art because these conversations are intended to, you know, to tell their story, in relationship to artistic practice, or work in academia, in the museum world, or just patrons or what have you. Where did you grow up?

GRAHAM BEAL: I grew up in a [. . . Victorian –GB] seaside resort town called Bexhill-on-Sea—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Bexon-on-Sea?

GRAHAM BEAL: Bexhill-on-Sea.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Bexhill?

GRAHAM BEAL: —on-Sea, Sussex. It was a kind of a posh seaside resort. My family goes back centuries, on my father's side. In fact, in the 12th century, Bexhill was called Beal. Saxon peasants, as far as the eye can see—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: But it had one notable feature, which has finally been restored with lottery money. It had one of the great Bauhaus buildings of Europe, the De La Warr Pavilion, built—sponsored by the 9th Earl De La Warr. And it's this—it was—it was a mess, when I was little boy, it was built in the '30s. But that was a kind—we used to go there for band concerts—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —and pantomimes, and things like that. But it was clearly an exceptional building. And I,one of the great influences on my attitude—my father died when I was 15, —was my art teacher at my high school, grammar schools, as they were called then. His name was Stuart McCrory, and he was of Irish extraction, a Marxist, and had done things like build roads in Yugoslavia when he was a student, and was in the Korean War. But he was a man of just extraordinary tolerance and perception. And he was, many ways, he was like a Japanese Zen. He always asked—he almost always answered a question with a question. And he and my—the headmaster made a couple of comments when I was a senior pupil of what an extraordinary man Steuart McCrory was. And very—I have painting by him, hanging above—in my study.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, he was a practicing artist—

GRAHAM BEAL: He was a practicing artist—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —himself?

GRAHAM BEAL: —yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Just out of curiosity, may we note the name of your father?

GRAHAM BEAL: My father's name was Cecil John Beal. He was a journeyman electrician. He—my mother was, in British fashion, was from a—married below herself. They met during the war, and my mother also had artistic interests. She had originally intended to try to go into dress design, and my sister now has many of her books that she did when she was a girl. So, I had this background—on my mother's side—we lived with my grandfather—her father, and we moved to the south. And he was a semiprofessional Irish tenor, as a young man, growing up in Liverpool, part of the Irish diaspora. So, I always had—you know, even though we lived in very modest, if not constrained, circumstances, there was always this background of appreciation—we all sang in the house—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —and there was just this—the fact that art was accepted as something natural, normal, and something that individuals participated in.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, your father's interest in art came about as a result of his convalescence from—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. Yes. He took up oil painting. He had a natural facility for drawing horses, and he painted in a painstakingly—almost—it was almost a pre-Raphaelite technique. He would paint the picture in white, first, and then in pre-Raphaelite style—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: — apply the color. I don't know why he—I never understood why he—as I look back on it, why he had opted for that kind of approach, but he picked it up somewhere.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Interesting. And he had been injured in the war?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah. He was a kamikaze—he was on an aircraft carrier, and a kamikaze—and he got some infection, ultimately, from a wound that ultimately killed him because it destroyed his kidneys.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, he's in the Pacific?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I guess a lot of—a lot of popular history, I guess, or I should say, popular memory, doesn't remember the British—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —naval engagements in the war in against Japan—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —because the American navy was so—

GRAHAM BEAL: The narrative yes—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —aggressive about public relations, as well as—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —operations.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, the admiral of my father's fleet was Admiral Lamb, and he was called Poor Little Baa Lamb because he had to do what the Americans told him.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear. But MacArthur you know, never went anywhere without a film crew.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, it was—I mean, they were—

GRAHAM BEAL: Like many generals, he was an appalling man.

[They laugh.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, beyond grammar school and pre-college education, what was your trajectory? What did you think your path in life would be?

GRAHAM BEAL: I wanted to be a painter, and one of the conversations I remember with Stewart McCrory was my asking him how artists made a living. And he said, well, you have to find some way to support yourself. You become a teacher, like me. And he must've seen the disappointment on my face. And he said, well, if that doesn't interest you, have you thought about art history? And to me, art history was something that he taught for half an hour. We had three-hour art classes, believe it or not, in those days. And art history was the half hour that we had to get out of the way, in my mind, before we could actually start the real class. So, he—but he just said, "You like history. You write well. You might think about art history"—and then I applied to six—under the old system, applied for six universities, five of which, unusually, had studio components. Reading, Newcastle—I can't remember the others. But the only one that did not was the best university of the bunch, Manchester University, and that was the only university that accepted me. My portfolio was rejected by—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

GRAHAM BEAL: —all the colleges. So, it was devastating at the time, in many ways, but looking back, you know, I can say, "Well, I can take a hint." But basically, I went off to Manchester University. And in those days, it was means tested. I got—everything was paid for by the county. And—but the—and the quid pro quo of that is that you don't have spare time when you were a student in the old system under—in Britain. Four percent of the population went to university. When you went to university, you went there to study, if you wanted to pass. And so, I basically no longer had any time for painting. That was—I ceased to be—ceased to do it with any regularity, and then you start losing muscle memory, and all that kind of—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —stuff, and—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —It's gone.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Did you discover a direction or particular era, or particular style, particular genre of—

GRAHAM BEAL: I was—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —art history that interested you?

GRAHAM BEAL: I became particularly interested in Surrealism—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —but then I—when I went to Manchester, got my degree there. Then, I went to Courtauld Institute, and I was basically told that that wasn't art history yet. That, you know—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Interesting, because today, art history embraces so much contemporary and critical theory. But that might be partly market-driven, as well.

GRAHAM BEAL: As I understand. I think something—outside the big centers in New York and Harvard, I think something like 90 percent of the Ph.D. candidates are studying contemporary art. It's an astonishing figure. Has huge ramifications for the museum world, I think.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: My wife's an art historian of some note, and she's lamenting all the time that the field is hungry, is starved for trained historians, and everyone wants to do theory and contemporary.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And so, the universities are working to please the appetites of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —students, but they're not really helping the field.

GRAHAM BEAL: No. You know, I think of the specialists who came to see the American wing, and they all—you know, they all got out and looked at the early American section. They all got out their flashlights, and crawled around under tables, looking for, you know, different kinds of joints—amazing specialization—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —it's just—doesn't seem to apply anymore. So, I was basically told by Anthony Blunt, who was my main adviser, that I had to pick something else. That—a good friend of mine, who went on to be a film producer, was clever to pick de Chirico and Renaissance architecture. So, he managed to do that. I wasn't clever enough to do that, so I picked Rembrandt, and wrote my master's—thesis, it would be called in this country, on Ferdinand Bol, and spent quite a bit of time in Amsterdam. And I went—launched into the world as a curatorial—what would today be called probably an assistant curator, or an assistant—as a budding specialist in 17th century Dutch art.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: About what year was this?

GRAHAM BEAL: This was '72.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Ferdinand Bol. Interesting painter. I mean, a lot of people—well, again, as a diminishing awareness of the history of art, I think, among artists, but Rembrandt is an excellent example of an independent artist who had a career as a painter, and also sustained himself as a teacher, and at one point, had a fairly lively atelier—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, yeah. And in fact, I got into trouble with my main adviser because going

to the Netherlands, and working with Dutch and German scholars, I became exposed to the notions that Rembrandt really did have an atelier, that he was much more like Rubens than this lone practitioner. And my thesis on Ferdinand Bol ended up discussing the fact that—things like that Bol enlisted in Rembrandt's studio, let's—I make this up, but something like 1632. So, that would mean by 1634, he graduated. But then, there are no signed paintings by Ferdinand Bol until 1642. So, I argued that in those eight years—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He's working.

GRAHAM BEAL: —he's working with—and all of these, "Is it Rembrandt? Is it not Rembrandt?" is a false dichotomy. Now, the Germans and the Dutch were figuring that out. But Michael Kitson, my adviser in the Courtauld Institute, didn't like that approach at all, and it finally took [Sir Anthony] Blunt's arbitration to get me my degree.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, at that point in time, early '70s, it was still Cold War. It was still the paradigm that was being celebrated in the contemporary art world, and I think, also, in the history of art, with the idea with this sort of artist is some kind of superhero, and as a totally original individual, discreet entity that had to be appreciated—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —apart from everybody else. But in fact, the truth was quite the opposite. They are—they were mixing it up with everybody, yeah. So, that whole idea of—well, I guess, you know, the ideal is a person like Picasso or Pollock or whoever, who were propped up as a sort of superman—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —artists. And of course, you couldn't have an artist that was—that was using students to do their work.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But I do remember, a few years after that, I was attending Yale, the MFA program at Yale, and I took a class on Rembrandt with Egbert Haverkamp-Begeman.

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He was a lovely guy. And he took us into the Frick [Collection], and walked us around the offices, where they had on the walls a few Rembrandt drawings that anyone could see, there were multiple colors of ink, different pen nibs in the construction of the image. And he was explaining how these were teaching drawings—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —that he would lay out the drawings, and then challenge the students, you know, to put in the shadows or whatever. And the curator was horrified and said, "No, no, no. These are Rembrandt." But he made it very clear, even at that time, that—it was hard to say. It was, was this really Rembrandt? Was this not Rembrandt? Was this an ink drawing done with a reed pen on Japanese paper that someone, 100 years later, had added the shadows to it to make it look more like a Rembrandt painting? And so forth.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. I actually became very good friends, still am, with Peter Schatborn—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —who went on to become the director of the Rijksprentenkabinet And back then, in 1969, when I first met him, he was a young curator at the Rijksmuseum Museum, just starting out, as his kind of own one man Rembrandt project for drawings.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow.

GRAHAM BEAL: And you know, he would discuss the fact that he would say, "This can't be Rembrandt. That hand is like—is a claw. That's not a hand." And people would say, "If it's not Rembrandt, who is it?" And of course, there was no answer. But in the 40 plus years since then, Peter and a couple of other people have worked, and the culmination was the exhibition at the Getty, about three or four years ago, of Rembrandt's drawings. And after

nearly 50 years of study, he can say, "Yeah, this is Gerbrand van den Eeckhout." This, you know—we now can attribute these—we have—but it's—it was a lifetime. And as you were saying, people just were—it looked like Rembrandt—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —but you could see that there's the alterations, and all this sort of stuff. And yes, and it's been—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, did you continue your academic studies beyond your masters?

GRAHAM BEAL: No, I—in Britain, at that time, at the Courtauld, your masters—the—you had to have some kind of original idea. You had to have a thesis. And if you were going to museums at that time in England, a masters from the Courtauld was considered a final degree. And so, that's what I did. I maintained the physical love of art, which was palpable. And so I went to work in museums. I became academic assistant to the director of Sheffield City art galleries. And I joke now if any director put in a line item in the budget for an academic assistant, he or she would be fired summarily for—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —[Laughs.]—

GRAHAM BEAL: —dereliction of duty. Don't have time to have to have that? Why do you need an academic assistant? But that was my first job. And it was like being a graduate student. I was paid pathetic wages—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —but that's what I did. I worked on research projects for the director, a wonderful man, Frank Constantine. Just died, nearly 100 years of age, just last year. And you know, it was—it was a great job. People were—because Sheffield was a very socialist town, and had a very strong Ruskinian tradition—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —my job description said that, all things considered, whenever a citizen of Sheffield came in with a question, I was to drop everything and address myself to the citizens' questions. So, every day, people would ring the bell, and they would have some kind of work of art. The British equivalent of *American Gothic* was Millais' *Bubbles*—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —and I saw so many versions of Millais' *Bubbles*.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

GRAHAM BEAL: I learned in the not quite two years I was there—I learned so much about reproductive techniques. All the stuff that the Victorians came up with, to create what looked like an oil painting, but was in fact a print.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: A chromolithograph, or—

GRAHAM BEAL: All of those—yes. Prints made on canvas, prints made on canvas that had paint on them, so that it had relief—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —you know, impasto. A couple of very important real works of art came in. A woman came in with a painting I didn't know at the time, but it was by the second greatest horse painter of the 18th century, John Herring. And her husband had bought it for £3 somewhere in the south of England. He was a lorry driver, and he'd dropped dead of a heart attack—like, 50 years old or something. And so, you know, the widow turned up and said, "What is this?" And I said, "It looks pretty good. We better take it in, and get a receipt." And it turned out to be a John Herring, and we helped to sell it for what seemed like an extraordinary sum of something like £20,000 at Christie's.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow, so, that sounds like an Antiques Road Show story.

GRAHAM BEAL: It—well, yeah. But most of it was absolute junk, you know?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: People would want appraisals, and I'd say, "I cannot—I'm not qualified, and I'm not allowed to give you guys, but I can tell you the frame is worth more than the image," things like that.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, today, it's no joke that if you want to get a frame from someone like Eli Wilner, it may be as expensive as the painting.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And it's new. But Sheffield must've been quite an adjustment because that's a very industrial place—

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, I'd been at Manchester University—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —for—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —three years. And the thing about Sheffield—one of the things about Sheffield, is that it's right on the edge of the Derbyshire Dales. People think of the Yorkshire Dales in—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —*Wuthering Heights*, but if you go the opposite direction, you are—you could walk out of the middle of Sheffield, and within an hour, be in ravishingly beautiful countryside. And I met my—the American who became my wife by then—she is an ecologist. And so, you know, in many ways, I look back with great fondness on Sheffield. It's been a disaster since then—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —but I'm looking—actually, planning a vacation for June, and we are heading to the Derbyshire Dales.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wonderful. Wonderful. Where did that position lead?

GRAHAM BEAL: I was—because I'd met my American wife, teaching Americans in London when I was a graduate student, earning tax-free, under-the-table dollars for very little work, a couple of lectures a week. And I would walk—would take—I taught history of English architecture from Hampton Court to Syon House basically. And we would go there, and it was—there was no slides. We went to the buildings. And I taught English as a foreign language as—every summer, and I wanted to live outside England for a while, and discovered that—I had American friends at undergraduate and graduate level. But working with students, I found that in many ways, they were more foreign that the Europeans that I'd been teaching for several years. And so, I was interested in coming to the States—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —and I had a friend who was a professor at Carleton College. Went when my wife went, and—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Carleton?

GRAHAM BEAL: Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

GRAHAM BEAL: And he helped me write to a handful of colleges. And somehow, out of that, the head of the Art Department at the University of South Dakota heard that there was an Englishman who was looking for a job in the states. So, he called me and interviewed me

over the phone, and offered me the job—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wonderful.

GRAHAM BEAL: —at the University of—Vermillion, University of South Dakota. And so, suddenly, I was leaving England. After—actually, less than two years in Sheffield, 20 months or so, I think. And then, there I was, in a very foreign country, South Dakota.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It would be a foreign country to people from either coast in this country.

GRAHAM BEAL: It was a foreign country for my Minnesota wife, too, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And that's not far away. Well, Minnesota, as you know, has many jokes about people from the Dakotas, and the Dakotas have many jokes about people from Minnesota.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. The dumb—my wife's of Swedish extraction—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —the dumb Swedes. The dumb Finns.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, it's the Garrison Keillor

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Coen brothers, kind of—for another discussion, perhaps. But—

GRAHAM BEAL: And during this whole period, I was also approached by Washington University in St. Louis.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Ah.

GRAHAM BEAL: And I interviewed. I was offered the position, a year away. So, I had a year to fill in, which, the University of South Dakota—my wife was not crazy about moving to South Dakota. She hadn't married an Englishman to move back to the Missouri. But we agreed—well, at least, it would get us over there. You know, we would be there and—then, one bleak November day, I got a call, I was at home for—used to walk home for lunch. Got a call from the chairman of the search committee from Washington University, who explained to me that they had inadvertently contravened with the new Equal Opportunity Regulations, and that they were going to have to interview all over again. And so, there I was, in South Dakota, looking out in November, bleak fields, thinking, "What have I done?"

But went through the whole process again, and it was a legitimate process. They really seriously interviewed other candidates, and I learned later that I was the compromise candidate. That there were two other candidates that split the committee, completely. And so, one April day, I got another phone call, and the man said, "When can you start?" So, I was in St. Louis.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How did you find life in South Dakota?

GRAHAM BEAL: It was very interesting in that the university, you know, was this little liberal nodule. There was a joke that at the turn of the last—the previous century, Sioux Falls and Vermillion had battled about who would get the state prison, and who would the state university. And Vermillion lost; it got the university.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —[Laughs.]—

GRAHAM BEAL: So, it was—it was this little island—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —somewhat liberal. And then, within that, there was the art department, which was besieged. And there was an Englishman who was the—that was the new chair of the department, and he was a very strange bird. But the department was very tight, so you know, we all did things together. We worked together, played together. All dinner parties at

other people's houses, all the time. But you know, I was only there for an academic year because the Wash U job came up. But I do remember, the end of the first week that I was there, the—they decided to take me to a bowling alley. Now, I actually did quite a bit of bowling when I was a kid in Sussex. But we went off, and I was—I had long hair, shoulder-length hair and a full beard, and I wore London tailored denim suits, and was at the bar with another—just a South Dakotan. And he asked me if I was a student. And I said no, I'm faculty. And he was, "Oh, what faculty are you on?" And I said I'm on the art faculty, and he said, "You don't look like an artist to me." I thought two things—well, "I don't?" I mean—and then, I didn't want to get into an art historian—talking about art historians. And so, I just said to him, I said, "What—why not? What do you think artists look like?" And he said, in his South Dakotan accent, which I won't imitate, he said, "Oh, I don't know. I guess I just think of them as running around naked."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —[Laughs.]—

GRAHAM BEAL: And so, that was my introduction to—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, with long hair and a beard, I mean, I would imagine that somebody out there could've also called you a damn hippie.

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, I got—for the first time, for quite a few years, I got abuse—public abuse in the streets, for the way I looked.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Really?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Really?

GRAHAM BEAL: And we drove to—drove—a group of us drove to Albuquerque for a conference, quite soon after I was there. And we went—in the middle of the night, we were driving through the night, and we went into a road stop. And the straightest looking guy, lovely man, Robert Olden was the painter—professor of painting. He picked up that we were in trouble. And he said, "Guys, we got to get out of here." And we got up and left, and a couple of cowboys tried to follow us. We got—just got in our car, and drove away. But—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You ought to have shown them a picture of Wild Bill Hickok.

GRAHAM BEAL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Shoulder length hair—

GRAHAM BEAL: And a beard, and—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, yeah. Sort of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Imperial, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —imperial beard. What was your reaction to Vermillion, when you got there? I mean, I'm trying to imagine—because I remember the first time I went to that part of the west, and I was sort of—had a lot of questions about what I was doing there. I mean, in a way, there are aspects of it that are fascinating, if you're into the history and the, you know, the fur trade, and the Native Americans, and Catlin, and geology, and all of that. But in another sense, it is also a kind of a place that is bereft of what—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —some might call European style culture.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. Well, you know, I thought I was—you know, I went there with the expectations that I would only be there for a year.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: So, it was—it was all interesting. Everything was interesting to me. I mean, meeting the husband of the departmental secretary, who was a highway patrolman, and talking to him about the fact that he's just come back from Seattle, and he couldn't stand it

because he felt closed in by all those hills and mountains, and he just couldn't wait to get back to what, to me, was this complete—I mean, I thought Holland was flat. Just the—so speaking, oft quoted, usually attributed to Oscar Wilde, two nations separated by the same language.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: It was very, very strong feelings. But you know, then I had this gloomy period where I didn't know what the hell was going to be happening, and I thought well maybe we'll be moving back to England because I could've gone back to my old job, but—my boss made that perfectly clear, if America doesn't work out, we'll take you back. And on the other hand, we were going up to Minneapolis. It's a, six hour—four or five-hour drive. I can't remember now—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —we were going up to my wife's family in Minneapolis on a fairly regular basis. So, you know, I just sort of dropped in for a few months, and then—and then left.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And then, you moved to St. Louis.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Which is very different. And how did you find it? What—

GRAHAM BEAL: I really liked St. Louis. I realize now that—they told me, when they offered me the job, they said, "We know you're inexperienced. We know you're going to make mistakes, but you know, we'll give you whatever help we can." And those—the people who were talking like that were people like Emmy Pulitzer. [Emily Rauh Pulitzer] She was Emmy Rauh when she interviewed—when she was part of the interview committee—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —she was Emmy Rauh, a curator at the St. Louis Art Museum. And in the year that I was in South Dakota, she married Joe Pulitzer. And I arrived in St. Louis, and it was, I mean, southern hospitality. It was incredible. My wife was doing field work for her master's degree, so she didn't—for the first three months, I was alone there. But I basically didn't have a grocery bill for the first months that I was there because people were—it was summer, but people were entertaining all the time. It was very, very friendly, very open. People would say things to me like—you know, people have their rivalries and their histories, they said, but there's—in St. Louis, there's no one who you can't seat next to anyone else at dinner. You know, it's so—and then, I was director of Washington University Art Gallery, which had a really wonderful collection that had been put—the great Horst, Janson was there after the war for a brief time. But he took a lot of paintings, including *Dash for Timber* by Remington that's now in Fort Worth. He took a lot of old paintings, deaccessioned them, and with the proceeds, which I think didn't total very much—I think *Dash for Timber* sold for most at the time. He bought paintings—works of art by Picasso, you name it, Henry Moore, Paul Klee, put together this extraordinary modernist collection. And he was working at a time when other collectors were coming to being, with "Buster" May, Morton May, working with Max Beckmann—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —who was at Wash U for a couple of years. Had a profound effect. You see, you had Buster May. You had the Shoenbergs, who sort of faded from the collecting scene. And then, you have the absolutely remarkable Joseph Pulitzer, one of the most wonderful people I've ever met, who had started collecting as a young man. Had three houses in St. Louis, stuffed to the gills with art. And he had married—second marriage; his first wife, Lulu, died of cancer. He married Emmy Pulitzer, and she started adding the Pop and the Minimalist, and the—and all the modern stuff. Very, very, very generous. Very good-hearted people who, certainly, Joe and Emmy, helped me as I picked my way through what it's like to try to be an inexperienced university art museum director.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What were the most clearly drawn contrasts between what you expected to find when you came to the States, and what, in fact, you did find? What were the, you know, coming to the Midwest, what did you expect? And then—

GRAHAM BEAL: One of the things that I didn't expect—this is very narrow, but one of the things I didn't expect was the aversion to nudity.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, good point.

GRAHAM BEAL: Couldn't have—the art department was not allowed to have life classes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: At Wash U?

GRAHAM BEAL: In Vermillion.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In Vermillion.

GRAHAM BEAL: And so, we used—the faculty used to secretly find a space—blank out all the windows, and then, we would have—do life drawing in the evening. And then, encountering people's squeamishness towards nudity—visitors to museums. You know, not wanting to bring their children to see an exhibition that had any amount of nudity—any amount of nudity in it. The thing that—it's sort of a flip side to your question, though, is that what St. Louis—St. Louis gave me a completely false impression of what a good-sized American city had as art collectors. It wasn't until I moved to Minneapolis and then you know, on to other places—that I realized that that was an extraordinary moment in St. Louis, with the—and there were other collectors who aren't as prominent. But the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, the collecting—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —in St. Louis was really, really remarkable.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, the a long history there that goes back to the 17th century, and Spanish and French fur trade. And later, you know, railroads—everything.

GRAHAM BEAL: The entrepôt, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah. And we were—we were talking about, you know, the Forty-Eighters who came there from Germany and Europe, after the Revolution failed, and how they—this intellectual infusion of political radicalism—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —as well that helped drive the country into a civil war. And the importance of art, too, I think, was pretty strong, even in the early days because a lot of artists went out that way. You had people like [George Caleb] Bingham, [George] Catlin

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and others who were able to find patrons. And I guess, a lot of the artwork was imported from the east coast, or from the Gulf, but—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, there was an early collection at Wash U, left by a banker called Charles Parsons. And it had all of the usual suspects for a late 19th century collection that was not interested in Impressionism. I mean, I think it might've had a Harpignies but that was about it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: It was Barbizon, Jules Breton, that kind of thing.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: The collection was still—I published a catalog about it, one of the exhibitions that I did. But I remember Joe Pulitzer coming to the opening, and all these 19th century works of art—conservative 19th century works of art, and he actually voiced concern that his collection was going to look like this. You know, in other words, this art is really irrelevant, in many ways. And what is—is my collection—I remember—I forget his exact words, but yeah, so they're were, as you were saying, there were a group of collectors before the great modernists that we think of now.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, there was that spirit of civitas and there were a few prominent families, historically—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —like the Chouteaus and Bents and so forth, who were leaders in the economics of, well, the fur trade—the beaver fur, early on, and then—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, the Astor—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, Astor.

GRAHAM BEAL: Astors.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Astor, well, they were—they were the competitors, right, with the Chouteau, who were the patrons of Catlin and others. But everybody came through St. Louis. You know, [Karl] Bodmer, [Prince] Maximillian—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —von Wied-Neuwied—and it was quite a place. And I guess, still is. Trouble, I guess, with urban blight—not unlike Detroit—

GRAHAM BEAL: Very similar to Detroit, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, yeah. But still, the heart had a deep interest in culture, and the arts. So, what was your sense when you were at Wash U—what was your sense of St. Louis, as a place where art was being made?

JAMES MCELHINNEY

GRAHAM BEAL: It didn't strike me as particularly vibrant. I mean, Ernie Trova was there, and then he was having his moment with his *Falling Man*, and all those kinds of things. But it—the pulse was fairly low, I think. And I remember thinking that 19—and this is 1974 to 1977, that the 1904 World's Fair still figured quite large in people's imaginations—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —it was as if, you know, looked back on, that was the great moment.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That was the centennial of Lewis and Clark expedition, so—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —where was everybody going? Were they all going to Chicago, or going to New York?

GRAHAM BEAL: New York.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah?

GRAHAM BEAL: New York, not Chicago.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Not Chicago. There was still a pretty lively scene in Chicago. I guess you had people like—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Ed Paschke, and The Hairy Who, and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —all of those guys.

GRAHAM BEAL: Roger Brown.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Roger Brown. Yeah, yeah. But New York was certainly at that point in time—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. There were a couple of good dealers running Greenberg [Gallery], who'd taken over from Joseph Hellman.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: So, it wasn't as if—as you heard complaints in other places, that "why do the collectors in my town go to New York?" But that was where they went.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's where Hellman went, too—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right? And so, he—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —so, where the dealers go, the collectors go. So, if he had established himself as he had in St. Louis, and he opens a gallery in New York, as you know, a lot of these—

GRAHAM BEAL: There was a—quite a scandal. When I got to Wash U, they were still recovering from an event that had happened a few years earlier, whereby Bob Buck had been—was the director at Wash U, Steinberg Hall. And he had founded a collector's group that was led by Joe Hellman.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: And Bob Buck put together this exhibition at Washington University—really radical—I mean, Richard Serra, Alan Saret—I can't remember the others, but they were, you know, the people of the very early '70s. Richard Tuttle, maybe. And the exhibition closed. Joe Hellman was a property developer. Suddenly, the exhibition closes, a new Joe Hellman gallery opens, and all of the works that were in Washington University's exhibition goes to Joe Hellman's gallery. And it cost Bob Buck's job in the end. Huge scandal. And then, after a few years, Joe Hellman sold his gallery to [Ronald K.] Ronnie Greenberg and—well, sold that space, and then moved to New York.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I think people would only wink at something like that in New York.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, it ended a man's career in St. Louis—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, that's an interesting story. I'd never heard that—I did interview Joe Hellman a while back, and that was not one of the stories he told.

[They laugh.]

But it is clear—I mean, a lot of people, I think, following—studying the history of art, a lot of people are going to be reading the transcript of this conversation, will have assumptions about how art was bought and sold and why, and so forth, but a lot of it actually boils down to friendships and social connections—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —so that if you have a dealer who opens a gallery in Cackalacky, Texas, and moves to Los Angeles, the buyers are going to go to him, wherever he is. I think that's, you know, part of the lesson there, but also, I mean, how could somebody pull that off? So, it was not known that Hellman was—

GRAHAM BEAL: I mean, this is a long time ago now—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —so—but my memory is that it was a big surprise, and that the university, and a number of people felt that Joe Hellman had commercially exploited the university, and

the status of the university.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Was there any quid pro quo? Did the university benefit in any way?

GRAHAM BEAL: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh. Well, see, that was the problem with that deal—if there had been a new gallery or a new building or something—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —or some new income stream, then probably it would have been winked at. But it's hard to keep track of the labyrinthine operations of the—of the art world, which someone recently described to me as a consumption of culture in pursuit of other priorities—interesting idea. How long were you in St. Louis? How long did you—

GRAHAM BEAL: I was there from—I was there for three years. When I was in St. Louis, I went to Minneapolis for Thanksgiving, the first year that I was there, and I made an appointment with Martin Friedman—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —and had a long conversation, and he gave me a lot of information, and told me about things like the American Federation of the Arts, and the exhibitions that they organized, and gave me some names, just as Emmy Pulitzer had done.

But then, a couple of years—done a few exhibitions, got some NEA grants, I got a call from Martin Friedman. And he said he wanted to come down—he was traveling, and he wanted to see me. And so, he did—looked around my operation, and then he invited me for an interview to ask if I'd be willing to be a curator at—and I said I didn't think I could because my wife, who I'd just uprooted from one place, was in the middle of her Ph.D. studies. And so, I actually turned Martin down, and went home and told my wife. And my wife said—who I didn't think wanted to—she's from Minneapolis; didn't think she wanted to move back there, necessarily. But she said—she told me that University of Minnesota was better for her area than Wash U. And so, I wrote Martin a letter and said that I was precipitous in what—in my decision, and that yes, I was interested. And you know, to cut a long story short, I found myself taking a salary cut to move from being director of Washington University—I remember, I told Martin this, and he winced. He said, you know, "was I really that arrogant?"—didn't sound arrogant to me at the time. He actually said to me, "Come to Minneapolis, and I will teach you how we do things in this country." And he'd seen a couple of my grants, and watched some of my—he'd been on panels—grant panel—NEA panel, and watched a couple of my projects. And so, that's how I moved to Minneapolis. And as I joke, finally, I moved to the dark side. I formally became a curator of contemporary art—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

GRAHAM BEAL: —which I'd be dabbling in at Washington University with exhibitions of—my first exhibition in Sheffield, actually, was called *Made in California*. And it included artists—this is 1973. It was Ed Rucha, Ed Moses, Larry Bell, Joe Goode, Laddie [John] Dill, Guy Dill, Bob Graham, Ken Price. And it was an exhibition I did from London. So, I was very interested in—particularly interested in California—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —art, and that's what I'd done, a couple of exhibitions at Wash U that Martin had noticed, so 1977, February '77, I moved to be curator at Walker Art Center.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What were your proudest achievements at Washington University, would you say?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, I really—so long ago, and I was there for a little bit less than three years, and I was stumbling around, trying to, you know, find ways. But I think—I hope that I, after four or five years of the museum basically barely functioning, we once again had a program of exhibitions, and you know, the public started coming again. And I made a few—a few acquisitions that—the most significant one was probably an oil sketch by [Francesco] Solimena for the murals at Monte Casino that were destroyed—a few other things. But I

don't think I can sort of site anything that I remember with particular emphasis, when I was there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: A landmark—

GRAHAM BEAL: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —achievement?

GRAHAM BEAL: No. I mean, we did a huge installation of Larry Bell—*the Iceberg and its Shadow*—an enormous—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow.

GRAHAM BEAL: —it filled the whole—the largest gallery, and it was just a maze, you know, so that was fairly spectacular.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, how would you get the support for an exhibition like that in those days? Did you have to write a grant, or did you—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah—

[talking simultaneously]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —patrons or—

GRAHAM BEAL: —grants and a couple of patrons, but there was, actually, there was some endowments that yielded funds for operations and for acquisitions.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, as you left the museum, you found it in a better condition that when you had arrived. Was that due to restructuring by the board, or—

GRAHAM BEAL: There was no board.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: There was no board?

GRAHAM BEAL: No. There was an advisory committee for one of the funds.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's it?

GRAHAM BEAL: That was it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And otherwise, it was treated like an area of the art department?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, and when I got there, in fact, I was amused that the University of Florida president, [Edward Thaddeus] Tad Foote, who died recently.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: When I got there, because there had been no director for several years, various deans had raided the gallery for works of art to adorn their departments, and Tad Foote had built a law building. And he had conducted a serious raid on the storerooms. And so, throughout this big, new modernist, brutalist building, was, you know, like 30 or 40 works of art—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow.

GRAHAM BEAL: —from the museum. And so, I did embark upon a program of getting back the works of art that had got—and discovered that many of them had, in fact, disappeared. And I know this has happened at other universities. I know that it happened at the Ford Motor company, that executives, when they retired, or deans and professors, when they retired, they just took home the painting that they got used to of thinking as theirs. And so, I did, in fact—thanks for reminding me. I did, in fact, carry out a full inventory of the collection to discover what was no longer there. And—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Must've been quite a lot of detective work to actually figure out that these paintings existed, and to find out where they were, and then craft a memo, perhaps, to say that they needed to be examined for condition reports, or something, and how did

you—how did you—

GRAHAM BEAL: I—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —retrieve them?

GRAHAM BEAL: —I—basically, I remember going—I mean, the big battle was with Tad Foote, for understandable reasons. And he was—he was clearly a man on his way. He was old school kind of wasp, as his name indicates.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, I know.

GRAHAM BEAL: And he, you know, just assumed that it was his empire. And so, I wouldn't say that it got unpleasant, but I basically made the argument that these were significant works of art, and they needed to be in the right kind of environment, and that they were a risk, and insurance—you know, those kinds of—not so gradually, actually, we—I got them back, and discovered that lots of things had gone missing over the years. Well, dating well before the problems. It was an ingrained, you know, oh, you need a picture for your office? Go down to Steinberg Hall. They'll have something for you.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Did you change, you know, the protocols for borrowing works of art? Did—

GRAHAM BEAL: I mean, we no longer lent works of art out of the—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's the easiest solution.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, I think—I think one would be shocked to learn how widely practiced that is. But I do know, for example, the curator at West Point, and they would frequently lend works from their not insubstantial collection of mostly expeditionary art, and portraits and, you know, people like James Walker, that kind of stuff.

GRAHAM BEAL: What's that great story about the Paul Cadmus showing the drunken sailors that was considered to be an outrage?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh—

GRAHAM BEAL: And it ended up being owned by an admiral, even though it, you know—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, *Sailors and Floozies*.

GRAHAM BEAL: That's right, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah. Great painting.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's really—

GRAHAM BEAL: I just saw it somewhere in a—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It was in a—last time I saw it, there was a show—

GRAHAM BEAL: At the Whitney—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The Whitney, yeah, yeah. At the Whitney. Yeah, they've—they're doing more with their historic collection, which is great. But the—yeah, it's—an hilarious painting, where these—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —stone wall and some park—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —yeah, it's a great image. So, any memorable interactions with, like,

local artists? So, you spoke about Ernie Trova. Was he—

GRAHAM BEAL: I helped organize—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —a presence?

GRAHAM BEAL: —an Ernie Trova exhibition for the first exhibition at a sculpture park, the name of which I'm forgetting, that was opened in 1977.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In St. Louis?

GRAHAM BEAL: In St. Louis, yes. Should have the catalog somewhere.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He did all those Falling Man—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —series? And he was one of the early artists in Arne Glimcher's stable.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, that's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Nice gallery.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, I remember well, those images, and now one rarely sees them. But what was—what was his influence on, you know, the department?

GRAHAM BEAL: None whatsoever. He was—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He was just a—

GRAHAM BEAL: —off by himself. You know, and sort of—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —independent?

GRAHAM BEAL: —yeah, acted, you know, no pun intended, sort of fallen into this Falling Man phenomena—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —[Laughs.]—

GRAHAM BEAL: —that he then, you know, with Glimcher, just made, you know, version after version after version—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Prints and multiples—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: And then, he did try to break away, and one of the show that I helped organize, he had a—some David Smith-like works. Sort of cubey-type pieces. He was trying to break away from—break away from the falling man, but I don't—didn't really follow, after I left. My main memory of—as I suggested earlier, my main memory of St. Louis was sort of being with Joe Pulitzer, talking at his and Emmy's houses regularly, and looking at their collection, and hearing his stories about how he started collecting, and it was—just very fond of that aspect of my time there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What significant lessons would you say you absorbed from your conversations with Joe Pulitzer?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, of course, he had the fabled eye.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: So, he had absolutely extraordinary material. His anecdotes were often about the fact that when he bought his first work as a student—was it Yale or Harvard? It was a Modigliani. And he hung it on—it was hanging in his apartment at the farm, as they

called the second of the buildings that they owned out in the country. And his father used to play poker, and when they were well oiled and the poker was over, he would then take his buddies to make fun of his son's art collection. And Joe asked him to at least not do that when he was home. So—but the—I remember another evening, and I can't remember why that neither of our wives were in town, and I went around for a couple of drinks with him at his in-town house on Pershing Place. And he said—we had a couple of Scotches, and he said, "Come on, I'll show you some things." And then, he took me through the house and pulled out, from under beds and from various closets, all the stuff that he never put on show. It would—may be unfair to call them mistakes, but there were some mistakes—the things that hadn't lasted. There were also works that he'd bought because, as a patron, as an auction for some charity, he felt that he needed to. So, as I—as was reinforced when I worked with the great British collectors, the Sainsburys, you know, these great collections only come about through tremendous application of time and effort, and through the willingness to make mistakes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, I think one has to look at those acquisitions as research—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and I interviewed Steve Martin a couple of years ago, and he spoke about how his first purchases were pre-Raphaelite paintings, or paintings of the pre-Raphaelite manner. And one of them he put up for sale, or he showed to someone who made some comment about, "Oh, you've got that one now." It's one of these paintings that—making the rounds.

GRAHAM BEAL: —[Laughs.]—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And someone, I think, finally told him, very honestly, that, you know, his collection was pretty mediocre, and that he had to really apply himself, and I think he just got rid of a lot of stuff and started over. But he's very—he's a very interesting person to talk to about collecting because he takes it so seriously.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah. And not like "I need one of those."

GRAHAM BEAL: Right. And my—the main patron, when I was at Wash U—we're not talking about Joe Pulitzer, but—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —my main patron was a man called Dick Weil, who married—his wife was a Steinberg, and the art museum at Wash U was called Steinberg Hall. And Dick was a prickly character, but he had—he had a great collection, and we were sitting in front of—sitting in his front room, in front of a Monet—of the pink women canoeing, by Monet.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: I saw that again recently, somewhere, too. I think it might've been at the—at the Clark. Anyway, I asked him—I said that—it was a fabulous collection, and I said, you know, "What were the first works that you bought?" And he said, "There isn't anything here from my first three years of collecting." He started collecting after the war, inspired—stimulated by Pulitzer and "Buster" May. And he told me that he sat down—after three years, he sat down and he looked around his house, as it were, from whatever vantage point it was, and he said, "And I realize that I didn't like a single work of art that I was looking at" because he had—his eye had become educated.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: And so, he then started—it was the same kind of art. It was all school of Paris, basically, and German Expressionism. He said, "Then, I started again. Then, I really started collecting." And unfortunately, when his wife died, Flo—lovely lady, he went into a terrible depression. And rather than leave any, he picked up the phone and he called [Ernest] Bieler in Switzerland and said, "I want you to sell my collection." So, the whole thing was dispersed from St. Louis.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's tragic.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, in 1970—

GRAHAM BEAL: Seven.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —seven, you moved to Minneapolis.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And you had been there before, obviously. You're—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, well—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —married to a woman who is from—

GRAHAM BEAL: —from suburban Minneapolis, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And how did—how did you find it? Because it's a very particular kind of place. It's a very particular part of the country, too, with—as we were saying, the sort of Norwegian bachelor farmers and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —all of those clichés about Scandinavians.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, you know, it—even then, thought of itself as the Athens of the north. But it was a very small town. I remember taking someone from—a patron from the Museum of Modern Art around, and we drove around the eight blocks that were—constituted the downtown. There was no good restaurant then. When Martin interviewed me, he was concerned that as a European, the best restaurant he could tell me to was the Hotel Sofitel, out by the airport. So, it was this strange mixture of liberal politics, avant-garde—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —ideas, but very, very provincial. As this woman from the—patron—nice lady from the Museum of Modern Arts, she said, "My god, it really is a cow town, isn't it?" And you know, the answer was yes. And in some ways, it is. But the six years that I was there was when the real transformation started. When the Walker and the Guthrie had been attracting artists. There was the university—there were several, of course, Macalester—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —College, Saint Olaf College just down the road. And it was then—it was the late '70s that it really started to bubble. And so, when we left in '83, it was—it was quite a—it had a lot that it could be proud of, that had begun the transformation to the, I think, relatively sophisticated place that it is—that it is today.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: To what do you attribute that?

GRAHAM BEAL: I think, along with Lauro Martinez, you know, finally, the wealth comes together, and you have the Daytons leading the way, and you have other people copying that—reinforcing the institutions. And there's yuppification, whatever the word would be; suddenly, there was a demand for restaurants. Restaurants, like Detroit now, a new restaurant seems to open every week in the last year or two that I was in—I was in—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, there were—there was a lot of—there were a lot—I remember, there were a lot of places, all over the country, in the late 1970s, that all of a sudden started serving latté—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and baguettes and—

GRAHAM BEAL: That's right—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —sort of, you know, brioche—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —or whatever.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, it became this sort of America—middle America sort of became more culinarily—[sneezes] pardon me. I remember the late '70s, there were a lot of places that suddenly were serving latté and brioche—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and so forth, and yeah, it was the yuppie era. But there had to have been some other impetus for this because there was wealth there all along. But they had to have some way to—some reason to turn their attention towards supporting the arts. Was there a—I mean; it can't just have been the Mall of America.

GRAHAM BEAL: No. It was prior to the Mall. One of the features that's often cited is the fact that the Daytons—the Dayton brothers, four of them, they did certain things—they said Bruce Dayton is with the institute. Ken Dayton is with Walker Art Center. Robert Dayton is with the symphony—I'm making that up, but I think that's what it was and if you want, for you, Walker Art Center—Kenny is your man. Don't go to—you know, so they laid out some rules—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Got it.

GRAHAM BEAL: —another rule that they laid out was the 5 percent club. They would give—they would give whatever the highest percentage, allowed by law, to charitable causes—happened to be 5 percent at that time, for the company. So, they established the 5 percent club, and if you wanted to be taken seriously as a corporate partner in Minneapolis, you needed to join the—it was informal there was no actual membership, but you needed to be able to say that you were a member of the 5 percent club. So, other corporations—Pillsbury, General Mills, Honeywell, they all stepped up to be seen, to be part of this 5 percent support for any kind of charitable activities. And then, I think—this is not my area of expertise; I saw something happen similar little bit later in Omaha. The wealthy people of Detroit—of Minneapolis drove around in Mercuries. Mercury Station Wagons. They didn't have Mercedes, and you know, they didn't have these fancy, luxury cars.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mercuries? That's a Ford.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, right. But not a Ford. It's—you know what I mean?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's a Mercury.

GRAHAM BEAL: It's a Mercury. It was old. It was the old money mentality. You didn't show off. It wasn't about you.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: And that, I think, started to change with the next generation coming along, with the yuppification, to use that—I haven't used that word for years. But then, people did start driving Mercedes. They did start showing off their wealth, and letting people know that, yeah, they actually had more than two houses. You know, it was that kind of shift that was going on at the same time.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, it was about valorizing status?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And I grew up in Philadelphia, so I'm acquainted with—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —that idea that—the first time I bought a tuxedo, I was advised to go to the hospital thrift shop, and find one that was almost a good fit, have it tailored. Because

then, the fraying and all of the wear on it would make it look like I'd worn it to supper every night, since I was—

GRAHAM BEAL: [Laughs.] That's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —yeah, able to shave, or whatever.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And so, that kind of—that kind of social conservatism evolved into something that was more competitive, right?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you had to prove that you were serious, that you were worthy because you were willing to commit 5 percent of corporate earnings to philanthropy. And then, that would make you acceptable in this social elite, which was then—that's an interesting—so, it didn't really have anything to do with art, per se. It had more to do with—you know—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —showing your commitment to community values.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. It was much—you know, you did also have—General Mills had established an art collection, and after four decades, it remains one of the great art collections—corporate art collections in the country. There aren't—you know; you remember the '80s? How every corporation suddenly seemed to have a—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: —collection, and then a curator. Well, General Mills has been absolutely steady. The man who was the—went there to frame the pictures in 1976, Don McNeil was one of my closest friends. He was the curator there for 30 years, and he's the—president after president, CEO after CEO, made the commitment to art. And whenever they made a new building, Florida or wherever, Don would go there, and he would buy the art, and he would explain to—and a whole program of educating the employees, and explaining why although it may look extravagant, buying original works of art, rather than beautifully framed reproductions was something the corporation believed in. And so, there was that kind of activity as well. Pillsbury, now part of General Mills, they had—they had a collection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. Had they subscribed, or had they legislated the percent for art that exists in a lot of cities—I think it might've begun in Philadelphia, but I know in New York and other places—

GRAHAM BEAL: There was—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —you know, 1 percent of the costs of new construction by certain kinds of enterprises, corporate building—

GRAHAM BEAL: I don't think there was anything like that in the—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It wasn't—

GRAHAM BEAL: —in Minnesota.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —necessary if you had the 5 percent club.

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, that would be redundant.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But I know that that exists—it's not a national law, but I know that it exists in many—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right, right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —parts of the country now. And I want to say it began with a Philadelphia redevelopment commission. I can't be sure, but I—it was—that was an early one, for sure because as you know, that town has the greatest amount of public sculpture in the world, I think. It's not a well-known fact, but a lot of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Philadelphia?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, a lot of public sculpture.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, when my wife decided she couldn't get the work she wanted here in Detroit, she went to work for the—went back to work for the EPA, and was, for six months, was in Philadelphia. And I really liked Philadelphia—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, it's an interesting city—

GRAHAM BEAL: —but then, she got offered a job in Washington, and moved there, so—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, that's a curious place. But so, St. Louis didn't have the same kind of collective responsibility, sense of collective responsibility—

GRAHAM BEAL: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —you had individuals like May Pulitzer, and they were sort of singular—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, in fact, and then, the St. Louis Art Museum was in serious trouble—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —and it was—I think it was the year that I left, they finally passed the millage—the property tax on the back of the zoo, whereby the St. Louis Art Museum now got property taxes from the whole of the St. Louis region, rather than just the city of St. Louis.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, tomorrow, we could talk about the tri-county millage—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —which I learned about—

GRAHAM BEAL: But that was—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —last week.

GRAHAM BEAL: —that was a big—that made a big difference to the St. Louis Art Museum.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, that provided a subvention—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —to activities. And did that inspire, also, more philanthropy from the private sector?

GRAHAM BEAL: I don't know. I was—I was gone by then. I know—I remember going back to St. Louis to visit, and walking into a sparkling St. Louis Art Museum, rather than the dowdy, gloomy, dusty place that it was when I was there. And Jim Wood came right at the end of my tenure. He was, of course, the one who benefited from the—but he was—he was—he was important for St. Louis.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Corporate art collecting, as you say, did sort of get off the ground in the '70s, and was very hot in the '80s, and a lot of corporations were buying art, partly, I think, due to the percent for art laws here and there around the country, and partly for prestige, and partly for the idea of investment. And that also created an ancillary market by employees of a corporation which had a collection to buy things that were like things that were in the collection, basically created a big kind of mid-list art market that now is basically gone.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But I have a memory that the Walker Art Center was not on the—on,

you know, the radar at all. And then, all of the sudden, it was a very important venue. And that must've been about the—about the time that you got there.

GRAHAM BEAL: I'm not sure of the exact dates. I mean, [Harvey] Arnason, who wrote the *History of 20th Century Art*, [*sic. History of Modern Art*] was director in the '50s. And he took it from this—from this T.B. Walker's collection, which had everything—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —in it. And Martin, I think, arrived there in the '60s as a curator. Started buying—oh, no, he took over as director in the early '60s, I think that's right. Yes. And he was buying Oldenburg, Segal, you know, all that—all that stuff. And then, he actually embarked upon a deaccessioning program that got rid most of T.B. Walker's stuff. And then built—got advance to build a new building. Tore down the old Hispano-Gothic building that had been covered up by a moderne-facade—you could still see the Hispanic chimney sticking up behind the moderne-facade. So, Arnason got it going to a certain extent, but it was really when Martin moved in, and he sort of made —someone reinforced to me a conversation recently that, you know, they were really—the Whitney wasn't doing much. There was nothing much happening in LA or San Francisco that for a while there, it really was Walker Art Center—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: —once you stepped outside New York, and the east coast. And you know, that was really Martin's—that was clearly Martin's doing. And I remember Martin saying he was going to teach me how things work. What Martin didn't teach me was how to deal with board politics because the board was so disciplined under the Daytons, and Dayton's friends. I'm forgetting the people, like Phil von Blon, Mike—no, I can't—but they were the model board. Ken Dayton wrote a paper that originally was called "A Trustee is a Trustee is a Trustee." I just found it in my papers—it was finally published about the discipline of trustees. And so, I got a completely—just as I got a false impression about collecting from St. Louis, I got a false impression about how orderly U.S. art museums were, because the discipline and the—Martin's combination of the discipline of the board, the sense of civic responsibility rather than personal gain, and Martin's leadership produced an institution that was focused, and again, disciplined at all levels.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, he must've had pretty strong support for his program of de-acquisition and acquisition.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And what was the rationale? Did—were there no people in the twin cities who thought that there—that something should be, you know, done to sort of honor the Walker legacy, or was that just—

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, the Walker family was still involved, that—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —in fact, when I went there, the Walker Art Center was not a 501(c)3. It was still controlled by the foundation.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, interesting.

GRAHAM BEAL: They used to meet every year. But most of them lived in San Francisco. And so, they'd come in for once a year, and you know, they didn't have any particular ownership of the Walker collection, which only went—it was one of those classic stories where Walker wanted the Minneapolis Institute to build a wing for his collection—and his collection was not very good. And so, when they said no, he built his own—his own museum. But it was a shadow, compared to the Institute. So, I think when Arnason came along and focused on contemporary art, everyone was fine with that. The Museum of Modern Art had just opened in New York in the late '20s, and so, I think there was the sense, yeah, there's the Institute, and the Walker—everybody knew. I mean, someone told—T.B. Walker had a Ferdinand Bol painting that had been sold as a Rembrandt. And it—I lost—I couldn't find that painting when I was doing my research. It was published in 1922, but that was because someone put a Rembrandt signature on it, and sold it to T.B. Walker. And when someone said to T.B. Walker

—I read this somewhere, someone told T.B. Walker, "That probably isn't really a Rembrandt," T.B. Walker's response was, "Well, maybe not. But it doesn't matter; it's close enough."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —[Laughs.]—

GRAHAM BEAL: And that's the old attitude to building museums, that goes back to the last quarter of the 19th century. So—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. Need one of these, need one of those.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, that's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah. All right.

GRAHAM BEAL: And so, I don't know the details, but I think Arnason, and then Martin, had a fairly free hand, and they were doing good things that no one else was doing. And so, when the time came to get rid of the collection, I'm sure there were noises about why aren't these in the museum, giving the best stuff to the Institute? But obviously, they didn't. They sold these—the non-Rembrandt sold for $200. And a few years later, when I was at Walker Art Center, I got a panicked call from Greg Hedberg, who was curator of the Minneapolis Institute, to come over. Would I please go over right now to the Institute? I went there. In conservation, there was Sam Sachs, then director—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —and Greg Hedberg, and they pointed me to this picture. And I said, "My god! That's the missing Ferdinand Bol self-portrait!" And a glum look and they said, "Well, the Walker deaccessioned this painting as a Rembrandt. Now, we have a patron who wants to buy it for the Institute so that he can rub Martin Friedman's nose in the fact that they sold for $200 a bona fide old master painting."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

GRAHAM BEAL: And Sam and Greg said, "And we don't want to do that." But I was there. I still knew enough that yes, this was the Ferdinand Bol. This was one of those portraits with the berets you know, based on Rembrandt's National Gallery—London portrait.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: And so, I confirmed what they didn't want to know, that this was, in fact, a bona fide work. And I went back, and they then—they then subjected it to some tests, and discovered that there was the beautiful restoration job had been done by the dealer, who recognized it for what it was. But there was close to 40 percent loss, they claimed. And so, that, then, fell below the threshold of the amount of a genuine. So, they would be able to tell their would-be patron that they, in—could not, in all good conscience, accept this work of art into the collection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And where is it today?

GRAHAM BEAL: It went into a German private collection, I think.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Ah, interesting.

GRAHAM BEAL: They said we can't—we can't explain to the would-be-donor, that it's as embarrassing for us that we didn't buy it for $200 as it was the fact that Walker Art Center sold it for $200.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, they all got themselves into a pickle, didn't they?

GRAHAM BEAL: [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: There is a Bol in Milwaukee, I think—trying to remember where I'd seen —

GRAHAM BEAL: There is a—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: There are quite a few of his pictures around—

GRAHAM BEAL: —there's one in the Mable—the John and Mable Ringling Museum. And you're right. There's one in either Cincinnati, or Milwaukee.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I think so.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Maybe Milwaukee. But yeah, he's—not Rembrandt, but he's pretty darn good.

GRAHAM BEAL: He was one of the better pupils, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, him and—he and Dou or Do, however you say it—

GRAHAM BEAL: Gerrit Dou, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Dou?

GRAHAM BEAL: And Govert Flinck—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Dou.

GRAHAM BEAL: —and—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, there was sort of a dark underbelly of sniping and competitiveness between these great philanthropists right?

GRAHAM BEAL: It was interesting. There was—there was bad feeling between—despite the Daytons being there and sorting everything out, there was at board level, rather than staff level. There was a kind of—I think it's fair to say, Walker Art Center was king of the roost. It acted like it. Martin was good at making people angry with him.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He was the cock of the walk?

GRAHAM BEAL: That's right. And you know, Sam Sachs was there, and Dickie Davis had been there, and done some disastrous deaccessioning. Got rid of many works of art—purely because they weren't what he wanted, basically. And then, Sam came in and didn't do a great deal. And the Institute was kind of somnolent—just so of puttering along. Started the local artists' gallery, and people were, "Why doesn't Walker Art Center do that?" Well, we don't show art according to zip code, you know? We show—so, yeah, there was all of that going on. And frankly, Martin—I went over to have lunch with the new chief curator, Michael Conforti and I had a great time. We became good friends, and I spent three hours over there, and I was reprimanded by Martin when I got—"why are you spending so much time at the Institute? What are you doing over there?"

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Peculiar, but not. I think this is fairly common—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. Less common now. I think—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: —one of the big changes, I think, there's been a shift to us all understanding we are all in the same boat, you know? Our rivals are not—our rivals are the Minnesota Mall, but not the symphony.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. And sort of the more art one has, or the more music and culture, the more dance, what have you, that can be concentrated in one place, then the more people will come and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and use that. And so, it's a—I think it's the same thing with restaurants, you know? You think you don't want to have—be the only one in a five-mile radius—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —you want to be surrounded by 20 other restaurants.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And then, the competitiveness is salubrious. It helps everybody be better—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and pay attention to what they're doing a little more closely. But there are many people, I think, in the arts—artists, absolutely, who think in a kind of zero sum—

GRAHAM BEAL: Zero sum game, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. And this is not productive. But my—as you were talking, I kept wondering how much influence the patrons or board members exerted on programming?

GRAHAM BEAL: That was, to me, that was part of the lessons that I did not learn. I don't know what it was like, in detail, at other institutions, but the board at Walker Art Center had—did not, as far as I could tell, certainly didn't interfere with the programs, and don't know what other aspects of management, but as far as I know, they left the running of the Walker Art Center to the professionals. And to the extent that when I organized an exhibition based on six print makers—print making houses, the chairman of the board at the time, Allie Wittenberg, wanted to discuss with me the idea of having an opening whereby prints would be available to sell, which, to me, was a very—back then, was a very dangerous idea. But she came into my office, and I remember, she said—she told me that she had something to discuss with me, and she—and she wanted me to know that Martin had given her permissions to talk directly to me—I was chief curator by then. But nobody talked to the curatorial staff until they talked to Martin.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And how was he able to maintain that kind of iron grip on—

GRAHAM BEAL: He was ahead of everyone, all the time.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: We opened—we'd finished doing the renovations and extension to Walker Art Center. It was one of my last board meetings there, before I moved back to England briefly. And he—Martin—the board was all there to celebrate the fact that the building, the extension was done, and Martin started talking about the new sculpture garden. And Mike Winton, that was his name—part of that whole clan, had a Mies Van der Rohe house, added a Frank Geary guesthouse to his plot. And they started heckling Martin, saying "Martin, stop. No. Come on, we just"—you know, and Martin said, "I have this idea for a sculpture garden, and it's going to cost $11 million, and"—people were, as I say, heckling. And Martin said, "And I've already raised the first $4." End of discussion. Embarked upon a sculpture garden for Walker Art Center.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, there's a lesson in that. Just a little housekeeping did the Walker—were you—did the institution have a sales and rental gallery? Did they—

GRAHAM BEAL: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —involve themselves in any of that?

GRAHAM BEAL: No, no.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That was a popular sort of outreach—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —device in the '70s.

GRAHAM BEAL: The Institute actually, I think, had one when I first visited there in the early '70s—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And then sort of—

GRAHAM BEAL: —as did the DIA.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —eventually merge with the shop or the store that, at one point in time, only sold postcards and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, I actually closed the rental gallery—sales and rental gallery at Joslyn Art Museum. And we can come to that—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. So, the Walker's operations, then, relied entirely upon private funding? Or—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But specific exhibitions, which you organized, were supported, in part, by NEA grants, or—

GRAHAM BEAL: N.E.—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —or other grants?

GRAHAM BEAL: In those days, I mean, we all look back on former—previous eras of seeming so much simpler than our own. But in those days, we used to get grants from General Mills, from Pillsbury, from Honeywell, from the Dayton-Hudson Foundation. And they would—talking about $250,000, which was, you know, 1980, for the Walker Art Center—no specifications. And I remember the head of the Dayton-Hudson Foundation that, since, has become a much more difficult target foundation—I remember the head, Richard Armstrong, his name was, the head of the Dayton-Hudson Foundation, calling me to ask about the National Gallery in Washington, Carter Brown—he said because—he said "we've given them a grant, and Carter Brown keeps calling me to find out how we want them to handle the money. And I'm"—he said, "I'm trying to explain to him that you're the National Gallery. We trust you." And when I gave—got a grant from Pillsbury and I was doing a Robert Graham exhibition—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —I called the head of the foundation and said, you know, "I want to let you know that he was an ex-communicated Bishop, Catholic Bishop, who'd supported—had supported birth control." I said, "I'm calling you because we are—we plan to use the Pillsbury money for a Robert Graham exhibition, which is nothing by nudity. It's all female nudes."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: And he appreciated the call, but he was actually a bit irritated with me. He sort of said, well, you know, we—you know, Walker Art Center knows what it's doing. You know? You don't—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Interesting.

GRAHAM BEAL: —have to make this kind of call. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Interesting.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Quite a contrast to the way things had become.

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, yeah. Yeah. The absolute opposite. Oh, I once had to call Evan Maurer [spelled phonetically] because I got into trouble with the Target Foundation, and one of my great patrons here, Joe Hudson, insisted that I call Evan Maurer to find out how to do things—didn't put it quite like that. I called Evan, and Evan said, "The Target Foundation is not the Dayton-Hudson Foundation that you and Joe remember." He said, "I have tire marks all over my back—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —[Laughs.]—

GRAHAM BEAL: —from the Target Foundation."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, they really want—they really want their agenda pursued.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep, yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. So, the museums become a device for these patrons to advance their own—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep, basically.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —cause. And I mean, that could be good. It could be bad. Just an aside, in the last, well, eight years, there's been a new kid on the block called Crystal Bridges [Museum of American Art in Arkansas].

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Interesting development of an individual putting together a complete—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —entity, a complete collection, a complete museum, a complete programming, in a part of the country that never had—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —that kind of resource before. Do we think that's a trend?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, you've seen the Broad Museum and the ego—I mean, Alice is—Alice Walton's is not quite the same kind as an ego museum. I mean, this—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's not an ego museum. It's not called the Alice Walton—

GRAHAM BEAL: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —it's called Crystal Bridges, yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. Yeah, but there's a—there's a lot to talk about there. But anyway, I think, in her case, her heart is in the right place.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Absolutely. One wonders what's next because one is having a look now at—I don't know where you would put it, but the whole discussion, and plans for the George Lucas Museum in Chicago.

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, god. That's the opposite, I think.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

GRAHAM BEAL: We have good friends—I know you don't want to waste tape on this, but I have a good friend who was on the committee that turned down his museum in San Francisco.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: And Nancy Pelosi made sure that that person was not re-elected to that committee.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Very interesting. A museum of narrative art?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And by a strange coincidence, the former president of Crystal Bridges is now the nominal president—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —president of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Don Bacigalupi.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Don Bacigalupi.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, there's another story.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's a great name, Bacigalupi. It sounds like kiss the wolf or something.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, that's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's a funny name.

GRAHAM BEAL: I think it is southern Italian, isn't it? I think it is Calabrian, or something like that?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Bacigalupi means—yeah, kiss the wolf. But yeah, there are some interesting machinations under way we can probably speak about, off the record. But you—now, you mentioned that after working at the Walker—and you were there for five—

GRAHAM BEAL: Six years.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —six years, that you moved back to Britain?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What was the motivation for that?

GRAHAM BEAL: I was homesick, I think, to—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Simple.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. And I know whenever people left Walker Art Center, it—you went into Martin's bad books for quite a while. Not forever, but you'd betrayed him. But when I told him that I was interested in going back to England, Martin, with his usual perceptiveness, said, "It's England, isn't it?" And it was. So, I went work as keeper, as it was then called, quaint—now director, of the Sainsbury Center for Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia for two years.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That must've been quite different.

GRAHAM BEAL: It was. But it was—my wife told me later that I was easier to live with, living back in England, by far, than when I was—when I was an A-type American curator. The—I loved the Sainsburys. Bob Sainsbury, like Pulitzer, is someone I remember with tremendous fondness. His wife, Lisa, who just died at aged over 100, was a much sharper individual. But I had a conversation with Christopher Brown, who was curator at National Gallery, and then went on—just retired as director of the Ashmolean at Oxford. And he sort of—very condescendingly, he said to me—at least, I thought it was condescending. He said, "What's it like, working for the Sains-? Isn't it a bit like being a courtier? You know, do they have to be—you know?" And I sort of remember saying, "Good god, no." I said, you know, "The Sainsburys! They love art. They spend money on art. Yes, they have a say," but I said, "It's the university that's driving me crazy. The administration—the bureaucracy is just unbelievable."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: "The Sainsburys are wonderful people!" But it was a completely different—completely different attitude.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, it's true, I think, that the old aristocratic patron model—it's not quite—it's not quite extinct. I think it's alive and well in certain individuals we both know. And I think the people who work for them are treated more like family, like the old—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —you know, they would treat—whether it's the woodsman, or the games keeper, or the chambermaid, or the you know—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —the footman. It's their family. They're—it's not just a replaceable worker or expertise—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right, right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —that needs feeding. Yeah. I think there are certainly benefits to being involved with people like that, as opposed to being involved with academia, which is increasingly corporate, and increasingly bureaucratic, and increasingly—in a lot of ways, increasingly broken and needing reinvention.

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What did you find to be the sharpest contrasts between the British university of your student days, and the British university of your maturity?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, by that time—by the time I got there, I'd worked at Washington University, which had a very enlightened administration—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —led by Bill Danforth. So, my old English student rebellion notion that those people are all fools who, you know, don't realize how badly they're damaging the Institute was not right. And I went to work for the head of UEA. And my first day there, I was asked to have a meeting with him. His son was—just left this country to return to England, was director of the Cooper Hewitt. So, and I—Michael—I'm forgetting his name, completely—he'd be called the chancellor in the States. He was the vice chancellor under the British system. Went to his office, and he said he wanted me to know that, yes, in theory, I reported to the assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs, he said, "but as far as I'm concerned, you work for the Sainsburys."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Interesting.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. So, and again, it was an example of someone who—it was an enlightened position, I think.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, very fortunate.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, why'd you only stay for two years?

GRAHAM BEAL: Because it became very—in fact, when I went to give my resignation to the assistant vice chancellor, he said to me, "I knew you would leave when you realized there was no chance of your wife getting the right kind of job in this country." She was a—she was a biologist. She—by this time, she was working in environmental science. She was originally working on hard science at Wash U before she had our—we had our first child. But yeah, it was clear that, you know, another wife of a dean was working a boutique—a woman's clothing boutique. You know, that was the best that she could get as a job in East Anglia.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Was that because of her gender? Or was that—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. And it was even worse for my wife because she was not only a woman. She was American.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I see. [Laughs.] So—

GRAHAM BEAL: And for a while, Nancy was happy there. You know, she learned to ride English. She'd always had horses; she learned to ride English style. She could drive up to Blakeney to bird watch—she was a bird watcher, beautiful—one of the great European preserves. But after a while, it wasn't enough, so—came back to the States.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You were lured back to the states—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —by—was this the Joslyn?

GRAHAM BEAL: SFMOMA.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: SFMOMA.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: San Francisco MOMA.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep. I interviewed—could've had the job at Des Moines, but my wife refused to move back to the Midwest.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And Jim Demetrion was there—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —at one point.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, he was.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Would you have been following him, or—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep. Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah? So—because he was going to Hirshhorn at that point.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Okay. So, how did—how did you become aware of the SFMOMA position?

GRAHAM BEAL: I was at—I was on my way to Des Moines to be interviewed. Flew in to Minneapolis, went to see Martin Friedman.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Who had forgiven you?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. Who never actually—never actually dropped me—I didn't get—because he understood that it was much more about—it was more than like, just going to a, quote unquote, better job, this was something of an emotional level that he didn't take personally. He said to me, "I know why you're here and it's a mistake. Haven't you heard that Henry Hopkins is looking for a chief curator?" And I said, "Yes, I have. But Henry Hopkins is known for not treating its curatorial staff with much respect." And Martin said, "He'll be different with you." So, I went out to Des Moines, interviewed for the position there, told Des Moines that I was going on to San Francisco. I went on to San Francisco; Des Moines dithered and dithered. In the meantime, it was much more complicated—we can return to that, but I was offered the job of chief curator at San Francisco.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: At what point—where was the museum housed at that point?

GRAHAM BEAL: It was in the old veteran's building.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That was the old—that was the old—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —veteran's building?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, were you involved at all with the new—with the construction of the new building, or were you—

GRAHAM BEAL: No, I was—at the end of the nearly five years that I was there, Jack Lane had come on board. I wrote the programs for the gallery and program side of the building. And my last board meeting at San Francisco was when Mario Botta presented his first model of what the new SFMOMA would look like.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's a stunning building.

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And I presume that your wife was able to find some—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —gainful employment in the Bay area?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, yep. She went to work in the Environmental Protection Agency.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Which, there, I think they would be quite busy.

GRAHAM BEAL: In the end, yeah. She worked—one of her main positions was actually working with the nine non-Navajo tribes of Arizona with their issues.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The nine non-Navajo?

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Nations, I should say—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Nations—

GRAHAM BEAL: —not tribes, that's all ns.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —nations. That's—yeah. That's—I have a good friend, Edgar Heap of Birds, who's a Cheyenne—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Arapaho. And he and I are old buddies, and saw him on—well-schooled and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. I was once with George Horse Capture. And he used the word Indian, and I said, "You used Indian! You said Indian!" And he said, "Yeah, I can. You can't."

[They laugh.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's pretty much true, I think. Respect has to be—has to be proved. I've used the word Indian, but I've known Edgar for so long that he doesn't hit me in the face when I say it—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —but the—yeah, I think it's fascinating. Nine non-Navajo Nations of Arizona. Well, Hopi are kind of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —in the middle of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —the Navajo Nation—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —right?

GRAHAM BEAL: Hopi, Apache. I can't remember the others—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And—what? Yeah—well, yeah. Apache and—well, Pima is California, right?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I don't know. Anyway, so many—so many nations, I think, even Kit Carson, who is hated for what he did to the Diné, said once—he said, "There's no such thing as an Indian. There are a thousand nations." So, complicated character—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —he was—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —illiterate, but spoke 80 languages. So, when you got to San Francisco, how did you find—it's a very different environment, from either South Dakota, St. Louis, Minneapolis, or England?

GRAHAM BEAL: I had organized some exhibitions—most notably, a mid-career respective of William Wiley.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: I worked with Wayne Thiebaud on an exhibition, and other artists—Crown Point Press—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —John Cage, not California then. But so, I knew the Bay area quite well, and I knew the collectors. And so, I just—I jumped right into it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you worked with Wiley at Walker?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And Thiebaud, at Walker?

GRAHAM BEAL: At Walker, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And how were they to work with?

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, they were wonderful—they are wonderful men. Bill Wiley was the kind of artist who—I mean, Bob Graham, who I worked with, was totally controlling.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: Everything was a battle. With Bill Wiley, it's—well, I'd sort of liked to see, you know, is that—okay, Bill, how do you want to do? Well, I'd like to see what you want to do. I'd like to see how you handle this. You know, I don't—oh, I don't need to have anyone to do with the installation. You take care of it. Very Zen, of course, in that sense. And Thiebaud is just a gentleman. Just a lovely—I was out in California in October, and went to an opening. He's like 95?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: He's still playing tennis every day.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Good for him.

GRAHAM BEAL: Getting me a big hug. Just, yeah, people milling around, all wanting a piece, and just great, great guy.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you already had connections among artists—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. And collectors.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And collectors.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How did you encounter collectors at the Walker? Were they—

GRAHAM BEAL: I mean, I—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —from the Bay area.

GRAHAM BEAL: From the Bay area—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: From borrowing, and from going out to California—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I see.

GRAHAM BEAL: —to working with, and you know—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Of course.

GRAHAM BEAL: —working with Bill Wiley, especially, and then going to—you know, you'd turn up. You'd be with Bill Wiley for the best part of a week, and then so you'd go to a party in the evening, and you know, meet all these people that were the—were the San Francisco art world. So, I knew it pretty well by the time I went to move there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I'm trying to think if that was—now, we're in the early '80s, right? Or mid '80s?

GRAHAM BEAL: This is 1984.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Eighty-four. So, this is around the time I—memory fails me, but when was [George] Moscone assassinated?

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, before.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It was a little before?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Because there was also that ruckus over the [Robert] Arneson—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —piece.

GRAHAM BEAL: And the—if I'm remembering right, I think SFMOMA was acquiring that piece when—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —I went there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, that had caused a huge uproar. And of course, there had been the much-covered trial and the Twinkie defense—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and all of that.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But you hadn't been around—

GRAHAM BEAL: No, no.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —when that was going on? And what were—what was the—what was the patronage like, in San Francisco? How did—how did art patrons comport to themselves, as opposed to, let's say, the Daytons in—

GRAHAM BEAL: It was—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Minneapolis?

GRAHAM BEAL: —it was completely the opposite. It was all about—it was very focused on the individual, and it was a tremendous shock for me, to discover something—it was particularly anarchic, but it was much more typical of boards in the U.S. than Walker Art Center.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: When was the first time you heard the expression, "My way or the highway?"

GRAHAM BEAL: Never. Never. Don't think I heard that, but there were factions. There was an older faction who genuinely believed that if anything worthwhile was happening in the art world, it was happening in San Francisco, by definition.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So extraordinary, because everywhere else in the country, people were looking to New York, and looking to—or had been, you know?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Partly because of MoMA, and Cold War monkey business. And—but also because that was where the greatest concentration of commercial activity was.

GRAHAM BEAL: Right. And it—very much become—as much that as a creative center, I felt, as a curator.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But that Bay area, also, more than almost other place—I mean, we spoke earlier about Chicago, and you had, you know, people like Roger Brown and Ed Paschke and Hairy Who, and the [Chicago] Imagist School and so forth. And LA, of course, you had Larry Bell, Irwin, the—

GRAHAM BEAL: The light and

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right—

GRAHAM BEAL: —finish school.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —all of those people. And then, the Bay area, of course, had this very painterly blend of sort of Abstract Expressionism, and Ecole de Paris, and Diebenkorn, David Park—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Joan Brown, so forth. And then, Thiebaud, Arneson, Wiley—

GRAHAM BEAL: And that—yeah, the whole funk—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. The whole funky—

GRAHAM BEAL: —circle funk—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —movement with Wiley and Robert, and—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, there was a—there was a lively contemporary art scene—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —there.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, that must've been refreshing, in contrast to—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. It was like—it was—I mean; it was like going back to my early days in St. Louis. It was just constant—I was just out, you know, long, long days. Gallery openings, events most evenings. Nothing on the weekends—everyone went away for the weekend. I had stuff to do at weekends, but that's another story—with visiting studios for—but it was very, very intense. But it was also—I didn't realize that I had not actually been appointed by Henry Hopkins. I'd be appointed—my appointment had been forced by Brooks Walker, who knew Martin Friedman, the chairman of the board.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Walker of the Walker Arts Center?

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is very interesting. There's a pattern here. You're at University of East Anglia, but you're really working for the Sainsburys. And you're at SFMOCA [sic], and you're really there because a wealthy patron wants you there. And this is an interesting—

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, I didn't know that when I—you know, I—looking back now, there was signals that I should've seen. But basically, it—then, it ushered, after the first glow of being there and starting projects, I had been—I didn't realize I had been brought in to bring discipline where Henry couldn't assert any. We had a panel outside my office, about as big as that wall, and on it were all the exhibitions for the next five years. And Henry had said yes to so many exhibition projects that they were on the wall above and below the chart because there was nowhere to put them.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How would that even be practical?

MR. BEAL: It wasn't.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

GRAHAM BEAL: It's a degree to which Henry had sort of lost control. Henry couldn't say no to people, and artists could walk in and see the chart, and I remember Judy Chicago, standing, looking at the chart thinking, "Where am I going to put my show?" And you know, and Henry—I gave an interview to Berkeley, and a lot of this stuff is embargoed, but Henry is gone now. It was—a lot of people loved Henry. He was hail fellow well met—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —you know, people talk about, "Henry must've been wonderful to work with." It was hell, working for Henry. And I spent my first months there, calling dealers, artists, other museums, saying, "You know that exhibition that you thought was coming?" including Martin Friedman, my own old boss, calling Martin saying, "Your big exhibition on Tokyo that I actually worked on a little bit before I left Walker Art Center?" I said, "There's no—we don't have any room for it. We can't take it until such and such a date." So, Martin then had to completely rejigger the international schedule to his Tokyo *Former Spirit* exhibition.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How did you acquire the reputation of being a person who could tidy things up?

GRAHAM BEAL: I don't know. I mean, I guess, in its own way, it started there. And—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Brooks Walker—you mean, at the Walker Arts Center?

GRAHAM BEAL: No, it started at San Francisco.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, how did Brooks Walker get the idea that you could do this? Through Martin Friedman?

GRAHAM BEAL: Martin spoke well of me to Brooks, let Brooks know that I wanted to come back to the country. And so, Brooks thought, at the time, "this is the man to succeed Henry." Except things got so messy, and it was—it became an extremely painful part of my career. Very, very—as stressful as anything happened here in Detroit was when Henry's whole organization began to unravel.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you couldn't keep all of his promises, clearly.

GRAHAM BEAL: No, I couldn't keep all of his promises. But then I, you know, as I would say with aspects of Detroit, I then became part of the problem because I was there, but I wasn't solving everything. And you know, and there was still the issue of Henry. And until Henry went, nothing was seriously good. Because Henry would lie to me. I would confront him and say, "I've just heard that you're going to France to plan an exhibition of design." "Oh, no, no, no. I've been invited to France, but I'm not—there's no plans. There's nothing." And then, he leaves France, and I'm given a letter from the French ambassador saying, "We welcome you to France to begin planning the next exhibition of such and such design." Well, who cares about—you know, who cares about French design anyway? I mean, there's Philippe Starck, maybe, and a few others. But that was—that was Henry. He had been given this nice offer—I'm sorry to be so negative about this man, but it—the whole situation—I mean, Henry was losing control.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And the board became aware of this, and saw—

GRAHAM BEAL: There was a new board of really tough men. Brooks Walker, Don Fisher were the two main agents for this change.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And what industries were they involved with?

GRAHAM BEAL: Brooks Walker was—you know, he made his money the old-fashioned way; he inherited it. He had a business going, but Don Fisher was the Gap.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, he knew how to be competitive?

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And he knew how to take heads, if he needed to—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and how to—yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, he was a tough entrepreneur.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And so, he looked at the operations of SFMOCA [sic], and saw that there was a problem—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —at the top?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, how did he become involved in the museum? Was he an art collector himself? Was he a—

GRAHAM BEAL: Brooks?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Don Fisher.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, Brooks was the main person—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —and Don Fisher, they were old school—you know, country, day school friends. You know, they went all the way back.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Okay.

GRAHAM BEAL: And they—but they were businessmen. And they weren't—then, they were not great collectors. Don Fisher was in the hands of Leslie Waddington, who—everybody—all the dealers and collectors loved because he sells all the B stuff. But you know, at that point, Don had just got involved. I remember going to Don Fisher's house, looking above the fireplace. There was a second-rate Ben Nicholson, taking me back to my—

[They laugh.]

— taking me back to my childhood.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Your first question about art.

GRAHAM BEAL: That's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That might be—that might be a good place to end today because I think it's been two and a half hours.

GRAHAM BEAL: Okay.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How are you feeling?

GRAHAM BEAL: I'm fine.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Would you like to continue?

GRAHAM BEAL: It's up to you. What do you think?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, let's—

GRAHAM BEAL: Give it a break?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Let's try to speak about your time at San Francisco—

GRAHAM BEAL: Okay.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And be sure you're able to get everything you want to share about that on, you know, the record. I do have a question, which is—almost every other place you speak about—in St. Louis you had Joe Pulitzer, and at the Walker, Martin Friedman, who was going to teach you everything you needed to know, and you had, you know, the Sainsburys in England. Was there a mentor in San Francisco?

GRAHAM BEAL: Eventually, yes; a very important person. That was Henry's replacement, Jack Lane. The—Henry retired from the museum; he went on to become dean at UCLA, the art section. But they, the board, interviewed and one of the finalists was Tom Krens—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: And when one, a woman who—I'm not sure she was still a trustee then—but she basically—everyone fell in love with Tom. And Anne Walker made them understand that Tom Krens was a very different kind of person. Anne MacDonald; she's actually from Detroit—part of the Fisher family. So they finally—they ended—I say ended up, it's a terrible way to put it—Jack Lane came here, and he was so unlike Henry in every way. He had a PhD in Steuart Davis and an MBA from Chicago, and he came in and somehow early on he decided—he seemed to decide that I was worth keeping. But I then watched him and participated taking SFMOMA apart, department by department, program by program—and then putting it all back together again.

And typical for me—typical of the situation, was that there were lots of departments with co-heads because there were people who had been there for such a long time and nobody—well, you really don't want to insult so-and-so by, you know—so had all these. And one of them was the registrar's department, and the two women—very capable women—were working there. One did loans and this kind of thing and the other one did exhibitions, so it actually worked. But Jack explained to me that departments needed to have one head, and that it was my job to pick which registrar was going to become head. And I said, "Well, you know, Jack, you do know that if I pick one we're probably going to lose the other." And he said, "Yes, but departments need to have one head."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But there are plenty of qualified people out there on the market, so—

GRAHAM BEAL: So that's the kind of thing that, as I watched him bring, you know, zero-based budgeting principles, analyzing the programs—that's where I really understood the—what it was to turn around a non-profit organization. And I learned a great deal from my art teacher, Stuart McCrory, and an enormous amount from Martin Friedman, who taught me about quality and decision-making and rigorousness. And then Jack taught me a different kind of rigor, and taught me about how you—certain levels of compromise are essential when you're dealing with board politics. Those kind of things. I never learned about compromise from Martin, you know, because everything just went the way he wanted it to.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It sounded like he had all of the ducks in a row before he would launch an initiative, or—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Or he would do the elevator pitch for the sculpture garden—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —it's just hard to say no if you've already got four million dollars. The board's going to say, "Do we want to kiss that four million dollars' goodbye, or do we—"

GRAHAM BEAL: Do we want to—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: "Hop on the roller coaster again?"

GRAHAM BEAL: Right. Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, it's different management styles—and, also, like Thomas Krens, Lane had both sort of the art component and, you know, the business, the MBA—because I think Krens went to Yale SOM [School of Management]—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And very—it's really interesting to ponder what might have happened had they hired him, because he's quite a dynamic character, as you know.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, and he did—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Ex-basketball player—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah. And what he did was basically—I don't know what he would have done in San Francisco—whether he would have been able to treat it like the Guggenheim, but it was, you know, it's not the kind of thing that you can repeat, I don't think.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: No. Well, he's had—he's had an extraordinary career.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He's involved, I know, in a lot of interesting things in the Gulf, and China, here and there around the world. But—so Lane was able to give you insights into walking that fine line between—how shall we put it—the museum as this sort of refuge of culture, and sort of the domain of privileged elites who are interested in the arts and, you know, serving the public in a way, and at the same time making it nimble enough as a business so that it can grow and it can be efficient.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, and that the efficiency supports the—is in service of the programming, obviously. That's what was happening at Walker Art Center—I just didn't know enough to recognize it for—I do remember Martin saying to me—he'd invite me in to go and do special projects with him on a Saturday—and one occasion he asked me what I wanted to do. And I told him that he was basically my model, and he said, "I don't think I can do that." He said, "It's increasingly difficult for directors to have anything to do with the arts program, so you need to think harder about that." He said, "Because I get all the credit here," he said, "but I couldn't have done any of this—"and he mentioned the man who, today, would be called the Chief Operating Officer, Don—he said, "I couldn't have done any of this without Don Borman."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you delegate and—but that's also empowering, too.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Because people who work for you know that they've achieved something.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And while the newshounds may be talking to the man at the top, the whole team feels a sense of achievement.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. So, you know, I was there with Jack. I was—we're so different as people, but we became very good friends. But I was—by then, it was a lot of work and I was—I had been going into the library on Saturdays to do research. I wrote the 20th century catalog for the Sainsbury collection—it was published by Yale—so I had plenty to do. Then I found myself going in on Saturdays to clear my in-tray, and then I found myself taking my in-tray to the beach with the kids—Stinson Beach on Sundays. And I thought to myself, "This is

not the kind of chief curator I want to be." So I was talking to Jack—and looking at the idea of becoming a director in one day—I was talking to Jack about the possibility of doing a Minimalism exhibition. I said, "I think there's a lot about American Minimalism that's related to the industrial militarism of the Sixties, and it's never touched in the literature. It's a whole aspect that's not talked about, you know." And Jack basically took the—he said, "Okay, yeah. That's a great idea, an exhibition—but you have to decide whether you want to be a chief curator here, or whether you want to be a director," because I had sort of sniffed at a few directorships, and been open about it with Jack. And, so, I made that decision.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: While you were at San—while you were at San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art[sic], which exhibitions—of which exhibitions are you most proud?

GRAHAM BEAL: I did a Giacometti exhibition with the Hirshhorn—that's the one that really stands out—really stands out for me.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And, for you, what—

GRAHAM BEAL: You know; I was only there for five years.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: So, for the first two or three years I was handling all Beverly Pepper exhibition. [Laughs.] Yeah, exactly. And an exhibition that I was—being done by Cornell, Joan Mitchell—that was a nightmare. She was a terrible person to deal with. But I think the Giacometti is the exhibition that I remember with the most fondness.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The, those—that Abstract Expressionist generation did sort of pride itself on being, you know, the boozy, and argumentative—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and potty-mouthed, all of that—and that was sort of their mode of conduct, I guess, for that generation.

GRAHAM BEAL: Mitchell was worse; she liked to humiliate people, publicly.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Cruel.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, cruel.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah. Well, that's—there's some pathology there. Happily, she's left money for people to do good things, to atone.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Giacometti is an artist who is not as widely-discussed today as he once was. I think—a wonderful artist, and he's actually a terrific artist to be used in teaching because his work is so process-based. You can talk to students about how form is built, or how form is taken apart, very easily. He diagrams it, and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But what was the rationale for a Giacometti exhibition in San Francisco?

GRAHAM BEAL: I—the Sainsbury's collection was rich in Giacomettis. I had become involved Giacometti through that, so when we were approached by the Hirshhorn, I was personally inclined to look at it. But when you look at—when you look at artists like Manuel Neri—and when you look at—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Of course.

GRAHAM BEAL: —sort of that existentialist—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Bay Area artists.

GRAHAM BEAL: Bay Area artists—very, very tight connection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oliveri.

GRAHAM BEAL: Olivera, that's right—Nathan Olivera. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And Manuel Neri—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I can see that. So, the—

GRAHAM BEAL: Stephen De Staebler, you know, the—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, right. So the sensibility had—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —some resonance there.

GRAHAM BEAL: And I really believe that Giacometti is one of the great artists of the twentieth—every time I'm engage with him I find him unbelievably rich, and about life—not about anxiety, you know—about all of it, all of those things. Just a very, very rich artist.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, that wonderful mini-memoir by James Lord of posing for him—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, yeah. Yes, yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Brilliant. I think every art student in America—I'm sure every art student in Western Europe—has read that book. But, what idea in particular, other than a resonance of sensibility, did you take away from that show?

GRAHAM BEAL: I think, as I just said, I think the fact that in creating these compressed figures that remind people of the concentration camps, it was actually Giacometti's quest for the spark of life—that he was trying to create figures that were taut, and could—almost as if they could move, were moving—looking for that. And the restless, the walking men, you know.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].. But the restless activity of his own process, of sort of carving away—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —drawing, and rebuilding—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Tearing down and rebuilding, that—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —whole. Well, the experience that anyone would have had being in Europe during the war and seeing the destruction and, you know, the renewal that followed. But—well, there's a huge conversation there, about his work. But he also—well, as you know—he began as a surrealist.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That wonderful piece at Yale that I used to look at all the time—or was it at MoMA—of, you know, the woman with the cut throat—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh yeah—it's at MoMA. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's at MoMA; there's another piece at Yale. So it was at this point that you decided that you wanted to change your trajectory.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, I mean I reached the point where I'd done a lot of exhibitions, I was now doing a huge amount of administration, and I remember thinking to myself that, if I'm going to be doing this amount of administration—and it was clear that the job, you know, that that was going to be part of my—I mean, I had the education department, conservation, design—

all reporting to me; I was called chief curator. My successor was called vice president for whatever; I was called chief curator. And I just thought, "Well, if I'm going to be doing this amount of administration, I obviously had reached"—how old was I then—where are we now, 1989—I was 42—"if I'm going to be doing this amount of administration, I may as well be director. Then at least the decisions are mine, you know, kind of thing."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: So I looked around, I interviewed at Portland, Oregon, at Fort Lauderdale, and at Omaha, Nebraska.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: At the Joslyn.

GRAHAM BEAL: At the Joslyn. And, much to my wife's dismay—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

GRAHAM BEAL: —when I told her I'd been approached by the Joslyn Art Museum, and I'd said, "No"—Jim Demetrion had given my name—she said, Nancy said, "Why didn't you look into it?" And I said, "Well, you didn't want to move to Des Moines, why do you want to move to Omaha." She said, "Well, things are different now." And, clearly, we—schooling was a problem for our kids, financial issues—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —with living in San Francisco. And so—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Very expensive city to live in.

GRAHAM BEAL: And so I interviewed and I was offered all three positions, what would have been mine. Dan Monroe was the new president at Oregon. I'd become very good friends with Dan—I called him and I said, "Dan, you know, the job isn't big enough for both of us. You know, you're the president—you've got the museum." And I was right—the guy who took the job lasted about a year. Fort Lauderdale, Florida did not appeal to me, at all. And Omaha—I felt as if I was back in Minneapolis. I felt that there was the new board there, headed by Walter Scott—the big, the captains of industry; Warren Buffet's best friend. And I just felt, "Yeah, Omaha's not my favorite place to move, but these people know what they want. They know what they're doing, and they're going to do it."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's an interesting place because you have the Bemis Arts Center there.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You're just, what, an hour or so away from Lincoln.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And there's the Sheldon Museum.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And, big DoD [Department of Defence] interests there, and Strategic Air Command is there—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, that was—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And also, it's the confluence—near the confluence of the Platte and Missouri Rivers, so I imagine that there would be a lot of work for your wife, lots of EPA-type activity.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, she ended up working for the Army Corps of Engineers.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, really.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I know a few people who were in the Army Corps, probably after her time there. But I know that the Corps has a major center there.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So it would be a—this might be a better place to pause, and resume tomorrow with your moving to Omaha and taking over the role of director of the Joslyn.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: At that time. Is it the "Jozlyn"—it's the "Jozlyn"—I've always heard it's the "Jocelyn."

GRAHAM BEAL: "Jocelyn."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I've always heard "the Jocelyn", yeah. The—

GRAHAM BEAL: People say it both ways.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: "Jozlyn".

GRAHAM BEAL: And there's no one to—no one knows enough to—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: "Jocelyn."

GRAHAM BEAL: I say "Jocelyn" because that's the—I think that's the English way.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: "Jocelyn." But I know that the western sort of lazy—

GRAHAM BEAL: "Jozlyn."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —lazy tongue. This is sort of the sort of American—middle American, southern American—absorption of the received pronunciation. Which is the non-rhotic English way—"Jozlyn, y'all." [Laughs.] But it's a wonderful museum—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and we'll resume tomorrow, speaking about your time at the Joslyn.

GRAHAM BEAL: Okay.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Thank you.

GRAHAM BEAL: Good. Thank you.

[END OF TRACK 1.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Graham Beal at his home in Michigan on Thursday the 7th of April 2016. Now as I understand it where we are this home, this sub-division, is called Palmer Woods?

GRAHAM BEAL: Palmer Woods, yup.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And which Palmer is that?

GRAHAM BEAL: It was the Senator Palmer.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Senator Palmer—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, I understand it was initially a project—it seems like it must have been a 1920's era—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, it was the first big development was what is now called the Boston Edison District, a few miles from here. And then, when Detroit exploded after World War I, this was one of the posh development areas, most of the houses are Jacobethan in style and this house was built in 1924.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, there was a lot of interest in half timbering back in those days—

Graham: Yes, Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —which one sees all over the country in fact—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yup.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —that style of architecture. It's on the northern edge of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —the country club.

MR. BEAL: Yes, that's right. Palmer Park is to the south of us—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I see.

GRAHAM BEAL: —and there's the beautiful Detroit, the Detroit Golf Club with a very interesting exercise in arts in crafts—monumental arts and crafts by Albert Kahn.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow. So before we dive into the narrative again and start speaking about your time at the Jocelyn—or the Jozlyn. What are your thoughts now that you've stepped back from directing museums and entertaining future projects, like writing projects, etcetera? What have you seen change in the field of museum work from the time when you began your career in the 1970's until now?

GRAHAM BEAL: I think, one of the big changes is that, as I remember it, when you worked in a museum, 30 years ago, 40 years ago, people really—generally speaking it was only the programs of the museum that came under scrutiny from formal criticism. The idea of the museum as worthy of scrutiny as a political and social entity and examining all of the kind of forces behind the museum was much less common. The museums as news themselves, the people who work in it, its motivations, those kinds of things, that to me is the big difference. I remember you just used to think that you didn't do advertising, I don't remember Walker Arts Center advertising itself, taking out ads in the local newspaper, rather you relied upon the press—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —to come and cover your programs, and that was your PR. So I think that's one of the—you know this whole tiresome notion of transparency. You know my farewell speech—actually it was the AAMD had a reception at the museum shortly before I retired, and I said that one of the things I was looking forward to in my retirement was becoming opaque.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Funny. So you've seen a lot of changes over the course of your career. Do you feel that the museum migrating from a kind of temple of culture, or educational resource to becoming sort of a theme park with multiple shops and restaurants and sort of infotainment center? That's—has that compromised the mission of the museum, is that undermining it? Do you think that's going to lead to bad things?

GRAHAM BEAL: I mean, I think you can point to examples, where you can claim that that is happening. The recent fuss over Indianapolis seeming to actually ask its audience—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —through whatever Facebook device, what exhibitions would you like us to take? We fought that perception when we were doing the reinstallation, the fact that we brought in groups from the public to test our ideas against them in certain areas was taken as evidence that we were asking the public what we should be doing, which I strongly believe was not the case. But I basically am a proponent of the view that for a hundred years —going, you can see this, actually you can see this debate going on at the DIA in the 19-teens. When the DIA was demanding public funding but wanting to remain a private organization—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —and the risk, the DIA becoming a city department in 1919 was the result of a protracted lawsuit, whereby the museum decided that it would cede its fiduciary power to the city. And then of course they came up with a way of maintaining control for a small group of people. These group of people were utterly admirable; they were individuals who

were personally very generous. Talking about Dexter Ferry the 2nd, a junior, and Ralph Harmon Booth, they gave their own money, they gave art, fantastic art, to the museum, but they basically kept control for themselves. And they played the role of existing for the benefit of all, while actually, and I would have resisted this notion to the death 30 years ago, basically maintaining a private club.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So this is what is called the Founders Society, and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. And I think that I was trained as a curator, as a child of the 60's, genuinely believe, and have my own personal experience had led me to believe that art was for everyone, it just needs to be accessible. But for many decades after the war, we were running institutions that had basically been designed in the first decade of the 20th century by art historians and connoisseurs, for art historians and connoisseurs, and trying to somehow make that more palatable to a broad range of people. And so we weren't in that sense, we weren't that democratic, and I think all of the efforts that we've seen with people like Evan Maurer, have been driven by the notion, to one degree or another, been driven by the notion that if we really believe that art is for everybody and that these institutions belong to the public and how do we deliver those institutions to the public. And as soon as you start doing that, worrying about that, you start talking about label lengths and the cries go up from the high priests and the keepers of the flames: dumbing down, Disnification, all of those things—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —Because, you know the critics, the people like me, people like you, we go into a museum, we're perfectly comfortable, we know exactly where we—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —it doesn't matter if we don't know the layout of the museum, we know we have all of the apparatus for us to just relax and really enjoy ourselves. Most people going into a museum, we know from our research, don't feel that way. They go in kind of—they go in emotionally hunched, they're sort of waiting to be beaten over the head by you know, some regulation, or its more like intimidating—these are all clichés but they're true. Our research showed that people who take their children—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —to museums, or they go to museums when they have out of town guests to show off their treasures, they're actually going in quite a high state of apprehension more often than not.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Because they're afraid that their training or their upbringing or their level of refinement is not going to be adequate for them to consume it properly.

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Either they their kids would ask a question that would embarrass them because they can't answer it or if they've got friends from out of town they'll get lost in a maze of galleries, their friends would get bored. And so—and then, nobody really engaged with the art, it was kind of a stroll.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well somebody commented that one of the museums in New York had become so much like a tourist destination. A place to just go and people watch and they just keep the art on the walls to give the joint some class, you know, this is a waggish thing to say. I think that the critics of this—maybe it goes back to earlier, to the beginning of the 19th, mid 19th century, when you have the formation like the V&A [Victoria and Albert Museum] in London. You've got the Ruskinian idea of improving, the carpenter is going to cut a truer joint if he—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —understands cabinetry and so forth. And so, the tradesmen and the people who actually work with their hands, carpenters, millers, potters, mailmen, anything—anybody who's going to do whatever they do with more attention, care and pride because they understand and respect that. So it's a work ethic, I guess, teaching people how to—and then the other side of it is sort of the open palace model, where you get the privileged elites who deign to open their private holdings to, you know the great unwashed, hopefully to

improve them—who cares it's a *noblesse oblige*, as opposed to the exercise the civic value. Think about he Metropolitan Museum of Art that refused, when there was a six-day work week—refused to be open Sundays for religious reasons, but it was really clear that they just didn't want those people in the museum—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —as opposed to let's say the Brooklyn Museum, which was opened with sort of the same ethos as the V&A as a sort of a community gallery. Not that it—any of these insinuations achieved these lofty goals. So the two ways you can imagine a museum is as a Palace, and open palace, is that fair to say? And the other is being sort of like a teaching—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, and I think certainly when you read the notions of the people founding the DIA or imploring Mrs. Joslyn, who was designing a theater originally and a concert hall, imploring her to add galleries. There is mixture of both of those sentiments together, the idea that this is a palace for the people, that people would go in they will ennobled. I mean there's a fabulous inscription on the front of Joslyn, the building as you go in, it says something like "come with clean spirit, and art will ennoble" it was written by Hartley Burr Alexander, a professor of philosophy. But then on the other hand, as you say, you have the notion that these are examples—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —of craft, and of things made by people.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. As a way of sort of improving the quality of life —

GRAHAM BEAL: The quality of life, yeah. Of course the arts and crafts, the city beautiful movements, all of those things, very important for the foundation of American museums, actually.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Mm-hmm [affirmative]. which, yeah there's no coincidence that the museums were being organized and often with art schools attached to them.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —at the same times as urban parks were being organized as sort of [Andrew] Jackson [Downing] and [Frederick Law] Olmsted—

GRAHAM BEAL: and thereby making them, in some ways, more difficult to get to—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right

GRAHAM BEAL: —because the tramlines didn't, as far as I knew, didn't run through parks.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, St. Louis is an interesting—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —example of that because the museum is—

GRAHAM BEAL: Is—1904 smack in the middle of their World's Fair.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —right, right, right. So tell us a little about what happened at the Joslyn. You decided you wanted, you know, to become an administrator. You'd gone from having an artistic ambition to accepting an art historical path and then that migrated into curatorial work and, ultimately as one advances in these institutions, one gets more burdened—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —or encumbered by administrative work and you found that you were fairly successful at that and wanted to take it to the next level.

GRAHAM BEAL: I actually remember, I applied for the Museum Management Institute, as it was then called, now it's the Museum Leadership Institute, because I felt that I was not a great paper pusher. I knew that—I had come to the decision that I wanted to run an institution, I'd been involved with several building programs with other directors and one of the things that attracted me to the Joslyn was that they were planning a new building. And so, as I said earlier, I thought, you know, now I'll go and be director, and then I'll have, I thought, at least I would be making the decisions, but then I also thought that I would have more control over the nature of my job.

And actually it all worked out that way, I was able to put together a staff structure where I had a highly administrative chief curator, and I made that point to the woman—lovely lady Marcia Gallagher—that freed me up to hold onto the product. It was medium sized museum total of about 100 employees including the guards. And the museum had gone through some very difficult times, its previous director had an emotional and psychological meltdown, taken the—marriage imploded, the museum imploded. And it was so bad that when the trustees asked the sort of the, Walter Scott, who was the sort of head of the captains of industry of Detroit [Omaha], when they asked him to join the board he declined. And he said he had joined the board briefly a few years before and it was the biggest waste of time in his life, those were his words to me.

And they said what will it take for you to help save the Joslyn, and he said, "Make me chairman of a new board," and so they did. The old board got whatever was necessary to pass, Walter Scott became chairman of the board, he asked to join him on the new board, eight people. So it went from a board of like 40 people, to eight people run by the most powerful people in Detroit [Omaha –GB]. And those—the head of Union Pacific Railroad, the head of Con-Agra, the head of U.S. West, a couple of—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You mean Omaha, not Detroit.

GRAHAM BEAL: —I'm sorry, in Omaha, yeah, I'm sorry, in Omaha. Walter Scott was the head of Peter Kiewit, huge, huge corporation that is privately held. And when I talked to them, I got this sense that they really did want to straighten things out. And when they said they were going to build a new building to add to the museum badly needed, I had very—I felt very confident that these—I thought of them as mid-western, I learned later that Omaha, Nebraska is the west, not the mid-west—that it was going to happen, whereas the other places that I talked to it was much less, although in some ways geographically more attractive, much less secure in the sense of what was going to happen.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So what was the, what was you know the mission of the new building? Was it to allow more of the collection to be exhibited, to create more space for changing exhibitions to—

GRAHAM BEAL: All of those things—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —to restaurants, libraries—

GRAHAM BEAL: —You know the original 1931 building was heavily influenced by the Detroit Institute of Arts building actually, that had opened just a few years earlier—was a beautiful exercise in, I call it, Prairie Egyptian Deco.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right

GRAHAM BEAL: —and it was a lovely building. But over the years as another parallel with Detroit, it had started off as an art museum and concert hall and then managed to turn into a museum for everything. So the historical sections, that sort of gauged spaces out in the lower levels in this kind of thing and the museum had fallen into, I'm sorry to say, it really had become sort of something of a, not a joke locally, because it was the cultural institution but people were not taking it seriously anymore. And the new board wanted it to be physically and emotionally and philosophically rejuvenated.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How was it interfacing, interacting with other museums in the area? I guess you got the Sheldon and Lincoln.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well yes, it was Norman Geske was bowing out. And Norman did a terrific job, in making the Sheldon the little jewel that it was, Philip Johnson's architecture not withstanding. But Norman was in some ways a rebarbative character, so he was among

those being most critical publically of doing what I was trained by Martin Friedman, that you don't criticize fellow museums whatever you think of them you don't do that to one another —

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right

GRAHAM BEAL: —Norman was not of that ilk. So another big change that happened in my career, that I really first noticed here, is that when I went to Omaha, there was sense among the community voiced, in this case by the Walter Scotts of the world, that the local cultural institutions needed to do more together. On the one hand—literally why don't you do bulk orders for toilet paper that kind of thing, but also this thought that you people should be talking to one another, that was new. And the Joslyn—and then when I went to Los Angeles and then when I came to Detroit, at each place, I found myself joining a group, in the case of Detroit, formalized group, of fellow CEOs of cultural organizations and it was the first time in the history of the city that these meetings had occurred and that was happening in Omaha when I arrived there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What were the partner institutions?

GRAHAM BEAL: It was the symphony, the opera, they had a very lively community theater, Marlon Brando first appeared at the Omaha Community—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Where he was born.

GRAHAM BEAL: —yeah, that's right. So those, the children's theater, those, there were a few more but I'm blanking out on them now, but those were the order. We used to meet once a month for breakfast and we didn't have an agenda, but at least we were talking to one another, not regarding our colleagues as people who are out trying to steal our money in the old zero sum game.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, were you there for the construction of the new building?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So that was sort of your tenure there, to see that through.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, I put together a committee, its politically very republican, but the man who was the head of the search committee was a democrat who had political aspirations. He was head of Union Pacific Railroad, Mike Walsh. And with his help I put together a board committee that looked not only beyond Omaha, or beyond Nebraska, but looked beyond the U.S. for an architect. And looking back I'm very thankful to Walter Scott who must have sustained a lot of personal and private criticism—would never be public—for the fact that in the end we went out and not because of me being English, but because the architect was Norman Foster. And he was selected by the committee, that through a process of travel and education came to understand that the best choice for this building was in fact this architect rather than the company down the street—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —that thought that it has the job in its pocket when I arrived there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How were you able to sell that idea? Oh it was a new board, so that was coming down from the new board.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, all right.

GRAHAM BEAL: Just, you know they traveled, we traveled the country, went to Europe went to visit different architects' offices. I remember one man, Bill Strauss, who was the head of the company that became Enron—to his utter dismay—but I remember Bill Strauss saying, "Well, I was the one who said we had to have an American architect, but Norman Foster is clearly the best choice for us."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How did that fly with the local community?

GRAHAM BEAL: It was the normal business, normal stuff of why are we engaging a foreigner.

But there was also a sense within the people that I talked to, that wasn't it great that Joslyn was doing something that was different something that really announced a different level of ambition. And when the museum—when we opened, I remember one of the old trustees, we were looking out across the atrium and she just said—this is a well-traveled wealthy woman—I can't believe I'm in Omaha. So and it was an austere building, and I know that's caused problems and they've gussied it up and done stuff to it that means that I'm probably never going to visit it, until people get around to cleaning it up again.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And it's been a success I suppose—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —with the local population. Well apart from having a global profile, or at least a global ambition, and hopefully global profile, one of the things that I'm curious about is how do Omo – Omahanian or however they refer to themselves, Omahans—

GRAHAM BEAL: Omahans, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —how do they see themselves in relationship to sort of the world of global cultures through, you know, the conduct of this museum? Did you change programing as well, because I know that it was known mostly for like western art and things like that.

GRAHAM BEAL: It has the Center for Western Studies which had been actually founded by, I'm forgetting the name of the company—that became Enron but when it when it was gas line company, Northwest something Gas Company [Northern Natural Gas Company]. Bill Strauss, who I just referenced on the building committee, had made this area of specialization and they had the Center for Western Studies, they had a collection of American—of Western American art, they had the Bodmer, Karl Bodmer, Maximilian collection and they had a third collection. When Enron—when Ken Lay took over and they changed the name of the company to Enron, Bill Strauss was obviously out of the picture by then—the first thing they did was to announce they were selling the collections, and there was a big uproar. The—it ended with Enron selling the general Western collection, the Remington, the whatever, and the museum keeping the—Enron donating the other two collections to the museum. It was actually, it was a part donation, part purchase, as I look back because the museum floated private bonds to buy the collections, which wasn't an issue, but it was something, obviously it got debt. Then when that was cleared up the new board decided that, in a good corporation fashion, that we should become a museum of Western Art.

I use this in museum study courses of an example of how individuals, who are powerful people, who are used to making tough business decisions, and who think that they know the world's values—all hell broke loose. These captains of industry just had no idea what hit them when the general public heard that the Veronese was going to be sold, the Monet's were going to be sold, the Renaissance, this that and the other. It was just like they learned who actually owns the museum, and it's not just a small group of aesthetes who don't have political or economic consequence, it was a real scandal. And so when I went there, in an odd way, they were a kind of a chastened group, who had learned that in fact there was this very important component of public opinion, that they had to pay attention to.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And how did they respond to that, what was the upshot?

GRAHAM BEAL: The upshot was, well one of, from my point of view, the upshot was that in some ways it was the most ideal situation I had as a director because they left the running of the museum. You know they were a reasonable board, and a small board, and a very direct decent people that who said what they meant, who had no hidden agendas—which is something I'd come to fear in San Francisco—that they left the running of the museum to me. And when I fired a curator who was particularly close to one board member and at the next board meeting that member asked to revisit my action, I remember Walter Scott bringing his chopping motion down on the table and him saying, "We hired Graham to run the museum, if we don't like the way he's running it, we'll get someone else." And that was it, that was the end of the conversation.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What kind of exhibitions were you able to organize?

GRAHAM BEAL: Organized everything from a blockbuster exhibition, that I started, working in the Soviet Union, during *glasnost* in San Francisco, organized an exhibition of

contemporary American and Soviet painters. And so through those connections I was able to get Joslyn hooked into a tour of the exhibition of the 19th century Russian realist painters, the Wanderers. And so you know that was a big, big event, because of course *glasnost* was going on at that time. So on the one hand, a serious exhibition introducing the very important Russian art movement, to the American public, and on the other hand the exhibition that was actually the most successful was an exhibit of the Day of the Dead. Drawing upon the fact that Omaha, because of the corn and meat industry has a huge immigrant—not exclusively Mexican, but largely Mexican population.

An exhibition of Grant Wood, an exhibition of African sculpture. I started an exhibition that, I was gone by the time it happened, but Joslyn has a plaster version of what we think is an experimental version by the Hébrard foundry of Degas's Little Dancer, so I organized an exhibition of, as I say, for various reasons, it finally happened after I'd left, but a wide range of exhibitions. And then cleared out the historical, the story of the conquest of the west that was in the lower galleries, the lower areas, cleared those out and made them into smaller exhibition space for works on paper. And a small gallery where we can do exhibitions that, something that's become dear to my heart and remains so, transparency, explaining how museums work. So an exhibition about provenance, an exhibition about labels, and those kinds of things, an educational gallery.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So in other words, interpreting interpretation.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So the people who may be would be intimidated would be able to get a sort of a primer on how what they're about to see is—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —organized and presented.

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Did—where you able as a consequence of all of this, you know, to grow the membership and—

GRAHAM BEAL: The year that I left—I don't remember the facts and figures of members, but I do remember the year that left where we had no blockbuster exhibition was the first time the museum had over 150,000 people visiting. And the old documents you see that in 19—I'm making this up—1978 it was 150,000, 1979 it was 150,000, in 1980 in was a 150,000 so there was this kind of mythical figure from the past and we exceeded that in 1995-6.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How about in other internal programing like educational programing or having the school groups coming in.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yup, all of that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: And it was actually at the Joslyn—you know I had been for most of my career in the states, I had been a curator at contemporary museums, where the audience was heavily self-selected. And it was until I got to the Joslyn and was involved in an ongoing way, with docent training, that I personally got the first glimmer of the gulf that separates the non-specialist visitor, in among those are people that want to be docents, from the art. And it took me a few years to figure it out, from my point of few, but that was, Joslyn was very important to me in that sense. In beginning to think that we really need to make much more of an effort to engage the general public with works of art because—I would never have gone as far then to say that art history is actually the problem, but that's really what it comes down to. That we were using an intellectual specialist framework that was established 100 years earlier, and what we were trying to do is to provide a glossary—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right

GRAHAM BEAL: —for the non-specialist to, explaining what baroque meant, you know. But by the time you got half way into a sentence of defining baroque, most people have tuned out. That, you know that was the beginning of that journey for me.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So how does one make ideas more accessible without dumbing them down? I mean you could say that baroque is—baroque, as we call it, is you know counter reformation, exuberant, catholic, you know, big energy, you know, how could you explain it to somebody.

GRAHAM BEAL: As it happens at the DIA, we've managed to install the 17th and 18th century galleries without using the word baroque once—baroque once. You do it by explaining the fact that [Peter Paul] Rubens didn't say "I'm a baroque, baroque painter". Rubens was about love and lust and God and passion and taste for life—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right

GRAHAM BEAL: And that's the vehicle that you use and jumping way ahead here, its, because my particular journey culminated with the DIA, it's: what is the human purpose for this object? Somebody needed it for some purpose, you get back to that human need, rather than a story that talks about developing tastes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So it's a Lord [Kenneth] Clark versus John Berger, sort of. Right, sort of —we all remember, we all grew up with—

GRAHAM BEAL: I don't know; I like both of them.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Lord Clark droning on and sort of telling us what we're supposed to like—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Berger, who did sort of

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —a reposte to that, and somewhere in the middle, so maybe you don't have to choose between one or the other you're going to get some, you know you'll attract some people with one, and you'll alienate others with that yet—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and then you have—I mean as aside, what was your opinion of the Barnes Foundation, the old Barnes Foundation? Because there was a case of a collector, he actually kicked Lord Clark out of the building.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well yeah, there was a list of people who were not allowed in.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: To me Barnes optimizes about as wrong headed as you can be.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: No disagreement.

GRAHAM BEAL: The idea that anybody can lock up great works of art within a carapace of their own ego is deeply repugnant. And I think that, like the Beit family left works of art to the National Gallery of London. I remember us going to the National Gallery, walking through and coming of this room where, this little room, relatively little room, with a mirror in it and few another thing that seemed to have nothing to do with the rest of the museum. And the Beit family, quite right—good for them, they said we'll give these to the nation but for 50 years we want them exhibited separately as the Beit gift. But at the end of 50 years they took off those shackles and those works of art migrated, went back to their old friends who they can talk to one another, and Barnes did exactly the opposite. And you know he had this notion that he was doing it for the common man and all this kind of nonsense. And I love the fact that citizens of Merion fought him like hell, putting restrictions on parking and everything—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right

GRAHAM BEAL: —so that as few people could go there as possible. And then when the world said okay, we'll move it where people, they said you can't—you know the whole episode to me is a caricature of misguided good intentions around the snobbery of art.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well there – there is a difficult environment there, because as you know Philadelphia has been characterized as snobs and slobs, you know that's what locals—welcome to the city of brotherly love, the city of snobs and slobs. And there was always a kind of tension between sort of the Main Line, Elite and the Rittenhouse Square Elite and the museum which was—which because of this conduct lost a number of very important collections, like Widener, like [Lessing] Rosenwald for reasons that we don't need to put on this narrative. But Barnes was one of the only ones who actually sort of—I guess people like the fact that he was at odds—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —with the 400, the social register types—and astonishingly that culture still exists among some people in Philadelphia, it's sort of laughed at—

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But, it's sort of their identity, the Merion Cricket Club, whatever.

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh I remember at the Courtauld where I became good friends with Americans, American students, one in particular individual who's a prominent scholar now, I remember another American woman, an American that she was absolutely classic Philadelphia, that you couldn't mistake. My friend who was talking was actually from Massachusetts, and Wellesley, but, Philadelphia, I had no idea what she was talking about.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The struggle to get rid of that Delaware Valley accent is a part from that. But yeah no it's a hide-bound place—it's gotten better, it's much more inclusive now than it was.

GRAHAM BEAL: Just put this on the record for whoever, when I was working for Robert Sainsbury who as mentioned was a sweet lovely man in many, many ways, and I mentioned Barnes and Bob sort of looked off into the distance and he obviously weighed what he was about to say and he just said "possibly the most unpleasant man I ever met."

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, that I've heard that also. But then I've also heard that some people adored him.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yup.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So he's one of these—you know there's a lot of personal spite and infighting and giving all of that property to the Catholic church and to that university adjoining his property—

GRAHAM BEAL: Lincoln

JAMES MCELHINNEY: St. Joseph's [University]—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh okay

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and then Lincoln College, and his personal struggles with [Walter] Annenberg and so forth. It's just, you know, the pettiness is just astonishing but now, I think its curious, because its unshackled in a way, there's no longer this sort of obligatory curriculum you have to consume in order to enjoy the work, but it still exists as his collection —

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —forever and ever. So what kinds of evolution in terms of museum education have you seen over the years? Because as the museum morphs from either a sort of temple of high culture to a kind of teaching, you know, the V&A lets say, across the pond, the V&A versus The MET.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, I think what we are still seeing, but really is the migration of the education department from the sometimes literal, but philosophical basement of the art museum, integrating into its real public face. It's very different museum to museum but I was trained that the curator installed the exhibition according to good curatorial principals, and when that was all done, then the education department was invited in to come and learn about the installation and then interpret it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: And then—that has changed dramatically, the integration of the education department into the planning of an installation. The beginning of the planning. Varies from place to place. Its much more—much harder work, you get lots of conflicts, the writing labels remains a battleground of strangely, bloody battleground in many places—

James: Appropriately known as "tombstones."

GRAHAM BEAL: —well, yeah. But I think the notion that the educators are part of the development of programs, what were traditionally curatorial fiefdoms, is one of the big changes. It's happened at different degrees and different places. I'm forgetting his name, but a curator of The MET came to give a lecture here at the DIA a couple of years ago and you know the hide-bound MET as it's seen with all its incredible territories. Here was a curator who was actually dealing with fundamental issues, for the general public and dealing in terms of the general public. So I think that's one—that is definitely one of the big changes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Do you think that's a positive thing? Does that give the curator a new ally in a way in kind of resisting the arbitrary will of the 'your name here' patrons?

GRAHAM BEAL: I'm—you know, curators—you know, are passionate about, they should be, about their field and, but have trained to be very possessive and territorial in many, many ways. It always struck me starting when I worked at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, when I first started trying to do some different things, the curators who really did care about their public and the relationship of their art to the public, welcomed the engagement of individuals who could broaden the appeal of their subject matter. Less secure curators or curators from different backgrounds resisted and some of them still—and that's going on now.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: We were talking yesterday about how half a century ago, the paradigm for artistic conduct was still sort of a heroic, ego driven, powerhouse of creative genius and how, you were talking about Bill Wiley and how he was so open to collaboration and including people in his process and so forth which is much more, I think, the character of our time now. If you think about just even how—a complete aside again, how offices are organized—if you take a look at an office building complex, an office complex, a corporate office in the 1960s, 70s they're all individual cubicles with doors and barriers everywhere, and now offices are back to what they were in the 1920s, 30s which are these open planned shared workspace, I imagine you've got these here.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yup

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Detroit, there's an outfit called We Work, I don't know, they have a lot of clever names, but they're just sort of open plan where you can show up, plug in a laptop, or you can hire a conference room, or you could do like whatever in a kind of communal space with coffees and counters. So that also seems to indicate a much more collaborative spirit of our time, you think?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah I think so. I mean, you know, I was—remember talking recently to a fellow director and he was actually asking my advice, and I made the comment that one of the things that I'd learned was that they—he was asking me about my management structure and why I had appeared to have a kind of inner council as well as the senior management structure—I basically said well, you know, I make the final decisions, but I believe that a decision—I've learned that a decision made alone is probably a bad one. And it was like, what? You know it just, yeah you make—you're the director—you make the decision, but make sure you've checked with you know—like Philip the 2nd, the Spanish king, had two advisors who hated one another, so he could rely—if one adopted one position, he could rely upon the other one to oppose it as forcefully and as articulately as possible so he'd get the full range of the arguments and then he would, could make his decision, so the story goes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well he got some bad advice about—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —about you know the weather in la Manche [English Channel] didn't he —

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, that's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —So neither of them were meteorologically gifted.

GRAHAM BEAL: In the end I think he relied upon someone upstairs and—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well yes, that's, well that's for another discussion I guess, but. So to sum up in a way, you have seen the museum, the sort of two competing paradigms if you want to accept that fact there's sort of, a temple of culture and then a community-learning center, which is elevating everyone with a knowledge and appreciation of art and craft. You know carpenter becomes a better carpenter, the pastry chef becomes a better pastry chef, because they admire values embodied by these works of art versus you know the private clubs of privileged elites. If you look at museums today, you've got, like you said, you've got both, because a lot of the departments for instance, in a number of the museum in which I'm aware of, we will not have to name any names, rely heavily upon the largess of private patrons—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —with their own personal agendas to drive, you know, programing towards certain kinds of exhibitions, certain kinds of artwork.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, I mean I think there are—one of the big divides, in my mind, is the—between the museum that is essentially a tourist attraction, the city that is a tourist attraction—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: —you can name them on one hand and most of the art museums in this country who belong to their community. And the obvious candidates, you know, Boston, New York, and Washington. These institutions don't have to worry that much about what they mean to the community because they have 5 million people on the Mall or on 5th Avenue.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right

GRAHAM BEAL: But, it used to be, when I was first in the profession it was like, okay how are we going to deal with this problem, well how would The MET handle it? Well we don't think that way anymore, and you know, Phillipe de Montebello has made himself into very impressive spokesperson, but he was running one of the least typical art museums in the U.S. Whereas, you get to Chicago and LA and you get a bit of a blend there. But for most museums, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Detroit, Minneapolis, it's what do you mean to your community? And you've got to figure that out. I like your—the polarity of what you're saying, but, it's really is—we learned at the DIA that when did some pretty serious investigations with funding from Daimler Chrysler about archetypical behavior, we learned that the same woman for example, who said at the beginning of the conversation, several conversations—that she felt uncomfortable going into the DIA, was the same person who when it was suggested that she wanted it to be more like the Somerset mall, no she did not want it to be like going to the mall. It was a special occasion, she just wanted to feel comfortable in what she believed—had been taught to believe was a special museum. So it's extending that sense of ownership, and how you do that is up to you.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So it goes beyond just the domain of art museums perhaps. The former director of the Brooklyn museum, we mentioned yesterday—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yup

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —made a comment to me in an interview I collected from him a year ago, that his observation was that over the last 20 years, art museums have increasingly have become to pattern themselves after science museums. You know which of course everyone one of them needs to have a dinosaur and everyone heeds to have a planetarium and this. And there with the interpretation of science which is also an intimidating realm to a lot of people—or two things people will say with no shame, I can't draw a straight line and I don't understand math, with no shame people will say this. So an art museum or a science museum have a similar problem, in that what they're trying to interpret is something that's intimidating to an audience with a middling education, or with average intellectual powers and how do you make it accessible. So you look at the Washington Mall Air and Space

Museum perhaps being a breakthrough—S. Dylan Ripley opens that back in the—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yup.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —60's early 70's and you know he was unlikely because he's an ornithologist—but then he wrote that little slim thing *The Sacred Grove*, I don't know if you've read it.

GRAHAM BEAL: No I haven't.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But you know talking about again, the problem of sort of blending the academy with the Agra and the Acropolis, sort of trying to find somewhere in between that does both and can include everyone, and so the Air and Space Museum becomes a model and the natural history museums become a model. And [Arnold] Lehman suggested that perhaps art museums are behaving more and more like science museums. So in your experience as a director were there like lunches between you and the head of the history museum or the science museum or did you have any kind of interaction—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —with people around the country about these things?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, I mean as I said earlier, in each of the cities that I became director there was a group, to some degree formalized, of cultural leaders getting together regularly and then from that came the more individual lunches and personal relationships in a way that I think—and I have no proof of this at all, but I just don't think when I go back to my conversation with Martin Friedman about me spending too much time at the Minneapolis Institute and there wasn't that kind of sense before. And I think—I remember talking about the kind of things that we were planning on doing at the DIA to an NEH evaluator and being told, well, history museums have been doing this for years. Well that may be the case but you know it comes down to what stories do you want to tell.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right

GRAHAM BEAL: And I believe that whenever—whoever you are, when someone stands in front of work and confronts a work of art for the first time, the basic question is, "What does this have to do with me?" And you or I, sophisticated understandings, as I said yesterday, high level of comfort, but most people are looking at this thing rather warily. And so what do you do to open these world—open it up to them, to demonstrate, that yes it may look weird, but it was actually a soup tureen it was actually used to serve soup to people in, kind of thing.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Or there's a piece in the museum that's on exhibit, south Italian/Greek fish plate that's basically just a platter for fish, you know with a little hollow in the middle you put your sauce there and take your fish and dip it, but perfectly a utilitarian object that because of its antiquity and charm, a decorative idea, is in a place of honor where it would have been just sort of in the back of a restaurant or something.

GRAHAM BEAL: In a kitchen. [Laughs].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: A kitchen somewhere, 2,000—2,300 years ago. So, what were, would you say, apart from the building, were your major achievements at Joslyn?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, I tell myself, evidenced by the fact that we didn't have a blockbuster exhibition and we had record attendance, that I made it a—that it became a place that people wanted to go because there would be something going on, and that really is—was my ambition that it was, "Let's go to the Joslyn," you know, not because of this, but "let's see what's happening at the Joslyn."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, the museum—yeah, I do remember that there was a time—I can remember as a kid going to, you know, the Philadelphia Museum, and there would be no one in the galleries.

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It'd be the same work on the wall, and it was like going to a, you know, in a way, a graveyard. You think of a tombstone label as being, you know—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —the slang expression—it'd be like going to see, you know, Uncle Pat or whatever.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Leave a—you know, pay your respects, as opposed to being an event center. So, the museums more and more had to become event centers and—in order to attract, in order to be relevant to a community, do you think?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, yes, I—the—one of the things that is—has been published, but Edsel Ford, one of the driving forces behind the—behind the Diego Rivera mural and—was that the DIA opened in 1927, and by the early '30s, before the real onset of the Depression, no one was going anymore. They'd gone down. There'd been a few times, you know. It was tremendously successful, and people—as you just said, they saw exactly the same things, same place, and the galleries were empty.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you had to have some place for people to get a coffee or sandwich or see a film or—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —hear a concert or a lecture or something like this.

GRAHAM BEAL: And the DIA actually is the oldest ongoing film program of any art museum in the country—started in 1927.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, that's bragging rights.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: When did you leave the Joslyn?

GRAHAM BEAL: 1996.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And spent a few years in LA?

GRAHAM BEAL: In LA, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you were there for three years, and what inspired that move?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, by the end of—we were ready to leave Omaha, and I interviewed at LA after the Michael Shapiro disaster, and I remember thinking—and coming back and telling my wife, who really wanted to leave Omaha, that I wasn't sure that I could handle LA, that the situation was very, very complicated and didn't—looked like it might be not a happy way to spend my time, and the trustees obviously came to the same conclusions. They interviewed a number of people as well as me, and they decided that—to ask the head—the executive vice president of UCLA, Andrea Rich—very powerful, very competent woman—if she would come and run the museum as a paid president. She did—she agreed, and then she looked for a director, and I decided that it was something that I wanted to try. So I went out there as executive vice president, and the lines were drawn that she would handle the board and the politics and the business of the museum and I would essentially be in charge of the—of the art and the programs.

I love LA, always have. I was very happy to move there, and there were a lot—a huge number of problems at the institution. The staff—the staff structure was a mess. I mean, you have this at all all—many older museum, but I thought of the curatorial staff as a kind of loose confederation of warring nations—you know, many highly internationally recognized individuals. The board was used to running the museum.

Under the old system, the chairman of the board in the bylaws was the chief executive officer, not the—not the director, and so there were—there were lots of historical issues of—with collectors. There was the Price collection in the Japanese pavilion. Price had reached the point where he had filed suit, stopped the museum from showing the works of art that he had given to be shown in the—in his Price pavilion. There was Arthur Gilbert, whose collection was on view with his famous snuffboxes of Catherine the Great and Frederick the

Great. There were—there were big issues.

And for the first couple of years—and there was the whole issue of board governance. Who ran the—who was the CEO? Andrea had been hired, and her contract said that she was the CEO, and at the same time, the bylaws said that the president of—the chairman of the board was the CEO. And so over two years, we sorted out these two—these problems, and it—despite what people were saying in the press, it was a—I think it was a successful partnership.

But when we solved the problems—when we had the staff reorganized and we had the budget balanced, when we had big exhibitions coming to town, like the Picassos from MoMA, *Van Gogh's Van Goghs*, from the Van Gogh Museum, Impressionism, big exhibitions that were drawing people and that were helping make the museum vibrant again, and was bringing in—the museum cleared over $10 million on the Van Gogh exhibition, cash in, cash out—we were left—we used—we were able to use that $10 million to do a lot of capital expenditures that didn't involve having to ask the board.

So, you know, we—a lot happened, but when the—when the two years was up, there wasn't really a need for this duo of people, and it—the relationship between Andrea and me began to be strained. I'm sure, were she alive today, she could tell you some of the things she didn't like that I did, and I don't need to go into the petty details of some of the things that she did, but she didn't stick to the agreement that I would have the final say on artistic issues, and so—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you were being micromanaged by—

GRAHAM BEAL: Not quite micromanaged, but people had learned that if they didn't like my decision, they might get a hearing from Andrea.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, she would override—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —you on certain issues.

GRAHAM BEAL: So, I started looking around, and—but it was—you know, I—and at the same time, with all of—with this freedom, we were able to—do—reinstall lots of the—we reinstalled the American collections. We—the obituaries tell a completely different story, but we asked Gilbert to take his collection away, which he did not want to do, and we really cleaned up the place. And I got—was instrumental in getting a major Korean collection. I got a major Mexican collection, established a new center for Latin American art, and laid the grounds for acquiring a major Islamic collection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Interesting, because those are—you think about Pacific Rim cultures. You think about south of the border—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —although people south of the border don't have much respect for the border—trans-border issues, and then, of course, there is a—you know, especially in the '90s and late '80s there was a growing, big Iranian population, very affluent Iranian population that—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —centered around the Shahbanu of Iran, I guess, who was—was she in LA for a while? I mean, I know that some of, you know, the family was there—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —the Pahlavi family was there, and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Pahlavi, yeah, I—you know, I had dinner—I had lunch with them.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I met Reza Pahlavi, the son.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: One of the sons killed himself recently. I don't know—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, really? I didn't—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —which one it was.

GRAHAM BEAL: I missed that.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It was just a cocktail party in New York, and there was a pleasant guy with a scotch in his hand and a big pin of Iran on his lapel and a handler—some guy who looked a little bit thuggish—and we had this nice chat. The photographer came over and—posing, all of a sudden his drink was gone.

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.] And then afterwards, we—I—we, you know, introduced each other, and I realized who he was. So, you never know who you're going to meet in the Big Apple at the Lotos Club, but—so it sounds like your time in LA was really kind of busy.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I mean, how did—how did you attract collections if you were only there for such a short period of time? Were you approached, or—

GRAHAM BEAL: We—the case of the Mexican collection—the—Bernard Lewin, his name was—went to the Getty. He was 90 years old, had been a dealer in Mexican art—has a fascinating—it's not for this tape, but a fascinating story of fleeing Germany. He was Jewish—in 1939—last minute—became a successful furniture dealer and then got the art bug and became a dealer in Latin American art, retired, moved to Palm Springs, opened a gallery there. Here he was, 90 years old, desperate to not have this burden anymore, approached the Getty, and Miguel Angel [Corzo], who was the head of the conservation section at the time—I can't remember his name now—he said, "Well, no, the Getty would not be interested in this, but have you tried LACMA?" and Bernard—Bernie said, "Oh, LACMA won't be interested," and Miguel Angel said, "There are different people there now. I think you'll find that's not the case."

And so he came to us, and I then, you know, spent time negotiating with him. He thought he had 2,000 works of art. It turned out that he had 4,000, but 200 of them were extraordinary pieces. He had—he had a couple of thousand of Rufino Tamayo prints. I mean, a stack of the same print, like 50 of the same print.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow.

GRAHAM BEAL: And he wanted—we negotiated that he would get—and his wife, who was a couple of years younger than him—an annuity of $600,000 a year, and for that, the—LACMA would get his whole collection, and that's actually what happened. Among the—these 200 significant works were works by Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and 60 pieces by Rufino Tamayo, and most of those worth millions, and so it was a fantastic deal, you know. And the other two I embarked upon—the Korean collection—again, it was a fact that LACMA had never really tried to engage these people, and the Mexican collection was—the deal was consummated when I was there. The other two were consummated shortly after I left.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How did you hear about the position here in Detroit?

GRAHAM BEAL: I was approach three times by headhunters.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I see, but you must have known that Sam Sachs, who you had known before—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —had been, you know, the director here and had left in '97 or '96—

GRAHAM BEAL: I think it was '96, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —'96 to take, you know, the position at the—at the—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Frick [Collection]—

GRAHAM BEAL: At Frick.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and so according to—according to Sam, he—the position here was open for a while. There was no—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —I guess, an acting—

GRAHAM BEAL: An acting director, yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —director, but there was a—the—you know, the search lasted for a couple of years.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You came in 1999, right?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, what encouraged you, apart from the changes administratively in the cleaning up of the LACMA mess?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, one was the fact that when Sam left, they—the museum—that was a city department—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —but the Founders' Society, the people who were really running the museum and always had been apart from a little episode with Colman Young—was negotiating with the city for an operating agreement, whereby the private wing of the museum would become the Detroit Institute of Arts, Inc., a 501(c)(3). And run the museum for the city, because the city was broke, you know, and major money was still coming from the state, and that agreement was signed in—on—in December 1997. And so by the time that they were on the second round of looking for a director, it was—it was a private institution, and so whoever took the job was not going to be reporting to the mayor, and was not going to be responsible to the city council.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Sachs had told me that his car was a motor pool car—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —that his—that the—that the administrative staff—a lot of them were unqualified people who were just drawn out of the secretarial pool at city hall, and that the guards were likewise people who could have been, you know, raking leaves in a park somewhere or handing out parking tickets, and they were—they were assigned to be museum guards.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, what—when I—as part of the operating agreement, people had to choose whether they wanted to work for the new, private entity or whether they wanted to stay with the city. And, you know, I—because whatever happened in Sam's time is anecdotal —

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, at this point.

GRAHAM BEAL: —to me, but I think it speaks volumes that one curator seriously considered continuing to work for the city in some other capacity. I mean, to me, a—you're a curator because you don't want to do anything else, you know. You—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But—

GRAHAM BEAL: It's your—the reason you live is because you're a curator.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, that's the latent artist in you, I think. That's the latent painter in

you.

GRAHAM BEAL: [Laughs.] But people had to make this decision, and when I came here, I think that many of the entities that you're talking about opted for the city because, ironically with the way that things turned out, the pension stuff was superior. All this kind of stuff, but the people who chose to stay at the DIA to some degree had chosen the DIA over the city. But nevertheless, I still inherited two different staffs that had, to all intents and purposes, different benefits, that had—that had been warring with one another. You know, I mean, Sam was the director, but the—there was the president, who was the head of the Founders' Society—a different person—and he had really control of the purse in a way that Sam didn't, so it was a very, very unhealthy situation at all levels, and that's—that was the—that—you could feel that when I—I mean, I never—I've seen institutional dysfunction—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —at both LACMA and at—and Joslyn and SF MOMA, but it—at the DIA, it was a different magnitude altogether.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Much worse.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, Sam said that when he was the director, his actual title was that the—he was the head of the art department—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, that's correct.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —of the city of Detroit.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's a very peculiar idea—the head of the art department of the city of Detroit.

GRAHAM BEAL: That goes back to the 1919 city charter—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —when the DIA became a city department.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But the Founders' Society, as I understand it, retained control of the endowment.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, because in 1919 when this agreement was made and Ralph Harmon Booth, who was president of the DIA at the time, was more amenable to this arrangement. Some of the history books will talk in terms of a radical change, but it wasn't a radical change. The Arts Commission became the fiduciary body report—chosen by the mayor, and the head of the Arts Commission was guess who? Ralph Booth, previously the president and the chairman of the board, and Dexter Ferry, who had opposed the operating agreement notion in the first place, came up with—fully formed, at a board meeting, that was passed immediately without discussion—came up with the notion of a Founders' Society that would support the museum and would control money that had been given to the Detroit Museum of Art as endowment. Because the city was not an appropriate entity to handle such financial matters, and that's—so, the old school went on running the DIA, even though nominally it was a city department.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: When you came, were you still receiving a state subvention?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes, 25 percent of our annual budget came from the state.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow, so I guess the ratio had changed from—

GRAHAM BEAL: Seventy-five percent—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, from before.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, it dropped from two thirds of your operating budget to one quarter.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, or three quarters to a quarter, so—

GRAHAM BEAL: And the other—the other business-like factor of my coming here was the fact that the new board had started an ambitious fundraising drive that was already doing well, to build an endowment that would mean that we wouldn't need state funding any more long-term and to redo—completely redo the building. So, those were the—that was why it looked to me—wishful thinking—that it was a viable situation. But the real reason, in my mind coming here, was that I had finally got a better idea of what we needed to do to engage the general public with the permanent collection, and I honestly thought, wouldn't it be great to be able to experiment with new ways of engaging the public with a—with a collection that is so great that nobody can accuse us of doing anything from weakness?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: Because that's—when you—Tate Modern when it opened—well, they don't have a good collection. They can't tell the story of modern art, so they have to be thematic. Well, it may sound a little hubristic, but that was—that was what really drew me here. My wife, who did not want to leave Los Angeles—she came here with our son, and we're going—or she walked through the galleries, and she saw the quality of the collection. My son was moaning about leaving Los Angeles, and my wife told me—she said to Julian, "Julian, get used to it." She saw the collection. She's a biologist. She understood what was really driving me.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, what were your tactics for increasing public engagement?

GRAHAM BEAL: It was basically—it was that word "engage." It was how do we stop people in their tracks, stop them kind of gliding—what I call the "museum glide," you know, where the people might slow down a little bit, might even stop, but in 45 minutes, they could do the DIA if they just kept going, and then they could check it off their list, this kind of thing. What needed to be done to stop people, get them to look at a work of art, look back at a work of art, and what was the—what the story? What was the vocabulary? What were the devices that we needed to use?

And I'm tidying this up enormously, but, you know, for years we had been doing these fantastic special exhibitions, which told powerful and compelling stories, and we'd spend three or four, five, 10 years putting together an exhibition that was there for 12 weeks, and in the meantime you have acres of fantastic galleries stuffed full of great art, and you're not doing a thing with them. So, that was basically it. You—and it—simplistically it comes down to using the permanent collection as the—as the sole source for a series of exhibitions that is about human experience, about human needs that relates these objects—what has it got to do with me?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: The human experience, shared human experience.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, you construct a narrative around particular—pieces from the collection?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And—I mean, The Met was doing this, too. They would take like a Bronzino out of their collection, and they would borrow a few pieces—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —from here and there and construct a narrative around this one piece.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, and we were doing that, too.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: We had a little gallery that did that, but, again, it was like it was there for 12

weeks—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —or whatever.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, it was a very—it wasn't expensive. You didn't have to exert a lot of energy in assembling the exhibition or spend a lot of money in, you know, borrowing—

GRAHAM BEAL: Publications.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —yeah, publications or loan fees or shipping or—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —couriers traveling from all over the world, so forth. So, it was an inexpensive way to sort of animate your own collection.

GRAHAM BEAL: So, you know, the philosophy that we used was called the big idea. It's—gosh, I should—Beverly [Terrell –GB] from Chicago—it was her—you know, she was—she came up with this notion of the story—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —the overarching story that has one theme. You know, you don't mess around. You don't include extraneous things. So, you don't do a special exhibition, but to—really, it was giving to the permanent collection the love, care, and attention that you gave to special exhibitions. And creating a framework that wasn't about art history, that was, you know—*Degas: The Dance* is—was a special exhibition, but we—so, I set up teams drawn from across the staff, and they spent 18 months working with the curators to find out—to draw stories out of our permanent collection, and those were the ideas—the big ideas—some small ideas. And so it was about things that the non-specialist staff found interesting, and when we had all—had all of our big ideas, and there were several hundred, we whittled them down.

We then brought in specialists from around the world to critique the ideas because by this time, the world was talking—my world was talking about dumbing down and Disnification. People had heard that we were bringing in groups of the public to assess our ideas. Well, we were actually bringing them in to see how effective we were being in conveying what we wanted to say, but the last thing that I needed would be raw historical mistakes or old-fashioned notions. And so we brought in some serious specialists in all areas, and they spent one or two days—usually two days—critiquing the basic narratives that we were drawing out.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, trying to refresh the interpretation, make it more—

GRAHAM BEAL: Make sure it was current.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —current, more user friendly, more appropriate to the reasons why a person would chose to visit a museum, right? What are they going to find there?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, as I think—I think as you said earlier, people were—are intimidated because they feel like they're walking into some kind of a pedagogical—

GRAHAM BEAL: Test.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —environment, and there will be a quiz, right?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And this doesn't agree with most people's notion of pleasure.

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And so you want it to be pleasant, but at the same time, you don't want to pander to, you know, a child-like appetite for interactions with large rodents—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —or cartoon characters.

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So—and there's a lot of leeway, I mean, to do things. So, what was your most successful exercise in this regard?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, we have a couple of instances. One is, we have this great French 18th century that was left—most of it left by Anna Thompson Dodge, and it had been installed very, very elegantly shortly before I arrived. And because I knew nothing about that area, when I had a few minutes, I used to go into those galleries and sort of learn about one of the main collections under my care. But what I learned most was that anyone who came into those galleries—nine—there were nine of them—spent almost no time in there. They just wandered through, and they might say things like, "Oh, this is pretty, Sheila," or something like that—isn't this—but there was absolutely no engagement. And so the questions that we posed in planning the reinstallation was, why does this object exist, and why is it in the Detroit Institute of Arts?

And if you ask why these objects exist—we put all the 18th century material together, English, German, Italian. It was mainly French, but a lot of English. The answer comes, by and large: These objects were made for a society where most of these consumers were bored out of their heads. They had nothing but time on their hands, so they ritualized the whole day and made everything into an elaborate ceremony. And so we take people through a day in the life of a European aristocrat. Four hours to get dressed, wandering around the garden in the afternoon, maybe going hunting, maybe a picnic, a fête champêtre, something like that, and then at the end we have the objects—the decorative arts objects that most people I now know find as uninteresting as I used to find them.

We have a small table that you can sit down at and press a button, and onto the table is projected a five-minute version of a 14-course meal using the objects that you see—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, interesting.

GRAHAM BEAL: —around—and so, you know, so people see that, yeah, knife and fork, yeah, or food's served, and here comes that tureen. Here's that weird lazy Susan that's up—you know, that kind of thing. So, the other one—the other example that I like is the 18th—17th—mainly 18th century Italian art. If you ask why those objects exist, they exist because they were made for—again, very wealthy—but they were made for tourists. They're souvenirs.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The grand tour.

GRAHAM BEAL: The grand tour. So, we rearranged the galleries—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —not Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassicism. We have Venice, we have Florence, we have Naples, and we have Rome, and you get the flavor of those—of those cities, and people understand.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: That's up to him—to that Duke, that was postcard that he took back to hang on his wall.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The Canaletto or the Guardi or whatever—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —gives sort of topographical views of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —Venice or wherever. It's interesting because the way art history traditionally was taught was as a kind of Darwinian evolution—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —some kind of—the assent of art, you know, from the Dark Ages to Minimalism, and this is pure nonsense today. Nobody believes it anymore, but—so constructing a narrative based on—well, it's an interesting idea that aristocrats were bored out of their heads so they ritualized everything makes perfect sense.

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, I—you—the diaries—I have the three-volume version of the 20-volume version of the Duke de Saint-Simon, and it's actually—it's almost laugh-out-loud funny sometimes—the squabbles that go on for chapter after chapter about who can take his hat off and who can't, you know, just nothing else to do. [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, there's a lot of dueling and seducing and all of that going on, too —

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —but—horseplay and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —that the—that culture of idleness, which I guess didn't really last very long when you get right down to it because aristocrats of a certain period before were expected also to be warriors.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: At some point, they stopped having to—having to kill each other.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, the—yeah, the—you're right. With the Age of Absolutism, with the settling of—the relative lack of warfare, and of course professional armies in—but yeah, for most of this—the—with the notable exception of the 30 Years' War—

[They laugh.]

— you basically have an aristocracy that was—that was essentially emasculated and forced to go to court.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How did the—how did the Detroit public absorb all of this.

GRAHAM BEAL: It—you know, as I said yesterday, it's—in a way, it's hard for me to talk, but the success was just resounding. It was unbelievable. My—you know, most of my mail that I —through my career that I got as a curator and as a director were complaints. You know, that something went wrong, and so you hear about it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: The emails and the mail that—the comment cards that flooded in were just unbelievable. You know, 15-year-old kid writing to tell me that he and his buddies decided to go—come down to the DIA because they heard something was new, and they came down here, and they didn't want to leave, and they couldn't wait to come back. I mean, you know, sort of choking up thinking about it—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: —but—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, did this reflect also in the revenues from, you know, the restaurant, café, store, so forth? Were these things—were you using the income stream from these other activities, or—

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, by the time—you know, by the time we opened—reopened, which was 19—which was '27[sic], we had been in recession in Detroit for five years, and there was no sign of anything changing. State funding had gone from 25 percent to no percent, and we knew that we were facing an existential crisis, and so one of the things that I was doing even before we opened was beginning—under the instructions of the executive committee—was we were having to raise $15 million a year on top of everything else to keep the museum

open and to replace the funding we'd lost from the state. I was told I had to eliminate that gap—operating gap within five years. Those were the instructions I was given. I knew—it was an impossible task, but I knew that the board was throwing down the gauntlet. Something had to be done. With Annmarie Erickson, chief—who had—by then was effectively chief operating officer. I also had a chief operating officer before, Nettie Seabrooks, African American woman who was the deputy mayor who was very important to me in getting—in making a lot of changes at the DIA before the new DIA opened. So, I—these two women need all the credit. As Martin said about Don Borman, I couldn't have done it without them. Annmarie and I planned the downsizing, and we laid off 20 percent of the staff, and we cut the budget from a proposed $34 million to $24 million. It was big news, obviously, everywhere, and we then also had a special, secret taskforce of the board investigating what needed to be done.

There were three things that we could do. We—was to cut further to bring costs down further, which was of course—the formal challenge was to cut further—to sell art, or go back to the citizens of the tri-county area and do what the zoo did.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The millage.

GRAHAM BEAL: The millage. And for two and a half of the first three meetings—two-hour meetings—I did nothing but fight off a segment of the secret taskforce, who insisted that sooner or later we were going to have to sell art. It was—and the idea that we would go for a tax, which was—of course was my recommendation—was not welcome, but in the end, the notion that that was the only viable thing that we—because we all—I was also able to demonstrate that to take even another $5 million out of the budget reduced to, say, $20 million, closed the museum. We'd be open weekends for a few hours, no education programs, no special exhibitions, you know, just a dead museum.

So, they—in—and then the board endorsed the notion, and we engaged Melman from New York. They told us later that they almost didn't take our money because in 2010 they didn't think you needed a—didn't need a—what are they called? When you go out and ask people's opinions? Didn't need a—not an opinion poll but a—yeah, something like—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, a council to—

GRAHAM BEAL: You didn't need a specialist to tell you whether or not you could raise taxes when we started—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —using them in 2010. But they did take our money, and then they were stunned when the results came back, and the results were as favorable as they could be. Seventy percent in two counties said yes, they would consider passing the tax for the DIA. We also asked the question if they would consider a slightly larger tax if the symphony was included because the politics of this were pretty obvious, and we went from being viable to totally unviable in terms of the tax.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: With the symphony?

GRAHAM BEAL: With the symphony.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Why?

GRAHAM BEAL: Because it was—as the focus groups that we observed—when they—when they asked who goes to the DIA—this was the new DIA. Who goes to the DIA? The answer was, "Oh, everybody goes to the DIA," and when the next question was, "Who goes to the symphony?"—rich people go to the symphony.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, well, maybe was there—was there every any talk of opening up an annex at Red Wings' Stadium or something? The—

GRAHAM BEAL: The—well, those—there were suggestions like, you know, like that, but we knew—obviously, you know that the—your—the chances of—the percentage supporting is going to go down—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —as you get closer to the—but we had enough—we had the best cushion available to go for it, and in the end the tax passed by 60 percent in one county, 60-plus percent in another, and by 50.5 percent in the third county.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And it's for—what was the sum, $23 million, 10 years—

GRAHAM BEAL: It—we—$23 million for 10 years.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, and how many years have rolled by so far?

GRAHAM BEAL: It expires in 2022.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, that's a considerable amount of time. You've got another half-dozen years—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —to—

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, you know, we had hoped—at the time, we asked for 15 years, and we—it wasn't politically possible, and we said, you know, "We want this"—the—another reason it passed was it wasn't the endgame. We—it passed because people knew about the brutal cuts that we'd made. It was clear we'd done everything that we could within our control. It also passed because we asked for this time—this money to give us time to build an endowment so that we would never need this kind of tax support again. And that was always going to be a challenge, but it was really made extremely unlikely when the city declared bankruptcy and we lost two years of fundraising fighting the bankruptcy battle because nobody was going to commit serious money to the DIA—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Until it was clear—

GRAHAM BEAL: —until that—yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —what the outcome would be. My God, so God forbid—the year is 2016 a lot of people are predicting a big bump in the economy this fall, so that would not have any effect upon, you know, the millage or how it works. That would continue in spite of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —any hiccoughs in the economy or train wrecks or like whatever it is—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, that's good. That's good. I guess it's hard to imagine what it must have been like with your hand on the rudder of this—or your hand on the tiller of this institution dealing with the bankruptcy of a major city in this country. I mean, we didn't really talk about that, and I don't know if that's really anything—it's been so well-covered by the media, but there was a loss of confidence by donors that they weren't going to donate—they weren't going to make the commitment to an institution that might not exist.

GRAHAM BEAL: Right, because, you know, one of the most unpleasant meetings of my career was on May 16, 2013, with the henchmen of the—of the general manager. Never had a meaningful meeting with the—with the general manager himself, Kevyn Orr. When these individuals pressed us to make a commitment of several hundred million dollars over a number of years to the city, and although nothing was spelled out in this particular conversation, the implication was, you know, what can you do for the city, and if you can do enough, we can make you free of the city. But when it became—and I was there with my chairman and with Gene Gargaro and with the chief lawyer, Alan Schwartz, so I didn't—I mean, you know, this is a fiduciary issue. This is not a management issue.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: So, I didn't say a great deal, but because of the recent history of the DIA, it—the focus tended to be on me as the director, and of course that's what the public think. The director is the—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —top guy. But Gene was there patiently explaining that, you know, we've raised all of this money. We're tapped out. One reason that we got that tax was because we're tapped out, and don't they realize that the DIA's going to be bringing in nearly a quarter of a billion dollars to the city of Detroit to keep the museum going free for the city, you know. And it's like they couldn't have cared less about that, and they finally said, "Look"—I remember, he actually said, "I"—their lawyer said, "I hate to say this," and I remember thinking to myself, "No, you don't. Not really."

[They laugh.]

And he said, "But there's nothing to stop the emergency manager from firing you, seizing the museum, and selling whatever he wants of the collection." And again, I didn't say anything. It wasn't really my place to—because the chairman was there, but what I wanted to say was, "Actually, there's a great deal to stop the emergency manager from doing this," and that was never really discussed in the press. The major media outlets—even Mark Stryker, who I admire like I do few journalists of—in his position—stressed the fact that an imminent sale was possible, and that was never really the case. First of all, if the emergency manager cancelled the operating agreement, the tax money ceases. Because the tax—the legislation for the tax is that the tax goes to the Detroit Institute of Arts, Inc., not to the Detroit Institute of Arts, City of Art—City of Detroit Art Department.

So, cancelling the operating agreement was synonymous with closing the museum, and then he—then, he's going to have to sell the art, and even though by then, they had—for political reasons—I don't know this then. We never had these discussion—they had seized upon the fact that there were about 2,500 works of art that had the credit line City of Detroit purchase. They had that part of the collection evaluated, and it happened to include things like the Van Gogh and the Tintoretto and the Bruegel, so—and Matisse. They focused on those works of art as being publicly more palatable to sell something that had initially been bought with City of Detroit money, but in the meantime we had been doing our research in the files and discovered that in a number of cases, City of Detroit purchase doesn't actually mean City of Detroit purchase. It more likely meant that Ralph Harmon Booth gave money to a fund called City of Detroit purchase that was then used to buy the Matisse.

So, we were lining up for a lengthy legal battle. In the—and in the meantime, the otherwise very conservative and not my kind of person at all attorney general published a very strong, 22-page opinion that the city of—the museum's collection was held in public trust and could not be sold. And a number of lawyers told me that it was a very, very good paper, very strong paper. One lawyer—the head of a law company—told me, "If you can get that out of bankruptcy court into a probate court, you'll win."

This was characterized in the press as, "Oh, well, many experts have said it is not a strong position." Well, that was what the editors were using to sell papers—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Of course.

GRAHAM BEAL: —so it was day after day, it was city—it was Detroit Museum of Art, Detroit Institute Collection, Detroit collection under threat, under threat, under threat, and it was really much more complicated, and Kevyn Orr knew that, and as our bankruptcy lawyer told me, "In bankruptcy, you're not trying to sue. You're trying to settle," and so there was this whole—and Kevyn Orr was going around saying things like, "I'm only trying to help the DIA because it won't help itself," which was the most infuriating for me that he ever said, as far as I'm concerned. He was desperate that we sell art to save his bacon, and when it became clear that we were not going to be doing that, somehow this grand bargain, to—for which Judge Rhodes is given most credit, and he deserves a lot—materialized. And the whole thing was turned on its head. What we were told it was going to be—it'll be the rich museum against the poor pensioners, and the brilliance of the grand bargain was to turn that around. It became supporting the rich museum through foundation public and private funds to help the pensioners and save the museum.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's interesting, just as a sidebar, that the guards in the museum—the people who were standing around to help or to make sure you are behaving—are unlike any of the guards I've seen in—

GRAHAM BEAL: Really?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, a lot of—well, the docents—the docents were standing around,

and I asked one of them a question. I asked where the Asian art was, and she said, "Oh, you mean the mummies and everything?" I said, "You're new to this job." She said, "Yeah, it's fascinating," you know. I mean, there were the guys in, you know, the uniforms—

GRAHAM BEAL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —with the, you know, the blue—

GRAHAM BEAL: The blue blazers.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, the blue blazer, and then there are just people in street clothes—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —with some kind of badge around their necks.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, there—yeah, there are gallery aides like—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Gallery aides—and it was sort of—I mean, it—that must have a disarming effect on people who are, you know walking into this—if you come up the steps from Woodward, and you see, you know, the Rodin there and, you know, the river gods on either side. You go upstairs into this very formal entrance and into this grand acceuil in this big hallway that goes back to, you know, the Rivera court. It could be—it could be intimidating to somebody who isn't used to that kind of environment, and so having a person in there who is interacting with you in that way is—so, I said, "Oh, it's okay, I'll"—I see there's a lady over in the back of the—of, you know, the courtyard there—the desk. "I'll go ask her."And she ran ahead of me, and she said, "This man wants to know where the Asian art is." She said, "I want to know where it is." [Laughs].

GRAHAM BEAL: Mainly in storage, unfortunately.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, it was so disarming, you know, that I'd imagine that that must have a very positive effect.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, and those are the people that go back to Sam. Those were the people that Sam—the volunteer that was put together. At the time of course, it was the ladies who lunch kind of profile, and it was a mixed message to the world, but it's very much what other museums have come to do, sort of, you know—I mean, that's another little change in my time is that you—in the old days, guards were trained not to interact with the public. You—they were not to be distracted from guarding the art, and that meant that they were not given classes about what the art in the galleries means because you didn't want them talking, you didn't want them able to answer the public's questions because then they weren't doing their job anymore.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Talk about people who are bored out of their skulls. I remember—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, oh, I've done it. I've done it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I remember being in the National Gallery. I guess I was in college or something and—end of the day—and one of the guards just out of the blue said—African American guy—said, "You thinking about stealing something?" And I said, "You thinking about starting a conversation?" I said, "You must be bored out of your skull." He said, "Oh, no. Yeah," and it was—but I think mixing it up seems effective in a way.

So, just—I mean, a question about, you know, as we know, the outcome has been sort of happy ending with a couple of complications, I guess. We can talk about those in a minute, but what—just curiosity, were—did any of the creditors who were pursuing, you know, the city, say, look, you know, "We, you know, want you to pay us, but we don't want you to mess with them. We don't want you to—yeah, we care about how you raise the money to pay us. We don't want you to"—

GRAHAM BEAL: No, they weren't—they didn't care. They wanted their money.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: They just didn't care.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, so it was all in the courts that that—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, you know, and one of the puzzles to me—although maybe it's not such a puzzle is that Judge Rosen[ph], in a sort of town meeting with the economic club after the whole thing was over, said words to the effect, "As justice, if you know you're heading for bankruptcy, you can't suddenly transfer all your assets to your wife or somebody else to avoid"—there's a legal term for getting that stuff.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, sheltering or something like that.

GRAHAM BEAL: Sheltering. So, he doubted that the DIA's collection that had never been listed as a city asset, quantified, was in fact available as an asset. Now, if he had said that at the beginning of the trial, it might have been very, very different.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I would imagine that there are some people in Illinois who would like his kind of jurisprudence. Are you shocked by what's happening there?

GRAHAM BEAL: What, over their pension funds, you mean?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, you—well, pension funds. Also, closing the museum, just locking up the state museum and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, I hadn't followed that.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, so a kind of shocking story. Yeah, it's the—I guess it began with, you know, the [Governor Rod] Blagojevich—or however you say his name.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The guy with a Beatle haircut.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, I think that's right, Blagojevich I think you say it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And as I understand it, the—a number of state resources have been basically shut down or—in order to—

GRAHAM BEAL: To reduce costs?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, in order to reduce costs, and I guess there must not be enough private support. I mean, people assume—and they assumed for a long time, I guess, in the, you know, the wake of FDR and the New Deal and the Great Society and all that through the '60s that, you know, things that were run visibly as public institutions were just—

GRAHAM BEAL: What?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —secure because of that, and—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —in fact they're not at all. In fact, what you're saying is that probably those institutions that are more dependent upon public funding are more exposed than ones that are run privately.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, so that's a major change in the reality—in the economic reality of operating a museum between, let's say, the 1970s and now.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, I mean, jumping countries here, but my first job at Sheffield City Art Galleries—I was a member of a staff of several curators and conservator. The last time I visited Sheffield City Art Galleries, the woman who replaced me as academic assistant to the director was the director, and she was the professional staff of Sheffield City Art Galleries.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The entire staff?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yep, and that's happened to provincial museums all across England. Run by local funds, and of course we've seen the examples of city councils in Britain actually selling art to keep the leisure department going.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, Inland Revenue does take an awfully big chunk out of the paycheck, and I don't—do they—do they have the same kinds of laws? I don't think they have the same kinds of laws of electoral—

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, municipal museums in Britain are generally run by the local governments.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: So, the national tax has nothing to do with that.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: No, I meant that the motivation for people to make charitable—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —contributions because they're already paying so much tax that they would see this as yet a further tax.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, they—you pay it through property tax—the rates, as they're called.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I see.

GRAHAM BEAL: And that's the basic notion of local government is supported by people who own homes—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, so—

GRAHAM BEAL: —or people who own property.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —schools—well, like here, schools tax, road tax—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, but that's paid for by the counties, yeah, so—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, okay.

GRAHAM BEAL: But the biggest thing about—the big difference between Britain is you get no deduction for giving to charities.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's what I—that's right. That's what I meant that here, you can claim a deduction if you want to donate—

GRAHAM BEAL: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —a million dollars to a 501(c)(3). That comes off your taxable income.

GRAHAM BEAL: To a—yeah, up to a certain percentage.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And—yeah, the debt—yeah, and the debt is calculated—-

GRAHAM BEAL: Whereas what's happened in Britain, making the situation worse, is because—under Thatcher, and maybe it would have happened anyway, there was emphasis on doing it the American way, getting corporate sponsorship. Corporate sponsorship in Britain has—doesn't have a philanthropic aspect to it, so it's always been about the promotion of the corporation—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: —and the best place to do that is in London, not Sheffield, not Leicester, you know. So, all of the art activity in the art world has shrunk to happen in London. There's nothing—not much innovative coming out of the old, grand, regional museums—Birmingham, York, Leeds.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What about—Liverpool's got a Tate.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, that was actually taken over by the central government.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, really?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Glasgow—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh, they actually—the Liverpool—the Walker Art Gallery became a national museum because Liverpool could no longer support it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Got you.

GRAHAM BEAL: It's now like the British Museum, like the V&A. It's supported from central government funds.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, the motivation for this kind of philanthropy is probably short term and self-serving.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I did see this in Italy. My wife was involved with curating a show called *America* in Città di Brescia. It was organized by a man you may know named Marco Goldin, who was—

GRAHAM BEAL: Marco Goldin, yeah, I actually—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You know Marco Goldin?

GRAHAM BEAL: I actually had negotiations with him, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Marco Goldin is a very interesting man.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Linea d'Ombra—he was hired—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, Linea d'Ombra, si.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He was hired by the principi di Treviso, the Benetton family, to, as I understand it, to bring art to Treviso to sort of draw some of the tourist action away from Venice, and I was actually there at the time, and, you know, they had an Impressionism show, and, you know, Treviso. Why? I mean, it's a nice little town, but—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, we actually—in the end, we went with another organization. Now, the DIA's Modernist collection is currently in Italy on its way to Japan, and we ended up with Marco's rival because at some point, Marco's deal with Bologna—our collection was going to go to a palazzo in Bologna. The Bolognese political side sort of started to waver, and so it did—but, yeah, I had a nice meeting with Marco in the Danieli in Venice.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well that would be a nice place for a meeting any time.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But what I recall had happened was that the city fathers and the captains of industries in Brescia, which as you know, is a sort of fascist looking town full of gun factories and automobile parts, it's a steel town, it's not known for its art, it decided that it wanted to—didn't like the fact that Bergamo was sort of more cultural.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And they thought they were geographically more logical to be sort of a stepping stone between Verona and Milano. Bergamo, you know. So they wanted to compete with it. So, complete renovation of the Museo Civico and this blockbuster show which was about 500, 400 paintings from colonial to Wyeth, and curated by a number of people, including my wife and other art historians. And this splashy event—

GRAHAM BEAL: For profit?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: For profit and to promote tourism.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: To promote cultural tourism, and of course, it's not far from the, you know, the Via Claudia Augusta and all these other sort of other heritage tourism itineraries. And that goes up from Treviso or wherever it starts I guess, Venice actually, up to Augsburg where it—you can slide over to the Romantische Strasse, and you know, so forth. So all these heritage tourism itineraries are working, I guess, fairly well. But this isn't sustained money.

GRAHAM BEAL: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So these people are not willing to—

GRAHAM BEAL: No, it's—it actually brings up another change that's happened recently when I—when we sent our American collection to Europe, when we took it down for the beginning of the renovations. I was, you know, in a nice way, but by my colleagues—some of my colleagues blamed, and I was criticized for sending art on the road for money. And that was 2001.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Travelling shows, as I understand it, are motivated by some hope of recompense.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, but the idea that you just put a chunk of your collection on the road, to send—know that I did actually write a book about it, but no serious publication—not the old Sherman Lee, scholarly educational effort, and that has changed completely. I mean, no—we and I know other institutions have lent to Marco Goldin because, if you lend me your Cézanne, I'll give you a hundred thousand dollars.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well that *America* show did have a lot of work from the Wadsworth Atheneum.

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: There's a big show that was actually at the Wadsworth Atheneum, and just miraculously rematerialized in Italy for that exhibition. So—

GRAHAM BEAL: And that was one of the things that the emergency managers didn't want to believe. They heard that the Louvre was getting 2 billion dollars for supporting museums in Doha. Why can't the DIA do something like that? That was the notion that somehow we could—they kept talking about monetizing the collection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I'll tell you something after the recording is turned off, that I don't think we need to put on the recording about that. About—well, anyway. But, do you want to talk at all about the tempest in the teapot over your bonus?

GRAHAM BEAL: Well that was—I would say I think that I honestly believe that that was an unscrupulous piece of manipulation. Because, I had been getting a bonus that was published since 2001. Every year in Crain's, it would be published, and my details of my compensation.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And so, this was just—

GRAHAM BEAL: This was seized upon by the conservative newspapers as a way of undermining the next millage effort.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Got you.

GRAHAM BEAL: At my compensation—we demonstrated to the conservative politicians when we went for the millage, that the compensation of everyone at the DIA was below the national medium.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well that's what struck me. When I did the research, I thought to myself, "What's the big deal? This is—these are very modest salaries by national standards."

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And of course, someone, I can't recall the name of the person who said, "Well, you know, that's more than an average Detroit resident makes in a year." But that's not the point. They're not splitting hairs over what the people who play for the Giants or the Red Wings are making.

GRAHAM BEAL: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And that's—one really has to question what's that doing for public salubrity, I mean that's a whole other industry.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, no, it was manufactured for political—when my chairman wrote a letter too, pointing out that in fact that my average annual raise was less than four percent. The combination of delaying my raise and additional bonus had resulted in this one-time jump. They just used his letter to restate all of the misinformation. It was clearly targeted—the editors wouldn't back off. Annemarie called someone, she says, "Don't you realize the damage this is going to do long-term? We're not going to have anything to do with the *Detroit news*." It didn't make any difference. They knew they had their story. They knew it would run and run and run.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, has that caused any kind of public outcry? Are people not going to museums?

GRAHAM BEAL: No. No because—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's just, they just need to sell fish wrappers.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, and what didn't get in to the papers was that all the people who said privately, you know, "You're worth every penny," or "There's nothing wrong with your compensation," you know, people who knew what other directors had been— And then Mark Stryker, when he did a piece on the millage in 2012, actually did a detailed analysis of my compensation as opposed to—and I was, you know like seventeenth on the list of the directors.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: Running one of the top ten museums. So, you know, it was out there, we sent that information, but that wasn't who they were—they—*Detroit News* got what it wanted from that story.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Do you think that kind of mentality is going to continue to present problems to your successor?

GRAHAM BEAL: I think so. I know that Salvador [Salort-Pons] is getting a very fast, intense education into regional politics.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I can imagine.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I had a conversation last night, as I told you, I basically walked from the river up to, you know, the end of Ferry Street.

GRAHAM BEAL: Straight up Woodward?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Straight up Woodward. And it was quite an experience, because like I said, I only passed about half a dozen people on the street. No one is walking. And I must have seemed like some outer space alien who had landed and didn't know where I was, an object of curiosity. But I did stop in a place on the way, near the hotel, and got in a conversation with—ordered a meal and got in a conversation with the server about the light rail. And the light rail, which is, for the sake of you know, the reader of the transcript of this, which will be probably a reality by the time this is actually available, expected to open in the middle of 2017?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And as the server—you know of course, this is a server in a restaurant, but so, you know, however you want to evaluate the merit of that as a demographic sample, said that his understanding was that it was initially intended to go out into the county. It was intended to go farther out into the suburbs, and that there was some kind of plan over the years to expand it further.

GRAHAM BEAL: There were several hopes. Things were floated. One was that it would come

up to 8 Mile.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: The Detroit border. The other one, and the hope still is, that it will go all the way to Pontiac.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But he said that there was opposition from the suburban communities, that they didn't want to provide a free ride to undesirables—

GRAHAM BEAL: To burglars.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —to burglars or, yeah to—

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, there was some of that, but it was basically financial in the end.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But yeah, the mentality though, this sort of—

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh when I was in Omaha, they—there was a proposal to change an old rail-bed into a cycling thing—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: —and people in York, Nebraska were worried that Omaha burglars would get on their bikes, and ride to York, and burgle their house, and then ride back to—so it's the same thing.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: They're—yeah, they're going to get on their three thousand dollar, Italian mountain bikes, or bikes or whatever, and they're going to ride out to rob a Mcmansion somewhere.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And ride back into Omaha with their loot strapped to their back.

GRAHAM BEAL: That's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Pretty ridiculous.

GRAHAM BEAL: [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But there is this kind of mentality. And I was also struck by Detroit being like a series of intense little clusters of housing and commerce, divided by this sort of random, poorly organized spaces that don't really seem to have any particular logic or purpose. They're just sort of huge, empty spaces, and I was taken, and I was shown the old Lions' stadium where they preserved the diamond, but the stadium is gone.

GRAHAM BEAL: Oh.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's just, you know, a baseball field in the middle of the city. But it's a curious environment, and I must say that I am trying to find parallels. We had spoken before about Buffalo, and maybe Houston a little bit, some kind of—it's almost like a disorderly vision of a city.

GRAHAM BEAL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But there are areas, like for instance where the DIA is, that's called the Arts District.

GRAHAM BEAL: It's now called Midtown, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Midtown. Which seems to be sort of a village.

GRAHAM BEAL: 98 percent occupancy.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well that's wonderful. And what is the area? Do you know what the footprint is?

GRAHAM BEAL: It goes from what's called the New Center, you see the big Fisher gothic skyscraper there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

GRAHAM BEAL: Designed by Kahn, to downtown. To—I'm sorry—to the 75 freeway. That's south of the Symphony.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, that's a—that's good. So that's coming back, but the town is reassembling itself along that corridor do you think, mostly?

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah. It's beginning to spread. I mean, I parked at a restaurant a couple of days ago, where I wouldn't have gone there for any purpose when I first moved here.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It was that dangerous in those days.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What about other arts initiatives in town? Like there—I walked past The Museum of Contemporary Art.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, MoCAD. That was an institution that when I moved here, we hoped that we were going to open the DIA Contemporary, and that was, you know, we had a plan, and there was talk of how to fund it. Richard Manoogian had bought the building for us, but when we had to go through our first round of cuts, after the failure of the second general millage, I reluctantly abandoned, and told Richard that I couldn't do it, that the museum couldn't possibly. You know, here we are laying off people and losing funding. And so Richard asked me to come up with a business plan. I came up with two versions of how to run a contemporary museum. The fact that it would not be the DIA meant that it was cheaper, because it meant that they did not have to worry about accreditation issues and those kind of things. Which made it—you know, anything a museum like the DIA touches automatically becomes expensive because you have all of these professional requirements.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GRAHAM BEAL: So absent those, it was much cheaper. And then, Judy Taubman. Bobby Taubman's the eldest son of the now departed A. Alfred Taubman. It became her project, and it came into life, and it's on its third director now, second or third director.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So Taubman was a major donor to the museum or?

GRAHAM BEAL: To the DIA?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes. A major financial donor to the museum.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And, well a lot of his collection was—

GRAHAM BEAL: Sold.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Sold.

GRAHAM BEAL: All of it. His whole collection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: His whole collection was sold, so none of those works—it's all dispersed.

GRAHAM BEAL: It's all dispersed.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So all of his assistance, the assistance the estate gave to the museum, or is it still continuing to give? Is there—

GRAHAM BEAL: Well, not right now, I mean, Alfred left—there is a pledge that Alfred's estate is fulfilling, but the reason—clearly Alfred and his children decided that they wanted a big private foundation for them to run in perpetuity. And I believe that when that decision was made, and when they went to Christie's and Sotheby's, Sotheby's obviously could not let this

one get away. And they made a ridiculous—we know now, they must have known it at the time—real gamble half a billion dollars. And so that—I believe that they meant that if Sotheby's was making that commitment, then they needed every single work of art, right down to the last Caravaggisti painting that was hanging on the walls of the DIA, and there were about 14 of them at the DIA, and so we lost everything.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, Sotheby's did report a loss in the fourth quarter of 2015.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, and they were what? 480 million I think, instead of the 500 that they pledged, so.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What are your fears and hopes for the futures of public museums in this country? I mean, we could speak about private patronage to shift from public support to private patronage. The—you know I think you called it this sort of "ego-patrons", I'd call it the, you know "your-name-here-patrons" versus people who are you know the "mission-based-patrons", people like Alice Walton, Agnes Gund, Patty Cisneros versus Eli Broad, and Koch Brothers, et cetera.

GRAHAM BEAL: I—I'm afraid I sound like a cracked record, but—I believe that by and large—and there are going to be exceptions—but by and large that museums are going to have to, as they've always done, but going to have to justify their existence in their own communities. You know, for many years it was a given that an art museum was a good thing for an—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

GRAHAM BEAL: Just having one was the right thing to—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Eat your vegetables.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yeah, but that's not the case anymore. And you know I hope that my colleagues will be inventive and creative, and will find ways to make these extraordinary objects meaningful.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So you have to be both monuments of culture, temples of learning—

GRAHAM BEAL: And authenticity.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —And authenticity, and extremely nimble.

GRAHAM BEAL: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, that seems like quite a message to deliver.

GRAHAM BEAL: Well. [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Thank—

GRAHAM BEAL: I was just going to say I never thought I would enjoy retirement, because the museum was always so important to me, but I've done—I'm glad that I'm stepping aside.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Somehow, I don't see ritualized idleness in your future.

GRAHAM BEAL: No, I hope not.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Thank you so much.

GRAHAM BEAL: Thank you.

[END OF TRACK 2.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]