Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Clifford Schorer, 2018, June 6-7

Funding for this interview was provided by Barbara Fleischman.

Contact Information
Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington. D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Clifford Schorer on June 6 and 7, 2018. The interview was conducted by Judith Olch Richards for the Archives of American Art and the Center for the History of Collecting in America at the Frick Art Reference Library of The Frick Collection, and took place at the offices of the Archives of American Art in New York, NY.

Clifford Schorer and Judith Olch Richards have reviewed this transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. Researchers should note the timecode in this transcript is approximate. 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

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is Judith Olch Richards interviewing Clifford J. Schorer III, on June 6, 2018, at the Archives of American Art offices in New York City.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Hello.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Hello. Good afternoon. I wanted to start by asking you to say when and where you were born, and to talk about your immediate family, their names, and anyone else who was important to you in your family.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So there are those who were present that were important to me, and there's one figure who was not present who was very important to me. So I was born in 1966 in Rockville Centre, New York. I lived—my youth was split between Brooklyn Heights, Massapequa, Long Island, and Martha's Vineyard, with probably more time on Martha's Vineyard than anywhere else, where my aunt lived—my great-aunt, actually.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was her name?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Dorothy Fitzgerald. And that's the absent member of the family that had a great influence. That was my—Dorothy Fitzgerald's father was my great-grandfather, who was a haberdasher in Fall River, Massachusetts, who actually was quite prominent and made quite a bit of money with a millinery and factory that made hats. And he was an art collector. And by the time I was born, he was deceased and the family was bankrupt. So all of the art that he did have was gone. But we have some legacy of where certain pieces went, and I was able to track some pieces down later in life.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And actually go to the apartments where they were.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Wow. Let's get—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, in one case they were actually in the same apartment where the family had sold them from years before.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, let's remember to get back to that.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So coming back to your—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —family. So my mother and father divorced when I was very young. The divorce began when I was four. I think it ended when I was 11. It was a very protracted process. [00:02:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And their names?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Gatia. Gatia Schorer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Can you spell that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: G-A-T-I-A. It's the Dutch, rather than the Japanese. And Cliff, my father, is the same name as myself, as is my grandfather. And my maternal grandmother, Ruth, was still living. My maternal grandfather was dead by the time I was born.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what was Ruth's last name?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Ruth Payntar, P-A-Y-N-T-A-R. And on my father's side, both parents were living. My father—my grandfather was Clifford Schorer Sr., and his wife was Mildred. And her maiden name was Mildred Wolfgang. And her father was Wilhelm Wolfgang. And we'll get back to him, too. He was also a collector of some very important merit, but not in the fine art world. He was a very important stamp collector. So he was—and I knew him when he was superannuated to the extreme. I remember he was 90 when he bowled a 300.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And he lived quite a bit after that. I don't know exactly how long, but he lived a long time. He lived until I was 13 years old. And he started me on collecting, actually. Just collecting as a general habit.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mentioned—did you grow up—how long did you live in the city where you were born?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I moved around quite a bit. I lived between New York and Martha's Vineyard. I lived in Massapequa, Long Island, for probably an extended period; I would say from about age seven until about—actually, from about age eight until about 13. Then I went away to boarding schools. And pretty much after 13, I never went back home again.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I went to a boarding school, and then I went to live with my grandparents, who had moved by that point to Virginia. And then I moved to Boston directly. And I've been in Boston ever since.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you have siblings?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I have a brother, a younger brother.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who's named?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Daniel Schorer. I'm very proud of Daniel. He was a television actor, and now he's an attorney in the U.K., so. [00:04:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, in those—you mentioned your great-grandfather and his collection—when you were in grade school, and even in high school, what were your main interests? And did art play any role in that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I was interested in history primarily, if I had my druthers. I think I got out of fourth grade by writing the brief military history of World War II for the entire year, because the teacher couldn't stand me [laughs], so she let me have the year off to write my military history, which I was obsessed with. So, yes, I spent a lot of time with history in general, not art history, and was always interested in history.

And then I would say when I was around—and this tied well into the art world. And the segue to art was clearly—and I see it very clearly now. My great-grandfather, when I was around eight or nine years old, gave me a Hefty trash bag with 80,000 postage stamps in it and said, "Sort these out." My grandfather's collection—my great-grandfather's collection—was in the millions of stamps. And he had, you know, many, many, many layers of very valueless stamps, but didn't have the time to bother with them. You know, bags full of them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you ever buy them in the mail, like kids did? Where you—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —spent five dollars and you get a thousand stamps?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I had access to, you know, a virtual warehouse full of them. A little house in Levittown that was literally bursting with stamps. I mean, it had—I know there were three million sorted stamps. I don't know how many there were that were unsorted. And so he gave me this Hefty bag and he told me to sort it. And I came back in a year, diligently, with the little glassine pouches that he gave me and all sorted. And all, you know, Hungarian and German—it was mostly—his world was primarily German, Austro-Hungarian, and all the occupied territories from the First and Second World War. And then he had a very complete American collection. I mean, very—you know, the Inverted Jennys, the Zeppelin sheet. You know, everything. I remember it was very celebrated. People came and visited to see the collection. [00:06:02]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you talk to him about collecting at all? Like, get a sense of what it meant to him?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. We're German people. We just put our heads down into the envelopes, and start looking at them and sorting them out. And I mean, he didn't speak—I don't think there were too many words

spoken about much. And again, I knew him, you know, to be fair, I knew him from age 80 to age 99-something. So I didn't know him—I didn't know him as a young man. So, I mean, he was—by the latter point of that, his eyesight was failing, and you know, the collecting was something he sat and pretended to do. But I think it was just muscle memory at that point, so.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you get a sense of how he—how he spent his time collecting versus what he did professionally to earn income and how he balanced that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. And actually, it was very similar to my grandfather, which was not his son but his son-in-law. My grandfather, who was a very technical man—very poorly educated, but a very technical man—he could take apart any machine and put it back together. And my great-grandfather, the folklore is—whether true or not, and I tend to believe it—is that he jumped a ship in New York Harbor and swam into Brooklyn, went to a church and got a birth certificate, and became an American. And he—by the time I knew him, he had retired as, I think, the 50- or 60-year chief engineer of Grumman Aerospace, so—for their plants, not for their aircraft manufacturing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's on Long Island?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: On Long Island.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Islip, I think. And so, you know, obviously this is a man with probably a military education in Germany. You know, military—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did he come before World War I?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: My understanding is it's around 1911 and '12, yeah. So he would've been 20 or so around then. [00:08:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So he would've come—he would've come into America then, and didn't speak English because—from what I could tell, his English was a second language—and then became an engineer. And my grandfather, similarly, was not particularly book-learned but was an incredible engineer. I mean, he and I did engineering projects from the age of—age 11, he would give me—

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is on your father's side?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: This was my father's side. He would give me projects to do. When I was 13, we restored a Model T Ford from the—from the, you know, bolts up. And I don't think that a manual was consulted more than once. It was just—my grandfather would look at something and understand intrinsically what it needed to do, and what the tolerances needed to be. So, you know, very technical people, but not, you know—I would say the learning was lacking, but the technical acumen was there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] What kind of high school experience did you have?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I went—I had a pretty bad high school experience. I went to a boarding school in New Hampshire called Kimball Union Academy, that was not in and of itself a bad high school experience. But my desire to live in the middle of nowhere—this was in Meriden, New Hampshire, which was literally the middle of nowhere—with 400 other—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you wanted to live in the middle of nowhere?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, no. I didn't. I mean, my desire to not live there—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —coming from, you know, New York and the Vineyard, and you know, sort of an active life. I ended up there, and I made the deal with the devil, which was if I was first in my class, I could not go back. And I became first in my class so I could not go back. So I didn't go back.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you only spent one year there?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Spent one year there. Came back to public school in Massapequa, Long Island, because that was the most convenient homestead we could use, and failed every class. Got straight Fs in every class for the next year. And then my junior year, after, I think, the second or third day, I quit high school. So when I

turned 15 and a half, I think, I was legally able to leave high school. [00:10:02]

JUDITH RICHARDS: This must've been extremely difficult for your family as well as you.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, there were—I would say—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Given that you were obviously a smart child.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —I was a willful and independent child. So I think that the understanding was there that I was going to do it, so, you know, might as well support him in that decision and then see what happens. My father was absent because he was enjoined from being present. And my mother was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, you were living with your mother?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. My mother was—my mother was a single mother who was living away from the house 90 percent of the time. So I was independent; I mean, I was independent from a very young age. I had businesses I was running to make money. I was––you know, I was very much on my own. And by 13, I thought I had no business in school, which is why that sort of very constricted environment up in New Hampshire was tough for me. So when I came back to New York, basically, I figured out how I could do it. And I got out of school and I moved down to Virginia, where I got a job in computer programming.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean you went down at 15?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. So my grandparents, whom I adored—my grandfather and grandmother—they lived on Long Island—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Fitzgerald?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No, Schorer.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Schorer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sorry.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They lived on Long Island in a town called Freeport. And when Freeport got a little too rough for them, because they were living in a part of town that had gone down quite a bit since they bought in the 1940s—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And they decided to move to, you know, some pastoral landscape down south, not knowing at all what that meant. But they packed up the car and packed up the Model T. I helped them. We all moved them down south.

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is in the '70s?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: This is in '79, '78.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And he drove a Model T?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no. We put it on a trailer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: We packed up everything to go down there. We drove my van, actually. The van that he then gave me. So we drove down there and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was your first car? [00:12:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That was my—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Really?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: My first car was my grandfather's van.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You weren't even 16.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, in Virginia you can get a license at 15. So we went down there—at 13, when he moved down there. Then I went back off to high school. And then I promised myself, I'm going to get out of high school and I'm going to go down to Virginia. So I went down to Virginia, and I got a programming job at Best Products, which was a retailer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you were self-taught?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Self-taught in COBOL and a few other computer languages. I love computer languages. So back then, you know, I did a lot of assembly code, and COBOL, and MDBS. And I must say, I was a little disingenuous with the employer about my age, and that came back to bite me later. It was a good job at Best Products. And the Best family, the family that owned Best Products—

JUDITH RICHARDS: The Lewises [Sydney and Frances].

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —the Lewis family. They were phenomenal art collectors. And old man Lewis and I had a few passing conversations in the hallway of his building. He had that very sort of—he had an idea about using modern architecture in all his buildings. Some of them were total disasters, like the fish tank building in Miami where the fish boiled. You know, things like that. But he was a really interesting and strange man. And I remember having sort of a few passing conversations.

And there was one large mud sculpture of a horse on the floor in the lobby at Best Products. And they had to water it with a watering spray gun. And I remember finding that hysterical, that they would water this mud horse every day with a spray gun. [Laughs.] And I remember having some words with Mr. Lewis about his mud horse. And that was very funny, so. But, yeah, I had a programming job there. It was a good job.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you keep in touch with him over the years?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no. I mean, I was a minion. I was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. But I mean, as you became—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no, no. There were—by the time, I mean, by the time I—the irony of the story is that I then became a bankruptcy liquidator. We'll get into that in a few minutes. I eventually liquidated Best Products. And I went down there to go to my old cube [laughs], and it was still there. Steel Herman Miller partitions from the early '80s were still there. It was amazing. It was amazing. [00:14:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Wow. So, how long—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: We're off track.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So how long did you work there as a programmer?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I worked there—so while I was working there, my father was lobbying hard to get me to go back to school. My grandfather was also lobbying hard, saying, "Go back to school." And I said, "Well, I'm not going back."

JUDITH RICHARDS: Your father was a businessman?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: My father was a businessman. And I said, "I'm not going back to school. I'll go back to college, if they want me. But I'm not going back to school." So my father was encouraged by that, and sort of dragged me on a little field trip to Boston and took me around to the colleges. And you know, we had sort of half-begging, half-boasting meetings where we said, "Yes, we know the boy got all Fs in high school."

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: "We know he dropped out after two and a half years, but you want this guy." You know, and I was trying to do my best to go along with that because I thought it was a ticket to yet another city. And that was really my main goal. [Laughs.] So it—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were tired of Virginia.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I was living in Chesterfield, and I was commuting to Ashland. And every day I would pass through Richmond. I enjoyed Richmond. I used to go to Richmond at night and eat and drink, and you

know, have a good time there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But you know, Chesterfield is a certain type of geo-politic. And Ashland is an even deeper sort of geo-politic. And it wasn't mine. So I wasn't at home there, you know, as a person. I enjoyed my job. I worked very hard on the programs. I mean, I was programming cash registers at that point, so it was very interesting. And most of our manuals were in Japanese, because the cash register manufacturers in those days were mostly Japanese. So it was an interesting thing. We had to get translations and then figure out whether the translations were right, and then write programs for them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, eventually, I was accepted to a few colleges in Boston. I ended up going to Boston University in a program that they created for, shall we say, eccentric-track children. It was called the Professors Program—University Professors Program.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I was in the first year of it. And it was a very independent study.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was there a particular person who was your mentor? [00:16:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, we didn't get that far because they were literally setting it up when I arrived. They asked me what I'd like to study, and I told them I'd like to study financial management and economics. And they basically said, "Well then, audit any course you want." So I audited a few really interesting courses. And one professor in particular became a very close friend. And his son became a future employee, so.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What's the professor's name?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Professor [Ernest] Wiggins. And he's deceased now. And his son, Caleb, is also deceased. But Professor Wiggins was a—he was, I think, the head of Fidelity's either Magellan Fund or Puritan Fund. And he moonlighted teaching financial management at Boston University Metropolitan College, which was their evening school.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I audited it at that—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was your father living in Boston, and that's why he showed you—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —no, my father lived in New York.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why did you focus on Boston for college?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I liked Boston, I felt that it—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —it's a good city. A good city to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you directed that.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. And it was also—it was an attractive city to me because of the 19th-century architecture.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you had developed an interest in architecture?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I always liked authenticity in the architecture. Let's put it that way. I felt authenticity when I saw it. So it wasn't that I had a great knowledge; it's just that I thought Boston was very beautiful. The neighborhoods that I knew.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is this partly an interest in history?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm sure it was all an interest in history. At the core—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And American history?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —American and European. I mean, also I thought Boston was the most European city in America. So that's always—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Had you had a chance to go to Europe by that time?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm trying to think if I'd been to Europe by that age. I think not.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were 18? Traditional age to start college?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no, no. No, I was 15 and a half. Yeah. No, no. So I dropped—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you weren't in Virginia very long?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, no. Three, four months. Yeah. I knew—I knew that Best Products, 18 hours a day in front of the screen, wasn't going to be my long-term plan. [Laughs.] It was a stepping stone. And also, my grandparents wanted me to be a child. And the problem was my upbringing hadn't prepared me to be a child. So, you know, my grandmother was doting on me like a grandmother. And I was just, you know, I was a rebel. And I said, you know, This is— [00:18:02]

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was happening with your brother all these years?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: He stayed with my mother. And you know, I got to know him less and less during that period. And unfortunately, I mean—

JUDITH RICHARDS: He took a more traditional path.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: He took a much more traditional—well, traditional, if anything in my house could be traditional. But we won't go too far there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] Okay.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But anyway, I would say that—I would say that, you know, I was very happy when I arrived in Boston. I think I turned 16 right around—it was in that first year, so that's what I recall.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What year would that be?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: '80; I think I was class of '87 or '88. Let's see. So that would be '83? I would be 16, turning 17 in that year. So, yes, it would be—I would've arrived in '82 in Boston. And then it would've been—'87 would've been the class that I was coming in.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you spent four years there?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I spent—at Boston University? Oh, no. No, no. I lasted six months. And I was doing independent study, but at the same time, I was offered an incredible programming job at Gillette. So I—you know, again, the same thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did they find you?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I had made a resume. And I had learned four or five other programming languages and shown proficiency in them, just because I knew that they'd be useful. And I decided to specialize in database languages, which was quite early for those advanced database languages. So I went to Gillette, and they had—they were looking for a programmer analyst—a senior programmer analyst. And I had the audacity to apply. And they didn't hire me as a senior programmer analyst, but they did hire me as a programmer analyst. And when I saw the numbers—and it was the same little fudge. I never actually mentioned my age.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you were 17 or 18?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I was 16 going on 17, yeah. So I got the job and I went to work there. And only 10 years later did I find out that my father was so furious that I had left school that he had me fired from Gillette by telling them how old I actually was. And said that "If you don't fire him, I'm going to sue you." [Laughs.] He told me—he shared that with me when I was 26, which I had not known. [00:20:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: How long were you at Gillette?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I think about a year. Yeah, about a year.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So that was—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So when I was six—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —'82?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. This would've been—I was 17 when I left. Because I know I started my business in 1983, in March, and that was—I was 17 then. So I had finished all this. The sort of *ante terminus* that I'm sure of is March 11th of 1983, the day I started Bottom Line Exchange Company and filed for my papers. [Laughs.]

So what I had done was I worked for Gillette for a while. My father got me fired. I had no idea why I was fired. So rather than go back to school—I wasn't going back to school—I went and got a programming job at Lifeline Systems, which was a very short, concentrated project. It was supposed to be a project of six months to write a program—an interface program—for the new IBM XT, which was in beta test back then. So I wrote that program in a month. So I got the full pay for six months in one month. And I left and I started the company. And that was March of 1983. I started my new company.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were still living in Boston?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Still living in Boston, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Living on your own?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, living on my own. Yeah, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. Had you started going to museums there? Talking about architecture?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Thinking about your non-business interests?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —I was still—I was still interested in stamps and coins. And I was still trying to buy, you know, what I could buy with a little bit of money in the stamps and coins world. I mean, I was—you know, I had negative $8,000 to my name. So there wasn't any collecting going on at that point. But I was definitely a museum-goer. I was definitely some—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you learn that as a child?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I do remember as a child going to the Met. And that had a profound impact. I remember that. [00:22:01]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, that's––you know, as a six-year-old or something, I remember that. And I'm sure it was with my grandmother. I'm certain it was with Mildred, because she was very involved in all of those things. Like, the Ladies' Club would go, and she would bring me on the bus. You know, the senior ladies from Long Island would go, so. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, I mean, I remember—I remember those events. I especially, of course, remember the Egyptian things. And I remember the Museum of Natural History, which haunted me later as an obsession with paleontology. So, yeah. I mean, certainly the little snippets of it. I wasn't—I didn't have anything approximating a cultural youth. But what I picked up, obviously, had an impact.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And then so the first things you actually collected on your own were stamps and coins?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. However, the first thing I seriously collected as an adult—so, age 17 comes, I start a company, and within six months I'm making money. The first thing I start collecting is Chinese export porcelain, of all things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did that happen?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Because I'm in Beacon Hill, I'm going to the local auctions; I'm going to all the auctions.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're going to the—not stamp and coin auctions, though?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You're going to art auctions?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: There weren't—there weren't—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or arts—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —so, there weren't purpose-specific stamp and coin auctions in Boston, really. I mean, in those days you had stamp and coin clubs, and you would go. And I would go to those. They would have Saturday gatherings where people would set up folding tables. They would lay out their stamps and coins.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Besides your great-grandfather—when you were living in Boston and starting to be interested in these auctions—were there mentors? Were there collectors you were reading about or you met? Other people who you could talk to about becoming—about this passion? This growing passion?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I don't want to slight anybody if they think they played that role in my life, but it was a very solitary pursuit. I can't remember that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you collect books ever?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I had a lot of books. I don't know if—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean rare books.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I don't know if I would say collecting books. I had this library that I carted around with me on my back, so to speak, from little apartment to little apartment. And it was obsessive. It was ridiculous. You know, milk cartons filled with books. But there were rare books in there, but it wasn't a focal collection. It was just books on subjects that interested me. And then if I found older ones, I'd be very excited. [00:24:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So going back to the export porcelain. How did that interest—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So it's a simple fact of plentiful quantities, disparity in quality that I could see and discern, and you could have entry-level objects at $50.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you reading about the subject?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. Just feeling and looking at the objects, and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were there—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —intrinsically—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —people educating you in some way about the field?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —intrinsically knowing the difference between an early 20th-century and a late 18th-century—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Reading auction catalogues?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Of course. So, you know, the local catalogues—I mean, I don't remember whether it was called Skinner in those days, but I think it was Skinner all the way back. Skinner had a published catalogue that had, you know, a paragraph of text on the better objects. So you would—you would certainly read all of those. Would I go to the library and spend time studying Chinese export porcelain? I never thought, frankly, it was a field of complexity enough to warrant even reading about it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And the Museum of Fine Arts?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Of course, I saw their objects. I knew that they had good examples of certain things. But I think—and actually, in those days it was the museum up in Salem, which is the predecessor of the—today's Peabody Essex, that had this kind of marine trade room with a lot—with a lot of things in it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I remember going there. And I remember saying, you know, These are the best Chinese export objects that you can buy, you know, in America, because these were very much American market pieces.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like you had a natural eye.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I, you know, I'll let—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You don't remember?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'll let posterity decide that. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: You don't recall anyone educating you about how to look? [00:26:02]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, I read—when I get involved in something, I read obsessively. So, sure, I read, you know, whatever I could find. But I––you know, I think there was a book out that came out around that time that was local, by Carl Crossman, this sort of auctioneer up in New England. I remember reading his book, just because it was there. But no, I mean, I can't—I didn't think it was a subject—I understood that it was—these were products made for the export market. In their day, they weren't particularly valuable, which is why they're strewn all over Boston. In every house, there are 15 of them. And they—and the span of time goes from, you know, 1720 all the way to 1920.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you—in those early years, did you have a goal? "I want to collect from the beginning, in the early 18th century, to the present; I want—I want this kind of collection or that kind of collection?"

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's interesting. It's that goal that actually, eventually, completely disabused me of stamp and coin collecting because it was impossible. So, you know, in the stamp world, yes. You want to—you want to sort of—you know, you want to have a completely catalogued collection, with every example of, you know, canceled, non-cancelled. You know, this sheet, that sheet, squares. You know, et cetera. And you eventually, as a young person, you come up against the realization that, you know, there's a handful of things that are up in the stratosphere here that we're never going to touch. That are in, you know, the rarefied collectors' hands. And everything else, they don't care about. So they're happy to watch us fight over the garbage. But if something great pops up in our little cabal, it immediately travels up to their level. So, you know, there was that frustration, that you can never have—you know, you can never have an encyclopedic stamp collection because you're always going to be—the lacuna is the same lacuna every other collector is going to have. [00:28:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, that's very frustrating. So, no. In Chinese export, the beauty of it, to me, was there were interesting subjects in the paintings. So, you know, they were generally illustrated.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Hence, the doorway into paintings. There were interesting stories in those paintings. And often, they were strange variations on Chinese stories made for an American market or made for a British market or made for a French market.

And I'm reminded that recently I was traveling around TEFAF [The European Fine Art Fair] with the curator from Antwerp—the chief curator—and we found a Chinese 18th-century Qianlong export plate with a Rubens—a very sort of adulterated Rubens painting on it. And he bought it for the museum. I mean, I pointed it out, and he bought it for the museum, and now it's, you know—it's an extremely interesting thing about how these ideas disseminate. And how the Chinese merchants were trying to sell you back what you wanted to see. And they didn't have a real understanding. They didn't understand what the crucifixion scene was on some of these plates.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So they depict the crucifixion scene as a maypole party. You know, it's extremely interesting. So all of that was interesting, and there was no need there to say, Okay, you know, from the Nanking Cargo-type of plate, there are 15 different floral varieties. You know, that wasn't interesting to me. So it was more about—it was more about the business of the trade of these things. The subjects that they were trying to make that were attractive to the audience. And what was happening in the world at those moments that would allow a ship to come back from the Orient filled with, you know, ballast––plates as ballast.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like it was a—the attraction to you was partly the art and the visual experience, and the business history.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure. Yeah. In that case, yes. Absolutely.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And since your background, in part, was business—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —it would be fascinating to look at that example. [00:30:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. And being a sort of mariner and obsessed with the mariners of, you know, the 19th century. It's fascinating to me to see the roots of sea travel that were established by that point to move these goods around at incredibly low cost. You know, from the slaves of West Africa, to the sugar, to the rum, to the plates, to the spices. You know, it was this incredibly complex—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —as we have today. But today we run it with computers. But in those days, you had—you know, you had little accounting houses in Salem, Massachusetts, running that—you know, running that enterprise.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In those years—so we're talking about your teens and maybe early 20s—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Late teens, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —late teens. Did you ever imagine focusing your entire life on this—on collecting—in every aspect? And not being so much in business? I mean, I know it's an exciting moment; you start a business. You're very involved in it, and you've developed this expertise in computer programming.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. No, I never—I mean, I always—I mean, the problem is I'm a jack-of-all-trades and a master of absolutely nothing. So I love to do a little bit of everything. So I still, to this day—I mean, I'm building two buildings as we speak, and I'm running back and forth doing concrete pours, because I love that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Hands on. [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Hands on. I mean, I'm doing the floors in my new buildings. And you know, I'm—you know, if you ask me to, I'll do the carpentry, the electrical, and the plumbing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You're serving as your own contractor?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I mean—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —these are bigger projects. But, yes, I mean, I'm serving as the general contractor. I'm always the general on my projects. So, yes. I mean, in a way, there is—there is still this desire to be involved in the business, to be building things, to be working on projects.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I don't think I could ever give it up. But art has consumed all of the oxygen in my room. And you know, there's no way I'm ever going to get it back. I mean, I know that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, I know that. And also, art, to me, is the thing that can carry you to the grave, which, you know, the trades that I do, I'm as good as my last project in the trades that I do. [00:32:01]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So while these—we're talking about these early collecting experiences. You're living in Boston.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You've started your own company, Bottom Line Exchange. You're doing various business deals and developing that.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are you meeting other collectors?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm starting to meet people—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Having that expand? That part of your life expand that way?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, I'm meeting people in the auction world because I was a denizen of the auction world, which is sort of—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you find that—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —the natural entrée into it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —because most of the material was only sold at auction? Or you found that going—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —to galleries was more limited?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I would say because in the—in the space I was operating in, which was not a very high-priced space, the delta between, you know, the wholesale and the retail was so large, because, I mean, really, if you went into an antique shop on Beacon Hill—I mean, I did, and I bought a number of things there—but if you went in there, you had to really go there to buy something you really had to have, because the price was 3- to 400—you know, three to four times—3- to 400 percent of what it would be at auction. And they probably bought it the week before, because the trade was very different back then.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, the trade was not quite so transparent. So because I happened to be going to all of these events, I would see the object. And then I would see the object resurface with a new price tag on it. So it was quite easy to understand the—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Some—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —you know, my dollar would go much farther if I was—if I was, shall we say, buying at the root and not the branch.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And most of the people bidding at auction in those days were the wholesalers.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah, retailers.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And they were also—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Retailers.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —they were also a very closed set. They didn't talk, and they weren't friendly. You had to really—they had to see you a lot before they would talk to you. And so, you know, they would see me enough eventually that I would get to know them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I would go visit their shops, and I would—and I knew from the Chinese porcelain days, for example, Polly Latham, who's a Boston Chinese porcelain dealer. She was getting her start around then. And you know, we just spoke the other day. She just, actually, sold one of my earliest acquisitions to one of her collectors because, you know, now I'm not so focused on that.

I had this Dutch East India commemorative bowl, which I bought very early on, which I was very, very pleased with, which she just sold to a collector who wanted a Dutch East India commemorative bowl, which I think is fun because the Dutch connection, of course—the Dutch fueled their money addiction and their art addiction by trading. And this was an example of something that they made to commemorate the 100-year anniversary, probably around 1744 or so, of the VOC [United East India Company] making entrées into China to sell the export goods. So, you know—and the money they made is what made the Rembrandts. [Laughs.] [00:34:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, and everything else in Amsterdam. So, it's an interesting, you know, circle. But I met a few dealers that I still know. I met a few collectors that I still know. But again, my collecting evolved. And in some cases, they still collect in those fields, or more likely, given that it's now 40 years later, many of them are either passed away or quite old now.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Because the people I knew [laughs] when I was 17 were 60. So, you know, it was quite a—it was quite a big disparity in age.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] How long did you continue collecting in that field?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Not long. I mean, it was a field where I think I probably bought 300, 350 pieces total, and over the course of probably three and a half years. And I got to the point where—and again, I'll be—I'll stand corrected on this, because I know a collector in Boston who has a very strong opinion on what I'm about to say—but I ended my venture in Chinese export porcelain to my satisfaction, meaning that I couldn't go any further in that particular collecting area, other than to buy more expensive, singular examples of the same thing. You know, or rarer and rarer things at Sotheby's and Christie's, which I couldn't afford. So I came to that same point, that same impasse, in stamp collecting, where, okay, I have every single U.S. issue, except for these 27. These 27 are unaffordable. I'm done. [Laughs.]

And in the Chinese export world, it wasn't quite that. But it was—I've covered the allegories I'm interested in. I've got some Islamic examples. I've got some French examples. I've got some Portuguese examples. You know, I've managed to find what is sort of seeded in the ground between Washington, D.C., and Boston, and Maine, you know, driving around like crazy every time there's an auction. And there's no further I can go. So the logical leap I made, which in hindsight was a very good one for commercial reasons, was Chinese Imperial. So Chinese domestic production for, you know, a very much more refined clientele, because I had developed— [00:36:02]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Still with porcelain?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Porcelain. I had developed my eye to the extent that I also realized that all the export wares were crude Kraak wares that they were just, you know, flipping onto the boats to get rid of it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And what they kept domestically and what they—what the scholars and, you know, the courtiers had domestically was of a different level.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you had this 300-and-some-piece collection, were you displaying it in your apartment?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I did have—I did have—so, I'm trying to remember how old I was when I bought—I bought a big house that needed a lot of work. I think I was 20 or 21. And I hadn't ever sold anything, so there was no selling going on. It was just—it was this hoarding, boxing, newspapering, closing the box, knowing what's in the box, and moving it over, and getting another box. So when I finally got a big house in Boston—I bought a townhouse and renovated it. It took forever to renovate because I did it all myself, nights and weekends. [Laughs.] [00:38:00]

But when I finally did that, I did start, like—I made, like, display walls of, you know, particular things. And at the end of that exercise—I have some wonderful photos of that house, because it was—I sold that house two years ago—and it was a long process.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, so you owned it for many—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: ––several decades?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. It was a long process of, you know, installing and reinstalling, and eventually it became a show house of 120 Old Master paintings, and you know, all the—it's sort of the progression of my collecting from beginning to end.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you started out displaying these 300? Or some of the 300?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I had probably 65 of them on walls, you know, with these plate holders and, you know, little arrays. It was very much a medallion hang, very old-fashioned. I mean, everyone who came to visit me said, "Welcome to old lady land."

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I was fine with that because, for me, it was aesthetically pleasing. I mean, my rooms were very dark. I liked dark colors. I liked a Victorian palette. I liked heavy curtains. I didn't want sunlight. And my rooms were, you know, burgundy, and you know, very, very deep colors.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you—did you make all those design decisions yourself?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I, well—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And the installation decisions?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —I tried to—I made every installation decision. No question about that. I tried to hire someone who came in, and we had some battle royales over everything. And eventually we agreed to part friends. But yes, I did bring in a professional for a while. And I think I needed more of a therapist than a decorator. But I did bring in a decorator. And I think her contribution to the house was some amazing curtains, which cost me a fortune. [They laugh.] As they tend to do. But, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you moved on after about three and a half years—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —to the Imperial porcelain?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So by the time I was 20, I started collecting, you know, monochrome from the Song period. Some cruder examples of earlier things from Han.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I bought a lot of blue-and-white from Kangxi and Qianlong because that, again, was what was plentiful in the New England homes. And I could buy that at, you know, the auctions. And I could actually get reasonably good examples. And commercially, it was a triumph because, of course, the Chinese were not in the market yet. [00:40:05]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And when they came into the market and destroyed the market—a reason that I left the market for good in about 2007—2006, 2007—when they started to sort of manipulate, you know, the auction market, I stopped buying, but I had accumulated quite a nice collection of Imperial things. Not a lot of pieces, because they were much more expensive. You know, buying those, buying a good, you know, a very, very good Kangxi market period piece was expensive, even then.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So when you moved into that, were there—were there any, again, mentors or sources of inspiration, information about collecting in that field?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: In that area, I started reading a lot more of the sort of first-tier auction catalogues regularly––you know, regularly. I would say by the—I would go to the library and I would read all the Sotheby's and Christie's catalogues, because they had a wealth of information. And then when they referred you to something else that was interesting, I would go look at that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I was definitely—we had a pretty weak art library at the Boston Public Library because it was all behind a key, so you had to apply for a book. And they would bring it to you, and that was incredibly annoying to someone with my—with my type of a brain. I wanted to go to the shelves and just start at one end and find things that interested me. So they wouldn't let me do the—they wouldn't let me look at the stacks. You had to go to the big card catalogues and pick out something. And often—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Could—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —in the fine art world, it wasn't there. You know, that was the biggest problem.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were there collections in other institutions in Boston that you might've—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Eventually I got access to Harvard, and that was great because then I could troll the stacks, which I did for 20 years every night of my life. You know, I'd just––I would just go there. And just, you know, wander around and pull books. [00:42:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you acquire any friends? Fellow collectors in the field?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: In that field, I have them now, and ironically, I didn't have them then. No. I mean, I certainly—I met people. I saw people. I spoke to the auctioneers quite a bit. I spoke to others who came to buy for their trade. And we would often––you know, we would find that in even a five-word conversation we understood what each of our aesthetics was and, you know, how we felt about different things that we were potentially going to bid against each other on. Or not. [Laughs.] So, no. I mean, I would say we—I didn't—I always thought of it as a bit of a battlefield rather than a camaraderie.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, we were in the marketplace.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And these folks were traders.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about relationships with—in those years, with local museum curators?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That would've been a little bit early.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that because you didn't know that they would be able to teach you something? Or you were intimidated about going to the museum?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That's a tough question. I was—I was always—intimidated was not really my MO. I guess—I guess I felt a bit insecure about the fact that I needed their help to learn something. So I've always thought of myself as an autodidact. So if there's something I need to learn, I will learn it, you know, if I have to. And I think that was to my detriment, because certainly their wisdom could've saved me a lot of time. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were there—in that field—because I don't know the field very well—is it difficult to—is it—are there issues of fakes?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Restorations that are hidden? Other kinds of pitfalls that you might—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: All of the above. You know, there's a story that Mao exported more Ming porcelain in the 1950s than the Ming made. So, yes. I mean, there were 20th-century and 19th-century fakes galore, everywhere you look. And there were some of them that were good enough to deceive the best. Or you know, just maybe the one-tenth of one percent could suss it out. [00:44:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But generally speaking, those didn't show up at most of these estate sales. So what we had to focus on was, Were they 20th-century, or 19th-century with apocryphal marks? Not, Were they scientifically designed fakes made to deceive? So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you say "we," you mean you and––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: The audience.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —your fellow collectors?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: The audience who is evaluating, you know, the merit of a Kangxi, you know—you know, a vase or whatever. Any object there that might have a mark. The mark is often apocryphal. It's often—it's often not of the period. And the Chinese think less about that as deceit than we do. [Laughs.] You know, because at the time that's not the way they thought about those things. You know, we say—we say that probably a little tongue in cheek because we know, of course, they would've loved to sell them as archaic objects, even when they weren't.

But I think that after—and this is why I talk about when the Chinese entered the marketplace. When the mainland Chinese entered the marketplace, it was all changed. Then it was scientifically designed fakes made to deceive. It was a kind of seeding operation, where they would send objects all over the United States. And I would see the same objects pop up here and there, and I would know exactly where they came from. And then I would see that they would bid up to a record price, and then the next week you'd see a very similar one—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —in another city. It was—it was basically an operation with an advance guard.

And the advance guard, I remember the night the advance guard came to the first Skinner auction. I'm at a Skinner auction. I've been coming to every Skinner auction for 10 years—oh, more than that, 19 years. All of a sudden, there's 30 mainland Chinese people in the room. And they're outside smoking cigarettes, and they're not talking about art. And they're dressed like people that came off the farm. And I'm thinking, Who are these people? And then I watch them set the record on every single fake in the room. And I said, Oh, this is obvious what's happening. You know, fake labels from Mathias Komor. You know, you name it. Every game was played. And at that moment, I decided this marketplace is basically like a rigged stock exchange. I can't play anymore. [00:46:01]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did Skinner know what was happening?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Of course they knew.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Could anything be done?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I mean, I can say more about that, but I can't say more about that for litigation purposes. But let's just say that there were reactions to what was going on after it happened.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, yes. I mean, there was—there was a bit of knowledge of something's not right here.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In all those years when you were collecting in the field of Chinese porcelain, did you think it was—perhaps you should learn a bit of Chinese since you're so good at computer languages? [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I tried. I'm reasonably good at language, and I tried. But I just didn't have enough practice. So, I mean, you know, I learned to read a tiny bit. And I learned to say the most rudimentary things. But the languages that I really learned and loved were French and the Slavic languages.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, Russian and Bulgarian.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] When you were also collecting that area, did you find the need and actually, in fact, travel to other cities? London? New York? Beyond—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —the auctions and the collectors?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —by the time I was 19, my business was very successful. So I had actually—I was doing something which, in hindsight, was very foolish. I was making a lot of money for three weeks, and I was traveling for three weeks. And then I'd come back and make a lot of money for three weeks [laughs], and then I'd travel for three weeks. So, I think—18, 19, 20, in that area, I spent 26 weeks a year outside the United States. I mean—[00:47:59]

JUDITH RICHARDS: You can be foolish when you're that age.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no. I mean, it was, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Outside of the United States?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I was traveling a lot. So.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Specifically for—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I was living—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —collecting?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I was living—I was in Paris a lot. I was in London less so. I like Paris. I like to go back and forth to Paris. I lived in Montreal off and on. So I would go up to Montreal, live there for a little while, and come back. I'm trying to think where else I—and I traveled all over Eastern Europe during the communist period, so I spent a lot of time in Eastern Europe. I was in Prague. I was in East Germany, Romania, Albania, you know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was the interest in traveling through those countries?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: History. World War II. I mean, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, again.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —it all goes back to the, you know, I remember these places. I remember these place names. You know. I mean, during—I mean, later on, during the Sarajevo conflict, I got on a plane. I went to Thessalonica; I got in a rental car. I drove to the border and I said, "I want to walk over the border and get a train to Bosnia-Herzegovina." And they said, "You're out of your mind." And I said, "I want—just let me in." They said, "If you take the car, you'll be murdered." I said, "I'll leave the car and I'll walk." So I walked across the bridge with the gun towers, and you know. It was—it was, you know, to me it was like—having the Balkans come apart,

the way they had before, was something I wanted to learn about. So, obviously crazy, but something I wanted to learn about.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were any of—so these travels weren't any—weren't specifically about collecting?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, they weren't targeted. They were—they were—I mean, in France, of course. I went from, you know, the Gustave Moreau museum to the—or well, pre-d'Orsay, right? Yeah, pre-that building—to the Louvre, to, you know. I mean, yes, of course. The Louvre, when it was easy to go in and easy to come out.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And easy to walk around, and easy to spend three days there, you know. So, yes, I mean, I'm very, very grateful that I did all of those things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Whenever possible, I would go to a regional museum, too.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you doing all this traveling on your own? Or did you have friends who also had these interests? [00:50:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I would say most of that traveling was on my own.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean, certainly in the war zone [laughs], I suspect you were on your own.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. No, no, no. That was completely alone. I mean—so I had a partner in Montreal. So I would basically—that's why—my base of operations was Montreal. But I would—in France and Europe, I generally—nobody had the money to just go wander around. [Laughs.] So, yeah. It was a solitary thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And lots of it. I mean, I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And in the years—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And everywhere I went, I met people. I mean, I'm very social. So, I mean, I don't necessarily meet art connoisseurs.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But I just meet people and just, you know, wander around with them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In the years—I guess in your late teens, early 20s, when you were collecting in the Chinese field—when you were in any country that had an active market in that area, were you investigating that and thinking, and did you ever make purchases there, beyond Boston?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. So that's where, obviously, you know, this is coming to the end of the period when I thought that it was practical to buy these things. Chinese Imperial you didn't often see, you know, in a Paris shop. So, no. I mean, I didn't specifically go to try to find the dealer who made a market in Chinese in Paris.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or the auction houses?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Or the auction houses, yeah. No. I would go to Hôtel Drouot and spend the entire day, day after day after day. And I would buy all kinds of crazy things. I mean, you know, I bought Byzantine crucifixes, you know, just because, you know, I was there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because they seemed cheap?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. I was there, and it was fun, and it was interesting. And it was an area I didn't know, and you know. So, yes. I mean, not because it was—it was cheap. The reality was, it was cheap. I couldn't sort of spur of the moment go say, Oh, buy this because it's very interesting. [Laughs.] You know? But I did buy things that were interesting. I remember—I remember in those days the things that I brought on Pan Am—oh, my God. The things I brought into the passenger cabin. I brought an entire chair, a French chair, into the passenger cabin. And they let me do it. I mean, there were—it was such a different time. I brought a chandelier back from Vienna. This huge chandelier. It was about— [00:52:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Crystal?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. Metal. Like a Boule chandelier. It was about 200 pounds. And I had to take it into various pieces. And I had to carry the pieces. And they let me bring that on the plane.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you buy a seat for it?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. I packed it up in the overhead. [They laugh.]

I mean, I remember I got it back to Boston, and it was hanging—it's hanging in the photos. You know, I electrified it when I got it home, because it was a gas—it was a gas and candle, so. But anyway, no, I mean, you know, it was the good old days. You could buy things in Europe and sort of do your best to get them home. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Flea markets in Paris. I loved the flea markets in Paris in those days. You know, you'd spend two days there every weekend.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So this was the mid-'80s?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: This was '85, '86-ish, I think. Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And the flea markets then were—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, I bought a—and that's when I started buying paintings. I bought the—I think I bought the first painting I ever bought, an Old Master painting, at one of those flea markets. It was a Saint Sebastian. No, it was a Saint Frances being comforted by the angels.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Just––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And it was just—I thought the frame was incredible. It was a very beautiful, 18th-century French frame on this Italian, Neapolitan, somewhat good 17th-century painting. But I bought it for the frame. So, I mean, I remember—I remember buying that because I thought it would be a good decoration.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that the first—so you said that was the first painting?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That was the first thing that I bought as a painting, yes. But I didn't buy it with much of a focus on the painting itself. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: But timewise, was that the beginning of your starting to explore that area?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I think I've always—you know, coming from stamps, where it's engraved image, going to Chinese porcelain, where I'm focused on the allegorical story or the painting on the plate, you know, the progression is—obviously, I took a little detour in perfection of, sort of the monochrome and celadons of the Ding ware of the Song dynasty. I mean, I—that was a—that's obviously devoid of all— [00:54:01]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —and I come back to that later in my life. Because, actually, I got rid of the Victorian, and I now live in a Gropius house. So, you know, I did that kind of loop aesthetically, where I went from the filigree to the shadow. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: At what point—at what point did you think about putting aside, possibly in storage, or selling that first Chinese porcelain collection? Or maybe even the—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I put aside—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —the Imperial as well?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Putting aside in storage happened organically, because by the time I was three years into my house, I had more than I could use in my house. Fortunately, I had a business that owned a big warehouse. So I actually—as part of my company, I had a 70,000-square-foot warehouse, which grew to be over a million square feet by the time I quit. And so, you know, I always had space. So things would end up in boxes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You just didn't want to think about selling? Or you were philosophically opposed to it?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Think about selling? You know, I never thought of it as a practical way to improve the quality of the collection until recently, like until the last 10 years. And—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You didn't feel encumbered? Just a sense of [laughs]—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, in a way. In a way—in a way, I thought every mistake told some part of the story. And you know, for me, when I go back and look at them later, I can laugh at myself, you know. But, yes, there did come a time when I sold the house, where I said, you know—all the blue-and-white went to Sotheby's. You know. And as I said, I mean, that was a—it was a wise decision to buy Chinese. But, yeah, I mean—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And the Imperial, did you end up selling it? Or maybe donating it, if that was that quality?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I sold—I sold maybe 16 pieces at auction. I'm trying to think. I probably only have maybe 20 pieces left. So of the—of the monochromes, the earlier pieces, I only have maybe 20 pieces left. Of the blue-and-white, and the highly decorated, sort of the Qing period stuff, that's all gone. I sold it all. [00:56:02]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I sold it all. I sold all the export wares. All of that is gone.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And in a way, I felt absolutely no—you know, that was a, you know, the Buddhist gesture of releasing. I just, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. Clear the way for the new.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. It didn't matter to me at all. It was—it was a vestige of youth. I mean, it was something I enjoyed doing, and I would do it again, you know?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: If I found a rational market again and if I found great things, I would be right back to it. You know, I wouldn't stop. So, you know, I think that's why I say it's a hobby you can take to your tomb.

[They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Your tomb. [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Literally, so.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When––as we're getting into the '90s, is that when the involvement with painting started?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, yeah. I mean, I would say—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were still—you were living in the house that you bought—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —that you had worked on?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I needed—I needed to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were traveling a lot in the '80s.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I needed to think about walls. That was one thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I had a lot of walls in this house. And I was—I was really kind of bringing it all to conclusion. But that wasn't what brought me to it. I mean, I think it was a natural evolution. I mean, as a matter of fact—

JUDITH RICHARDS: To painting?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: There was a day when I all of sudden said, you know, I can collect paintings. It is possible to buy decent things. Before that, I'd always assumed that I couldn't. That I was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you ever think about collecting drawings or prints?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Only incidental to paintings. And I still—I still have quite a few drawings that are related to paintings that are interesting to me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Or related to artists that are interesting to me. I could see the entry drug of drawings is one that I probably never would have left, because it's—that's actually a little broader a field. And I—and I—you know, obviously, there's a lot more material. But, and I went right to—I went right to the paintings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] [00:58:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And obviously really didn't—only went back to drawings and prints when, you know, when there was something.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you bought that first painting, did you very quickly continue buying paintings?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I mean, then it was—then it was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And it was—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —I would say by 1990—I bought locally until '94, '95. So in other words —

JUDITH RICHARDS: That would mean three or four years?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Three, four years. I mean, I—well, maybe a little more. Maybe five, six. But that would be locally; like, if an opportunity arose, I would go; I would look; I would buy something at an auction. If I saw something in the shop, I would buy it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: During these years, were you reading in that field then?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. That's where I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, that's the period of time—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Right. So, each—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —you were really developing—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —each moment—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —your expertise?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —each moment that I hit upon an artist's name that I didn't know, I would go off on another tangent. And I decided my aesthetic. My aesthetic was decided very early.

It was Antwerp, right around Rubens's first Antwerp period. It was Naples, [Jusepe de] Ribera, [Luca] Giordano at the—you know, Giordano at the beginning; Ribera towards the—towards the middle. It was, you know, it was Rome. It was [Carlo] Maratti. It was the High Baroque of Rome. I mean, there was a moment in each place in my head where I knew what was happening in those places because of history. And I knew those as pivot points in the history of the world. Antwerp in 1600 is a pivot point in the history of the world, and the art is a 90-, you know, at least a 45-degree turn, with the advent of the Rubens workshop and even his teachers: Maerten de Vos —

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —and, you know, the predecessors. So there's those—there's those kind of, you know, the grime of Naples and the horror that life must've been during the plague of 1650 creates this explosion of these gruesome paintings. You know, they're—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are there—are there any particular scholars that have taken this very broad approach to art history who were important to you? I mean, obviously, this is—this is one approach to art history, where you would take into account— [01:00:01]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —everything that's going on.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I mean, you know, obviously, I love the writing style of Simon Schama. But you know, of course, he's not writing—in my mind, I think of him as a historian rather than an art historian.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And he's a very entertaining historian. So, yeah. I'm not opposed to the popularizers of history. They're—you know, they're interesting folks to read about. And also, I'm obsessed with these pivot moments in time, so the events that lead to unforeseen consequences much later on. I mean, a story I'm obsessed with is the—is the German scientist who invented the nitrate process for fertilizer, because in his hands lies the population explosion of the 20th century. He also made the gas for the Nazis. I mean, it's those kinds of crazy, you know—I mean, you think about it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: There were a billion people in 1900. And there are 7.9 or eight billion people now. He's the responsible party, solely responsible.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean fertilizer?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Solely responsible. Without that, we could not feed these people. Without synthetic fertilizers, it's impossible to feed the human race. So it's, to me, those moments. Like, you know—and the same thing. You know, the Scheldt silts up in Antwerp and ruin comes upon the city. But for those moments of flourishing, when they were a key point, you know, look what they produced.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And then it moves to Amsterdam, you know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were—when you were talking about Amsterdam and Antwerp, I was thinking about the fact that your mother was originally of Dutch—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Payntars are Dutch, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —ancestry. So did that affect your interest at all? Did that kind of—did you ever look back for your family there?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no.

JUDITH RICHARDS: If there are any remnants?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. I mean, my family on my mother's side—again, it's interesting. You know, it's a—it's a story of ruination. And you know, the American catastrophe. So it's more interesting early on in American history because they were here very early. [01:02:02]

[END OF schore18_1of1_sd_track01.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So one branch of the family were the owners of the Deed of Queens, New York, when—back when the Dutch were here. But, but then, you know, many, many years later, basically, it was all dissipated.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: As it is by irresponsible, you know, people—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —managing their affairs.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But anyway, I mean, no—I mean, I knew of the name and the connection, but there's never been any—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You didn't—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: All right.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, there's stronger German roots on my father's side.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Even though they're Americans, through and through. I mean, they're all Americans, but they—there's at least some—I would say a kernel of the character is forged in the German fire.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Of which I can appreciate; I mean, I understand that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: My grandfather and I had a similar language about the world.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the, in the '90s, you were beginning your studying, and you're focused on these key areas of Italian—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —and Northern Baroque.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Again, it's a world of solitude, though; you talk about studying—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm not studying. I'm sort of burrowing a hole in the bottom of a library and shining a flashlight on a book under a cover, so no one knows what I'm––what embarrassments I'm reading about.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Not—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it's not secrecy. It's—why embarrassment?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. It just wasn't—I mean until 1999—when, unfortunately, the auction houses forced me to come out of the closet, that—that's really the only time, you know, when the Christie's and the Sotheby's, when they became so socially engaged with me, and they were trying to drag me out, you know, that they were—they were seeing a younger person buying things at a sale, and they wanted to know who they are, and what they—you know, they're doing market research, and in their market research, they want to drag you to a dinner and plop you next to the ambassador and, you know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Cultivate, yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, and they—you know, in a sense, that's lovely, but that, that's not really me. So I went along with it because, you know, I thought, Okay, I'll get some— [00:01:59]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you start to spend more time in New York, or that's auction?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Spending more time going back and forth, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. I mean, that––and also, you know, when you get––when you go to the Old Master market, if you really want to focus on something, you really can't go to any tertiary auction houses. You have to go to the source. And you know, in those days, there were more sales than there are now. So there were, you know, four or five sales a year.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So now there's really, you know, two sales worth attending. Just because there was more material in the market.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Can you remember key purchases you made in those—what you define as early years? I mean, was there a kind of sense that you have when you look back that there was a certain period of time when you were doing a lot of research and reading?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And not buying a lot, but gaining information and confidence, and then, and then it went–– the volume of activity—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —went up?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. There was––I would say by the early 2000s, it would start to be multiple deals. So, you know, the finances of it drove the whole thing. You know, there was a—I forget who the famous collector was, that says, "I deal to collect." Well, I didn't have that crutch of dealing, so I had to earn money to collect. So there came moments when I would be flush with cash because I did something, you know, reasonably successful, and then I would take all that money and go just sink it faster than, you know––prudently, but I would sink it. I would.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you—were you maintaining a kind of a wish list, so when you came into this—when you had the money, you knew you had your goals?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. There were definitely––it would definitely––I mean, there are still major goals that are unachieved that—you know, there's a whole list, yes, and there are some with highlighting, some without, some that are possible, some that are not.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Some that were—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what were some of the early key purchases, and how did they—why were they goals then and—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —how did they appear? [00:04:06]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So the entry point at that time was sort of the 10 to $25,000 per picture, and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is in the '90s.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. That wasn't quite enough to buy much, but if you bought secondary names, which meant that you needed to know all the secondary names, and if you bought the best quality of those secondary names, you could do okay. You could put together quite an impressive-feeling collection.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you say "secondary names," those are still artists who would be in museum collections? They just would not be the most prominent?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They would be artists that might be in storage and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] Okay.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, I mean they would be on the walls in some collections, and they might not be considered by art historians to be sort of the key figure of the movement, you know. For example, I am a big fan of [Giulio Cesare] Procaccini. And, you know, the best Procaccini, when I was looking back in 2000, was €5 to 6 million. And, you know, when the euro was new. I couldn't afford that. So I started looking at Daniele Crespi. And I saw Daniele Crespi as an artist who is equally competent but died so young that he never really established his name. And at one point I had five Daniele Crespis, because I thought he was, you know––

JUDITH RICHARDS: And his work came to your attention how?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, learning about the Lombard artists, all the Lombard artists, and sort of looking at them and deciding which ones I thought had merit.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Through your—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And again, it's very subjective. I mean, which ones had merit? I mean, who am I? But certainly, it's––there are some artists who, in a combination of craft and conception or conceit, jump off the page at me, and I say, This is an artist I want to own.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And often, those are the ones I cannot afford under any circumstances. You know, obviously, I feel that way about some of the greatest Renaissance masters, but that's just not going to happen. So, you know, you sort of, you pick your way along, and you have to be opportunistic. And fortunately, as I outlined earlier, I can look at an Antwerp picture or—rarely, but sometimes, an Amsterdam picture and an Italian picture, you know, a Naples picture or a Roman picture, so I have maybe three or four opportunities a year where most collectors might have one. So that made it, you know— [00:06:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because how you define a collection and the price point?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, and—but more than that: the artists that interest me and the types of subjects that engage me, they are broader than, I think, most collectors, because most collectors say, "I want one great Dutch or Flemish picture per year. I collect Dutch landscapes. I collect Dutch still lifes; I collect," you know, fill in the blank.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's how you characterize the collectors in your field now? Have they always been—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, that's changed. That is the way they were then, yes. And that was because they could be. And, obviously, that is the sort of the genesis of the great collections that just got given to Boston.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were doing research and you were reading auction catalogues, those are catalogues with the sale prices written in. So part of what you were studying wasn't just the work; it was the market.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: See, I don't want to seem like—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where are the values––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —too much of a philistine, but obviously economics play a role in my thinking when I—let me rephrase it, so that I seem less a charlatan. If I esteem something aesthetically and the marketplace undervalues it in my humble and completely subjective opinion, it is a rare combination of forces because, in general, when I esteem something aesthetically, the marketplace almost universally esteems it financially, too, and as Chris Apostle and I joke, I have a very common eye.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What's his name? [00:08:03]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Chris Apostle from Sotheby's. I have a very common eye, meaning that, you know, obviously, I can go through his catalogues, and I call him up about four lots, and he says, "Yes, you and every other dealer," meaning that, you know, of course, those are the four lots that, you know, that the 12 people that he knows are going to call him about. [Laughs.] So, yes, I mean, obviously there is this interplay between the marketplace and the art historical importance. Sometimes they're inverted, but almost universally they're—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I was thinking of something more basic.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Okay.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Just a sense of knowing what the price should be—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —or what's been bid in the past—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, I see, okay.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —what it sold at so that you don't feel—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You have to rein me in when I go off on tangents.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No, no, no, this is very important—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —what you were talking about—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —but, yes, I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: It was another level—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —no, no, I agree. I agree with you that, obviously, as you come to know—and there's a

downside to that, too. If you come of age at a certain point in the collecting dynamic, and you are presented with the last 12 years of catalogues, and you go through them all, and from that you draw your conclusions about what the marketplace has been, and then you make the investor's fatal error of projecting the future as the same as the past, the problem there is that you say to yourself, Okay, a painting by, you know, fill in the blank, Molenaer, is worth €20,000 for a minor work. And then, you know, you may 10 years later find that Molenaer is worth five, or he's worth 500.

So it is very––yes, you know, you have to put the, you know, the benchmarks of pricing in their histories, but now that I'm in the trade, which is a very different perspective, I have to take those shackles off a bit because I think like an old man, like every old man. "A loaf of bread is more than 29¢?"

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, I mean, "A Molenaer is more than $20,000?" You know. It's the same problem. So, yes, in a way, you have to forget some of that. You have to let that go. You have to think about tastes and the moment of your taste and whether the market is esteeming that taste at a given moment. [00:10:02]

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you started out in this field, did you have a general sense of where you wanted to go? And has that changed over the years? Your perspective is unusually broad, at least it used to be—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —for the field. Has that been changing?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, the stated goal has always been to die with one painting, the best painting I've ever owned.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, so part of it—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I don't mind living in a cardboard box. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —that's––so, and I'm getting there. So that's––you know, the reality is though, that that painting will never come my way, so I have to—to go back to this question, has my philosophy about this changed in the course of it? Of course. I mean, my eye has changed. In some ways, things that I thought were important moments are not as important as they were, because I've seen more examples of the same idea that I thought was such a novel idea. You know, sure, there is an accumulation of thinking, but the goal—my goal sort of long-term—has always been to find better and better and better things. The problem is, I've always had to forget about all of the things in my path until recently.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Because the path was getting very cluttered.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you talked about what's important and what was significant art historically. In other words, you're trying to build a collection that educates you, that is much more important than just the visual experience of it, that gives a sense of art history. [00:12:01]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Cultural history.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. Every picture––

JUDITH RICHARDS: And some collectors might just be focused on the visual experience, knowing the importance artistically, but—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —the visual experience is the key. And it sounds like you had a much broader approach, or deeper approach.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I mean, I think if I limited myself to sort of, you know, the quality of the paint, I think, in a way, that would be unsatisfying to me. I mean, I would certainly still be able to collect, and probably more successfully, because I would be focused like a laser beam on sort of one thing, you know, one idea. As you say, this aesthetic experience or, you know, the cultivation of the eye or a satisfaction of the eye. But for me, it's the

combination of the conception and the craft, so the conception is very important to me; knowing that [Guido] Reni stole his figure from the Apollo Belvedere because it was here when he was there is interesting to me and I––you know, to find that out, if I didn't know it before, either by accident or by some kind person sharing it with me, I'm––you know, it adds a layer to my experience of the art that's different from my aesthetic experience of the art.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] You talked about improving the collection; are you continually culling and, as you buy better examples, selling lesser examples?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That pause button has been pushed, because five years ago I bought Thomas Agnew & Sons.

JUDITH RICHARDS: We'll get to that.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. And so—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Let's say before.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —before that. Yes, before that, I was not actively selling anything, because the problem is, the things that you buy that are your sort of orphan children, you often can't sell them to the workhouse for very much money, so they're not going to produce much in terms of the next purchase. So, no, I didn't look to the collection to fund the next wave of the collection. I did put them in boxes and move them to deep storage. [Laughs.] And— [00:14:03]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because you were continually not only expanding the view, but you were also refining and improving the quality of each example?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: One hopes. I mean, you know, that's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: As your budget is—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You're putting a value judgment on it that I, you know, I'm uncomfortable making entirely myself. Yes, in my subjective opinion, I'm doing those things. I'm improving the collection. I'm also doing other things. I'm also sending—wherever there is some scholarly interest, I'm sending them out to museums, so that somebody puts a new mind on them, puts a new eyeball on them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, I mean, I love lending things, and I have a lot of things on loan, and I would like to do more of that. But that's very time-consuming, because you have to be your own registrar. But the idea of putting them out there so that other scholars may see these little connections that I sit and ponder over in my living room—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —that's, you know—and not even scholars, just, you know, let people enjoy them for what they are.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. It sounds like the word "scholarly" is very key, that your approach is scholarly. Have you ever thought of writing about the works?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm not that intelligent.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you speak to art historians who have––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I love—that's something I did start doing in 2008.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And that was talking to art historians, which is something––

JUDITH RICHARDS: But not before that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, really not. No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you read art magazines? I know you read books.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I mean, did I read articles?

JUDITH RICHARDS: There isn't a lot of coverage of Italians—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I read articles in the *Burlington*, I read articles in, you know, *Prospettiva*, you know, yes. I mean, but I didn't, you know, I wasn't trying to make myself a gadfly in the market, or even a gadfly in the curatorial world. Now, that's where the museum world and my personal life intersected, because of the Worcester Art Museum. [00:16:01]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Before we get to that—so that's 2008, about? Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I'm thinking 16 years. So.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, 2001, '02.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, when I got involved—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —with the museum.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Probably there's a few things that happened before that, we haven't touched on.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Maybe, maybe, I don't know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're collecting Italian––roughly Italian Baroque; that's around 1600 to 17—how do you define it? Do you have a year that you—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I kind of had a hard stop at 1650 in Rome, but in Naples, I took it right to 1680. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, no, no, I mean, I had particular moments in cities, but, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Have you—how do you go about—how in those early years, how did you go about defining and refining what exactly you were looking for? Or was it a matter of opportunity, that you would look at what was out there and decide what you wanted and give—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —yourself a kind of an allowance of paintings?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I know the famous expression about the collection you have and the collection you have in your mind. In my mind, I have a totally different collection, which is that I had unlimited funds for 25 years, and I selectively purchased the 19 works that came through the marketplace that I should have purchased. And I tried for one of them, but it was––you know, it was because it was terribly underestimated, but of course, the marketplace knew how to make it 700 percent of its high estimate. So, yes, there were—there's the collection that, had I unlimited wealth, I would have acquired.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And then there's the collection that I was able to acquire that stimulated some of the same nerve cells, but possibly the L-DOPA levels were a little lower. But it was still enough of the addiction dose to make you continue on and on, and on, and on. [00:18:01]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, yes, and it has to be opportunistic. I mean, if someone told me, every year, I'm going to buy one great Dutch picture, I'd say, Well, that's a fool's philosophy in terms of collecting. I mean, this year, there might be two and next year there might be none. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were there particular acquisitions that you really were excited about that you discovered?

And why was it particularly—and this is––still we're in––before 2000?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I still spent a lot of my time—regional auction houses, and I had expanded by then to go to the library and look at all the French auction houses.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Region, meaning New England?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no. All the regional houses, not the big city houses. So I was going to the library at Harvard and at other places and reading the catalogues for all the Drouot sales and, you know. Because in those days, you had to have the paper, you know; not everybody was online.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I was able to make some pretty interesting and exciting discoveries, things I recognized were by the artist that others may not have, and I was able to buy them. So those were always fun and, again, because a Crespi comes top of mind, there were three Crespis that came up that I was able to buy and reattribute to Crespi, and now they're accepted. So those—

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did that happen? How––what was the process of that reattribution officially?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, saw them, bought them; in one case, I'll give credit to someone else because it's his discovery of the lot, but I would see them and buy them and then, you know, we would basically spend time working on them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: "We"?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, often––in that case, I would have to call up an Italian curator. I mean, I would call Frederick Ilchman; I would call somebody, and I would say, "Who should I talk to about this person?" And usually it would be a letter at that point. I'd write a letter and say, you know, "I think this is by Crespi." And then send it away and—I'm trying to remember who did the book. It's [Nancy Ward] Neilson, Ms. Neilson. She wrote the Crespi book. So I wrote to her several times and said, you know, "Is this Crespi? Is this Crespi? Is this Crespi?" And she got tired— [00:20:02]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Including a photograph?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, and she got tired of my letters, and eventually she'd write back and say, "Yes." So, you know, that was a good start and I enjoyed that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And is there official paperwork that goes along with that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, not really. I mean, you know, it's just, you know––I think the next time it comes through the marketplace, it'll say, you know, "We gratefully acknowledge Ms. Neilson, who said it's by Crespi." And that's generally––you know, you build upon the scholars of the past, and the next scholar may say no. You know, but in general, I mean, it's usually—she has a pretty good eye and I respect her.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which institution is she at?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I don't even know. I don't even know. Her book is in Italian. But I don't think she's—I think she's not an Italian native. I wrote in English and I got a response in English, so.

JUDITH RICHARDS: She lives in Italy though?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I think so, yes. I think she's working through––in one of the institutions. I don't remember which one.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And that's—she may be retired now. Her book was from '88 or something, or '90. It was very early. Then we have a Guercino that came up in New Hampshire that I discovered, but unfortunately, other people recognized it, too, so they drove it up to the sky. You know, I love that. That's fun. That's always fun. You know, finding things that people just miss.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And, you know, I mean every year, the Alboni—[Alessandro] Allori—the Allori that was sold—this is a good one. The Allori that was sold at Northeast Auctioneers, which came from the Medici Archives, and I found it in the Medici Archives two hours before the auction. I went to Harvard, I said, "I've got to get the

microfilm for the Medici Archive." [They laugh.] "The auction is coming up." And I found it; it was an ambassadorial gift to the Spanish ambassador, and found the exact painting and everything.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you bought it? [00:22:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I bought it, yes. So those are––you know, those are fun. And that one—that one was––you know, it was estimated at, I don't know, $2,000 and it made 47,000, and I'm in the checkout line, and someone I know is there who bid against me. And I said, you know, "Thanks for that." And he said, "Do you know what you bought?" And I said, "Well, I assume you do if you just bid me up to $47,000." He says, "No, I didn't." I said, "Okay."

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, that's it. That's respect.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I said, "No, that's good. That's good." So I mean, you know, it's fun. Those things are fun.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When those things happen, are you—buyers at auction aren't identified. Nevertheless, do you get calls? Do you get––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no. I mean, the auction house generally won't give that information, because you're a client and they want—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it's up to you to reach out to the field—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, you––

JUDITH RICHARDS: —if you want to—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —have to reach out to the field, right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —involve yourself in your conversation about this.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I have two very young friends in Italy now. Their father was in the art—was sort of a discoverer. He was a good discoverer. He would run around to continental auctions back before the internet, and now the kids and I do a lot. So all day and night we send pictures back and forth by WhatsApp going, "Do we think this is this? Do we think this is this?" And, you know, we can cover a lot of ground. We can cover a lot of auctions in a night. And we can cover—because between the three of us going through a catalogue, we will isolate out the nine things worth sharing, and then we share those nine things, and then we comment on them, like attribution comments, back and forth. And, you know, that's a fun game, and it yields some fruit, it really does.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Huh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So as you got to 2000, 2001, how did your interest—you said you became involved with the Worcester Museum. Had you been involved with other institutions before then? And why not?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. I don't know that I ever—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And involved, being—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, no, no, other than going there and looking at things. [00:24:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: I guess being a donor or being a supporter or being involved in a patron's group of any sort that would put you in contact with other like-minded––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I mean, it's interesting because I came to the art world as such a sort of soliloquy, I did not really—you know, I didn't have people to talk to about that sort of thing. So the Worcester experience was a very interesting one and actually was perfect, because Worcester is the size that it is.

So I had read—I forgot which painting it was; it was the [Bernardo] Strozzi. There was a Strozzi that—I was looking at Strozzi, and I was trying to figure this Strozzi painting out that I had discovered at a little auction. And then I'm going through a book on Strozzi, and it says Worcester Art Museum. I'm in Southborough, Massachusetts. I've never been to the Worcester Art Museum. I had never even heard of the Worcester Art Museum.

And I'm, you know, this is probably—I'm trying to think what year it is. It's got to be more than 16 years ago

because I've been on the roster there for 16 years, so maybe 20 years ago. I don't even remember the day. I'm at my office; I'm looking the Strozzi up, and I see Worcester Art Museum, and then it dawned on me, Wait a minute, they also have that Piero di Cosimo. How can they possibly have a Piero di Cosimo in Worcester? And then I realized, you know, I'd read the name Worcester Art Museum, like, here and there, and I've always logged it in the back of my mind like, Oh, this must be some old collection from New England that, you know, has a few good things.

So I got in my car and I drove over there at lunchtime, and I walked through the whole building, and literally, there was nobody there. I was followed by a security guard—the whole—just followed around.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] Because there's only one.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And it was incredible. I was like, you know, one after another, really high-quality secondary names. Like the best—you know, the very important people in the orbit of the greatest, and very, very good quality; I mean the best quality that there is. So I went through the whole museum. Then they have these mosaics from Antioch. They have, you know—one of the greatest mosaics in America is hidden behind a coat check. So I went to the director's office. [00:25:59]

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean Roman mosaic?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. Antioch. A Roman mosaic.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I went to the director's office, and there's a glass door. You walk in; there's no receptionist.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who was the director then?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Jim Welu. I walked in the office and I said, "Hi. Is your name Jim?" He said, "Yes, I'm Jim." I said, "You've got a great collection here." He said, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm just a local guy, and I just came by to see this collection. This is incredible." He says, "You want to have lunch tomorrow?"

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] He's a good director.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I said, "Sure. I'll happily have lunch tomorrow." And you know, so we spent, I don't know, 350 hours talking, I mean.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Over many years? Or just, this—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —is intense.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I went to TEFAF. I used to go to TEFAF all the time. I ran into him at TEFAF. We started talking at five o'clock at TEFAF; we finished the next morning at 9 a.m. So we just talked all night in the lounge at the hotel, the whole night, just, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, about this painting and that painting, where it came from and—you know. So he got a sense that I was a very strange human being.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And he—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And he was keeping up with you.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —and he said, you know, "You need to be involved in this museum; you need to be involved with this museum." I said, "Well, what does that mean, 'involved'?" He said, "Well, we'll make you a Corporator." And I said, "Well, whatever your normal process is, just do your normal process. I don't want to do anything fancy." So he says, "You'll be a Corporator." So I guess there were 300 Corporators, and I forget, but it was—I had one term as Corporator, and then I was on the board, and then I was president. It was just crazy.

I mean, it was, you know, sort of—and I think the problem was that he didn't have a lot of—not even art enthusiasts; they just didn't have—they didn't have the depth of art knowledge they needed on the board at that particular moment. They had wonderful people. They just didn't have the––you know, there weren't—you know—when the curator was talking about exhibitions, and why this is important and that's not important, there were a lot of questions that were being asked that were derailing the conversations. [00:28:03]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was your business background also important to them? Or—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —were they being––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, definitely. No, no, they––I mean, but they did have good––they had the head of Unum Provident Insurance. They had good people; they had good people.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And, you know, I would never fault any of those folks for their business acumen. I think the problem was it was the overlap between business and art that made it difficult for them to manage the institution. You know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It is difficult for, you know, someone who's used to running a 20,000-employee, for-profit operation to come into a 160-employee museum and understand how this expenditure furthers the mission, rather than, you know, a profit model or efficiency model. You know, bringing an efficiency model to a museum can destroy a museum.

So the thing I noticed right away was, we have a museum with this collection in a second city in New England that has only 20,000 visitors a year. We should close the museum tomorrow and give everybody that walks by on the sidewalk $400 and just call it a day, because that's what the budget is. And if you can't get more than 20,000 people in here, you've got a serious problem. So it was at that time, the seeds were planted to grow that institution visitation to 200,000, and that's happened. That's––I think—we're there now at the end of our, whatever, 10-year plan.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And you know, other things happened too. There was another local museum that was in trouble, the Higgins Armory Museum, and they had the second-best arms and armor collection in America, and also an unsung hero. No one, you know—other than school trips, people didn't really think of it as a great collection. So they had had merger discussions in the '70s to merge the institutions, and the Higgins finally ran out of runway. They didn't have any more endowment. [00:29:55]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And so I was very happy to be there at the moment when they needed the business side to think about things like the real estate, the liability, the employees, you know, the human resource matters, the board relationship between their board and our board when they're being absorbed into our board, that sort of thing. So that was fun, and I think that the institution now is so much stronger having that collection, because that tells the story of the history and the history of art history. So you've got—you can put them side by side. You know, world history is told in warfare and plagues and movements of civilization, and the art tells that story, but it tells it in the abstract.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, why does this woman look like a skeleton? Well, that's because it's a posthumous portrait. [Laughs.] You know, because she died in this plague. But you know, obviously, I thought it was really fun to be there at that moment, that particular moment.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were there—was it a big decision for you to become involved on that level with—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It was 20 hours a week at the beginning. It was a lot of time, a time I still don't have, but it was a lot of time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I mean––

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you find it fulfilling?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, I thought it was great, yes. No, it was a lot of fun. And I met wonderful people; I saw them all last night. We had a cocktail party last night at someone's house; it was all the board members. And the museum is making ambitious purchases. And if I had any role in that—that they're now actually spending this big endowment they have to buy pictures and to buy art, that's exciting to me because, you know, there was a long period of time when the acquisitions were very modest, because there wasn't a thorough process to get a big purchase through. And now I think there's a very good process in place. There's an understanding of what they need; there's an understanding of what they want.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Did the mission change at all during the years that you were there?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. The mission changed; the vision statement changed; the facilities are undergoing changes. Yes, there are big, big changes. [00:31:59]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But, you know, and with the absorption of the Higgins Armory collection, the unrestricted endowment grew by 25 percent, even though the Higgins was out of money, because of the way we orchestrated that handover. They were able to sell the parts of the collection that were not museum-worthy, but they raised a tremendous amount of money.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that went into your endowment?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Because the collection was enormous. Their collection was just chock-a-block with things that had nothing to do with museum collections.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh. Not just multiple helmets—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, no, no, no.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —that were the same.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, there were, you know, metalwares; there were Art Nouveau objects; there were lock boxes. There were things that were not really museum pieces, but they were very valuable things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, so. And then the real estate. We sold the real estate. They had a large piece of real estate.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So that really transformed the Worcester Art Museum.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I mean, it helped to give the Worcester Art Museum the breathing space to get their spend—I think this year their spend is down to 5.8 percent of endowment, which is the lowest I've ever seen, by an enormous amount. So that's a huge—I mean, fiscally, they were on a path to 10 years and the money would be gone, back in the day, because you know, they were spending eight to nine percent plus capital, you know, plus cap ex, and you can't do that, you know; grandma's jewels only last so long.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And Worcester was once a city of, you know, nine millionaires, and those millionaires supported the museum. And now, it's a city of, you know, 100,000 Ph.D.s, who all have good income, but they don't support institutions. So you have to have a different model.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You have to have a much broader and thinner support base. And that's great.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you been involved with other arts institutions besides Worcester?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: The MFA. I do the Arts of Europe Advisory, but that's really-–they've asked me to join and do more, but because of the time commitment at Worcester, I really haven't been able to.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I notice that there was a major contribution from, maybe, from your business to the Museum of Science. [00:34:02]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, that touches on another one of my collecting areas, actually. That is—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That is from my paleontological collecting. So.

JUDITH RICHARDS: We can talk about that.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So their largest—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mentioned paleontology—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —at the very beginning.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So their largest triceratopsian specimen is mine. So that is something I did with them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you donated the piece, or you donated the funds for them to purchase the piece?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So the piece was mine, in my collection, and it's named after my grandfather. It's Triceratops Cliff—but this is *entre nous*. [They laugh.]

And so they––I put it on a seven-year loan there, and then at the end of seven years, there were a number of stipulations. I wanted to have a three-day ceratopsian symposium, which they did a wonderful job of. They invited my paleontological heroes, which they also did a wonderful job of—and I sat in the audience quietly, and then at the end of it, we came to an accommodation to create a permanent installation for the specimen, which is the largest specimen in the state.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So was your contribution focused on that installation and maintaining that object and any other objects you might—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —give?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's very complicated, but basically—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, you don't need to—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —it's a—no, it's a part gift, part sale, and in the end, it had––the strings that I had, they met them all, which were that they're going to do a focal exhibition on paleontology in the—because they're doing a re-jigger of many of their exhibitions. So, you know, the oldest stuff there is all these dioramas and things, and I know that they're thinking about the future.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I wanted to make sure dinosaurs, and especially an actual, authentic specimen—because everything else is a plastic model—that they actually have—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Everything else?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, all of the other examples in, on the floor are epoxy models. So you know, they have a cast—I mean, there are only three complete specimens, so you basically get––you buy a cast of one if you want to show one. [00:35:58]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So they have now––they have now one of the four most-complete of—in the world, and they have the biggest, I believe. I believe it's still the biggest.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, that's exciting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When did this––and so that's—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That started 14 years ago, or 10, 12 years ago. A long time ago.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, no, it's not that long. [Laughs.] I mean, it started—so you started collecting in that area or just that one piece?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no, so I had minor collecting in that area—

JUDITH RICHARDS: While you were collecting—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —until—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —the Italian Baroque—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, until there was an opportunity to really—there were two opportunities in my entire lifetime which were not multimillionaire, you know, games to really sort of acquire one major specimen. There was a stegosaurus that came up from the Badlands in South Dakota that I didn't move on fast enough, and then there was a triceratops that I didn't move on fast enough, but I had a second opportunity when the owner passed away. So it was—you know, that––it's not as if you can—at the level we're talking about in paleontology, there's not many opportunities.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did that interest develop?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, I've always––I don't know. I guess, what kid doesn't like dinosaurs?

JUDITH RICHARDS: And when did you—but you didn't really start buying—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, I didn't start doing that until I was in—until I was—I had—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —until—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I had a little bit of disposable income.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —2004?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, 2004 or '05, yes. And that's really––that was more of, you know, expanding the things that I could do.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are there any other [laughs] collections other than that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: There are other––there are other areas that I'm interested in, and I put money into them, but they're not, sort of, simple collecting. I mean, paleontology, you have to understand, is the rarity of those objects, compared to the paintings we're talking about.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They painted half a million paintings in the Dutch Netherlands between 1600 and 1650. [00:38:02]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Half a million?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, some incredible––there was an estimate of the marketplace, half a million paintings, and the paleontological specimens of that scale are four, five [laughs], yes. So, you know. And also, you have to catch them at their exact moment in time, because they erode as they emerge, so if you don't find them as soon as they start to emerge, then, you know, you lose them to time. So that's why it's amazing now, because we're at a time when people are out hunting all the time, which is great. You're going to find—there are going to be many more.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But what about the issue of who do they actually belong to, and do they belong to the culture, the local museum?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, that was an editorial that was written by John Humphries, I think it was, at the time that I had my specimen, and he was worried I was going to take it home.

JUDITH RICHARDS: From North Dakota?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So when I bought my example—the triceratops—there was an editorial in the *New York Times* about my piece, saying that some rich person's going to hide it away in their castle. I wrote a response saying it wouldn't fit in my three-family house in Boston, and I'm going to put it on public display. But they wouldn't print that because I wouldn't put my name on it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So what I did instead was, when I put in on loan to the Museum of Science, I made the

Museum of Science call him and invite him to come for the opening. So he came for the opening. So that kind of closed that circle, but—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Does it say "Anonymous Donor" at the museum?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. There's a plaque to my grandfather, dedicated to my grandfather, but it doesn't say anything about me. So, yes, there's a plaque to my grandfather. The name is the same, unfortunately, so people know who it is. They don't know—they didn't know that the specimen was named after him.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So this is a field where you're not cultivating auction catalogues and—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, I mean, that's the field—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —or any of that sort of stuff .

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —where you sort of––you read––you know, I've read some really interesting studies of juvenile ceratopsians and how their horn formations develop. But no, I mean, it's not–– [00:40:05]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're relying on people in the field, aren't you?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm relying on smart people to tell me about things and, you know, say, Oh, this is interesting, or, This is not.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] But because of the scarcity, it can't at all occupy as much time and —

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —energy.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And also, you know, there are people who make it a life's pursuit, and they put a team together and they go out every summer, and I'd love to do that, but I don't have time in life to do that, so.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Thinking of boyhood passions, you talked about war, and did you ever want to collect armor?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I have one piece of armor. I have the Coronation Halberd of the Archduke Albrecht, and it's in the museum at Worcester [laughs], and, no. Again, an opportunity. That's all. I mean––

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Now, again, that's a collecting area that was most popular between 1890 and 1910, 1915. You know, back then, and they've done a very efficient job of hoovering up the things that, you know, are the greatest examples, and obviously Peter Finer is a phenomenal dealer of arms and armor. But I think that would bleed money away from my other, more serious interests.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. We just have a little more time today perhaps, if you want to take more time?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Whatever you want to do, it's fine.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Just to ask a couple of basic general questions. Do you have all your collections in a database, or what kind of inventory do you keep?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: For paintings, well, we have to divide that now. So the gallery has a very good stock book system.

JUDITH RICHARDS: If we can go just separate, not the gallery.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: My own—I always maintained paper files, and I'm a computer guy, but I maintain paper files because I've changed technology platforms so many times over the last 25 years that you have to be conscious of that. So I do have paper files, and now, in my current computer, I will have a rudimentary fact sheet

and photographs of just about every painting. Objects, not so much. [00:42:05]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, especially lesser objects. I mean, I don't obsess over, you know, things that I consider decor in a way.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you talked about enjoying lending. Do you have a—so your approach to lending is to try to be as positive as you can—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —under the circumstances.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure. If there's anything that somebody––I mean, two weeks from now in San Francisco, two big Pre-Raphaelite paintings will be in their Pre-Raphaelite show [*Truth and Beauty: The Pre-Raphaelites and the Old Masters*, Legion of Honor Museum, San Francisco].

JUDITH RICHARDS: You have Pre-Raphaelite paintings?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. They'll be in the Pre-Raphaelite show. So, yes, I mean, I lend.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that a whole collection or just two?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That is related to Agnew's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —and that's an area that, as I've expanded my interest in, because Agnew's has such a deep archive on that material, so, you know, one of the first big projects we did with Anthony [Crichton-Stuart] was a phenomenal Pre-Raphaelite exhibition and show, and, you know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: We brought back together some pictures that hadn't been together since the 1870s.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Wow. When you're dealing with loans, and physically, the reality of the question, do you employ a registrar or an art handler or anyone like that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, an art handler to move things around—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But not a registrar.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Not a registrar. I probably should, but, you know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you do all the paperwork yourself?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I do.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And the insurance? And the—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, most of that's quite simple. I mean, the institutions usually insure when it's inside their building, and I insure it to get there and to get it back.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Are there light issues with the materials that you collect, and has that been––or had an impact on your home?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I like darkness, so that's easy.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] You mentioned that.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I mean, my house is always very sort of Victorian curtains and heavy, heavy, heavy, to the chagrin of everybody.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you can't complain about having to keep your home dark.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no. I mean, I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: As some collectors do.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. And in my new home in Boston—I just got a small place to replace my big house because I needed a place to sleep when I'm in Boston. I'm not in Boston that often anymore, and I have no art in that house at all. I mean, I have a few—I have a print from a Bulgarian art show from 1890. I mean—something very strange—but nothing, no art. And that's intentional because, for the first time, I'm living in a building with other people.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I don't want to really have things that can be damaged by other people's negligence, so it's just better not to do it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I see. Do you have—do you maintain storage? Have you always maintained fine art storage?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I've always had a warehouse. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And is that a storage space—do you feel that you need to have a storage space where there's a viewing area, that you can pull things out and sit there and contemplate the works or––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean––

JUDITH RICHARDS: ––or show people the works there?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: ––I get my screw gun and I open whatever I want to open whenever I want to look at it, so, yes. I mean, it's not a viewing area; it's not a formal—I mean, it, you know. Right now I'm down to one 40,000-square-foot building. So I've sold off most of my warehouses.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So––because I downsized my companies. So.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you have conservation issues? How have you approached conservation through the years? Is it something that you're really concerned about, or is it––yes. How do you deal with that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, I have had some issues because, obviously, living in Boston, New England, you have the humidity problems, and I had a lot of paintings on panel. My Antwerp pre-1600 pictures were all on panel. And they tended to be a little unstable. So, yes, I've had, over the years, to send things to the art museum or to conservators or to other places to get them out of my house.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And some, you know, lifting, but I usually don't let it get to flaking. So, you know, yes, of course, that's always a problem. You know, it's always a problem. Having old art in New England is not the easiest thing, because of humidity control, which is almost impossible. You can spend as much money as you want; if you open a door, you're going to change the humidity. [00:45:59]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is this something that you—that the Worcester Art Museum had to deal with, or have they always had good-quality climate control?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I think they have more problems now that they have more visitors, because the doors are opening and closing more, and more people means more humidity from the people.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But I think, in the past, they've been pretty good in the most important areas. There are a lot of areas that are uncontrolled in the museum, like all the antiquities are in areas that are uncontrolled.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But that's okay.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. It's okay. But the––you know, certainly the paintings—the early paintings—I know those rooms—you walk in, you can feel the humidity.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you describe the place you live in Boston as not as having one work of art, right now.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Has almost nothing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It has a whale vertebrae, a really good example.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: A 110-foot whale, very big specimen. So I have a whale vertebrae the size of this table.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You don't have the 110-foot specimen?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no, no, no, no. Just one. Just one huge vertebrae specimen, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's fascinating.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] But, no, I mean, it's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So do you live with art in London?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are you—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —sort of with art 24-7 in London because I have the gallery.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I mean, I don't keep much at home in London.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So that's a huge change?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's a big change, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, I want to talk about the gallery tomorrow.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. And I mean, when I—aesthetics—my aesthetics are a little sensitive, so I do have—I did buy a Gropius house that Hans Wegner did the interior of. And it's not really suitable for old art. I mean, it was never conceived—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where is the Gropius house?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: In Provincetown. It was never conceived as sort of being able to carry, you know, a 19th-century or earlier painting. So I do have some sculptures in there. But really, this house sort of speaks for itself as a kind of singular work of art, as Gropius so often said.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So. [00:48:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, this might be a good point to end today.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Perfect.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And I'll pause it.

[END OF schore18_1of1_sd_track02.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is Judith Olch Richards interviewing Cliff Schorer on June 7, 2018, at the Archives of American Art New York City offices.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Good morning.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Good morning. Just to pick up a little bit from where we left off yesterday, this is still before Agnew's enters the picture—in the early—in—around—so you're collecting Italian Baroque, as you described it yesterday—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And some Flemish.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —and some Flemish Baroque, too.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Same period.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Can you talk about any important acquisitions, let's say, around 2005, 2010? I'm thinking of that period before, then I'm going to talk about the panel at the Frick, 2013.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Okay.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But those—as your collection, perhaps you'd say, entered a mature phase. [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure. I'm not sure exactly the year, but I remember there were a few what I would consider to be ambitious acquisitions that I made that I was very, very pleased with, where there wasn't as much competition as I anticipated. There—as I mentioned, I had been chasing in 2000 this Procaccini, this major Procaccini altarpiece, which I was not able to buy, and it was the—it was with Hall & Knight, and it was at TEFAF, and it was one of those TEFAFs that you go home utterly devastated.

So I went to TEFAF; Hall & Knight had—this must have been 2000—had a phenomenal booth. I mean, the booth—just one masterpiece after another. And I—you know, I doff my cap to them. They had *The Taking of Christ* by Procaccini; they had a Paulus Bor, who's a very, very rare Northern artist that I admire, and I had underbid the painting at auction. They had a [Hans] Hoffmann of a hare, a painting of a hare, which was, you know, a world-class masterpiece, and they had a Sebastiano Ricci, a big Sebastiano Ricci. This is what I remember in their booth. And, you know, it's sort of rare that a dealer in 2000 could mount such an exhibition. [00:02:03]

They also had a book that went with the Procaccini called *Procaccini in America*, which was a very well-researched book by Brigstocke, and I was very impressed.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who was that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Hugh Brigstocke. I was very impressed with all of it, you know; the effort as a dealer was astonishing. So I went to the booth, and I talked to them about the Procaccini, and they didn't know who I was, and I basically wanted to keep it that way. I hadn't ever spoken to them before, as I hadn't—

JUDITH RICHARDS: They're based in London?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They were based—I think they're—well, I mean, I know them as international, but, yes, they're based in London. I think they also probably were in New York at that point. They were independent at that point; now they work for Christie's, and then they—actually, recently they've left Christie's; one has left Christie's and the other has as well.

So they had this booth; I had a brief conversation about the Procaccini. They told me the price range was €5 to 6 million, I believe, and I thought that was odd that they would quote a price range. But I went away, you know, tail between my legs, because it was absolutely unattainable for me. However, the Sebastiano Ricci that they had was also a masterpiece, and, you know, I spent a lot of time staring at it, and I remember the detail that made me think, All right, I'll ask about that as well. The angels that were in—I believe it was *The Adoration of Mary of Egypt*, or *Mary*—it was *Mary of Egypt*, *The Last Communion of* [*Saint*] *Mary of Egypt*.

And the angels that were attending Mary—the detail that got me was they had a sunburn, but the straps of their sandals had fallen down, and you could see the outline of the sunburn where their sandal straps were. For an angel, I thought this was [laughs] such an unusual thing, to give them such a worldly attribute, you know, almost a peasant, worldly attribute.

JUDITH RICHARDS: An earthly attribute.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, an earthly attribute. And, of course, the idea they were in Egypt would add to that kind of, you know, sort of desert mystique of the whole thing. Anyway, so I asked about the price of that, and I think it was €765,000, which was actually attainable for me. So I said, "Give me a little while to think about it,"

and I went to walk around TEFAF. And when I came back to them to ask about it and, you know, pursue it, they said, "Oh, the National Gallery of Washington just bought it," so it was gone. [Laughs.] [00:04:00]

It was basically—they didn't tell me who bought it, but they told me it was reserved, and then shortly thereafter I learned the National Gallery in Washington bought it. So it was very depressing. It was one of those years where you go home completely dejected. But the turnaround comes: the Procaccini was owned by [Piero] Corsini.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who's that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Corsini. He was a dealer and, you know, and an ennobled Italian, and it was in his collection.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you recall his first name?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I do not. I mean, they're—you know, the Corsini are known, you know, a very famous Italian family, and there was one member of the family who was an art dealer. So several years later he passed away, and apparently they hadn't yet sold the Procaccini. So the painting ended up going to auction at Sotheby's, with a lower estimate. So it comes up at Sotheby's. I'm trying to remember the estimate; I think the estimate was either [$]2 to 3 million, or 1.5 to 2.5, but it was very enticing compared to the asking price.

So I was in the room, and—I think her name is Marietta Corsini? Someone who was the inheritor of this property was in the room as well at the back of the room. And it came up for bid, and I was bidding on it, and I think it ended up pushing over [$]1.7 [million], and I was out. So I—basically, I lost it marginally. I was in the running, and I lost it marginally. And I remember Mrs. Corsini was running around the back of room, actually shouting in the auction room about how outrageously cheap it was and how she was upset about it. It was quite a spectacle. But it hammered down; I lost it, you know, and thought no more of it. That was— [00:06:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: You said—which auction was that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That was Sotheby's New York. It was 2007 or '08. So, I lost it. So then flash-forward three years, and it's back on the market again, with a slightly lower estimate this time. So I called my friend at Sotheby's, and I said, "What's the story?" He's like, "Well, I can't tell you much, but there were some payment issues." So I said, "Okay." I said, "Well, you know, that's exciting news." So here's my third bite at the apple. Okay? This is—to me, this is one of the great paintings of Procaccini.

This is my third bite at the apple, and I wasn't going to lose it this time. And I think, given—the market history had sullied the picture. It really had damaged the reputation of the picture. To have the picture debuted with this book about how it's a masterpiece; have it not sell. Eight years later, have it end up on the auction market, have it sell and not be paid, and then come back again. A picture should not reappear three times [laughs] on the market. It's like a girl reappearing three times on the singles market.

It's the same sort of, you know, psychological idea. We all say, "What's wrong? What happened?" And so, in this case, we—you know, I really got ready for it, and I expected it to be, you know, the same price as the last time, and I was prepared for that. And I'm trying to remember exactly what it hammered down at, but it hammered down at the reserve, which was something like [$]680,000—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you present?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —to me. Yeah, to me, and I was excited, so excited. So then we took the picture up to the Worcester Art Museum, and we cleaned it, because it had been in dealers' hands. It had—effectively, it had been on the market for 25 or 30 years. It had been in dealer hands so long, and it had been sort of, shall we say, gussied up so many times by restorers—another layer of varnish, another layer of feeble retouching, another layer of varnish. We had 15 layers of varnish and retouches to take off, and underneath we had a masterpiece. I mean, it was—I remember the restoration process took four or five months. [00:08:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So this book was based on photographs with 15 layers of varnish.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It was very dingy and dark, but it still was a masterpiece. I mean, everyone knew that it was, you know. So I bought the picture, took it to the Worcester Art Museum. Rita Albertson at the Worcester Art Museum did a phenomenal restoration. It took a long time; there was a—

JUDITH RICHARDS: They have their own restoration—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They have their own studio. And now the painting hangs at the Worcester Art Museum so it can be seen, and basically, you know, after all of that gunk was stripped off, the painting that emerged is extraordinary, so we're very excited. But even better, it led me later to the apartment of the descendant of the

original commissioner of the painting, whom I found in Madrid, from whom I bought the last painting from that same series.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you find that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's a long, convoluted history, but basically lots of research, lots of phone calls, and everyone knowing that I'm on the hunt for Procaccini. And a very helpful dealer in Spain finally made the last connection to find the actual apartment.

We went to the apartment, and I bought the painting, and at the same time, the family—this was from one of the largest commissions of the 17th century, and the last two paintings were still in the hands of a man whose name was the same as the man who signed the commissioning documents 400 years before. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: In Spain?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: In Spain, in Madrid. So I went to Spain, and I tried to buy both of the remaining paintings. The Spanish state effectively seized one of them, and I got the other one, so I got an export license for the other one. So today I actually have two paintings from that same series. One is an *Adoration of the Magi*, and one is *The Taking of Christ*, so I have sort of the beginning of the story and the end of the story [laughs], which I'm very excited about. And they are identical sizes; they're both signed; and to me, this is the project that shows Procaccini as the truly important artist that he was, not simply a Lombard artist, but a great artist. [00:10:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are there any art historians who are thinking about writing—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, it's—yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —about him—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's the—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —because of these paintings?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's almost ready. The book is—so, Hugh Brigstocke and his new—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Hugh—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Hugh Brigstocke, yeah, and his new associate Odette D'Albo, who is doing new scholarship.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Odette—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: D'Albo, D, apostrophe, A-L-B-O. That book should be out very soon, actually. I've been giving them photographs for their book of my collection of works, and I know they've been sort of on the hunt for other good photographs. And I'm very excited, because Procaccini will finally get a major, monographic book.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was it known that he was commissioned by a Spaniard? Is that whole chapter of—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So that whole story is fresh scholarship. I know there were a number of scholars who figured this out, but those source documents—some of them still remained in that apartment in Madrid, so there was fresh scholarship here. And I know that the story itself is extremely exciting, because to my knowledge, it's the largest commission—I mean, it's 37 four-meter canvases. And, you know, if I think about that in relative terms, you know, the Medici Cycle by Rubens is not as large as that. So it's extremely exciting that—you know, and I believe 23 of the paintings are known—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —and previously had been unassociated. So there wasn't always—there was this idea that they were—they must have been from one commission, because they were the same size, but there was not a full knowledge of what this commission was until at least the last decade, when all these pieces came together. So it's very exciting. It's a long, convoluted story, but it gets us there.

So that was my 2000 [TEFAF] Maastricht, where I went away dejected but finally redeemed myself. It took till 2011 to finally redeem myself [laughs] from that failure to buy the Ricci on the spot and decide to walk around and think about it, which was my biggest mistake ever. These things happen, I suppose. [00:12:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. It turned out well.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You said it's at—they're both at the Worcester? Or just the—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, the *Adoration* is at—is in London at Agnew's Gallery at the moment, and *The Taking of Christ* is in Worcester, hanging—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that a long-term loan? Is it an official—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's been a very long-term loan.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is it an intended gift or—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, if I fall off a bridge in the next few months, everything goes to the various museums. But there is a long-term plan that the museum and I are talking about for the things they want to keep. I think they have seven to 10 loans of mine, so there are some things there that, you know, they would like to have long-term, so—and other things that they probably don't need necessarily, but they were interested in having for a particular purpose.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You talked about "everything." So do you have a plan that will stipulate—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, I recently did an estate—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —how many—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —plan, and obviously, it's all—the vicissitudes of fate will intervene, I'm sure, if I live long enough, but provided that I don't need the resources to live and provided that I haven't had an—I haven't found that Leonardo to buy where I need to sell everything—then obviously, I will—right now, everything is intended as a gift to the institution where it's on loan, if I die while anything is there, and then—and thereafter we probably will—if we move things around, we'll probably make accommodations. There are some institutions now that are speaking to me about things that they've borrowed that they really feel have become integral to their hang, and they want to keep them, and so that's a harder conversation, because, A, I may not be at the point where I want to sell the work, or, B, it may not make any sense from a tax standpoint, because I have given quite a bit, so I don't have much deductibility.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So—but anyway, I mean, it's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. [00:14:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —you know, longer term; I'm excited when an institution finds that something I provide to them fills a lacuna that they would then feel—that they would really miss if I took it away.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That's exciting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: This sort of opens the whole question of the relationship between collectors and institutions and their collections and how much of a collection—it happens more in contemporary art, but issues arise. How much institutions' collecting is based on what collectors want to collect versus—possibly versus what the curators want to collect. And it impacts different institutions in different ways, but it's a big issue in the art world. Have you thought about that issue, debated it, considered where you stand on it?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure. It's a very modern issue, because, historically, the American museum was created by private collections. So those private collectors often didn't have professional—other than dealers and advisers that were outside of their, you know, home, they didn't have in-house curators who made, you know, art historical decisions or collecting decisions. So that's a modern phenomenon, where you have this conflict between, you know, a museum, institutional curator and private collectors who may desire that their collection end up on view and the curator may have opposing views. That is a harder issue for the contemporary world, I think.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: For the—you know, luckily, we have the sands of time to wear away the lesser works from the, you know, from the museum-quality question of whether an Old Master belongs in a museum.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Or whose voice will impact this collection that's sort of held for the public trust?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And yet it may be private voices, and there's that conflict, potential conflict of interest, where you're lending something or donating something—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —which will then improve the value of your own collection if you still hold it.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. There can be—you know, that's much more of a contemporary problem. [00:16:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, you're not—I'm not going to be able to use the museum to improve my third-rate Old Master by donating my first-rate Old Master and saying, "This comes from the same collection." That—you know, the sophistication of the buyer and the marketplace in Old Masters is not going to be swayed in any way by [laughs], you know, that you had something on view momentarily, you know, in a museum; because you leveraged your ego or your money, or whatever it was, they've got your picture on view.

I think that that's a big problem, very serious problem in contemporary, you know, and basically where a collector-dealer can make a market for their particular artists by using friends and colleagues to install things in institutions to give them that curatorial imprimatur. And that's not my world at all. I mean, you know, we have collegial discussions at two in the morning over, you know, a drink, about the relative merits of this painting by, you know, fill in the blank—[Alessandro] Magnasco—versus this painting by Magnasco. But in general, we're not [laughs] going to be the maker of manners in that conversation. We're not going to determine [laughs]—you know, we're not going to insert that Magnasco into the artist's oeuvre or get it out there for the public and change the perception of that artist. That's not going to happen.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I like the fact that that we're talking more about an accumulation of scholarship, diverse scholarship, that contributes over centuries to an artist's reputation.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm not smart enough to make an artist's reputation from whole cloth, so—and I'm also not manipulative enough to make an artist's reputation by employing strategic curators to insert them into collections. So I think that, you know, we're in a—that's in a different world, but I see that. As a museum president, I saw that, you know, the risk that the curator's friend who happens to be an artist gets a monographic show. [00:18:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, to me there is where the—that's the crux of the fear. Because you know, then—and you understand what happens there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah, of course. During this period of time, the first decade of the century, were you coming across any preparatory drawings or other related material to these major works that you were studying and acquiring, or trying to acquire?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And did those—were those things—did you consider acquiring those things as well to accompany the painting?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, nine times—

JUDITH RICHARDS: If they were appropriate.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —yeah. Nine times out of 10, they would have been in the Albertina or in the Met or in, you know, fill in the blank.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So there—you know, what—the sort of happy circumstance that might fit into what you're asking is if I—and I can think of one, actually.

The Daniele Crespi, which was a very early Daniele Crespi that Otto Naumann, the dealer in New York, had purchased in 1994 as Lombard School. Then eventually, a drawing surfaced. A preparatory drawing surfaced that scholarship said—and it was not available. It was not in the market; it was in an institution. But the scholarship at the time said, "Wait a minute, that looks like a preparatory drawing for that painting," which then changed the attribution of the painting to a better attribution.

So, you know, those are the kinds of things that happen more frequently, which is that one finds a hand in a Carlo Maratti painting, and one then goes and finds that the Albertina has that hand in a sketchbook that is known to have been by [Andrea] Sacchi or Maratti. So, you know, you have these—you have those happy happenstances.

Does it happen that a painting and a drawing will happen to hit the market at the same time? [00:20:00] Yes, there was, of course, *The Massacre of The Innocents* by Rubens, which made £45 million, and two days later, for a relative bargain, a van Dyck of that painting, done in the studio at the same time, came on the market—a drawing of that painting. And so, yes, there are those amazing, you know, random fate intersections, but they're not—they're certainly not something that happen often enough to warrant, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Five years later, I might find a, you know, Salvator Rosa figure, or a print. It's more like I'll find a print after a painting—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Print—engraving.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —which I will acquire. Yeah, which I will acquire, just because it's related to the painting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. So then when you put the—whatever works you lend to institutions, do they borrow also the supporting works?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's interesting that, generally speaking, no, because, you know, the works on paper department has a very different policy on showing things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sure.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Rightly, they show things, you know, six months every five years, to preserve the image from UV radiation. So the short answer is that they may like to have it. If they own the work, they would certainly love to have any preparatory works that relate to it in their PDP collections, in their works on paper collection. But they don't—they certainly don't show them together except in a rare circumstance, where they might have a focal exhibition where showing the preparatory things adds something to the didactic, not the—it's not done simply to put the painting on the wall next to a print, you know, next to an engraving.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right. Yeah, not so much an engraving. If there are other such wonderful stories to tell, keep that in mind; we'll come back to it.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Don't ever give me that entrée. [00:22:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You'll never be done. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: The panel at the Frick, was that your—that was in 2013—it was called *Going for Baroque: Americans Collect Italian Paintings of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, and you served on the panel as the only private collector, or—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I believe so, yeah. Well, I mean, there was a collector-dealer, I think. But, yes, I believe so.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah, yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, I think that, in general, they just wanted an opinion. I think I was a substitute hitter that day, so—because I think they had somebody else lined up who couldn't make it. But I was happy to help. Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was—are those kinds of panels very useful to you as a collector, let's say, if you were in the audience?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I've always enjoyed symposia, you know, of one type or another. I mean, my favorite type of symposia end with, you know, almost fisticuffs between scholars about attribution. That's—those are the best. Those are the ones where you go three days with—of everyone presenting their papers, and then you have a Q&A at the end, and you can't shut people up because they're so—you know, they're fuming over what they've watched for three days.

And then you have this, you know, wonderful—but that wasn't, you know, this kind of a symposium, I think, was—maybe it was more to coax people into the idea of collecting as an achievable thing, which is what I hope my words were about, which is basically, you know, I'm no one, with no particular education, and I come to it with an open pair of eyeballs, and I've had a great time.

I mean, it's been—and I—you know, nothing has—you know, other than a few frustrating failures [laughs], nothing has really pushed me away from it. So, you know, I hope that's really my contribution in that context.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where do these wonderful symposiums take place, the ones that are so passionately [laughs]—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, those are—you know, I'm thinking of very specific ones. So those are the reason that I try to stay involved with things like the Corpus Rubenianum, which is the Rubens study group that is publishing—it runs the Burchard foundation that publishes the books, the Corpus Rubenianum. [00:24:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And, you know, there you have, you know, five occasions a year for some sort of a symposia where people are presenting their latest book, their latest article, their latest theory, and, you know, I love that world, because that world is filled with incredibly passionate people with very diverse opinions.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where does that take place?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That's all over the place. I mean, I'm trying to think. Last year was—we had a three-day thing in Rome. Generally speaking, the book presentations are in Antwerp. Periodically, they'll have them here in New York when they—they'll have a dinner with the Belgian ambassador, and they do this sort of thing. But, yeah, I mean, it's often those tables of five curators that are the most entertaining, you know, and I get to be a gadfly and just listen; you know, I just sit in the background.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do they focus—excuse my ignorance. Do they focus entirely on Rubens or Rubens and his—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Rubens and his orbit, yeah. And, I mean, it's an enormous orbit. I mean, the output of those workshops was massive, massive. And, you know, because of that, it creates incredible attribution controversies, which are passionate arguments about—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you encountered any of those with the works you've acquired?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, all the time, yeah. All the time. I mean, we—you know, since I've had Agnew's, I discovered one van Dyck sketch—discovered, like from nowhere—so, discovered one. I had to advocate and argue for it, and that did sort of achieve the goal I had set for it, which is a relatively universal acceptance.

Then we had a second one that was on the market in Paris as sort of "circle of van Dyck," but as soon as I saw it, I recognized that it was the real deal. [00:26:00] And not only the real deal, but it was the genesis of seven other copies that have all been variously considered either by van Dyck or by—you know, one is in Hampton Court; one is in the Hermitage. So there was another one, and that ended up—I ended up personally selling that with—through Agnew's to the Antwerp Museum as their only first period van Dyck sketch.

So, to me, that was, you know—that was my day at that curator table, where I was silent the whole time, and at the end, I just sort of put the trump card down. I felt very, very good about that moment, because it was a—you know, I've always been concerned about the state of van Dyck scholarship, especially recently, because—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you own any van Dycks, or have you?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, I have. I don't own them now. I had two, and I had to sell both. And, you know, obviously, I've been concerned about the state of that scholarship, which I think of late has been very much slanted towards the marketplace.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In other words, being generous with attributions?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Much too generous with attributions. I mean, beyond generous with attributions. And I understand why; you know, some of the scholars are superannuated, and they're just not in the game anymore,

and there's a very—there has been a very forceful cabal of dealers who've manipulated the market. And I know them, and I know the pictures, and I won't say more than that. But, I mean, I can tell, you know, when yet another picture arises from a certain quarter, what we're dealing with.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So it was very, very pleasing to me to have, you know, the Antwerp Museum—you know, the KMSKA—buy, with their own money, what I consider to be a certain van Dyck sketch, you know, from a very important—you know, one of his pictures in the Prado, one of his preparatory sketches for one of the pictures in the Prado. So those—you know, those are the moments where I think about all those table arguments about this picture and that picture and— [00:28:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Would you say that's one of the most gratifying occasions, and that that kind of experience is a key element for driving you to that kind of scholarship and scholarly discoveries, driving you as a collector?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, sure. I mean, you know, when I think back to the Guercino that, you know, I find in a little catalogue, and then I do the work, you know, it is very gratifying to have something, especially something like van Dyck, which is, to me, you know, in the pantheon of gods. You know, something like that, where I'm just fortunate enough to be at the right place in history at the right moment when scholarship is what it is, to be able to sort of take something and lift it up out of the quagmire and say, "Look, this is correct."

You know, these might not be—or they might be; I don't want to opine on that. But this is correct. And to have, you know, people who might—you know, whose eye I respect far more than my own, like Nico Van Hout at the museum in Antwerp—to have somebody like that say, "Yes, you're right; you know, this is in fact what you think it is." So, you know, those are very exciting moments. They're rare, of course. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you first started, and you're imagining the possibilities of your collecting, did you envision arriving at that level of expertise, where that could be a pursuit, an achievable goal, to discover—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm leery of the word "expertise," just as I'm leery of the word "artist." But I'm pleased that I was lucky enough to be at the right moment in history, where the relative scholarship might have been weaker than it could otherwise have been, which would allow me to find a rather large gap in the fence through which I could walk, if you see how careful I'm trying to be. I don't want to say that—I don't want to take anything away from the scholars who do serious scholarship, because what I'm doing is really applying an acuity of eye to a question, and that's a very, very tiny aspect. [00:30:00]

I mean, I'm not writing 400-page tomes on, you know, the—you know, the Old Testament series of Rubens. I'm just finding those morsels left on the trail and trying to follow them, and then that's—to me, yes, that's exciting. That's like a little bit of sleuthing, which I enjoy.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. Why don't we talk about Agnew's? I read that it's your first business involvement with an art gallery, or an arts institution—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Quite true.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —for profit. Had you been thinking about it? How did that acquisition come about? Was it something you had been looking for as an opportunity?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, the story is, I would say, more humorous than anything else, because my thought was that someday, when I was an old lonely geezer, I would have an antique shop, or I would sell bric-a-brac. I mean, it wasn't really—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean give up all your other—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —business interests?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Give up all my business interests and retire to sort of a conversational job where I sat in a shop, and I played shopkeeper, and people came in and looked at my furniture and told me how overpriced it was.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] And made their own discoveries.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Maybe, maybe so. And, you know, hopefully not in my areas of expertise they were making discoveries. But, yeah, and there was a certain part of it—you know, my world had—I had these warehouses full

with things all the time. That was sort of my—

JUDITH RICHARDS: All in the Boston—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —the flotsam and jetsam.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —in the Boston area?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: In the Boston area. This is the flotsam and jetsam of my other businesses. So my businesses create a lot of physical assets. [00:32:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean furnishings and the hotels?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Furnishings; hotels; office buildings full of furniture; artwork from lobbies; clocks from old buildings in Boston; you know, architectural elements that I salvage every time I do renovations on a building. It's a crazy catastrophe of storage. So, I have these big buildings filled with storage, and a few years ago it got out of hand, you know, when it topped over a million square feet of storage. It got out of hand, and I made a concerted effort to say, you know, "I have to scale this down, because if I fall down dead tomorrow, someone's going to have, you know, I would say, a William Randolph Hearst-scale cleanup to do."

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Because there's just crates and crates and crates. I mean, not, of course, of the quality of Randolph Hearst [laughs], but of a quantity, for sure. You know, it was a million square feet of office furniture and miscellaneous things. So I did start scaling that down, but I did always imagine every time I scaled it down, I would keep this sort of select group. "Oh, okay, this—all this 19th-century porcelain. Let's keep that." All those, you know, all the things I've picked up along the way. And—

JUDITH RICHARDS: This little shop, was it going to be in New England, in London—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I had no idea. It was a fantasy shop that wasn't going to exist, but it was just an idea of how I would pass my time, because I need something to do. [Laughs.] So, anyway, you know, then, at some point, I fixated on the idea that maybe I would do something a little more serious in the art market. And—

JUDITH RICHARDS: When was this, about?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Probably about 10 years ago, where I just said, you know, maybe—

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you say serious, you mean in terms of business?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, meaning that I would be a more serious financial player in the art market, not a face—

JUDITH RICHARDS: An investor rather than a conductor.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: An investor, not a face to an enterprise, but a—which I still am not—but a sort of investor-backer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I did start to back some. So, around that time, I had met a few dealers in the Old Master world, and I did start to either back or buy with the intention of selling, which I hadn't done before. [00:34:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, there was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you want to mention any specifics?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, the big London galleries. There were a few deals out there where I was a partner with the gallery to back the purchase of something a little bit more expensive, and then the gallery would sell that thing, and I would get a percentage of the profit.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And those worked out very well, because what I brought to the table, which I think was different from other investors they had worked with, was that I also brought very strong opinions. So when they

brought me works, I would say, "No, no, no, no—yes," and, you know, the yeses were often, you know, good choices out of that basket.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So where some of the other investors may have made a very small return because they—their gains were diluted by the losses—I was very focused on, you know, "I want this painting and this painting and this painting." And, you know, these were major paintings, so it was a pretty—it was a bigger risk. And so there I found that, you know, I was able to do a very nice return on equity and do something I enjoyed and run around on airplanes looking at pictures that I wanted to look at. So it was a fun little entrée into what the dealers did for a living.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Akin to that, have you ever guaranteed works—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: At auction, you mean?

JUDITH RICHARDS: —at auctions? Where there's a profit to be made by—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Only well after that. Yeah, I haven't done—I didn't—I hadn't done that at that point.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, there I was, really making capital available to gallerists whom I trusted and to buy pictures that I liked, so it was a very—I was not their first call. I was their last call, because they didn't—they wanted silent investors who did what they were told to do, and I was going to be an active investor who wanted to physically see the painting, who wanted to understand their rationale for purchasing it, and who wanted to understand their pricing strategy. And if I understood all those things, and we had a yes, then they had my money, but otherwise—so, for them, I think often, you know, I was not the first choice. [00:36:00]

[They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: But it sounds like it proved to be a good choice.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It was a good, you know, three or four years of financing deals that, you know, I found particularly exciting and interesting, and the paintings that we were able—that I was able to sort of touch in an abstract way were paintings I could never otherwise touch.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, to me, that was that was very exciting. In other words, they were things that wouldn't have been brought to me, and certainly wouldn't have been brought to me at the wholesale level, so to speak, and I couldn't have bought them by myself because of the dealer profit involved. So, in other words, you know, the spread between buy-sell was relatively high, because the dealer had found them in a very strategic way, you know, from private collections that they investigated or, you know, things like that.

But they just weren't—with that type of a seller you need to be cash at the ready, because it's not—they're not going to be—these are folks you're approaching to say, "I may have a client for—" They don't want to hear the next statement, "Well, I'd take a commission if you give it to me for a year to try to sell it." They want to hear what's the number and, you know, "When can you pay me?" [Laughs.] So often, you know, I was the sort of, "What's the number, and when can you pay me?" answer in a very finite category of pictures.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So that was fine. I had a great time with that and didn't think it would go any further than that, and then the Agnew's thing occurred. So a friend of mine that I had known came to me and said that he thought that the library at Agnew's would be available, and, you know, that was interesting to me. And—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, a library, because it was—they were liquidating? [00:38:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Well, the word was out that they were closing the gallery.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Michael Ripps, who's a scholar who has worked with the Frick on a number of sort of investigations of the art market and things like that, he came to me, and he said, you know, "You should meet with Julian Agnew, because they're selling the library and maybe more." So it was sort of—you know, it was sort of an early-days discussion. So I met with Julian Agnew, and I understood that, basically 10 years too early, they

were going to sell the business—10 years too early for my life's plan; I had no intention of doing this, you know, before I was 60.

So, you know, we met, we discussed it, and it was far more complex than I thought it would be. There were parts of the business I wanted to buy and parts of the business that I didn't want to buy.

There was a logic for the family dissolving the enterprise which was hard to overcome with the attraction of a sale. It's a very complicated taxation and business question, but basically, there was almost as much incentive for them to liquidate the company as there was to sell it. So it really was a question of lobbying to say, "Look, I'll make this better for you over a period of years," than doing it this way. Because, you know, there was the idea that 550 objects could just be chucked into auction; you know, you could have a publicized sale and get rid of the company, and, you know, the library could go to the nation, and the archive could go to the National Gallery, and, you know, wash your hands with it.

And you wouldn't have enduring liabilities for all the things that you've sold in the past because the company would cease to exist. And that's a big question in the art market; you know, having the liability for everything you've ever sold coming back to say, "Wait a minute, this is a fake," or, "This attribution is wrong," or, you know — [00:40:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or, "This is Nazi loot," and—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, Nazi loot. You know, fill in the blank; provenance issues, you know. I mean, the number of those issues I've dealt with in only five years is astonishing. It's astonishing. And Agnew's was one of the firms that simply refused to deal in what they called "refugee art." So they were the cleanest book of business I've ever seen relative to the Holocaust. They just simply said, you know, "No mas." You know, there are certainly moments in the '60s and '70s when scholarship might have been a little weaker, and they missed something, but in general, right after the war, when everyone else was profiteering, the firm didn't.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So they were very strict with provenance restrictions.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They were—they had the English family connections to allow them to continue to trade when others were forced to do business with people that were, shall we say, less than scrupulous, and so that was a lucky break in a sense. You know, that was—that's one distinguishing factor of the firm that I really—that I came to have great comfort from.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And also, you know, the sort of—the mere suggestion that the Agnew's family would ever deal in such a thing [laughs], the bristle with which that question was met gave me great comfort that they actually didn't. You know, they were careful.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it sounds like it was a very smooth transition from being a businessman and a collector to getting involved in the business of art through these interactions, these—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What did you call it? Investments.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: To considering and, in fact, acquiring a partial—you were the head of a group of investors—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —to doing this.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that's been since 2014, right? [00:42:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: 2013—

JUDITH RICHARDS: 2013.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —we closed, yeah, yeah. So we had a five-year—we had our five-year sort of anniversary. I think that is—actually, I think five years is November of this year. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Has your role evolved during that period of time? How has it evolved?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, it's interesting, because when I was confronted with the idea of buying the firm and realizing that I don't ever want to be the public face—I don't want to be the person in front of this business; it's not my world. Fortunately, Anthony Crichton-Stuart, who was running Noortman at the time—I went to see him, and I said, you know, "I won't do this unless I know that, you know, you will be available to me."

And he said, "Well, ironically enough, Sotheby's"—and I knew—I could feel this sort of—without even asking the question, I knew that Noortman's days since the death of Robert Noortman were numbered. Noortman was the gallery that was, you know, a very successful Dutch dealer, Robert Noortman. And Sotheby's purchased the company, and then Robert Noortman died literally, I think, six or nine months later, unexpectedly. So they put Anthony Crichton-Stuart, who used to be Christie's head of Old Masters, in charge of Noortman Gallery.

And I could see—there was a sense that I had that Noortman was not long for the world. I don't know where that came from, but it was an instinctive sense. So when I went to see Anthony and said, you know, "I would do this if you are available and you want to do it with me," and he said, "Well, ironically enough, they just told me that I'm on gardening leave." [Laughs.] So, you know, in a sense, there was a—just a moment, and that moment—if that hadn't happened, I wouldn't have bought the company.

Without having someone who could actually be front and center, running the business, I would not have purchased the company. What I would have done was purchase the assets; I would have purchased the library. I would have purchased some of the assets; we may have purchased some of the inventory. But I wouldn't have purchased the ongoing operation of the business. I would have left that to, you know, others in the art market to decide whether they would do it. So— [00:44:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: You—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It was a perfect, you know, confluence of interest at the moment.

JUDITH RICHARDS: There wasn't time to look for someone else if he had not—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I would not have looked for anyone else. I would not have looked for anyone else. So it would have been a matter of, "If you're not available to me, that's fine; I won't do the project." You know, I sort of had a sense of what I needed, and, you know, in terms of someone whose eye I've always esteemed and who has a very even keel and about whom I never heard a bad word. [Laughs.] You know, it was important to me that that's the type of person, you know, sink or swim, whether—you know, I didn't want a shark. I wanted somebody who had been in the market for a long time, who had great relationships with people, that sort of thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I imagine you wanted to preserve the goodwill of the name of Agnew's—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —and what it stood for.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah. And knowing, of course, that, you know, in a way, sort of on day one, my business challenge was to take a business that was burning, you know, [£] 8 million in losses, and flip it off instantly and reopen it as a business that would basically break even or make money, because I was not in the business of buying a company simply to continue the legacy losses of the previous ownership. So, you know, that was where my role was. My role was in figuring out the real estate problems that the company had, the finance problems that the company had, the management issues that the company had, but not the art questions. The art questions were Anthony's bailiwick.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So he's the director of—the managing director—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: He's director. I am none of the above. I'm not—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is there a board that you're—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: There's no board, no.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The structure is just—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: The structure is executive director is Anthony Crichton-Stuart, yeah. [00:46:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Has it impacted your collecting as you imagined it would or in any different way?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes. I mean, obviously, my personal collecting was—I pushed the pause button and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because you couldn't be competing.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. There are a number of hats I had to take off. So I resigned from the board at the Worcester Art Museum, because I found that that could be a direct conflict of interest. I resigned from the collections committee at the Worcester Art Museum. I tried to resign from the MFA, but they said it was no problem, and then Worcester actually asked me back as—created an advisory role, advisory collections committee. So I joined that, which was a lot of fun. And so, yeah, I mean, there were a number of things, a number of hats that I had to shed to sort of, I think, stay within what—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about your—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —I consider to be respectable parameters.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did your other business interests then also take a step back?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They were doing that anyway. So I was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were spending more and more time involved with art as a business and as a passion.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I did two things at the same time, and you're going to laugh. I bought a cash-flow business, that I don't need to babysit.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What is a cash-flow business?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Meaning, I bought a company. So, all of my companies are project companies; they only make money if my projects are executed and are successful. They've always been that way.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Like renovations and—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Renovations; purchasing a company; selling a fiber optic switch—you know, whatever it is—you know, building a shelter—you know, we do all sorts of different sort of project-based companies, and nothing has cash flow, meaning I don't sell widgets and collect the 39-cent margin on a widget, and I don't sell X number widgets a year. I wish I had. Matter of fact, from day one I should have just bought a Dunkin' Donuts. I'd probably be better off. So what I did was, around the same time I bought Agnew's, I also bought a restaurant chain, a franchise chain of restaurants, that would just provide a background income. So— [00:48:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you didn't have—that were well-managed, and you didn't have to—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well-managed, I have two dinners per year with the management team and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is this in—based in London—based in Boston?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Based in Boston. And recently, what I do is I actually—I get involved with the construction projects for them, so I'm building their new buildings, which I love. I love that—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So they're expanding?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They're building brand-new buildings, yeah. So we're changing—one by one, we're changing the buildings. And I won't mention the name, but it's a national company. And so, you know, I bought a territory with a partner, and we have a territory, and basically, you know, we go to an annual meeting, and we have a dinner with the managers, and that's our—so, in a sense, I was able to sort of extract myself from project-based businesses to at least have this background income that would support a very marginal lifestyle, which is what I live. And, you know, from there I was able to turn more of my attention—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you—do you spend most of your time—do you reside mostly in London now?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, I go to London about seven days a month, and again, you know, the gallery operates on its own. I love to run around and look for paintings for them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So instead of collecting for yourself—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —then you're—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, I'm thinking about now collecting in a different way. I'm thinking about, you know,

acquiring things that add some je ne sais quoi to some exhibition that's coming up, or that—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Gallery exhibition?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Gallery exhibition, or that take the gallery in a—you know, in the direction that Anthony wants us to steer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So there's strategy meetings with Anthony. He's making these decisions, which you approve of—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —and then you're going out—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah. And then we—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —in an understood way to further this.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And then we get on our airplanes, and we start flying around, looking for things, yeah. And, you know, for example, Anthony decided he wanted to do a Lotte Laserstein show. Lotte Laserstein was a Weimar German artist, a female artist—amazing artist—and Agnew's had sort of rediscovered her in the 1960s and then did a show, a monographic show, in the 1980s. [00:50:00]

And, you know, Anthony went through the archives and saw this material and knew the artist and apparently, you know, knew people who came to the show and thought it was an amazing show. He said, "Let's do a Lotte Laserstein show." So we both get on planes, and he goes and finds pictures in Berlin, here, there, and everywhere, and we pull together—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is it just the two of you doing this major part of the work?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, Anna doesn't do as much of the running around, but Anna is the gallery manager. So—Anna Cunningham; she does—she's the one who sort of—she keeps all the sheep herded; so she keeps us focused on what we need to do [laughs], and she manages all of the gallery operations. So if Anthony decides he wants to do a show, they get together; they decide what the show will be, and then Anna takes charge of all the sort of managerial tasks involved with that. Anthony takes charge of all the art questions involved with that, and he will then give me some yeoman's work to go and, you know, "Find this; find that," you know, "Keep your eyes open for this, that, and the other thing."

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And then there are moments when something will pop up unexpectedly, like the Campbell's Soup family, the Dorrance family. They had a big sale in the '80s, and just three or four weeks ago they had a sale of Dodo Dorrance, who was the daughter of Jack Dorrance, and in that sale was a beautiful Cezanne, really beautiful Cezanne. And I thought, you know, We should buy that Cezanne, because it's one of his most Old Master-y Cezannes, and try to tie it in with [Nicolas] Poussin. So, do something to tie it into the Old Masters, either Lorraine—Claude Lorraine—or Poussin or—and Cezanne. [00:52:00]

So, you know, in that case, I went myself; looked at it; liked it; made an irrevocable bid; and bought it at the auction and then brought that immediately to London; gave it to them; and they're running with it. They're—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So at some point, you've expanded your knowledge to include the succeeding decades—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Well, I mean, Agnew's is very strong—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —the 17th and 18th—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Agnew's was very strong up until—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —the 19th—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —yeah, mid-century British. They were very, very strong. They were contemporary dealers. I mean, they dealt in the Pre-Raphaelites when they were contemporary art. And so we've certainly—we've done a very strong Pre-Raphaelite program; we've done a very strong early 20th-century program; we are not really—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Early 20th-century British?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Early 20th-century British and Continental. And we're not really going to move into, you know, Ab Ex or anything, you know, sort of—World War II, I think, is kind of where I get a nosebleed, because it starts to get into other people's knowledge base and other people's territory.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But—yeah, I mean, there are occasions—we did a 5,000 years of portraiture show with an Egyptian Fayum and a Lucien Freud. So, you know, we've had the gamut; you know, we've had the gamut. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Wow, Lucien Freud is much—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —further into the decade than—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, well, this was an early, early—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, '40s or so.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. It was very early.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But still, it was him doing a kind of an Egyptian Fayum portrait, which was really wonderful. It was sort of the bookends of the exhibition.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I shouldn't say 5,000; 3,500 years. So—but still, I mean, those kinds of projects are very exciting. They may not be moneymakers. You know, your real moneymakers, frankly, are selling one or two major paintings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Does Agnew's participate in art fairs?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: We do. We do TEFAF New York, TEFAF Maastricht, Masterpiece. We've done Paris Tableau, which is obviously now over. I'm trying to think what other fairs we've done. Yeah, short answer is, we like a schedule of art fairs to just basically move us around geographically.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] [00:54:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's nice to be, you know, continental Europe for the TEFAF Maastricht and then New York for TEFAF New York.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You're keeping just the gallery in London.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Just the gallery in London, right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: We will have a viewing space in New York, but that's all.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: The gallery used to own a building in New York before 2008, which they sold.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So there's no more property in New York. And that was another thing, too. The company, when I came to it, it had the legacy of all this real estate that it owned that was very valuable, and it had sold that real estate in 2008. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like—gone through all the money.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, not gone through it; distributed it to the shareholders. The shareholders did very well by the real estate.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which was the family.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: The family, yeah. The shareholders did very well by the real estate, but the business, by that point, was, I think, sort of put on the back burner after 2008, then when they didn't have a premises, they built themselves a new and rather expensive rental premises, and the rent and the costs there were quite high. And the focus was much more British 20th century.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I got the feeling that that's where they had settled, was, you know, doing British 20th-century exhibitions, which was timing the market pretty well, but the costs and the sales prices of the actual paintings and objects were too low to sustain the model.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, selling a £50,000 work when you have £800,000 in overhead—if you're on a commission basis, you have to sell a lot of £50,000 works. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you—do you imagine in the future acquiring another art business? Another gallery, a different gallery?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I wouldn't—I would probably never acquire another gallery, because that would—I mean, I think I would probably be more of a financial investor in other art businesses, potentially service businesses. I do like art storage. [00:56:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Storage. [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I do like art storage and handling. I'm actually building a building in Massachusetts for that, which—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Climate-controlled art storage?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah, which I will—because, basically, now that I have to move out of my last warehouse, I need very purpose-built storage for my own collection, so I will probably build something that's large enough that I can accommodate other collectors if they need to.

JUDITH RICHARDS: There are new warehouses all the time, I think, going up, and there's that new one in Long Island City—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —UOVO.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is there a certain—and that's a kind of a new model of art storage, with viewing facilities.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Let's say the deluxe model.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that an interesting area for you to think about, the evolving nature of art storage?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. Not at all. No, as a matter of fact, I mean, obviously, we have great respect, and we like the feeling of our gallery in London, and wherever possible, if we can show a painting in kind of our home, you know, bring people into the living room and have the painting on the wall and sit down in front of it and talk about it—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Into the prospective buyer's living room?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or into the—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —into the gallery's living room, or the prospective buyer's living room if that's something the buyer would consider. But, yes, I mean, I think having a high-end warehouse where, you know—I would like to be the service provider in that equation and not the gallerist, because, to me, it's—no matter what you do, it's a clinical experience. You're going into someone else's space to show an artwork.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I think of storage as storage, but just good climate control. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Going back to putting your hat on as a collector, what would you say—if this is relevant to you—is the most important piece of advice that you received about collecting, and, in the same sense, a piece of advice you would give someone who was starting out? You, 30 years ago. [00:58:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, that's hard. I think there are two different pieces of advice, of course. I think that what people said to me back then, because it was a different kind of marketplace, was—it was all about market strategy. So back then, you know, we were in—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean timing?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, we were in auctions, competing with other people who were in the trade, so often your sort of very important thing to keep in mind was what everybody else was doing relative to something you were interested in: who was on it, who was not on it, that sort of thing. It was a much smaller circle. The circle was so small that you were sitting at a table with everybody that could be interested in that same object, at the same table, and you could actually talk to all of them. And those days are now over, because the auction companies have created a broader market.

So I think back then it was much more about a buying strategy, and, you know, I think now I would say, Be very cautious and very slow, because now the market is created to separate you from your money and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And this applies to specifically Italian Baroque or any of the areas you've—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I think that—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —focused on?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —generally speaking, what's happened is the auction market, which used to be a wholesaler's market, has become a mass market, and as such, the marketing techniques employed have become mass-market marketing techniques. They've become broad-market marketing techniques. And I think if you're focused enough to stay on the object, you know, to think at core about the transaction with your object and not listen to all the other noise and hype and marketing and, you know, all of that, and if you can learn as much as you can about that one object you're interested in, if you lose this one, so be it, you know. If you lose it for price or other matters, so be it. But I think that if there's any way you can filter out the noise of the marketplace—because the noise of the marketplace is just a cacophony now compared to when I—you know, when I was first starting. That— [01:00:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's a very different game. So I would say that's probably the only piece of advice I can have, is that you have to be much more object-focused, learn as much as you can about that object, and try as much as possible to ignore the catalogue entry that shows *Chairman Mao* by Andy Warhol next to Leonardo da Vinci next to the so-called lot that you're about to buy, and draws these amazing marketing inferences that, you know, you will be like the Medici if you buy this thing. You have to understand, I think, that at the core it's about the object for me; it's about the—it's about the artwork.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have—in that sense about the object, since you served on the board of Worcester Art Museum, and you've been involved in their acquisitions committee, and you've lent them work, it seems like you are interested—but I wanted to ask how interested—in the role of the museum, and the role of collector as educator, educating the public, expanding their understanding and appreciation of works that you love.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: How important is that to you? Or is it changing?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, it's paramount for the museum world. I mean, it's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: But for you as an individual collector? When you collect, does it play any role in what you're thinking about what?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, for me, personally, I think that, obviously, I feel much happier when something is on public view, and there's somebody telling someone something about it. I'm—I went to the MFA, you know, maybe a year and a half ago, and I have a major picture on view in their Koch Gallery. It's the big gallery at the MFA.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And there was a lecture going on in front of my painting, with a big group of people, and somebody talking about the Counter-Reformation.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which—whose painting? [1:02:00]

[END OF schore18_1of1_sd_track03.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's by Antonio de Pereda. It's a big Spanish altarpiece. And there was a, you know, there was a large group, and they were giving a lecture on the Counter-Reformation and how this painting perfectly encapsulates the Counter-Reformation because—and you fill in the blank. And, you know, those are amazing moments. I mean—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that coincidence that you ran into them?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Total coincidence. I was walking through the room, and they were giving this lecture, so I sat for the lecture, of course. And, you know—and I sent them a commendation letter afterwards. I said, "I had a great time. It was—thank you for doing that." You know, it was wonderful.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is there any indication on—it's a loan.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's a loan, yeah, yeah. It's a private—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is there any indication that it's from you—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no, it says "Private—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Just that it's private.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —Collection," I think. So, you know, I love that. I think that's fantastic.

And recently, Milwaukee—so I love Tanya Paul; she's the curator at Milwaukee. And, you know, I've watched her career rise. [Laughs.] Now she's at Milwaukee. And, you know, I basically said, you know, "Is there anything you'd like from me?" And she said, "Well, I'd borrow the Luca Giordano from your living room," because I was closing my house up.

So, I had—it's an unlined painting, so I said, "Well, it's a little fragile." So I didn't want to ship it out on a common carrier, so I actually rented a truck and put it in the truck, and I drove 20 hours, with one quick stop for some junk food. And I brought it to the museum and delivered it, and they installed it directly. And I said, "Your only quid pro quo is I want you to send me a photo of you giving a lecture with a bunch of schoolkids sitting in front of you in front of the painting."

So a couple months go by, and I get this photo, and I open it up, and it's really wonderful. It's a photo of her, and unfortunately, there's a lot of blue hair; there's no kids. There's a lot of blue hair.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So I wrote back, and I said, you know, "I told you, you've got to have kids." She said, "Those are the kids," meaning that's the young crowd that they get, you know, that's the 60-to-80 crowd instead of the 80-to-100 crowd. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: They don't have school groups or something?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, of course they do, but she's being, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: She's being funny. But, I mean, those are—of course, I'd lend for any lecture series that made sense, you know. I've also had some crazy requests that I won't honor, you know, museums in France that want to do a—want to recreate the human digestive system, and they want to—you know, they want to have this—I have a painting by [Pieter] Huys, H-U-Y-S, and it's a—it's this screaming woman. They wanted to put the

screaming woman in the colon or something. I said, you know, "Oh, come on, I'm not going to risk sending a 16th-century painting for you to do that." [Laughs.] You know, along with Ai Weiwei as the eyeballs or something, you know. I mean, it just didn't—I just didn't understand the narrative. I mean— [00:02:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. I don't think Ai Weiwei would have participated either. [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no, but you know what I mean. You know what I mean.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, yes. I mean, sure, I absolutely am thrilled when they can do something educational with the material—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Speaking of—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —to engage somebody in a way that's not just, "Here's a beautiful Old Master painting."

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay, just—I suddenly wasn't hearing the mic.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, sorry.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You talked about the label just saying, "Private Collector." It sounds, from what you've said, that you prefer a level of anonymity with your loans and your donations. Is that the case?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, I think that—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you ever envision—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —that's fair. I was actually shocked—so the Worcester Art Museum—you know, I had been there and had been president for a couple of years and was actually shocked when they put up this board in the lobby, you know, of your—of the donors and their annual giving. And I saw my name alone in a category, and I was very shocked, because I had never said, "You may do that." And so, you know, I had—I marched myself right downstairs, and I said, you know, "Come on, guys, that's not—you know that's not me." And they're like, "Come on, please," you know, "it's important people know that, you know, the board is giving." And, you know, so I finally acquiesced. But, yeah, I mean—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean, was there a dollar figure, or just call you "Chairman's Circle"?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, there was a dollar figure, a level. It didn't say exactly, but it was a level. [00:04:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: A level.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. And—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which, if there's one person—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —it's kind of easy to figure out.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, it wasn't expected. It wasn't expected. And, you know, we were talking yesterday about the Museum of Science. In the case of the Museum of Science, I think initially they wanted—initially I was anonymous, and then I think they really wanted my name. And I think we ended up on "Anonymous," because I think that's what I wanted to do, but because of the plaque that's dedicated to my grandfather, people can figure it out. You know, they can figure out—so—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I think I came across the name Schorer—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah. So I'm sure that somewhere they've used—you know, time goes by, and they use your name.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In an annual report.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Time goes by, and they use your name, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah, yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But, yeah, I mean, obviously, my preference is not—is to be, you know, "Anonymous

Loan."

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. You've talked a lot about your involvement in museums and education, so obviously you do have a sense that there's a level of responsibility when you acquire these works to share them. Are there any other thoughts you have about the responsibilities of a collector, at least in your field?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, certainly, don't destroy the art if you can avoid it. You know, that's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Be a good steward.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Being a good steward, yeah. And that's actually harder than one thinks for some of the types of art I'm talking about. You know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Panel paintings.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —early panel paintings in New England, for example. You know, the average home really can't take a panel painting because of the climate changes, you know, the humidity changes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But, you know, I guess with minor things, you know, with less important artwork, it is what it is.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And, you know, I visit English country homes now with Agnew's all the time, and I see these panel paintings that have been hanging in the same spot for 350 or 400 years—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, that's—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —and they're in—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —climate-controlled.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And they're in good shape, because the English climate is very humid. But the problem is, New England is dry as a bone in the winter, so you have, you know, you have extremes, and I think the difference—if you kept a painting in England for 350 years, if you kept the painting in New England for 35 years, I bet it would have far more wear and tear in New England. So you really have to be conscious of those kinds of things. [00:06:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You've talked about competition a bit; in fact, in a very knowing way. [Laughs.] This was something that you were aware of. Has that changed over the years in the field—the painting field that you collect in; the level of competition? I mean, you read—with this contemporary art market soaring—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —more or less, the interest in earlier painting has declined somewhat, but perhaps not in specifically where you're looking. But has there been an increase in some competition, or the alternative?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. You know, it's interesting to me, because I'm an advocate for that market. Of course, I think the Old Master market is tremendously undervalued, but my rationale for that is not your sort of usual rationale, which is that, basically, the prices are cheap for things that are 400 years old, and why are they so cheap, et cetera.

To me, what's happened is, it's a lifestyle that maybe is going away, the lifestyle of the sort of dedicated scholar, in high, euphemistic quotes, collector who would buy one major painting per year, who would study, study, study, study, study until they found that moment, and then it would come and they would buy it, and they put it in their collection, and then they die with a 29-painting collection that's extraordinary.

Those people are not—they don't exist now, and they don't exist for a lot of reasons. The marketplace has sort of moved away from providing them a platform for that, because there weren't enough of them. So, in other words, the entire world previously had been constructed around those dedicated 80 collectors who came to the market, who came to the oasis once a year to buy a painting, be it Maastricht, be it Sotheby's New York, whatever it is.

And so the market of those dedicated folks is shrinking. [00:08:00]

So what's happened, I've seen, is there's been a decoupling of—the top one percent of the market has soared. You know, the really great, truly amazing things that anybody would want in their collection have decoupled from the rest of the market, the rest of the market which was the kind of—all the way from, and I say this disparagingly, decorative works up to sort of upper-middle market works. You know, let's put it in numbers: $10,000 to $250,000.

That market is extremely weak now, and, you know, in a way, it's good comeuppance, because there was a long period of time when all the boats were lifted by the tide, the good, the bad, and the ugly. And the market was not very discerning, because there were enough people in it to absorb all that material. Now that decorators are not putting bad Old Masters in the living rooms of every nouveau riche house, that's not floating anymore. So you've got another decoupling.

Now you've got that top strata, which will always be high and going higher. You have this kind of upper-middle strata, which is still the serious, dedicated, scholarly collector, you know, the French amateur, you know, the person who is going to get the books, that has the piles of catalogues in their living room.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's, like, a half a million?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, that's like $100,000 to half a million, and that's not the weakest. You know, when a good picture arrives into that market, it creates a ripple, and it sells well. Then you have the everything else, and the everything else is becoming a really sad mess, and it's because Grandma's dying, and Mom and Dad are dying, and the 50-something and younger—they want nothing to do—they want, you know, clean lines, Mid-Century Modernism [laughs]; they want Abstract Expressionism. [00:10:00]

You know, what our task is, I think, at Agnew's is to show—and, you know, we sound like a broken record, because every dealer says the same thing—but is to show that you can have that one great Old Master in your kitchen, you know, in your dining area, you know, the food still life. You can have that kind of one really good Dutch picture, and you can still have your Abstract Expressionism, and you can still have a modern space, a livable space. It doesn't have to be, you know, Grandma's attic.

So I think that in order to have anything above 50 to under 500 survive and thrive to replace those dedicated 80 families of collectors who used to run around and buy those things, we need to create a sense of style that employs those things in a way that makes sense today, and that's what we try to do. That's why, if you come to our booths today, you'll see that there are wall fabrics; there are modern interiors.

We did a Baroque-style porcelain fireplace by a Japanese artist named [Katsuyo] Aoki, this amazingly modern, white porcelain, beautiful fireplace. And then we put that with a 1930s painting by [Tulio] Crali, you know, this sort of *aeropittura* of Modernism—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —and we put a Reynolds. And, you know, you can do that, and if it's done aesthetically well, you can show somebody that, you know, you can still have the quality and think about what a bargain it is. I mean, for the price of a multiple by Damien Hirst, you can buy a Reynolds, you know. I mean, a real Reynolds. And, you know, a picture that always has its place in art history, always has its story, and more than that, it's a segue into the story of the person in the painting, the sitter of the painting. It's a segue into the—you know, what was going on at that time.

For me, it's that doorway into history. So, you know, it's the conversation at the cocktail party, I suppose [laughs], but, you know, maybe not the cocktail party some people want to go to. But I do think it wraps human history in a way that makes it exciting, but it also can still be beautiful in those settings. [00:12:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are you involved in creating those settings in the booths, as you described?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I leave that to Anna and Anthony, and, you know, I come in and I nod my head in approval, because they have such amazing taste. Anthony's family lives—they own the Isle of Bute in [. . . Scotland –CS], and they have a fabric manufactory, Bute Fabrics, and they make some of the most exquisite fabrics you ever saw. We've been using their fabrics as our wall coverings in our booths, and, you know, amazing. They have these kind—they have everything from 19th-century styles to very Modernist styles, and it's—it gives us a chance to say, you know, here's a modern interior, with a beautiful thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you ever kept, or do you keep, diaries or journals about your collecting activity?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No—

JUDITH RICHARDS: No?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —sorry to say.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.].

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, I'm not that interested.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you ever tried to, or wanted to, learn how to do any of the kinds of ceramic work or painting or whatever yourself to see what's entailed?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That's very funny. So the Museum of Fine Arts school in Boston—I took my one class in Renaissance painting technique.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Egg tempera?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Egg—oh, it was worse than that. We made our own paint—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay, rabbit-skin glue.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —we made everything. We made pigments; we ground pigments; we made egg tempera. We did—so—and I decided to do my homage to Carlo Crivelli. And so I painted one Madonna and Child with pickles and fruit [they laugh], which is the Carlo Crivelli typical. And I have it at home to remind myself of what an absolutely abysmal painter I am and to really, you know, bring home—you know, I always think I can put my—I can do anything I put my head to. And, of course, I know that one of the great loves of art for me is that I cannot; I could not; I'm incapable. So, you know, as you say, you know, as we were talking about yesterday, that intersection of conception and craft. [00:14:00]

So the little paintings on my Chinese export porcelain, the engravings on the Columbus series of stamps, the—you know, all of those things, all of those, you know, progressing all the way up to, you know, big, narrative, allegorical paintings of the Baroque: those are all this kind of marriage of conception and highly skilled craft. I took a little bit of a detour towards the pure craft in the Song dynasty monochromes, but, I mean, one must imagine that in the eighth and ninth centuries in China, they were a thousand years ahead of Europe, and to me, that—you know, they were creating perfection in porcelain a thousand years before the Europeans even understood what porcelain was. [Laughs.]

So, yes, to me, that was the detour, but it was—which was pure craft, but I esteem the craft as much as the conception, and I know that I'll never have the craft. So, you know, to me, I'm in awe of that ability.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So that was really interesting and enjoyable—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —to learn what was entailed in—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —grinding your own pigments.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Frustrating, enjoyable, you know, disheartening. Again, knowing that that is a skill set that I will never possess, and that as close as I can ever get is to collect something—

JUDITH RICHARDS: But it's—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —by someone who possessed it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —yeah, but it's so different to really try to do it yourself—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —versus—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It's just amazing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —read about it in a book. [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah, that's so interesting. Has—you've talked about a lot of traveling to discover, to see things that you were going to see, destinations. Have there been particular trips that have been important to you or—or in another way, how does travel impact your collecting?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, I can just give a recent example. I mean, there are many historical examples of seeing some particular painting in a museum and just standing there for 25 minutes and saying, you know, "I can't believe this painting."

I mean, one experience like that was seeing Ribera in the Capodimonte when the room where the Ribera was was closed, and so I had to negotiate with this very large Italian woman who was blocking the entrance to the room to say, "Look, I came to see that painting." And she's, you know, "*Chiuso*, *chiuso*." [00:16:00]

You know, she was waving me away. And I finally said—I said, "Look, how much is it going to cost me, and can I take you to lunch, or, you know, what is it going to take me to get in there?" And she's like—she just—I slipped her a little money; she shifted her chair over, and I went in. [They laugh.]

And, I mean, I remember spending as much time as possible in front of that painting, and obviously, you know, that—

JUDITH RICHARDS: The institution was open; it was just closed because they didn't guard it?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, they close rooms. Yeah, they close rooms.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, it's very arbitrary, and I think maybe they were going to open it later, and maybe they weren't. Anyway, I bought her lunch, and I got to go into the room. She just moved over. She shifted her little chair over, and I walked by.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that the first time you've encountered that kind of [laughs] situation?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: In Eastern Europe in the old days, almost always I would give a bribe to be taken through a museum where they frankly couldn't be bothered with any visitors. I mean, in the smaller Eastern European museums back in the early '80s, when they weren't making any money, and nobody—you know, they were pretending to work, and they were pretending to pay them, and nobody cared. I mean, there were many instances in smaller museums when you just said, "Look, you know, what do you need?" [Laughs.] You know? "You want a bottle of mineral water? Take me through." Whatever you have to do to get into the museum, because they—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Turn the lights on.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —they didn't actually want you in there. They didn't actually want you in there. But, you know, the other trip that really comes to mind recently—and, again, it's in a totally unrelated field. I was in Bulgaria a couple years ago, and I was in Plovdiv, which is a small city. [00:18:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Can you spell that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: P-L-O-V-D-I-V. Plovdiv. That's the [laughs] sort of Latinate spelling. It's obviously spelled in a different alphabet. So, I was in Plovdiv and, you know, had a good time with wandering around, you know. My partner and I were going through Plovdiv, and I went to what used to be the Communist Workers' Party headquarters in town, which is now kind of a little makeshift museum. And I remember coming around the corner and seeing something so staggeringly, unbelievably great that I couldn't believe it. I stopped dead in my tracks, and I stared at it, and my partner was like, "Oh!"

JUDITH RICHARDS: What kind of institution were you in? Were you in a kind of museum?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It was a little municipal museum. I mean, it was basically, you know, not an—you know, it was like you're trying to pass the day away; you're walking around the city; and there's this building that's 40 feet wide, 60 feet deep [laughs], you know, and you go in, because it's open, and, you know, they charge nothing to go in.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You had no idea when you went to Plovdiv that there would be such a—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I knew Plovdiv has an important role in antiquity, but I didn't know what I was going to see there. I assumed, like most Eastern European cities that are on the antiquities tour, that most of the great things were moved to the capitals. So I know, for example, in Sofia that they have wonderful, you know, Mithraic panels from tombs and things, you know, from altars, because Mithraism was very big during the Roman Empire.

So you have lots of interesting things in Bulgaria, but they're basically in the sort of, you know, big, communist, ornate, central museum in Sofia. So I go in there, find this—there's this little Plexiglas box, and inside this Plexiglas box is the most breathtaking bronze I have ever seen. It had—it was a face of a man; it looked Renaissance. He had eyelashes; he had glass eyes. He had eyelashes of copper. It was extraordinary. [00:20:00]

So I'm looking at it, I'm looking at it, and I'm reading the label, and the label says it's King Seuthes III of 740 BC or something. And I'm saying, "That can't be possible. This is a Renaissance object. It's Poseidon or something," you know. His hair was wet; I thought it was a Poseidon statue. So I asked my partner—I said, "Call over the person here. I want to talk to them."

So he called them over, and I said, "This is amazing, but why is this an antiquity? Why is this not Renaissance?" You know. And she says, "Wait here." She goes away, and she brings back a photograph of a 16-foot-deep hole in the ground, a modern color photograph of a 16-foot-deep hole in the ground, with them excavating this head. I said, "I stand corrected." I said, you know, "That's incredible."

And I remember talking about that object for months to everybody and anybody. I said, "One of the greatest bronzes on the planet is in Plovdiv in the Communist Workers' Party headquarters in a plastic box." I said, you know, "They found it in 2004." I said, "Get on it," you know. [Laughs.] I was like—this is incredible. And sure enough, like a year later, the bronze show comes to London, and there it is with the—in full—you know, 100 greatest objects in bronze. It's King Seuthes III. And I was so, Oh, my God, you know, that's incredible. Those are the kinds of moments, you know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You don't often find neglected objects, but luckily, this one was neglected because it was so recently found, and now it's sort of risen to the top of the pile immediately. I mean, it went from, you know, plastic box in Plovdiv to now, you know, altar throne in the Sofia National Museum via the London, you know, RA show on the greatest bronzes. And so, those are wonderful. You know, when you happen to be at the moment when something is coming out of the ground— [00:22:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you happen to be able to have this person who [laughs] shows you proof, too.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Who had the photographs, because I would never have believed that was an antiquity. I thought for sure this is some—yes, this is some Renaissance, you know, late Renaissance thing, or even early Baroque thing, that, you know, is amazing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Having that photograph at hand to show you gives me the sense that they already knew that it would be mistaken.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I think they were so proud that they recently found it in the ground that they had that at hand so they could tell the story. I think that's a big story for Plovdiv.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know that these regional areas in Bulgaria were the places where they found the Thracian gold hoards, and then, of course, the national government took it all away from them. So they used to have in their little museums—they probably—once, back in the '50s and during communism, they probably had these Thracian pieces, you know, that they found in the ground, and then the National Museum sort of pulled them all into the National Museum.

So for them to have, you know, something that is at that level—I mean, compared to broken pieces of pots, which is what the rest of the museum was, you know, broken fragments of pots and maybe some rings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Wow.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So this was an incredible object.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is there an exhibition that you would love to see created that relates to what you've been collecting and discovering and what you want to learn about?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Every year, there's a new sort of thing on the horizon. I mean, I'm still waiting for the great Quentin Matsys show. You know, there are sort of monographic shows of sort of the unsung heroes of art history that I'm very excited, you know—when Maryan Ainsworth did the [Jan] Gossart show at the Met, you know, those kinds of—the Pieter Coecke van Aelst tapestry show with a few paintings—those kinds of shows are always extraordinary for me, you know, the things that not everybody is going to go see, but that, you know, obviously, it tells a story about an unsung name who may have been either the teacher of someone who went on to achieve, you know, sort of, international fame, or the originator of ideas that became part of our— [00:24:14]

JUDITH RICHARDS: What's the name of the curator at the Met again who did the Gossart?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Maryan Ainsworth. She's great. We love her. She's always willing to take a phone call from an annoying person like me. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] I don't know if there are people, collectors, that you have relationships that you want to mention someone, or competitors. Someone mentioned the name Mark Fisch to me—Jon Landau. If these people figure in—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I know them by sight. Jon Landau I certainly know more. I've spoken to Jon a few times. Very nice man, and very giving of his time, very kind person. I would say George Abrams is the kind of collector that, you know, is, you know, someone—I spent, I don't know, nine hours with him on Sunday. So, you know, we can talk endlessly about art, and, you know, he invites me to his house, and we look at art.

And because he has such an enormous collection—he has one of the great Dutch drawings collections in America, and Dutch metals and bronzes and—you know, we have—he's a cabinet collector, so we can get down and focus on little objects, and we can go one by one by one by one. I mean, you know, he opens the drawers of his metals, and we pull them out, and, you know, it's a great experience. I mean, I love George. [00:26:00]

You know, some—I mean, certainly, the newer collectors who are in the Dutch and Flemish world, I think they're less scholar-collectors. They take advice, and they build wonderful collections, and they're wonderful people, but you talk to them about things other than paintings. You talk to them about business; you talk to them about family. [Laughs.] I think George is the kind of old-school collector, where art consumes probably 45 percent of his brain [they laugh], as opposed to everybody else that I know, where it's 10 or 15 percent.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm trying to think who else. I mean, certainly, Thomas Leysen, who's a phenomenal collector in Antwerp.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Leysen?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Leysen. L-E-Y-S-E-N. And he's also involved with the Corpus Rubenianum; he's a great charitable giver. He's—you know, he sponsors museum events; he sponsors exhibitions. He just built, I think, the first public museum in Antwerp. He bought the [Frans] Snyders House—Snyders is the artist. He bought Snyders's house, and he's turned it into a museum, and he connected it to the museum next door.

So, I mean, he's at a level way above mine in philanthropy, and very chauvinistic about his city of Antwerp, which is wonderful, because, you know, Antwerp has had, you know, off and on, hard centuries and good centuries. And to have somebody really sort of advocating, you know, going to bat for them the way he does, you know, with the Corpus Rubenianum especially, but, you know, with everything. The Rubens House, the Frans Snyders House, the Rockox House. He's doing all of these really focal things. He collects in that era; he collects Antwerp painters, buys great things. He and I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mentioned the Snyders House, the Rubens House, and one more.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: The Rockox.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How do you spell that?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, boy, that's a tough one. R-O—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'll—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —C-K-O-C-K-X. Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: R-O-C-K—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —O-C-K-X, I believe. Rockox.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. I'll look it up afterwards.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Okay.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That just gives me a [laughs] direction.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I think we might have one extra letter in there, but that's okay. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's okay. I'll sort it out on Google. [00:28:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about relationships with galleries and auction houses specifically? Have there been important dealers that you've worked with that have influenced—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —you?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, the dealers that I would say, you know, rise to the level of—even though they're inadvertent, because they don't know that they are—I would say mentors, Johnny Van Haeften and Otto Naumann for sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Haeften?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Johnny Van Haeften. H-A-E-F-T-E-N. And Otto Naumann.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I had—yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And Konrad Bernheimer. You know, people with whom I've sort of done business; I've had long conversations. They may not appreciate how much I'm absorbing from them, but, you know, I'm gratuitously stealing from them. Every time they issue a word I take it. [They laugh.]

So, yeah, they've been very sort of, again, inadvertent mentors. They have no idea. Matter of fact, for a great deal of time in speaking to all three of them, they didn't know who I was. I would just go up and talk to them, and we would talk for half an hour, and I'd walk away. And that's the way that relationship went for years and years and years, and then, all of a sudden, I popped up sort of with them as a dealer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, it, you know—it's been very—

JUDITH RICHARDS: They recognize your interest, the—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —level of your interest.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: They—I believe one of them asked someone who knew us mutually after I walked away, "Who is that guy? He seems really smart." And I thought that was very, very—it was really very nice, because I would just come over and talk about art. You know, I'd just come over and ask them questions about art, and I'm learning more from them than they could ever learn from me—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —because they're there telling me about something that they have, you know. So—[00:30:04]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you think it's a mark of a good dealer that he will engage in that conversation without pressing you to find out who you are?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yes, absolutely. But, of course, the ones who did press me in a different way—and I can names, but I won't—the ones who kind of tried to sort of turn that conversation into a purchasing experience or get lost, they were out of my book before the 15 minutes was by, because I knew they were charlatans. And also, there were many dealers where I could suss out instantly that they knew absolutely nothing, and they were talking nonsense, and that drove me mad, so I would literally just turn around on my heel and walk out the booth. So, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah, yeah. Likewise, have there been specific curators—you mentioned many—who have played an important part in your education, in your development of your interests?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: All of them. Yeah, I mean, that's—the ones who have open doors will always have my heart. [Laughs.] You know, sure, I mean, I could go down a list of 200 people that I've wandered in on and started spouting nonsense, and they tolerate my nonsense, and then they actually engage in a conversation with me. And then, you know, I appreciate it; even if they don't know who I am, I appreciate it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Have you—you mentioned the—a committee at the MFA in Boston—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, it's the Art of Europe.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —and at the Worcester Art Museum. Are there other museum committees that—well, I suppose if you lived in New York, you'd contemplate being part of—but have there been or are there other opportunities like that you've—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I mean, there would be—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —may have collectors'—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —opportunities I think—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —committees—curators—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —yeah. I think—time-wise, I don't think I could participate in any more. I've been invited to a few other things, but it's really a question of, you know—my geography is such that I'm not usually in the neighborhood at the right moment. [00:32:05]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, I mean, I would say that all of those things would be exciting and fun to do, but unfortunately, I don't have the ability to do them all.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, I have some questions that sort of look to the future.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure. Why not.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So now you've kind of put collecting on the back burner—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: For a moment.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What kind of—do you have any plans or ambitions or goals about collecting in the future?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Absolutely. I would—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And issues or concerns about it, too.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I mean, I would certainly say that having a gallery creates an inherent conflict of interest that I have to think carefully about. So if I want to pursue an area of collecting, it almost would be easier, as the curators do with their oaths, to collect outside of your area. And since I'm, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or acquire specifically in conversation with a museum curator for the institution.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Right. That's—you know, those are all possibilities.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you would still be in conflict.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. You know, you're always in conflict. I mean, I found a conflict the other night at the collections committee advisory meeting at Worcester. Worcester is getting ambitious, as I said, and they're buying great things. And so, you know, now that I see they're buying great things, they're talking to people I know about pictures I know, about things I know about, and that creates an inherent conflict. Do I say, you know, "Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, because I know how much this costs, where it came from, blah, blah, blah?" You know, it clouds my view of the artwork. Or do I say nothing?

And that—you know, in those cases, I think only if it rises to the level of a conflict of interest that violates the oath. We have a sort of oath that we take about, you know, things we have personal interests in or things like that. You know, if it rises to that level—I mean, there's an old joke about the museum world is nothing but one big conflict of interest. Well, it is, because you have the curators who are advocating for the artwork, for the artists and the collectors. And, you know, you have this big triangle already. [00:34:00]

In the old art, it's a little easier, because you don't have living artists advocating for, you know, those sorts of things. So you have dead artists' legacies advocating, which I think is a much easier thing to negotiate. But I do see that I have to be conscious of the conflicts of interest, and that conflict of interest also impacts the—you know, I don't want the collectors who buy from Agnew's to think that they're getting second shot at things that I've already vetted and said I don't want for myself.

Not that my collection is that important, but even the idea that I'm sort of peeling off the wheat from the chaff in any way. So that doesn't happen. So if Anthony says, you know, "We've got this great work"—if he came to me tomorrow and said, "I've got this masterpiece by Rubens that we can buy," it would break my heart, but I would understand that, you know, despite that being a lifelong goal is to have that picture, I understand that that's going to have to be offered through the gallery, and that I'm going to have to be hands-off, which is why it's best just to simply pause in the collecting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So have you been collecting in some other, noncompetitive area?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I'm trying to think what I've—no, what I've done is, which is interesting, is I've sort of done that kind of thing your psychiatrist advises you to do, which is I'm projecting. I'm projecting, you know, my sort of personal loves onto things that I'm helping the gallery find, and I'm not taking psychological possession.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It's very Zen.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, it is. It's wonderful. It's actually, you know—it's the kernel of what you do as a collector without the headache of the aftermath. [They laugh.] So, it's the—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Without the upkeep.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —it's the hunt, the pursuit, the discovery, the investigation, the scholarship, the writing. You know, all of those things, and then you just let go, and it's, you know—it is a—I think my psychology is well suited for that in a sense, because I don't have this great lust for the object; I have the lust for the moments that, you know, that sort of— [00:36:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that a new revelation? I would think that you did have a lust for the object, with all the objects you've accumulated.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I have a lust for all the things the objects do in my brain.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The experiences.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, the experiences, the moments, and all of that. And, obviously, I can continue that when I put something on loan by going into the room and listening to people talk about it, you know, and that adds to the experience around the art.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But I think that, in a way—you know, buying the Cezanne, for example; that's not a picture I would buy for my own collection, but it's a wonderful picture to tell an important art historical story, that if Agnew's can tell it really well, then someone may respond and want the Cezanne, or someone may simply want the Cezanne because they want the Cezanne. But, you know, that, to me, is all very rewarding. And I don't have that desire to have that at home, so, you know, I've been able to sort of, I guess, suppress my immune system enough that the lymphocytes are not attacking every object so I take them home [laughs], if you know what I mean.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Does Agnew's publish? Is that something that you are thinking about?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, they do publish, especially catalogues for exhibition and shows and things like that, yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are there specific publication projects that you would be interested in seeing them do?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Absolutely. I mean, obviously, the team is small, so we have to pick our battles carefully.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or bring in outsiders.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, we have to pick our battles carefully. I mean, you know, recently we did some work on Joseph Wright of Derby, and Cleveland bought our Joseph Wright of Derby. And we've obviously done a lot of work on our Pre-Raphaelite exhibition, which was kind of a protracted—we did, basically, a two-year Pre-Raphaelite fiesta, with lots of publications. [00:38:00]

I mean, little things, but just lots of articles, publications, and now, you know, again, contributing to the San Francisco exhibition's works. So, you know, we may not necessarily be the origin of all the writings, but we're a part of it, so we can contribute to, you know, the fundraising effort to write a catalogue, and we can give the pictures; we can do this; we can do that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you're in New York, for example, what are the specific places you most love to go to look at art?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, the Met, number one, of course. I mean, to me, the Met is visiting—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Looking at paintings?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. To me, the Met is visiting friends, you know, visiting pictures that, you know, I know from [laughs]—I look at the granular level of certain paintings because I know them very well. I enjoy exhibitions at the Frick and at the Met. The Frick's very focal; they're very small; they're very focal.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I enjoy—I don't know. I mean, there's so many things in New York. I would say—sometimes I still go over to the Natural History Museum just to poke around. But, yeah, I mean, I'm—generally speaking, I stop into all the galleries that I've always known, you know. There are fewer and fewer of them, you know. The galleries in New York are closing that sell old art, because they're retiring. Everyone's retiring.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And there are fewer young—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Well, I mean, there's a smaller market, so it's something we have to adjust to. And I think, in a way, my art world is still centered in London a little bit. You know, this—sort of the pre-1900 art is still centered in London. I think the auction market is very strong in New York, but the dealer market is certainly a London-based thing, with a few exceptions.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you—what—at Agnew's—so, in this—specifically in this period of your life, what do you think are the greatest challenges you are grappling with as a businessman-slash-collector art expert? [00:40:10]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Well, I think Agnew's has to stay small, and I think that that's challenging, because Agnew's had—has always had big ambitions. And, you know, there was a day when Agnew's had 40 employees and a full building in London and, you know, exhibitions going on 24-7 and had printmaking exercises, had contemporary artists doing things. You know, they were a very large shop.

And today, you know, a good example is, in 1900 the gallery sold 1,001 paintings, and some of them were sold—12 in a row to Frick; the next nine to Mellon; the next 12 to Morgan. I mean, you know, literally, and these are Constable, Claude Lorrain, you know, Millais, you know. I mean, you read the stock books; you just are in awe that, you know, on every page of the stock book is a painting that we now know from a collection, a public collection.

So, those days are long over, and to imagine what a business becomes when you were a thousand paintings a year to 12—you know, and that's—and that each one of those 12 takes as much work as 17 to 20 of the pictures you sold in 1900.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that similar to—is that situation similar to other galleries in London that have once had 40 employees in the field and now are reduced to this kind of more focused business?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I mean, I think you'll see—

JUDITH RICHARDS: The competitors are in equal situations?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I think so. I mean, I think if you—well, I guess, in scale, Colnaghi and Agnew's were the two large players that had the large back of house. You know, they had the large office. And Colnaghi is still extremely ambitious; I think they still have 40 employees, and, you know, their ambition may or may not be equaled by a marketplace that can sustain their ambition, but, you know, time will tell on that. But I think that I'm not willing to roll that roulette wheel. I'm thinking that we want Agnew's to be scaled for the marketplace, and I don't think that being that large is the correct scale today. [00:42:06]

I think today the number of collectors and clients is smaller. I think that they're, shall we say, more demanding of one's time, so you have to be available for them, and you have to work with them more individually. And, you

know, you will have a much smaller book of business; there's no doubt about it. Now, the difference is that in, you know—obviously, in relative dollars, in 1900 you may have sold 1,001 paintings, but, you know, at an average price of 28 guineas.

So, you know—and I'm making that up—but, yeah, I mean, there were pictures probably ranging from—I remember Constables for £14,000, which would have been a tremendous amount of money in 1900, down to literally three pounds or 28 shillings [laughs], you know. Literally, very, very inexpensive. So you have—you know, you have—if you added all of that up and then inflated that with inflation, it probably still wouldn't equal one major sale today, because art inflation is actually much higher than monetary inflation. So, you know, one major painting today selling for $25 million, even though the gallery may only make a commission on it, is still more than the gallery sold in adjusted dollars in 1900. And the difference is, of course, in those days they could sustain an enormous work house with a framing shop and a carriage shop that moved pictures around and, you know, all sorts of services. Retouching, restoration— [00:44:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, you still have conservation in the galleries.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Well, we still have some aspects of those things, but certainly not at the scale. You know, we don't provide client services the way that the firm did back then.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, yeah, I think it's—I think we are scaled right now for the market we're in. We can still do a very large volume in dollars, but a very small volume in pictures—you know, dollars or pounds—but a very small volume in pictures. I think we're right-sized for the moment for the market. Now, we have to be very responsive if that changes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you see yourself or the gallery having a role as a mentor to—well, yourself as a mentor to younger collectors and the gallery for its own interests to expand—to grow a new generation of clients?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And how does that manifest itself?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Well, we talked about that a little earlier. Taste-making is a very difficult game, and, you know, obviously, we're outgunned by *Vogue* magazine, all the way down to—you know, Condé Nast Publications to, you know, you name it—to Sotheby's. Frankly, taste-making is not something we can pioneer. What we can do, though, is we can use the tools of taste-making to try to—you know, again, our market is so small that an expansion of one collector is a significant expansion.

So, you know, we can fight that territory one collector at a time, and if that means a deep engagement with one person to try to interest them in something that we think will be rewarding for them—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I assume participating in art fairs is a way of broadening your audience—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Perhaps collaborations with—in some other— [00:46:02]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —symposium or whatever you can imagine doing—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, we've done—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —that will bring in people and—yeah, and then convert that—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, that's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: —current interest in only contemporary and Modern to—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, our first TEFAF, for which we received some praise and some criticism—which is exactly what I want—as the radio personality says, "One star or five stars, and nothing in between." We had a Bill Viola exhibition of his martyrdom series [*Martyrs: Earth, Air, Fire, Water*, 2014] that he made for St. Paul's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that in New York?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That was at TEFAF, the first time—

JUDITH RICHARDS: TEFAF.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —the first TEFAF.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no, no—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —first TEFAF in Maastricht—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —when I bought the company that year. So we did something, you know, I thought rather radical, which was, you know, Anthony's idea, a very good idea, which was to show—Bill Viola was focused on martyrdom by the four elements, and we constructed this entire idea about martyrdom to build an exhibition around.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And again, we got plenty of press about it. Our older colleagues might have found it charlatanism, but that's understandable. And, you know, obviously, Bill Viola was looking at the Old Masters and thinking about—you know, he says as much in his own words. So, you know, I don't think it was in any way, you know, shall we say, a false unity by putting them together. I thought it really worked well. And though that might have been too bold for our first step out of the box, because it was so much contemporary and so in-your-face, but we had been doing steps in that direction all the way along.

And I think it's working in a sense that people think of us a little bit differently than they did Agnew's under the old ownership, and I think we've come full circle; I think the five years that we've been operating in business, Anthony has done a wonderful job, you know. And Anna especially, too, on the aesthetic, of creating a new aesthetic that people do not any longer associate with the old aesthetic. And they still associate us with the great works of art, with the quality of the art, because Agnew's obviously—unsurpassed in the—I mean, 15 percent of the National Gallery comes from Agnew's. [00:48:00]

So, you know, you think about the quality of the art, but also the taste choices that one makes at any given moment in the history of the firm. This is a taste period that is clearly distinct from the prior taste period and, you know, probably will be distinct from the future taste period, because if we don't evolve in that way, we will basically fail.

If we rely upon the aesthetic of our art and say, Here it is. It's a temple. Come to it if you want. The door is closed; we buzz you in. You can admire; if you want to buy, you pay our price and you buy. Those days are over. Those days are long over. But if we can say, Engage with this art on your terms. If you like this aesthetic—we're trying to sort of coax the camel into the tent, as it were; we're trying to bring an aesthetic that harmonizes with, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, Anthony was creating that kind of bridge when he brought the Bill Viola.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And have you spoken to other contemporary artists who look back to various aspects of the Old Masters as inspiration?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: We are—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And they would be—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —yeah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —crucial partners.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, we are, and we will. I mean, I think that right now—so what we did in the interim is, we did this portraiture show which brought in—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, Lucien Freud—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: It brought in Kehinde Wiley, Lucien Freud, and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —you know, other—you know, Kehinde Wiley's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, these—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: —commentary—we had a Reynolds and a Kehinde Wiley together, and we showed that, you know, basically, this portraiture—you know, the portraiture is not only of its time, but it also can be timeless. So we brought those things together; we did a big show, and we borrowed from major collections. We—I think we borrowed institutional collections, too, which was a rare thing for a gallery.

Then we did the Lotte Laserstein, the Weimar German show, where we borrowed from the German state institutions for the first time ever, as I understand it, as a private gallery, borrowed from museums, Berlin specifically. And we were able to put together a comprehensive Laserstein show. [00:50:05]

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean it's unusual for galleries in London to borrow from museums? I mean, it happens in New York all the time for shows.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, it's very unusual for—well, when you talk about old art, and you talk about a, you know, an institutional collection, I know, for example, Worcester Art Museum has a policy, as do most American museums, you cannot lend to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So I'm thinking of 20th century.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You can't lend to a private gallery.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Now, the difference is if the artist is alive, and the dealer is alive, and you've got, you know, sort of some other motivations. But, you know, if Worcester receives a request from a private gallery, "Can we borrow your Strozzi painting?" the answer is definitively, "No." [They laugh.]

So in this case, we were able to do something which German museums—German state museums with historical art—have traditionally said no to.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And I know, for example, Ordovas Gallery was able to do a Rembrandt and Francis Bacon show, and there I think the motivation was they got the Bacon—

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Sneezes.] Excuse me.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Bless you. They got the Bacon as the plum to borrow the Rembrandt. So you could borrow our Bacon if we can borrow your Rembrandt. So, yeah, I mean, there are some instances, but those kinds of things—so we're doing that, and obviously, we're open and exploring ideas of what the next show will be. You know, we had a bit of a detour into history because we did the Pre-Raphaelite show, which was a big undertaking for us, you know, kind of a year of the Pre-Raphaelites.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that based on a body of work that the galley owns? [00:52:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: That was based on opportunism, because some of the greatest—six of the greatest Pre-Raphaelite paintings ever made were available to us at that moment. So, I mean, signature works: *Saint Cecilia* by Waterhouse, Rossetti's *Proserpine*, *The Heart of the Rose* by Burne-Jones. These are salient works in, you know, in the catalogue, and these are works that the gallery had a historical involvement with in the 19th century. So, it was very, you know—it was the right [laughs]—it was the right zeitgeist.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: You know, it was the right moment. So, yes, something like that that comes—an opportunity like that would derail any project for a period, but then we'd come back to our projects, you know. And you have to do that, I think, because, again, this is a small market with limited opportunities, and you have to work very hard at the ones you have.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have there been any—this might be my last question. [Laughs.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have there been any surprises that you've come across in terms of this, being involved as you are with Agnew's?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, yes, every day. In the archive there are astonishing surprises. I mean, you know, we have about—I'm trying to remember how many photographs there are. I think there are 3- or 400,000 photographs in our archive, and if—

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is the archive that's been acquired by the National—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No, no. No, no, no. This is my private photography archive of the gallery that's in the—it's in the gallery. And so the National Gallery has our historic stock books and archive. We maintain the photographic backup to all of that so that we can research individual paintings in the photographic archive. So in that archive, every time I open any given artist, I will find something astonishing that I didn't know about and—you know, so that—to me, that's just—it's, like, literally a treat a day. You know, you can only do so much of it; otherwise, you have a saccharine high.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] [00:54:00]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: But, I mean, I love opening those folders and just finding out what was sold in 1937 to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, you're new; Anthony's new. Are there any people there who sort of are the continuation?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure. We had four years of consultancy by Christopher Kingzett and Julian Agnew, who were running the firm before. They just have both retired from us. Christopher Kingzett is still working independently in British Modern, and that's his field, is British 20th century, and Julian was more in the Old Masters and 19th century. And Julian's now fully retired, but, yes, I mean, we had a long handover period—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Institutional history, yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, with plenty of Q&A.

[They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Which was great. I mean, it's been a lot more fun than I ever would have imagined. And of course, my fear about doing this as just a simple risk-taking exercise—my fear has proven to be well-founded but measured, so it's something I could wrap my arms around. You know, it's a hydra; I could wrap my arms around and, you know, slowly get a handle on what the risks are, because it is a big beast. It has a lot of history; it has a lot of business that it's done. And, you know, there's a lot out there that I don't know and that every day we have to learn about.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So there's a responsibility to the legacy.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, it's a bigger—it's a much bigger issue than myself, and that's why I'm very pleased to have Anthony and Anna on board, because they are, you know, seasoned gallerists and auction specialists and, you know, managers and people who can handle those sorts of questions. And my role has come down to the things I'm good at, which is financial management and, you know, making sure that we, I think, take measured aesthetic steps. So, you know, when bold ideas come, I'm the kind of, you know, the vetting board for the bold ideas, and I enjoy that. I love that. It's fascinating. [00:56:00]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you see yourself spending more and more time in London?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: No. No, I mean—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or is it important––

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I think, you know, my life is here in the States, and, you know, I—the fortunate thing is that I haven't quit my day job, because if I relied upon—because the gallery is an uneven—a very uneven cash flow. If I quit my day job, then I would put an extraordinary amount of undue pressure on the gallery to be earning period by period, and I think that would be to the detriment of the galley.

So what I'm trying to do is take a very hands-off approach to the sort of—any cash flow that goes into the business is reinvested in the business, which helps us to be able to buy better stock and do different things, and that might give us a slight edge over some other galleries where their owners need to provide their lifestyle from the income.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're not—it sounds like you're not sure you will go back to collecting for yourself.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Oh, no, I will.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You will?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Of course.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] At some point.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, yeah. No, no, no, I will. And again, I mean, I don't—because it's not a family legacy business for me; I'm not planning on handing this off to a son, so I have to think very carefully about what the next generation of the Agnew's company will be.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: I know that Colnaghi has managed to navigate those waters for the last 60-odd years since the original—you know—well, even more than 60 for the—since the original founders were out of the picture.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Agnew's is a different kind of firm, because it traveled through seven hands in the same family, so you have a—you know, I have an even bigger responsibility to make sure that whomever I hand it off to—you know, that they have the same appreciation for it as an asset and don't need it as a source of income. Because I think that's where you can really—you know, that's where you can hurt it, I think, is if you need to run it as a shop, because it really is a five- or six-year business cycle. It's a very long cycle, so you can't think about it as "I need a salary this year," you know, from the ownership standpoint. [00:58:12]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. I mean, you have to be able to provide for everybody that works for the company, but, you know, the company itself may not provide for its shareholders very well. I mean, it may at some point, but it's certainly—it's a measured approach, I think. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is there anything else you want to talk about in terms of future aspirations?

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Well, I mean, you know, the only thing I would add to that last statement is that, in the gallery world, I think that everybody I know does it for love and not for money. You know, with the exception, of course, of some of the contemporary galleries which are really making the money. [Laughs.] But I think that what keeps you in historic art is that that often is where your passion is, and you're bucking the trend, the business trend, but I think that, you know, it provides you with such personal satisfaction.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah. There's one area I meant to touch on, and that is the competition, the relatively recent change, as you talked about the auction houses becoming retail and directly competing with galleries, even though galleries offer this tremendous educational service.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Does that impact Agnew's? Is it—is there—is it an issue that you grapple with, or is there a way that you can manage—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Sure, it impacts us all, and it impacts us all in a very fundamental way. So we're all competing for the same limited consignments, for example—galleries and the auction houses. And if the auction house can earn—can tell a client, "Well, we're not going to charge you anything; we'll charge the buyer. So we're going to charge a buyer's premium; we're going to charge 20 percent from the buyer." So for the average buyer, philosophically thinking about that, they think, Okay, well, I'm going to sell this, and I'm not going to pay a commission. [1:00:00]

And when a gallery approaches the person, and says, "Look, we're going to catalogue it; we're going to do this; we're going to take it to this city; we're going to show it at this fair; we're going to do these things; we're going to pay the insurance on it; we're going to pay the shipping and all of these things, and, you know, we'd like to earn 15 percent." And they say, "Well, 15 percent is outrageous! The auction house will charge me zero." And I'll explain, "Well, actually, they won't charge you zero. They will charge the buyer 20 to 25 percent." And so, they're walking away from that equation with a very large amount of money, "And your picture is going to be part of a catalogue with 160 pictures in it."

JUDITH RICHARDS: And it may get burned.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: And it may get burned, and it may also have little to no attention paid to it, because it may be lost in a sea of other things, and this exciting story we have to tell about your picture will be utterly lost. And, frankly, after the story is lost—and the story is what sells the picture, and then the picture is burned at auction; then it's worth half of what it was before you did that. So think about it from that perspective. And often that's not a message that's simple enough for people to understand.

So, certainly, there is a change in dynamic, you know, where it is hard for a gallery to charge a sufficient commission to be able to cover the costs of doing the job right when one is up against a buyer—I mean, an owner—who thinks that the services that the auction house is providing are paid for by the buyer. You know, there's a lack of understanding [of what] the agency—you know, our agency—would be to them, our agency would be to the seller. And, you know, obviously, we also value our clients; we work with our clients.

And on the other side of the equation, you know, the auction house is marketing to a buyer who's going to pay the fee, and it is going to impact your net sales price, whether you understand that or not, you know. I can point out that prices at auction are still 40 percent below the price that a well-executed private sale treaty could be done at, if the buyer and the seller are fully informed and have all the information, understand the importance or lack of importance of the work, you know, the things that an auction doesn't allow for. [1:02:00]

[END OF schore18_1of1_sd_track04.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: So, you know, there's still an auction wholesale-to-retail spread more because the presentation is slipshod and fast, and, you know, you're in a group of merchandise that goes across the counter on the same day. And that risk is that that day, that buyer is not in the room. That's your real risk.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yeah.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Whereas—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the only alternative—if the person can be convinced—is if you just offer them cash to buy it, and then you have a part of your inventory.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah. Yeah, and, of course, you know, if you think about return on equity, and you're in the business world, you understand that with the inventory turn of a gallery being as slow as it is, buying something and hanging it on the wall is often a very bad business decision. It's what leads to bankruptcies in galleries, is buying too much stock and not selling it fast enough. So, yes, I mean, you're talking about a razor-thin equation which is, you know, buy, consign, don't buy. You know, go—be too ambitious with your consignment terms, you know.

You really want something; you offer someone five percent commission, and your costs are 10, you know, and that happens regularly in historic art. Regularly, you know, that you say, "Okay, we're going to fly it to Hong Kong; we're going to do this show; we're going to put it in this catalogue [laughs]; we're going to hire this scholar to write an article." You know, by the time you're done with all of those things, you—you know, your five percent or seven-and-a-half percent commission is completely consumed, and then some. So, you know, that's why it's useful to have, you know, after you've made the emotional decision to handle something, to have a bit of a business meeting. [00:02:00]

[They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, on that note—

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Thank you.

JUDITH RICHARDS: —I think we'll conclude. You're welcome.

CLIFFORD SCHORER: Yeah, that was great.

[END OF schore18_1of1_sd_track05.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]