



Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with Leo Castelli,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Leo Castelli on May 14, 1969. The interview was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The original audio recording was transcribed in the early 1970s. In 2018, the full audio was reconciled with the transcript. The transcript has been lightly edited for readability.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS : The date is May 14; Paul Cummings talking to Leo Castelli. Well, why don't you tell me something about where you were born? I haven't been able to find that out.

LEO CASTELLI : Well, I was born in a rather provincial city, Trieste, which at the time of my birth still belonged to Austria. At that time, it was not as sleepy and provincial as it is now; because it was the principal port of the mighty Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was quite a busy, cosmopolitan port.

As to my family background, my father—when I was very young—already had a pretty important position in a bank there. It was an Austrian bank that had branches all over in the most important cities of the Empire. I think he had some kind of managerial position. I think he had that because we lived in quite comfortable circumstances. I was about four when we moved to a very nice house with a garden, which he bought; so he must have had the means to buy a little house and garden and so on. We are a family of three. I have a sister older than I am and a younger brother. They are both, by the way, here in the United States.

My brother is a scientist who works in Washington now on government projects. He is a psychiatrist. It's that branch of studies, so he works with drugs. He's about four years younger than I am. My sister is two years older than I. She lives in Riverdale. My brother came here before the war. He had gotten some kind of invitation from the Rockefeller Foundation to do some studies. Then the war broke out and he went into the army. After the army, he went to some kind of state hospital for a while. Then he developed an interest in psychoanalysis, but of the California variety. He lost faith in that and then just got interested chiefly in drug therapy. He got more and more involved in drugs, and finally that became his specialty, and he does work for the government. So that's as far as he goes. My sister is just a housewife. She has a family of her own, a son.

I went happily to school for a couple of years. Then the war broke out. This was in 1914. You see, it's a long while ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was it a private school or public school?

LEO CASTELLI: I don't know, public probably. No, maybe private. It was just a grade school, whatever it was. Then, when the war broke out, the whole family moved to Vienna. Well, actually Italy got into the war later, in 1915 I believe. We stayed on in Trieste while the war was already going on between Austria and Germany, and France and England on the other side. When Italy entered the war on the side of the French, the Allies, then it seemed dangerous to be in Trieste, to be so close to the Italian frontier. So my father was moved to Vienna, as well as the family and myself.

Trieste was a place where all languages were spoken. The native language, of course, was Italian—not really Italian but we spoke a dialect which is very close to the Venetian dialect that we spoke at home. Everybody in Trieste, as a matter of fact, did not speak Italian; they spoke that dialect. In school you learned Italian; it was almost a second language. Now the difference, say, between the Triestine dialect and proper Italian—which is an artificial language anyway because you have dialects all over, in Venice, which is close to ours, and Milan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Rome.

LEO CASTELLI: Piedmont, Naples, Rome, etc. Well, you learned Italian almost as a second language. You do that in all of Italy even now still, a little less now. The difference, let's say,

between the Venetian language we spoke in Trieste and proper Italian would be similar to the difference between Spanish and Italian.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it's that much different?

LEO CASTELLI: Now just to give you an idea, the Sicilian dialect is so different that I would not understand a word of it. Whereas any Italian-speaking person would understand the Venetian dialect more or less if he followed very closely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. That's right, most people in Trieste speak three or four languages, don't they?

LEO CASTELLI: So Trieste, as I said, was a very cosmopolitan port at the time with lots of Greeks and Austrians and Hungarians, Armenians, Turks, what have you—you know, a port city. German was spoken, at least by people with a certain background. It was necessary to know German if you wanted to get ahead in life. After all, we did not know that Trieste would become Italian. So at the age of three or four, you would get a German or German-speaking or Austrian fraulein (a nurse) and then you would learn to speak German. But, again, my mother tongue was this dialect. I had very little schooling before the war broke out and we moved to Vienna, just a grade and a half. So then Vienna was important in my life because that was three years I was in a German-speaking country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In Vienna?

LEO CASTELLI: In Vienna. I went to German-speaking schools. I spoke German fairly well, you know, as a child does. But to begin with, I had some slight trouble in school. But, as a child does, you very rapidly get to learn the language that is spoken around you; so I got along pretty well in school. I went through the third and fourth grade. Then, after that, I went to high school for one year and a half. Then the war was over and back we went to our own little house in Trieste. By this time, Trieste had become Italian. I completed my second half year of high school in Italy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How old were you then, by the time you finished the schools and the traveling?

LEO CASTELLI: Finished school where? Altogether in Italy?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I went to that Italian school which was—Well, it's very similar to the French lycée system. The grade school is four years or five. If you're sort of brightish, then you do only four (as I did). You go at the age of ten to high school. Then you have eight years of high school. Then you have five years, which are just—you learn all kinds of subjects: Italian literature more or less, and mathematics, and whatnot in five classes. Then you have another period of three years which is called actually lyceum (?), you see. In those three years actually, it's a little like the humanities program that you have here in the first two years of college. You have it much earlier there because at that time you are 16, 17, 18. Then at 18, you go to university. There is no college in Italy. So, for instance, I went to law school. Or you could go to medical school, or you study literature, or whatever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you go to law school?

LEO CASTELLI: At Milan. So, what had developed during my high school years—Well, as soon as I got to be about 12, I was very interested in reading, in literature. I was learning French at that time when I was 12, because in Italy every properly educated person speaks French or used to speak French. Well, even now, you'll find lots of Italians who speak French. Almost everybody does. So, I had these French lessons, and I was very interested in reading. I read a lot, always.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of things did you read? Do you remember?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, up to the age of 12 or 13, it was just mere adventure stories like every boy does. But then I started getting interested in real literature quite early. I'll tell you more about it. But, anyway, at 12 I began to learn French, and at 13, there was a number of books that I could read because I had read practically everything there was to read in Italian. So a new field opened up. When I got to be 15 or 16, then I was reading real literature.

I remember when I was 17, for instance, I had scarlet fever at that late age. At that time, when you had scarlet fever, you had to be quarantined for about 40 days. By this time, the family had grown more prosperous, and we had changed houses, and we had a much bigger house, a bigger garden. There was not only first floor, second floor, but there was also a third floor with all kinds of spare rooms. They had put me up there with some kind of nurse to get over my scarlet fever—my 40-day quarantine. There, I remember, I was reading night and day, ferociously. During those 40 days, I read something like 15 or 20 books of—practically all the works of Anatole France. I didn't know exactly what to read. I found out about things from reading various literary magazines that I could pick up. Then I decided that that was the thing to read. So I taught myself actually about French literature. You did not study French literature in Italian schools. So I think that I caught on, or perhaps my French teacher had mentioned earlier when I had French lessons that Anatole France was an important French writer. So I read all of that. Every day someone had to go out to the bookshop and buy me another volume. I also read all of War and Peace in something like one day and a half, you know, just reading continuously.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This was all in French then?

LEO CASTELLI: No. War and Peace, I don't remember whether I read it in Italian or in French. By that time, I also was reading German. Well actually, I had always kept up with German; and it seemed to me that at that time German literature was very fascinating—even more fascinating than French actually, because you had that fantastic period where Kafka and Thomas Mann and all those terribly interesting people were writing. They were writing about problems that seemed to be closer and more interesting to me than, say, what the French in their more classical manner had to say about the world.

There was also Freud and all that that happened in Germany. At this time, when I was about 17 or 18 or a little later, I started reading the famous book of Freud's. I don't know what it's called exactly—*Lectures for an Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. I read all those things and Kafka and Thomas Mann and other people.

I read ferociously to the point where, actually, I was reading so much that I did not do anything else in school. I was not reading the subject I was supposed to read like Dante or Machiavelli or whatever you had to study in school but just things that had absolutely nothing to do with school. I wasn't doing my school work at all. I actually had to repeat one year because I wasn't doing anything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You weren't following the program.

LEO CASTELLI: So then, since I was sick, (I had that scarlet fever and I had an appendicitis operation and all that) at the age of 17, I had to have a tutor to help me out with school; because I was pretty bad not being interested in knowing the usual school subjects. This teacher, who came from some other school, was absolutely amazed. He was a good literary man; he was a poet in his own right. He was absolutely amazed at my knowledge of foreign literature—German, French. There was not much contemporary literature that was interesting at that time. He just couldn't understand how somebody that knew so much about literature could be made to repeat a class when he felt they should already be in college or some such thing. Anyway, that is just to indicate that I was very interested in one particular field and neglected everything else. I was reading even when I was in school. I wasn't even listening. I had a book, reading. I was just obsessive about that. Then at that time also, I started to teach myself English; and I started to read in the enormous field of English literature.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Languages were easy for you?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, languages were easy. Then, when I was about 19 or 20, I was reading (the idol at the time was Huxley, you know) *Point Counterpoint*, that kind of thing but also more serious things. I tried to read Joyce, but I didn't get very far. Anyway, he was a major figure for me. I was trying to read poetry by Eliot. I was trying to read Proust and so on. It was difficult at that early time, but I got interested in English Romantic literature of the 19th century. I was reading Dickens, Thackeray, and all that, which was good basic stuff. I read quite a lot of that. Anyway, I ended my school years at the age of 18. At 19 I went to begin my law studies. In the beginning, I was pretty good at it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you pick law?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I'll tell you why: because my father—being by that time very much involved with the whole economic life of the city and trying to direct my career—felt that I should follow more or less in his footsteps. He was a director on the boards of many important enterprises there: oil refineries, insurance companies, shipping companies, and so on. Well, there were two particularly gigantic insurance companies with world identification in Trieste, one of which my father had some control in, being on the board. He felt that that would be the most interesting career that I could embrace. So, of course, having a legal training would be very good for anybody doing anything. Also, in America, by the way, a lawyer can do practically anything, can also become, I don't know, president or defense secretary or—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: So that seemed to be the idea—that a man with legal training would be able to handle all kinds of things in industry and commerce and so on. That was his idea. I was not really terribly interested in law, but I was happy to get out of Trieste to go to a big city. I had various friends in Milan, so we had a rather happy life. In the beginning, I was pretty conscientious and did study. For the first couple of years, it went pretty well. Then I started neglecting my studies more and more, and, by the end, I just squeezed through and got my degree doing just the minimum. So, I can't say that they were brilliant law studies at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How many years did you study law?

LEO CASTELLI: Four years of law, but I wasn't there very much actually. You see, in Italy you have the system where attendance is not strictly necessary. You get all those mimeographed sheets of the lectures at the end where they come along as the lectures develop, so you don't have to be there. I can guarantee that I was in Milan pretty much, not, well, sometimes a month or two. Then I would go and do some skiing or something else that would be more amusing, and play tennis, and be back in Milan for exams. I did a lot of sports at that time. I liked skiing very much. I was especially good at mountain climbing, where I did some quite good things, and played tennis. It was a very pleasant life that one had in Trieste, I must say, not very conducive to deep studies and activities. But anyway, I finished my law studies.

Then I got into that insurance company to begin with. I found it just terribly boring. Since everybody there was very friendly, the older friends of my father, they really did not exact much from me (which was wrong of them). I was just around; and if I didn't do anything, they wouldn't feel that they should tell me to be serious. So that job didn't go very well. I was still very interested in reading, in literature. That went on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long were you with the insurance company?

LEO CASTELLI: I was there for about one year. When my father saw that things were going very badly there, one day we discussed the subject. I said to him that this really was not what I wanted to do, could I just switch and go back to studies and to study literature seriously. I was pretty good at foreign languages, and I could probably do something with that. There weren't many people who could speak so many languages. Since I could, probably I could get a professorship in English literature or something like that. It would be pretty easy for me. I always wanted to do something more creative than that, but I sort of thought that would be a good beginning to get immersed in it and not have to do anything else. So my father said, "All right, I'll let you do it. But please do me the favor of giving it another year. I'm going to send you abroad; and then perhaps being abroad, you'll find it more interesting and you might change your mind about devoting your time to literature." My father was a good man. He was not a tyrant at all. He was sort of precise and severe, but he would understand problems. He was very good. So I said, "All right. Fine."

PAUL CUMMINGS: This was your first big travel by yourself?

LEO CASTELLI: He said that he'd send me to another branch in Bucharest, which is a very big city in Romania; and if I didn't like it, then he would be willing to help me with the project of devoting my life to literature. Well, I got to Romania. It was, indeed, a very gay city. I got terribly bored with the insurance company there exactly as I was bored with the one in Trieste. This naturally was to be predicted because I was sort of hopeless. Well, I had a good time. Finally, I did get married there, so the whole literary project naturally evaporated. My father had sort of figured it out right. But anyway, I was still bored with things and not liking

it in the insurance company. There was a man there who was a friend of my father's and also of my wife's family who was running there a branch of the largest Italian bank. So I decided to switch to the

bank. I thought it might be a little more interesting, but it also turned out to be uninteresting to me. I was just hopeless. So this gentleman, who was the manager, saw that I didn't make much headway there; and he thought, well, we'll send him to do something else in Paris, which, of course, was something to be seized upon joyfully.

I went to Paris in 1937. Well, I was in some kind of office of the Italian national bank or, as it's called, Bank of Italia, which would be like the Federal Reserve Bank. There I had some kind of a job connected with the special currency that was around there, tourist currency, which I was supposed then to promote, to see to it that people in the various banks understood how to distribute it, what its special interest was. Well, people who got this particular, it was called tourist lire would get it much cheaper than the real lire; and so it would promote tourism, etc., etc.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Right.

LEO CASTELLI: At that time, there was Fascism abroad, too. In fact, I forgot to tell you that I was very glad to get out of Italy when I went to Romania, because I found the Fascist regime rather intolerable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have interest in politics or was it just—?

LEO CASTELLI: No, except that I found it sort of in bad taste and gross. It was really not—I was not so much politically conditioned or interested; but, you see, there were restrictions. England and France were sort of the enemy, and to me they really were the countries I was most interested in. It was a vulgar kind of illiterate movement as you probably know—Fascism. The whole atmosphere was oppressive and certainly no one who had any kind of intellectual life would want to stay there. So I was glad to get out of Italy, although I still remained involved with the Italian government. That didn't bother me too much, since I was in the Federal Reserve Bank business, as long as I was in a free country. So really, it was not serious political opposition on my part. It was just that the whole thing was distasteful, because of the anti-intellectual attitude of the regime.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In your traveling, did you meet a lot of people who had intellectual interests, like writers, etc.?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, not much. I had a friend who attended law school with me and who was also from Trieste, and we shared literary interests. In Trieste itself, I was pretty much alone. There was a tradition there, but there was just like a shadow of it. Because James Joyce had been there, and he had left a certain imprint. The memory of Joyce's being there in 1914 still lingered. Well, all in all, Trieste was a pretty literate kind of place without anything exceptional. The possibilities of finding material in libraries and bookshops was really very limited. I did the best I could to find whatever I needed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have any interest in music or things like that?

LEO CASTELLI: I liked music, yes. Well, that is sort of something that one likes. One begins with opera, and then there was the symphony orchestra there. There were good concerts occasionally. I was interested in classical music—not a great interest. Yes, I rather liked it at the time. Those were the days when one was terribly interested in Wagner, I would say. In Milan, I saw the whole performance of the Nibelung, say, and the Meistersinger under Toscanini. So, there was a considerable interest. That friend that I just mentioned was very good that way, and we had musical experiences. There was a common literary interest, too.

But, generally speaking, say, in Bucharest, in my wife's family, there was a certain literary culture, French culture, because French was a great influence in Romania. They had a good library in which you would find all the French classics and so on. There was a certain cultured atmosphere there. At least my wife's mother was pretty good at that. My father-in-law was a big industrialist with not much interest in literature.

But, anyway, we got to Paris, my wife and I. My wife at that time, as you probably know, was Ileana. There I had this job for a little while. I soon got pretty tired of it. I had a friend there who was an architect; he was French. I had known him because he had decorated the French

Embassy in Bucharest. His wife was Romanian. Anyway, we were friends, and we had a group of friends that were not terribly interesting. But this one was the most interesting of them all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was he?

LEO CASTELLI: He was Drouin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he was an architect.

LEO CASTELLI: He was an architect to begin with, yes. And so, we sort of had all kinds of projects at that time. I still was involved in that currency business, but we were thinking about doing something more interesting. By that time, I had also started collecting, although I didn't know much about anything. I was not in the proper group to know much about what painting actually was. But still being in Paris, I had an idea about contemporary painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of things did you collect?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, wait a minute. I knew about Picasso, about Matisse, of course. I had, as a matter of fact, read Fry and some basic books at the time. So I had an idea about what Cezanne meant and what Picasso meant and other artists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You visited the galleries and the museums?

LEO CASTELLI: Not much. But I did visit them. I had a general feeling about them, since it was connected a little bit, after all, with my interest in avant garde literature. That had some kind of relationship. But the interest was really not really tremendous. My literary interest still dominated. Well anyway, I had started collecting little things here and there, drawings. Maybe I had a Matisse drawing, something like that.

I had also been collecting all kinds of antique furniture. For instance, in Romania we used to travel around in the country and go to the peasants' houses and buy old ceramics, chairs dating back to the 18th century that were painted and that you could hardly recognize as old chairs. But we knew the type. We would find them popular everywhere. There was a certain painted ceramic that had been done at the end of the 18th century with a pewter lid, with very nice images. You would find them in the peasants' homes. You would spot them as you would go through the peasants' homes; and you would offer them a modest sum, which seemed enormous to them, for those ceramic things. So there was this interest already in finding things.

But then one day walking through the Place Vendome, we saw that there was a place in one corner there between the Ritz Hotel and Schiaparelli's (there was an arch there) that was for rent. We had to go to the management of the Ritz to find out about it. Drouin said what about seeing what that is and inquiring to see if you could do something with that, because he had sort of an idea of doing—I was the great art expert, as you can imagine; and he was the man who would decorate apartments in the new manner, mixing antique with modern furniture. So his role, it was decided, would be to make furniture and my role would be to pick out the paintings and the painters to decorate these things.

So we went in and found that the rent was very, very cheap. It was supposed to be very cheap to begin with the first year and more expensive the second, the third; and then it would attain its full figure later on to give us a chance to develop. So we were very optimistic, and we found it was very nice, and we should really seriously consider it. I spoke to my father-in-law, who was in Paris at the time, and asked him would he finance a project like that. He thought it was an interesting idea, and he knew that I was completely uninterested in the bank and hoped that that would really give me something to do that I would have a feeling about. He said okay, he would give us some money. So we started working there. We got the place because it was really absolutely splendid. It had an entrance stairs going up between two large columns and then a series of rooms, something like five rooms but all larger than this one here, very high ceilings with windows on one side which looked out on the garden of the Ritz where people would take tea.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous.

LEO CASTELLI: So it was very, very beautiful. Then we started putting the place in order and working at it. Drouin started building certain pieces of furniture. As soon as a group of

Surrealists that were around, like Dali, Max Ernst, Tchelitchew, and so on, found out that we had this place, they rushed upon us like locusts and immediately had all kinds of plans for our first show. They would do all kinds of things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did they find you or how did you find them?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I knew one of the artists that was extremely active at that time there, because she was from Trieste and she knew about me. This was Leonor Fini. I don't know whether you've ever heard of her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, we had been childhood friends more or less. She knew that I was there. She found out about my project. Of course, she was the chieftain there and everybody came. Then we decided to do a great show. Drouin would make furniture. Since I was the specialist in antiques, I would pick bizarre antique furniture—special things that you would find with Surrealist designs—bizarre chairs, bizarre tables, and so on. That was my province. Then all the Surrealist people would do panels, furniture, objects, all kinds of things. There was also Millie Oppenheim there and Leonor Fini and Berman, Max Ernst, Dali, Tchelitchew. The gallery was not quite ready and the lights were not installed, but we showed one large painting that Tchelitchew had just completed. It was our first show, interim show. The painting was called *Phenomenon*. We showed that by candlelight.

So that was our first show, and then this other show came about. Oh, there were all kinds of things. Leonor Fini and Berman did two special painted cupboards. Leonor Fini's had doors that were like swans, lady swans. Berman's was a rather sinister setting that looked like a wild landscape. His theme would be something coming out of Canaletto—not Canaletto—Guardi, you know, those romantic landscapes. It looked like that. It was quite nice.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a catalogue for the exhibition?

LEO CASTELLI: There was just an invitation catalogue. Then Millie Oppenheim designed a table with legs that were the legs of some animal or bird—and a hand mirror that was all like hair, like locks. I wish I could find it. Leonor Fini designed tall panels with all kinds of heraldic figures. There was all that antique furniture and then the modern furniture of Drouin's. We had a grand opening. That must have been in April or May, May rather.

PAUL CUMMINGS: 1939?

LEO CASTELLI: 1939, yes. That was our first and last show in that particular place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened after the show?

LEO CASTELLI: The war broke out. Well, we all went away for the summer; and then, in September when we came back, the war had broken out and Drouin got into the army. I went to various parts to begin with, but finally we were in Cannes where my father-in-law had a house. Then, when France fell, I little by little felt that it was about time to clear out. Then we all went—Ileana and Nina, the child (she was six then), and the English

nurse that we had (who by the way is still with Nina and takes care of her little children). We went by a very complicated and circuitous route, and we got finally to New York. This was in 1941.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you go through Spain or something?

LEO CASTELLI: I couldn't go through Spain. I got stuck for a long time in Morocco, and finally I got false passports so we could go through Spain. There were all kinds of things that you could do at that time with money. So I got these false passports, Moroccan passports, and we could go to Tangier and across Spain to where we got an old creaky boat. It took us about 15 days to get to Cuba.

Morocco was pretty good to begin with; we spent about two months there. When we got there in the fall, food was pretty plentiful; and then, as we stayed on, it got scarcer and scarcer. But anyway, there was no real suffering.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it took about two years to get here?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, no. I started actually thinking of going away in June 1940 at the time of the fall of France. At least I began thinking it was time to go from there because the Germans occupied half of France. I was in the sort of free part, in Cannes; and, well, one never knew when they would start occupying the rest of it. So then it was time to think and clear out of there.

We had many friends who helped us. It was very complicated. By November we had collected an impressive number of visas of all countries including Mexico, Brazil, because we didn't know where we could get to. So, we had those passports and visas. Finally, we got to New York in spite of our Brazilian and Argentinian and other visas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: From Cuba, you went where? To Florida?

LEO CASTELLI: No. From Cuba in the same ship—We just stopped in Cuba and then went on to New York. Then, after a few months, I went back to Cuba to come in in the regular way because I had come on—I don't know what kind of visa it was at the time—a most provisional one that wouldn't permit me to stay more than four weeks, I guess. Anyway, I got here on a regular basis by March 1941.

Then here there were all these people that I had known like Dali, Max Ernst, and so on—and Julien Levy, who knew about me and my activities. Julien Levy said, "Well, why don't we start something terribly interesting." But I was very— Well, I had little money. My father-in-law was here, too, but—Well, he had saved some money, but he was not very willing to do much about me at this particular point. There wasn't really much left; he had lost plenty of money. So I really didn't know what to do when I got here.

So I sort of started vaguely— I thought that maybe I could go back to my teaching project. By this time, my interest had shifted to other things. Curiously enough, I didn't think of doing studies in art but rather in history. Perhaps I was terribly interested in history because I wanted to know why this war had broken out. I wanted to know. This was something that interested me more than anything else. So I thought maybe doing serious studies here would sort of give me the key to why we were at war and so on.

So I went to Columbia. There, since I had the law degree, they gave me full credit for college; and I could start on a master's degree and Ph.D. I did that for a year. I really liked it very, very much; but I never finished because I got drafted into the army.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had an interesting time in the army, I understand.

LEO CASTELLI: I had a very interesting time in the army, yes. I had basic training at Fort Bragg. They treated me like everybody else. It was pretty tough. I really didn't like it very much to begin with, but I got adjusted to it after a while and did nicely. Then a captain in my company said that I was being thrown away in the regular army and that he would try to get me into some kind of outfit where I could put my knowledge of Europe and my languages to better use. So after I was through with basic training, I was sent to Camp Richard, which was a military intelligence training camp.

It was very, very, very interesting there. There were all the simulated conditions there. At times you'd have thought you were in Japan or in Germany or God-knows-where. There was German materiel and people in German uniforms. There were those war games that we played, and everything looked very authentic.

So there I was trained for France, something that was called M.I.S. My role, if I ever got to France, (which I didn't), would have been to find out from the civilian population data about the enemy. For instance, I'd go to a village and the people would just have seen some German units go by. I would find out (knowing all the German armament and knowing all about German uniforms, etc.), figure out from data that I would extract from them like what the guns looked like—I would figure out what kind of unit it would be—anti-tank or whatever—that had just passed. I would piece this information together. But it never got to that because they felt that I would be wasted on a job like that. They didn't really need personnel any more for that because the war was drawing to an end.

They felt that I could be much more useful as an instructor. That seemed to be what I was going to be; but then one day they called me and said, "Would you like to go overseas?" I said, "Yes, of course." I was bored. "We've got something for you. We cannot tell you what but you'll find out."

I was sent to Washington with some other people I knew who were in my class or had been. Since two of them spoke Russian and one other one spoke Romanian, it was very clear to me right away that we were going to Romania. Actually, that's where we went. We were part of the Allied Control Commission. You know that Romania was invaded by Russia. There was something like one million Russians there. The fate of Romania was sort of going to be decided by several commissions. There was the Russian army, and an English outfit, a United States outfit, and a French outfit. These allies were supposed to decide the fate of Romania. We were a unit of about 50 people altogether. There were more officers there than there were men actually. I wasn't an officer. I just, at that time, had finished reaching—I was something like a private first class. So I was sent over there; and I got up to the rank of techmaster sergeant, but slowly, over a period of two or three months. My role was to be interpreter to the general. There was a general, a few colonels, you know, a sort of intelligence outfit. There were signal corps people to keep communications with Italy. That was our headquarters at Caserta and a plane that would take things over, back and forth.

In the beginning, it was very, very interesting. I was constantly with the general, interpreting for him with Romanian political people—like prime ministers and so on—about what ought to be done there. Then they objected at my not having an officer's rank. They said it was not proper that they should discuss things with a mere sergeant. On the other hand, the general did not have the power to give me a commission. There was all kinds of red tape involved there. So he said to me, "Well, you can't do that anymore, so just go around and find out about things." That's all. My role was just to be around. So I had total freedom. I had no precise role anymore.

I knew lots of people there; I had a very good time. There was an underground resistance movement against the Russians because things went from bad to worse. After a while, the Russians became dominant, and whatever we did was just absolutely to no avail. We had absolutely no strength there, no voice. I remember Averill Harriman coming there and we talking to him and explaining to him what the situation was, how really we had no control anymore at all with the situation and that he should tell the optimistic President Roosevelt that, as far as we could see, the Russians were no friends of ours, that they were just taking over. He did a good job, but he did not convince Roosevelt. As you know, at Yalta, if he had listened a little more closely to what Harriman had to tell him, probably it would have turned out very differently. Anyway, that was it. I sort of went around and observed the underground movement that I was in contact with at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you have to do with them?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I was interested to find out and to report what they were doing, what the chances were for them to re-oppose the political takeover by the Communists, and so on. I mean, it was all a hopeless thing; but it was interesting to find out what was done there, what could be done. After all, we tried to help them as much as we could. I became very, very unpopular with the Romanian C.I.A—whatever it was called in Russian, NKVD. Well, we got reports in in which I was mentioned very often as an element that they didn't like at all there. So I often feared that in one way or another on a lonely road they would bump me off. But it didn't happen, fortunately. Well, I went through that, and then I came back in March.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long were you there, then?

LEO CASTELLI: From December 1944 to March 1946, one year and a few months. Apart from doing the job, which was interesting, it was a great deal of fun actually. First of all to begin with, we lived (all the personnel, not the officers) lived in a hotel which was very, very comfortable, each room with bath and food downstairs whenever you wanted to eat. But then, that didn't seem to be good enough for us, and so each one got situated in a house of his own. You know, what happened actually was that all the rich Romanians who had marvelous houses and didn't want the Russians to take over had some kind of vague protection if an American was there. So they were very eager to have an American around. So I got to live in a marvelous house with good treatment. Well, that was the war experience.

Then back to New York in 1946. That's really when things started. As I told you briefly, I really couldn't do anything with Julien Levy and the group of painters like Dali and so on, who were around and who all urged me to do something. There was no money, and especially there was a total lack of experience on my part. I didn't know anything at all. I had

started a gallery, but it had been going for something like two months and that was the end.

But an interesting thing is how did I continue my career in art. After a year in Romania, I got a furlough and went to Paris. This was the end of 1945. That was a rather complex trip because first of all—Well, our plane took me up to Belgrade and I had some papers saying that I could use any kind of plane that came along up to Paris and then back. In Belgrade I was lucky and, after a few hours, I found a plane that was going to Vienna, a military plane. In Vienna I was less lucky. I got stuck there for something like three days before I found a plane going to Paris. But that was very lucky because every morning I was hanging around the airport to find a flight. There was a pilot waiting there and he said, "Where do you want to go, Bud?" I said, "I'd like to go to Paris." He said, "Hop in." It was some general (I don't know who he was) who was going from Vienna to Paris. So I had a very nice trip from Vienna to Paris in a general's plane.

Then in Paris to my great astonishment, I found the Drouin Gallery. I had had absolutely no communications with the outside world, especially with France, since it was occupied by the Germans. Well, it was not occupied any more; by then it had been cleared. I found Drouin there in the gallery functioning and it had become a serious art gallery. It was no longer the kind of nonsense that he had wanted to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What could he do at that point?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it was very easy. There were all kinds of experienced gallery directors who were famished to find a good gallery to work in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But there was no market.

LEO CASTELLI: So he didn't do anything. But here was this man (I can't remember his name now) who he hired to run the thing, and he brought in a few painters, more or less indifferent, who were around in Paris at that time. It was during the war. Then after that, he got two better people who actually now still own the Galerie de France—Caputo and Prevo. They brought in better things like Picasso. I don't mean Picasso himself but paintings of Picasso, paintings of Rouault, and things like that. So what I actually saw when I got to the gallery were some very nice Picasso gouaches and little Rouault paintings and so on. These two people also knew quite a few real painters of the post-Picasso era, such as Manessier and Le Moal. He had also got to know Michel Tapié at that time. As a matter of fact, I think Michel Tapié really succeeded those two and then brought in really art. And there was Dubuffet and Albret that Michel was collecting at that time, and people like De Stael and Wols. I saw a beautiful Wols show in March when I got back from— (You see, I went on that furlough but then went back to my base and then stayed another three months there and then back to Paris.) Then at that time, I saw the Wols exhibition. Yes, it must have been then. So there was Wols, there was Fautrier, not Fautrier, yes, Fautrier, too. All had the beginning of their career there at Drouin's.

He also had gotten in touch with Mrs. Kandinsky, so there was Kandinsky there. He had gotten in touch with Pevsner; there were Pevsners there. So it was really great. The possibilities were immense. There was no money and nobody was buying. But, just imagine. He had Kandinsky. He had Pevsner. He had these new people like Dubuffet, Fautrier, and Wols, and so on.

But everything was going very, very badly. No money, nothing. No market, zero. Well, he asked me at that time, "Do you want to continue with me?" I said, "Of course I'll continue with you." He said, "That's wonderful. So you go to New York. Maybe in New York there's more business than here." I said, "Fine, we'll do that." He really had something there.

So then I got back home, and he started sending me things. For instance, a roll arrived and in the roll was a Kandinsky and other things like that, especially there were lots of Kandinskys. Well, I didn't know anybody really. I had an apartment up here on the fourth floor. This house had been bought by my father-in-law back in 1942, so I had an apartment up there which didn't cost anything. There I had parties, you know. I had some paintings that were hanging there. I had bought little by little. I didn't have much money, but I bought a few here and there. So I had some very nice modern things. I was especially in contact with Nierendorf at the time, and Nierendorf had Klee and Kandinsky.

Then I had a great windfall. This was in 1947. Agatha Scheyer out in California had sent all her stuff to Nierendorf, and a few weeks later Nierendorf died. So there was all of Agatha

Scheyer's stuff and all of the Kandinskys that Nierendorf had there. His directrice, directress, Mrs. Pritic, was a great friend of mine who had sold me—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who is that? I don't know of her.

LEO CASTELLI: She was called Mrs. Pritic. She disappeared out of circulation. Anyway, she had sold me a few things. I don't know how I bought her things because I didn't have any money really. Drouin was sending me all those Kandinskys, and my only customer was the Baroness Rebay of the Guggenheim. She would buy those fantastic Kandinskys. I had some early ones there, say like 1914, 1915 Kandinskys that would fetch something like \$250,000 today. I remember the best one that I sold her I sold for \$4,000, which seemed a tremendous sum of money at that time. She seemed to be the only one who bought them, for the Guggenheim. So she was there. There was Sadie May of Baltimore that I got to know. She has died since. And there was Albert (Alfred) Jensen going around with her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. With her.

LEO CASTELLI: He was new. He was very well-informed about art, had a good eye, and so I had—Well, it was much later though. It was in 1949 that I broke up with Drouin, so I don't want to jump the gun. I want to stay in the earlier period. So I had this apartment.

Oh! The windfall was that at that point this Mrs. Pritic said, "It's just terrible. Now we'll have the estate on our necks, and these things actually don't belong to Nierendorf. They're here on consignment. The things of Balcashar (?) are here on consignment. They belong to Mrs. Kandinsky in Paris. What shall we do? We have to get them out or we'll be blocked for years while this estate thing goes on." So she said, "I'm going to send a telegram to Mrs. Kandinsky and see what we can do."

It was just really like a whodunit. Right away she got a telegram back saying, "Give everything to Castelli." So we whisked all the things out before anybody came. One day, while the body of poor Mr. Nierendorf was still warm, we whisked all the things out, and they put them all here down in the basement, all the Kandinskys. There were something like, I would say between large oils and small oils, more than 30 oils and a great number of watercolors and drawings. Those I started to sell plus the ones that Drouin was sending over from Paris in rolls. I was selling those things especially to the Baroness Rebay and maybe to a few other people. I can't remember now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you get to meet her?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I was in the art world. When I got here back in 1941, everybody knew me from that very brief experience I'd had in Paris. Julien Levy knew me. Dali knew me. Max Ernst knew me. I got to know Peggy Guggenheim right away.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the European artists.

LEO CASTELLI: It was all there, right from the beginning. I can remember going to Peggy's before I got mixed up in the war, say in 1942, and seeing a huge Pollock there. I don't know whether I met Pollock; maybe I didn't at that time. I met him later. Anyway, she was already talking about Pollock. She invited me to have lunch with her. To them, I was sort of an interesting person though I couldn't offer anything at the moment really. But they sort of felt that I was one of them, and they all knew me.

And I invited them. I had great parties at my house up there on the fourth floor with everybody around in the art world. In the period between the time of my arrival and my going to war, I didn't do much there; but after the war really, I had a substantial kind of activity in my apartment—all kinds of good paintings that I had bought. It was fantastic. I had a Mondrian that I had found.

All that I had got between 1946 and 1947 when Nierendorf died. In that span, I really had developed quite an activity. Yes. Still there was no question of my opening a gallery. So I had all those people, Peggy Guggenheim, Julien Levy. I can even remember one party that we had. It must have been after Christmas or just around Christmas. Julien Levy got terribly drunk, and he fell into the Christmas tree that had real candles on it. That was a real catastrophe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, boy!

LEO CASTELLI: It was very nice. We had very simple kind of furniture—Eames furniture, you know. I always tried to keep things as modern as I could as soon as I could. So there was some Eames furniture, and there were especially simple sofas and things. A table, the dining room table, was a round Victorian table. Maybe you can still see that table, but you could see it for a long time in de Kooning's studio. When I changed my furniture and bought something else (I don't know what), Bill, who was a great friend at the time, said, "Could I have the table? I like the table." And I gave it to him. It must still be around in East Hampton, I'm quite sure. It was in his studio for many, many years in his various studios, on Fourth Avenue first and on Tenth Street later on. I can still remember it there. So there were these parties, and I really was doing quite nicely in developing my relations with the art world.

But I still sort of appeared more like a collector about town than an art dealer, although I was doing some selling here and there of the Drouin things, as I told you. Well, actually what happened is that Drouin was sinking. He had no money; things were getting worse and worse. I was doing all the sales here, and then he would write me desperate letters, pages and pages long, explaining the terrible situation he was in, that he needed \$1000, \$2000 immediately. I was supposed to make some money on these sales, but I never could keep a dollar because he was so desperate. He was sending me telegrams so that I thought the world would come to an end (which it actually more or less did for him). I was sending all that money back.

I was involved in some kind of business at that time; because, during my absence, my father-in-law had bought an interest in some kind of textile thing for himself. Then there was an annex with the family that he was involved with that did run the textile mill in Jamestown, New York, I believe. There was a brother there who manufactured sweaters, so he had bought an interest in that. I was approached to take care of that. That was a horrible experience that lasted much too long, and again one of those things like the bank and the insurance company in which I was not interested at all. I spent just a little time there just to be present more or less—too much for my taste. A little money but not much came out of that to keep me alive. Otherwise, with Drouin clamoring for all that money, I wouldn't have made a penny; although probably, if I had no other source of income, I wouldn't have sent him the money.

But really, there were a few very, very meager years that we had from 1946 up to, oh, I would say 1955, 1956. Fortunately, we had the apartment here which didn't cost anything; but, believe me, at that time for many years, it was rather difficult to pay the grocery bills and things like that actually. Really to the point that, when I did that Ninth Street show in 1951—I was the rich man there—I paid for materials to paint the place and for the famous announcement that Franz Kline did, and it cost about \$125. I had spent all in all, I think, something like \$450; and I don't know how because, actually, I didn't have it. But anyway, I always managed to wheedle out money from one thing or the other.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was a lot of money in those days.

LEO CASTELLI: That seemed a tremendous fortune to all those people, and they were all terribly grateful. So I got a present from all of them. For instance, I got a marvelous oil on paper from Bill called Philip Square that, very regretfully in the beginning of my gallery, I had to sell to just survive in the gallery. I sold it to Ben Heller for \$10,000. Just imagine, my \$450. This is just one example. I still have the Kline that Franz gave me that I didn't sell, but other things that I got I had to sell little by little to survive. So that was that period.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Before we get into the '50s and the Ninth Street show, I'm just curious about the artists that you knew in New York and the kind of activity that was going on.

LEO CASTELLI: You see, I had an approach that other people didn't seem to have here. The art world was really rather green, immature.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, there were not many galleries.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, you can't imagine how few there were actually. There were very few shows, very few galleries. Kootz had just barely begun. Janis did not exist. Betty Parsons had barely begun, although she had begun. Who was here? There was Nierendorf. There was Curt Valentin, who had a good gallery; but he was handling, you know, Klee, Juan Gris, and Lehmbruck, and those things. There was really nobody handling American things; there was

no American painting. Except, Julien Levy was handling Gorky and there was Peggy Guggenheim.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Charles Egan was—

LEO CASTELLI: Charles Egan came later. Charles Egan wasn't there when I began my career. He began about that time, in 1947 or 1948, but there was nobody—There was Nierendorf. It was an entirely European-oriented kind of art market here. There was Edith Halpert. She had the American thing, and she was showing Ben Shahn and Reginald March and those things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Rehn nobody was interested in. It was an older gallery.

LEO CASTELLI: It comes back to me now how provincial and how poor this market was. The only people who were doing something were Julien Levy—He was showing Gorky (that's to his eternal merit), who he considered to be a Surrealist. Pierre Matisse was doing a good job relatively speaking, because he had Matta and Lam, who were, after all, two very live forces then, much more than anybody else and a great influence also. Especially Matta is somebody who animated everything in a fantastic manner. He was in touch with everybody, and he was responsible really for Gorky's waking up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've only met him a couple of times.

LEO CASTELLI: He's very bitter now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He seems to be somebody who had enormous energy and was involved.

LEO CASTELLI: Enormous energy, enormous influence. He was incredibly active. Unfortunately, he left under very sort of sad circumstances. You probably know, since you are doing this thing. No doubt you've heard it from others. He was certainly partly responsible for Gorky's death, we can say, indirectly. The way he carried on with his wife, and Gorky having that terrible accident, and also having cancer to boot certainly led to poor Gorky's suicide. So then, the situation being so ugly—. This was back in 1948, I think, Gorky died. Matta left and went to Italy and, from then on, he never came back actually. Except, a few years later, he came back and he found the situation with abstract expressionism with de Kooning dominating the scene. He sort of tried to make friends in a condescending way, saying that Pollock wasn't so bad after all and de Kooning— And those people didn't give a damn about him and didn't want to hear from him anymore. So, he left in anger and never came back, actually, and became an embittered political Leftist-oriented man going to Cuba, being a bosom friend of Castro and so on. He made a lot of money, too. He still makes a lot of money.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. As far as I know, the only critics who were active then were Greenberg and Rosenberg.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, that's another chapter that I have to talk to you about a great deal if you want to hear about the strange situation there with Greenberg and Rosenberg. Greenberg I've known from very early times. As a matter of fact, it was Greenberg who first introduced me to certain painters, and I think he introduced me to Gorky. Yes, in a certain indirect way, because I met Gorky for the first time at a party to which Greenberg, I think, had invited me. That must have been in early 1947. Somebody, V.V. Rankine, reminded me of that, and she knows a lot. V.V. Rankine was involved. Her brother-in-law or something was Gorky's wife's brother or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right. There was some—

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. There was some connection there with Gorky. I have even visited Gorky's place in the country in Connecticut with her. I can remember very well. She was young at the time. So anyway, Greenberg had taken me, I believe, to that party at Gorky's. V.V. Rankine, who I saw the other day, reminded me of that party; and she even told me what house it was in. It was her house maybe, I don't know, that she shared with somebody. That was the party where I really, I think, met Pollock for the first time. He was terribly drunk.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: This is May 22 and it's reel two. Well, could we start again after the war

when you returned to New York and were getting involved with the New York scene as it was then?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. How did I get involved with the New York scene? Well, I told you that I had some contacts with it before the war.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. With the Surrealists and Julien Levy.

LEO CASTELLI: With the Surrealists, the people that had come over from Europe to America to the Julien Levy Gallery and so on. Then my contact in Paris again with Drouin right after my return from the army assignment and also money problems relating to my connection with Drouin. I told you also how this connection ceased in 1949.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: So, in the meantime, how had I gotten to be more involved with the New York art world? Well, there was a general attitude, I think, that I had that perhaps was a literary one in a sense, for which there was a tradition in Europe and perhaps less of one here, of groups forming like the Surrealists and before them the Impressionists or the post-Impressionists, and Gauguin and his group around, and so on. Well, I'd heard I'd read about what all these incredible people were doing—how they had friends, protectors, hangers-on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like critics and poets.

LEO CASTELLI: Critics, poets, Apollinaire, and all that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'm just curious about that because you had read so much. Did you ever have any interest in writing?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, I did have that. As a matter of fact, I did want to become a writer, novels and things like that. But, actually, I never subjected myself seriously to the discipline of writing. Perhaps I didn't even understand in an odd way just how it was done. You just couldn't sit down and do it. It really took quite much more knowledge about the process. Perhaps I would know how to do it now. I know that it's just tedious handiwork. At that time, when I was very young, it seemed to me that the inspiration should be there and that I should be able to write my first biographical novel without any preparation, without any trouble. But it never came about. I started writing something or other, but this was not the way in which a book is written, I suppose. At least I was not successful with that approach.

What was interesting for me though were the groups that gravitated around literary figures and around great painters. To me, for some reason, there was fantastic prestige attached to that, to the great painters—well, a sort of hero worship, perhaps, of which there is more in Europe than there is here. This is supposed to be a very democratic society, and that kind of thing (what they now call a personality cult) is generally discouraged.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, except the movie stars and things like that.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, there is that about movie stars perhaps, but the cultured people didn't seem to be then very, very much—Nobody seemed to be very interested in cultured people, which surprised me. But I was, because in Europe one was interested in cultured people. They were heroes. Here they were not. So, I followed the European bent. I was also, after all, otherwise involved; because my livelihood, too, in a way, I hoped it to be. I really didn't want to make it my livelihood actually. I was more interested in the environment, in the milieu, than in making money out of it. Probably, if I had been a clever businessman, I could have made much more out of it than I did. For me actually, that was not the point. The point was to be with these people, to live their lives.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'm curious. Was your wife interested in the art scene? Was she very involved in it?

LEO CASTELLI: My wife was Ileana at that time. At that time, maybe she felt a little bit left out, but she went along pretty well. She had a certain interest in it. As it turned out, later on she got very, very involved when I opened the gallery here with the artists, with Rauschenberg and Johns and Lichtenstein. She had a keen eye for all the activities that the artists were involved with. In fact, she still goes on being terribly good at it, much better than I am. She's freer than I am. So, when she comes to New York, for instance, she spends

days and nights with the artists again, is present at performances, happenings. She's very good at that, better than I am, actually. But, anyway, in the beginning, perhaps all these parties that I was giving at the house (and really we couldn't quite afford them) but they were very good and everybody did come to those parties. Well, she probably disliked certain people that I was very much involved with in the beginning like, say, Matta. She probably liked the abstract expressionists better. They seemed to her less snobbish, more sincere people. So, when I got more involved with the Pollocks and the de Koonings, then she was much more with me than before with those other...

PAUL CUMMINGS: With the Surrealists.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, with the Surrealist crowd, which was also rather inhuman. As you know, in their paintings, too, they tend to be sadistic; and they tend to be extremely egocentric. Well, all artists are; but they particularly were in a very, very patent way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, I know.

LEO CASTELLI: So, after Matta left, I think that was really a turning point, I would say—Matta's leaving. I was very friendly with Matta and was very influenced by whatever he thought. He had a very lively spirit. For me at that time, he seemed to be the ideal of the very much aware, intellectual, involved artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did he leave? Do you remember?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, yes. Well, everybody, I think, knows that there was Gorky's suicide that played a role in his leaving America abruptly. And he was also married at that time to Patricia (now Batiste), and that marriage was going very, very badly on both sides. One can't say that anybody in particular was responsible; they were both responsible maybe. I don't know. It begins always somewhere. As you probably know, Matta had an affair with Gorky's wife, Agnes; and Gorky was very sick. He had cancer to begin with and also he got into an automobile accident with Julien Levy. Something happened to his neck. He wore one of those braces, and he couldn't use his arm any more very well. As a matter of fact, I remember going out to the country (I don't remember exactly where. Was it somewhere in Connecticut that he had a house—actually an old barn transformed) after the accident. He seemed to be pretty steady then. That must have been pretty close toward the time when he committed suicide. It was after the accident; he was sick. He had the brace. I can remember him walking around with the brace. That must have been in the spring, and then he killed himself in the summer. Yes, that's right. So it was really close. There were his children there.

A person that you should see about Gorky (and about that period), who knows a great deal about it because she happened to be also at that time (I don't know what relationship she had to Agnes Gorky) was called Moguch (?). He had probably invented that rather mean-sounding name for her. It was V.V. Rankine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, yes. You mentioned her.

LEO CASTELLI: V.V. Rankine, actually I think, was a sister-in-law in a way. I don't know exactly. You'll have to find out from her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There is some relationship, I know.

LEO CASTELLI: It's very interesting, because I saw V.V. not so long ago at a party, and we started reminiscing about that period. Lots of things came up that she remembered that I had completely forgotten. She remembered, for instance, that visit to the Gorky's where she was and Gorky with his brace quite vividly. Also, she remembered a party that apparently took place in a loft that she had with her sister. This was a party for Gorky in which I think I really met Pollock for the first time. At least, I have a very vivid memory of seeing him for the first time as Pollock and very drunk. Maybe I had seen him before the war at Peggy Guggenheim's, but of that I have no clear recollection. I remember seeing that large painting that he did at that time. But anyway—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you get to know Peggy very well?

LEO CASTELLI: Peggy? Well, it was not a terribly—How could one have a close relationship with Peggy? That was impossible. She belonged again to that arrogant, Surrealist troop and unless you were incredibly "in" (which I was and wasn't, really. I didn't have enough to offer,

I believe, at that time to be really "in" in), you couldn't really be her friend. She had a few close friends but—Well, I was also too young perhaps, too unimportant. She came to my parties and she invited me to hers. And we had occasional lunches and things like that, but the relationship was not close.

Then, of course, it lapsed because she left. She left about that time, too. It must have been about 1948 that she left the gallery, *Art of This Century*, that she had up on 57th Street that is now Bonwit Teller's. So she disappeared, and then. Well, after some going around both in Paris and Venice, I think she bought that almost immediately and settled there. Then after that, she became to me entirely uninteresting because she lost touch with America. She didn't pursue her search at all. She didn't buy any Pollocks any more. She stopped dead. She continued to sort of be interested in a few local Venetian painters of no consequence. So that she indicated something that I always suspected—,—that she actually had no original ideas and that all her ideas came from the people that surrounded her, Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, Matta, and whoever was a close friend and advisor. Once she isolated herself in Venice, that was the end. I think that's the truth about Peggy, and I think that probably lots of people will have the same hunch about her that I have.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, one would even suspect that from reading her book.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. So I was just saying that because I feel that V.V. Rankine could provide you with very, very interesting material about the period of Gorky's death, Matta, and Agnes, etc. that she would best have. Anyway, Gorky then committed suicide. Matta went away. I think that must have been 1947. Yes, the fall of 1947 if I'm not mistaken.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Something like that.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. It was the fall of 1947. Peggy went away also about that time, so two figures disappeared there. Peggy was doing a very interesting job, and it's a shame that she left. Of course, she was under the influence of Matta, but Matta had quite a few friends in the budding American movement. I won't say the abstract expressionist movement, because she was showing Baziotes there at *Art of This Century*. She was showing Motherwell especially. Well, and really de Kooning hadn't come up seriously, and Kline hadn't come up seriously, and Pollock she was showing also. She had all the elements there to become a very, very important central focus for this movement. But then she left. It is really interesting to ponder over what would have happened if she had stayed. But then all those painters were taken over by two galleries at that time, as you know. One was Betty Parsons and the other one was Kootz.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Didn't Howard Putzel have something going at that time?

LEO CASTELLI: Putzel was around. He was a man about town; but always, as far as I can remember, he was very ineffective. No, he didn't have anything. At that time actually, there were still some very active galleries, important ones, but European, exclusive European folks, I would say, like Curt Valentin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Curt Valentin and Dudensing.

LEO CASTELLI: Valentine Dudensing, whom I also got to know briefly. I knew him well. He also left. Pierre Matisse, of course, was there. Pierre Matisse was interesting at that time because he was really pioneering. He was handling Dubuffet right after the war, and Giacometti. He was involved with the Surrealist Tanguy and so on. So he was one of the really live galleries—European, if you wish, but Europeans that had been in America, that had lived here during the war years and some who had also remained like Tanguy, for instance.

At that time, for instance, I got to know two people from California. One was Bill Copley, and he was associated with a man called John Ployardt, a very handsome, elegant man. He looked like John Barrymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was his brother-in-law.

LEO CASTELLI: He was his brother-in-law, yes. He was a designer—quite talented, too—John Ployardt. And, of course, little Bill Copley, who now married Stella Yang.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

LEO CASTELLI: Do you know about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'd heard that he'd gotten married recently.

LEO CASTELLI: He got married to Stella Yang, who used to be the girl friend of Kiesler—first his assistant and then girl friend. What a life he had with her! She's Chinese.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

LEO CASTELLI: And now she's happily married (I don't know whether they're happy or not) married to Bill Copley. Now Bill Copley had a lot of money that he had inherited from his father—or actually his adopted father—millions and millions of dollars. They wanted really to get rid of him, so they gave him (it was rumored then) \$30 million just to get out of the way of the rest of the family. He then with Ployardt decided to open a gallery in Los Angeles. It was the first Los Angeles gallery. It's been largely forgotten because it didn't last very long. It lasted as long as the two sisters (who were quite beautiful, by the way), one married to Copley and the other one to Ployardt, remained their respective wives. Then one day they sort of almost simultaneously abandoned their husbands, and that was the end of the whole thing, I guess. Ployardt went to pieces; he really was terribly affected by it. And, I don't know, Bill recovered.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He went to Europe, I think, afterwards.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Bill had more means; he could do all kinds of things. He got married to Norma, the famous Norma Copley, to whom he stayed married until quite recently, and then they divorced.

But anyway, there was this gallery. Since I was friendly with Pierre Matisse and everything was so available at that time, they got in touch with me. Well, being a sort of man about town, they knew about me. I don't know exactly when that was. It must have been in the late '40s. They asked me to organize shows with them. So I did the Matta show for them. It must have been really in 1947 or 1948. I would like to trace it. Do you know about it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: There were six exhibitions and they were all Surrealist.

LEO CASTELLI: These are my six exhibitions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, sure. I know. At least I remember Tanguy, Matta. What other exhibitions do you have?

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was a Magritte.

LEO CASTELLI: Magritte I was not responsible for. It didn't come from—. Whatever came from Matisse was sort of organized by me. With fantastic ease, I went to Matisse and said, "Look here, there are these friends of mine and they want to do a show of Tanguy." Matta was easier because, after all, he was a young man and was going to stick around. Well, Tanguy also. After all, one didn't sell Tanguys so easily at that time. (One didn't sell anything, for that matter, at that time.) So Matisse would say, "All right. Fine. Let's put a show together." And here there were 12 or 15 beautiful Tanguys—that would amount probably to \$1 million now—that were sent out to those unknown people in California. No, there was another show that I was responsible for. Tanguy, Matta—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Cornell?

LEO CASTELLI: Cornell probably I was instrumental in, too, I imagine, because I knew Cornell at that time. Anyway, I remember Tanguy and Matta certainly that I was responsible for.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I talked to him about those shows.

LEO CASTELLI: Who?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Copley. He's very vague about them. He remembered certain things, but they had a funny contract where he said they would buy ten percent of each exhibition or something.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, probably, because they were sort of the European idea that was imported here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. And the whole time they had the gallery, they only sold two paintings.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, sure. Nobody bought paintings. Nobody bought paintings in New York, so you can imagine it would be much less so in California. But this comes back to me—that episode that I hadn't really thought about for a long time. Poyardt I didn't see for quite awhile. About maybe four or five years ago, he suddenly appeared; and he was a total wreck, a real alcoholic. I really didn't know what to do with him. I wanted to help, but what can you do? But then I haven't seen him for a long while, and I wonder what's happened to him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But Copley you still see, don't you?

LEO CASTELLI: I've been seeing him occasionally but not after he got married. I haven't seen him since, but I saw him on and off. I had a good relationship with him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He lived in Europe for a long time and came back and forth.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Well then, to come back. Matta and Peggy Guggenheim left. I was indulging in all these things, as you can see, without getting a penny out of it. It was just sheer friendliness and the pleasure to do something for those people out there—for Matta, of course, and for Tanguy, who I knew pretty well, too. He was also an incredible alcoholic. He was married to that American woman, Kay Sage. She tried to keep him alive by training him so that he did not start drinking until noon or the cocktail hour. But he really died of that. He was an incurable alcoholic. He was a nice guy, by the way, otherwise.

So then after Matta and Peggy left, I got—I don't know. Probably I lost interest in the Surrealist movement since my friend Matta went away and began to gravitate toward what was going on here. That really was the beginning of my involvement with New York art. Greenberg, of course, like all those people, if they found somebody who was really interested, they would sort of get hold of you as the Surrealists had gotten hold of me in Paris. Then, a few other people like Greenberg thought that here was an ally and why not. He didn't know exactly what I was going to do. He knew about Drouin and my involvement with that gallery. I had probably not finished my relationship with Drouin yet. So Greenberg felt, well here's somebody maybe we can do something with.

In fact, I had organized a show with Drouin, which again was something fantastic. It couldn't happen today. It must have been in 1947, 1948 at the very latest. Also, Marcel Duchamp was one of the committee. The Gallery Razzo in Rio de Janeiro—Drouin had sort of convinced him to do an important show of Americans. Was it only American painters? I think. I was in charge of the American section. It must have been sort

of like 1948 or 1949, because I remember that the de Kooning that I got was one of those black and white ones.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What show was this? I don't remember.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it was a show that never came about. It was one of those things. The people that I knew (I don't know through whom, maybe through Matisse or somebody), who took care of (oh, maybe also because I had imported things through them) was Bodwell. They had a huge loft up there, just incredible, in their warehouse where there were no bins or anything; and the paintings were just leaning around. So I was in charge of picking that show, and I wish I could remember what I picked. It must have been terribly interesting. I remember the de Kooning. I picked probably all those people that were then working in America that—. Well, the Peggy Guggenheims and the Greenbergs sponsored it; so it must have been Motherwell, Baziotes, Pollock, and so on and so forth. The thing is that everybody was very generous. I went to their studios and galleries and said that I need this painting or that painting for this show in South America.

All expenses were supposed to be paid by this guy Matarazo (?), who is still very active in art. He is involved, for instance, in the Sao Paulo Biennales. I think he finances it in part. I imagine it's something like that.

So I got all those things together in that loft of Bodwell's. There those things were for months

and months and nothing happened. We didn't get the money from South America and, in the end, nothing. Or did they leave and were never exhibited? I can't really quite remember what happened. I think that the paintings didn't even leave. They were there, stashed away at Bodwell's for months and months. I had a terrible time with Drouin not producing the funds, Matarazo not living up to his commitment. Finally, I was very happy at the very end, that I could retrieve all those paintings, that nothing got lost, that the whole damage was that they had stayed there for several months. But no one really cared very much about it. One de Kooning more or less, or one Matta, or one Pollock more or less didn't really matter at that time. So that was something that I got involved with. It must have been 1948—before the demise of my relationship with Drouin. After that, I would certainly not indulge in things of that kind any more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You didn't really say exactly what happened, why you stopped. You said he was declining and sending for money.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I can tell you that in a very few sentences. The fact is that the thing didn't work at all, that he got more and more deeply into debt, and that he counted on my sort of salvaging the situation, which I certainly didn't have the power or the know-how to do. In the end there was such an anxiety. I had very little money at the time anyway, and the little I had (as stupid as it was) I would sort of save every penny to send him more, some few more hundred dollars. Because he said that he would

practically commit suicide if he couldn't get a few hundred dollars to get out of a terrible scrape.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It became untenable.

LEO CASTELLI: Absolutely. You can't imagine the moments, the days, the weeks and months, and the anxiety that I went through with the Drouin business. I have largely forgotten it, and I'm afraid that all the correspondence that I had with Drouin somehow is lost. I didn't really keep it, but if I just delve back into that, probably all this fantastic period would come out.

Anyway, I couldn't cope with it any longer, and I decided that I would go to Paris (this was in 1949) and would just sever the relationship and try to salvage a few things. Drouin was very nice and generous. He sort of set aside some paintings for me. In fact, he really wasn't even entitled to give me anything, or himself anything; because he was so deeply in debt that everything that there was in the gallery was more or less completely mortgaged, all mortgaged. So actually, what he did there was to cheat his creditors. He had an idea that by giving to me perhaps then I would, in case of need, be very generous with him. But it never went that way, and I kept those paintings and then little by little sold them. It helped me survive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When do you think you met Clem Greenberg? Do you remember?

LEO CASTELLI: It must have been at the time of the party I was describing, the party for Gorky. As a matter of fact, I think it was probably Greenberg who invited me there. Maybe he sort of organized that party or was involved in it. It must have been in 1947. Well, depending on when Gorky killed himself—it must have been in 1948. We ought to know. Do we have a Gorky book or something? I haven't got one here. Maybe it was 1948. So that must have been the end of 1947 or the beginning of 1948 maybe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did you get to know him well? I haven't been able to figure out any association on his part with you.

LEO CASTELLI: No, there was no close association with him. But, as I told you, he took me around one day and showed me various artists—the new artists that he found, well, more than interesting, the great artists that would emerge. One of them was de Kooning, and the other one was Paul Resika that he was interested in. At that time, he was quite abstract. He was not doing those landscapes that he does now. No, I saw him on and off, but there was no close relationship with Greenberg ever. We have known each other forever; we have rarely really talked to each other. It's always been a loose relationship, not much talking to each other about problems of art. I considered him in a way my senior. I admired his perception, visual perception, very much. It was only much later that I began to disagree with him here and there, because it seemed to me that he was focused too much on just one possibility in art and not on others. So, there was Greenberg, who really led the way there.

I think that the one whom I knew best at that time was really Motherwell, because he was a friend of Matta's and was a more, let's say, European-oriented person at that time. So he made the transition for me from the European Surrealists to the American painters.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You knew him through the Guggenheim Gallery, through Peggy?

LEO CASTELLI: Through Matta, I think, especially. Matta introduced me to lots of people at Guggenheim who gravitated around that group.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, the point I'm driving at, is there anybody who was an interesting theoretician or critic at that point that interested you?

LEO CASTELLI: No. I didn't really need that because, in my case fortunately, I came across a movement when I really started my career seriously that was a visceral movement. There was no need for theory as far as the abstract expressionists were concerned. They were all emotions, I would say, or at least it seemed to me that they were. There was some subtlety, of course, in a man like Motherwell, who was very familiar with European-type complex involvements of artists, poets, writers, and so on. He knew a lot about the Dada movement. He had written that book that Wittenborn published in 1948 or 1949. But anyway, I don't know how, but little by little I got more and more involved with the abstract expressionists. Well, actually, my favorite artist at that time became de Kooning. I used to see all those people quite a lot especially after The Club started. The Club started, I would say, at the end of 1949 if I remember rightly. First, there had been that other kind of club there on Eighth Street.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, with Motherwell and—

LEO CASTELLI: With Motherwell and Rothko and that crowd. But The Club which really then moved me to this sphere completely—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you were one of the early members of it?

LEO CASTELLI: I was one of the early members. There was always some dispute about whether I was a charter member or not. Some people, my friends, maintained that I was a charter member. My enemies said no, not at all, I came a few weeks later and I was not a charter member. That was always a point under discussion. Anyway, there was that whole group there at The Club and some really quite active like, I don't know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Pavia was there.

LEO CASTELLI: Pavia especially ran it, and there were some people who were more involved with it who were there at the time. Well, de Kooning was there pretty often, not very active in doing things for The Club because he was not that kind of person. Marca-Relli, Lud Sander, who by the way is somebody that you should absolutely see— He's not a young man nor a very healthy man any more. Did you see him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. You actually met him once in the Army at some point, I think.

LEO CASTELLI: No, I didn't, but we were in the same outfit I found out later when I got back. We were in that Military Intelligence at Camp Richard. We found out about that later when I got back from the war. He's been my good friend all through the years. I don't see him very often now, but I still see him and we've remained very friendly. We were friends right from the beginning. He—I don't know whether you had long talks with him—should be an incredibly good mine of information, because he's got total recall. I think he remembers everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's amazing.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Well, so there was all this life that went on there with those Friday evenings—I think it was Friday evenings—at The Club. There were things that we had to do. Some people were supposed to do the cleaning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Somebody sent out postcards and so on.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Everybody did a bit of work there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what do you think The Club meant to the people who went to it in

those days?

LEO CASTELLI: You mean to the members or to the outsiders?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no. to the members. What was it about The Club that they really—it seems that it was more than just a get-together and to listen to talks or discussions.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, no. It was really something that had great meaning to us all. It was a very important thing as long as it lasted. It was like almost something that we had great faith in, something that we relied on to perform all kinds of miracles for us.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean kind of social and aesthetic and everything, or what?

LEO CASTELLI: Not social. It was not really—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean within the group. I don't mean outside.

LEO CASTELLI: No. It was, I would say, really almost a mystical affair there. As far as I recall my feelings about it, it wasn't meant to do anything terribly useful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know it was never like the American Abstract Artists who published books and catalogues.

LEO CASTELLI: No, no. It was nothing of this kind. We wanted just to be together and do some things that would perhaps make the people outside and the people that guided it understand how important all this was, how involved we were. It was really an incredibly involved group. It's true, if you wish, ignorant, not terribly bright, getting sort of interested in all kinds of fads like Zen Buddhism at one point.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. Suzuki was there, I think.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, that's right. Well, we wanted to make people feel—it was the core of American art—and we wanted outsiders to understand like, I don't know, Max Ernst, who gave a lecture there, and others to understand what all this was about. We wanted to understand what they felt about us. There were question and answer periods where we wanted to find out from—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was an educational kind of thing in a way.

LEO CASTELLI: Not really educational in the ordinary sense of the word. No. It was a mystical fraternity. It was a curious thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is there any one of those evenings that specifically stands out for you, that you remember?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I remember in the beginning they had some nice evenings. There were the Rosenberg evenings, for instance. He was, of course, very articulate, very literate, and very much involved with the Trotskyite movement of a certain older group. They were very intelligent. I was very impressed by him. I really never had...although I knew him very, very well. We saw each other often through the years. I always considered myself a child next to him. He was a little bit scary.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he is.

LEO CASTELLI: I have lost my fears now. I feel very relaxed with him now, or with Greenberg for that matter. But at that time, they were real great figures.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. But there were very few writers involved who were interested in the artists.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, very few. The Partisan Review was mildly interested through Rosenberg and that type of intellectual—Philip Rahv, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Paul Bowles was there a few times.

LEO CASTELLI: Paul Bowles was there very little. He belonged more to the Surrealist crowd. He was a friend of Matta's—Paul and Jane Bowles. No, they didn't have much connection

with The Club. Pollock really didn't have much to do with it but he came occasionally. He was living out in Easthampton anyway, and he came only occasionally. Well, there was Max Ernst who lectured and there was Suzuki. Arp came. There were some really interesting evenings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Lots of interesting people.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, whatever interesting person in the art world did pass through New York would certainly be invited to spend an evening with us. Then there was the annex to The Club, which was the Cedar Bar just across the street, where, after The Club proceedings were over, everybody went. That was really quite a place.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the great social club.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, everybody went there. It was a very interesting kind of thing. Irving Sandler is the historian of that, as you know. There were all kinds of girls around there called the dancing girls.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? I've never heard them referred to that way.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. They were called dancing girls. Well, all this was immensely meaningful to us for a few years. Then, like everything else, it petered out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, it changed.

LEO CASTELLI: It still goes on but it's no longer—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I think the Max's Kansas City thing is—

LEO CASTELLI: The Max's Kansas City thing is over now. There has to be some kind of point of gathering. Then it was the Cedar Bar and The Club itself. All kinds of nonsense went on about membership, about how to pick members, whether women should be admitted. There was quite a fuss about making Mercedes Matter the first female member of The Club and things like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know. I don't sense The Club in that way, because it's been revived, I gather, recently.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And it doesn't work any more.

LEO CASTELLI: It can't work any more. It's just a revival of a dead nostalgic thing. I don't know who goes there. I'm a member of it but I have never gone. I don't even know where it is.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The first show you did was what? The Ninth Street show.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it was the only show that came about in connection with The Club, and we were already pretty far advanced.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was 1951 already.

LEO CASTELLI: 1951. At that time, I think The Club had reached its peak. It was at the height of its glory.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you had worked on some exhibitions with Sidney Janis?

LEO CASTELLI: I had worked on some exhibitions with Sidney before that. There was, for instance, an American-French show where comparisons were made. Really, it was a very silly idea. It's very amusing in retrospect—of comparing painters that seemed similar working in France and working in America, the opposite numbers, which, of course, was absurd because there was a certain formal similarity. But, as far as substance was concerned, there was absolutely no relationship, say, between— Well, maybe the only one that was valid perhaps was the one between Matta and Gorky—Matta, because he was a European, and Gorky, the American. There was a real relationship there because Gorky had been inspired and freed by Matta in some way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you get involved with Sidney? ...because he had just opened the gallery a little before that time.

LEO CASTELLI: He opened his gallery, I think, in 1948 or 1949. Was it that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think so, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. No, wait a minute. He had his 20th anniversary a year ago? Two years ago? Well, anyway, about that time. Janis I got to know well. First Drouin spoke to me about Janis in the late '40s when I was still involved with Drouin. He told me about this person (Janis was not a dealer yet) who had come to see him and he seemed to be very knowledgeable and why didn't I meet him. Exactly when I met Sidney I don't know, but I met him well before he opened the gallery. In fact, we discussed at great length his opening of the gallery. We had been sort of seeing each other for quite a while before that. Probably I met him in connection— He was writing that book, you remember, about— Or he wrote that book—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the Surrealist book?

LEO CASTELLI: No, not the Surrealist, the other one. The one about the Americans in which also Pollock—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, right.

LEO CASTELLI: What was it called? I don't know. Was it *Surrealism and Abstract Art* or something like that? I don't know. Well, anyway, that book. So he was around. He knew me. Of course, he knew all the painters like Pollock and de Kooning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he'd been collecting for years.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, but he didn't collect Pollock at all or de Kooning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: He had been collecting Picassos and Arps, but perhaps not Giacometti yet, but de Chirico and, you know, the classical choice at that time of Alfred Barr. Barr was his master. So that was Sidney Janis. So I probably would have met him in connection with one or other of the artists. By the time he opened the gallery, we already knew each other exceedingly well; and it must have been 1948 or 1949, 1948 probably. I think that he had his 20th anniversary last year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think so, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: So that seems very far away, but then it had seemed also that he had hesitated a long time. As a matter of fact, Kootz, when he abandoned his gallery...and I think, at that time, he moved into a private apartment. Or did he move into another gallery? I think that he didn't want to have a gallery any more. He had the idea that he would function better in an apartment. He had an apartment on Park Avenue from which he was selling the paintings. I think that was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is Kootz?

LEO CASTELLI: Kootz, yes; or maybe he moved to another space. I don't remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He closed for a while, and he moved to so many different locations.

LEO CASTELLI: There was one on Madison Avenue in a house that doesn't exist any more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: I don't know whether, after he left the present Sidney Janis Gallery...if it was after that that he got this apartment on Park Avenue and thought that he would do his business there and then, of course, found out that that was very difficult. Anyway, before Janis opened, Kootz came to see me or phoned me or whatever and said he had something to propose to me. You see how much advanced I was along the path of doing something; because he came to me and he said, "You are the first person I'm talking to about this. I'm leaving the space and I would suggest that you take it." So that means that back in 1948

everybody took it for granted that I should open a gallery. And just imagine, it took me another nine years before I did so. But anyway, I didn't. Then the next person that he talked to was Sidney, and Sidney took that space.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, Kootz has always been active, hasn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: He's still pretty active now. He does all kinds of things in his apartment—swapping, buying, selling. I haven't seen him for a while. Occasionally he comes and proposes all kinds of swaps that are not very good. So I generally say, "No thank you, I'm not interested."

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he showed all sorts of people, didn't he? I mean Picasso was his big thing in a way.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, if you want to talk about Kootz, he's been extremely erratic; but, at one point before the appearance of Janis on the scene— And Janis the first couple of years was very tentative; he really didn't know what he was going to do here. As a matter of fact, no American painters except some old pals of his like Lucia Chavonetti, whom he showed, and Morris Hirshfield, the primitive—He was really interested in the classics, and there he had certain artists that he favored over others, like Leger. Perhaps he was easier to get over Picasso. He was interested in the whole gamut of recommended painters of classics, and he got maybe a little bit through our long conversations about it. I used to see Sidney very, very often. We had lunch at least twice or three times a week and talked about things and worked out plans, projects, and things like that. Although not many projects did come about, but some did—that show that I'm going to talk about again at another time and sort of try to remember the names that were covered with some very interesting things.

So before that, in the '40s, apart from Valentin and Valentine Dudensing and Matisse, there were those two galleries, Kootz and Betty Parsons. Betty Parsons, now in retrospect and even then, was, I thought, the better gallery of the two—the more interesting one with Pollock, with Barney Newman, with Rothko.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She had everybody there at one time.

LEO CASTELLI: And Kootz had really—Well, apart from Hofmann, who I don't think anyway is a great painter, had these secondary people like—Who did he have now? I've almost forgotten. Well, he had Baziotes right from the beginning, and he had Hofmann right from the beginning. One thing that he did that was very interesting was one of those "new talent" shows, which he must have done back in 1948 or 1949, in which painters like Franz Kline were shown for the first time. Nobody had heard about him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that one that Greenberg organized for him?

LEO CASTELLI: I think it was Greenberg who did, or, I don't know. There were two. I think probably the second one was done by Greenberg, not the first. You'll have to find out about all those things. We just mention them, and I don't remember them so well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it's interesting. Even, say, up until 1950 or up until, say, the Ninth Street show in 1951, there was very little activity and very little dealing.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, well, not really. There was considerable activity at Betty Parsons. Those Rothko, Pollock shows at Betty's were very, very important events.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but she didn't sell very much.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, no. If you mean by "activity," no, there wasn't much selling going on. Real selling began, well actually began, when Sidney began to handle first de Kooning, then Pollock, Rothko, Kline, and the others. That really started, well maybe through natural circumstances, because we were getting out of the doldrums of the aftermath of the war—but maybe also it was Sidney's great merit to have promoted these artists. I won't say on an equal footing with the Europeans to begin with, but the fact that Sidney was handling them—Sidney, who had sold all those Legers, those beautiful Cubist paintings—was important. His choice of paintings was really about the best that could be. He really only showed very, very good material. It was, in a way, better than anybody else's. He never, for a long time, had one single lemon in those famous shows of his.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, one after another. It was incredible.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. So this man who had handled all this superb material was now handling Pollock or de Kooning. So, therefore, Pollock and de Kooning must be good since Sidney was handling them; and that really started the American collectors. The monied people, who would not touch an American painter from here to there up to that time, started then collecting Pollock and de Kooning. It took a year or two but it was Sidney who started the ball rolling. That was his great merit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I don't think Kootz ever was able to do that, and certainly Betty Parsons—

LEO CASTELLI: Nobody could do it. Only Sidney could have done it, and he did it, too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I think Betty Parsons is very important, because of all the people she's showed, although she never sold anything. It's just unbelievable.

LEO CASTELLI: No, she couldn't. At that time, it was impossible to sell. It was only through those incredible circumstances of Sidney's having handled the great men and handled incredibly good material, marvelously-chosen material, and then coming up with the Americans, with beautiful, well-selected shows that convinced the American public, the collecting public, that the American painters were really perhaps not equals of the Europeans but were worth considering. That they became the equals of the Europeans happened much later, only toward the end of the 1950s. They became the equals or were considered the equals.

Okay, Paul, I think we'll stop here because it's getting [late].

[END OF castel69may_1of8_reel_SideB.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: June 11th. Reel 3. You were going to talk about the *American Vanguard* show that you were involved in with Janis in 1951.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, you mean where we were comparing, rather naively, artists in Europe with artists in America.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: At that time, we still thought, everybody did, (there was some doubt but not so much of it) that, after all, similar things were going on here and in Europe. (That show, by the way, took place in 1950, so that really was quite early.) There was some kind of chauvinism apparently over here about the difference in quality, in spirit, and everything else between European and American art. It was not as evident then that the really important things were being done here and not in Europe. So there were, as a matter of fact, strong objections against that show and the spirit of that show on the part of Charlie Egan, who was very nationalistic and did not much understand the Europeans. Substantially, probably, he was more right than I was at that time in his judgment of the show. There was a rather sharp exchange between Charlie Egan and me at a party that's remembered by Walter Gutman in an excerpt from a book that he's writing concerning some of the New York leaders. He speaks about Egan and me and about this exchange. So it's recorded anyway in his recollection about that famous show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did the idea for the show originate?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, I used to see Sidney Janis pretty often and at that time everybody liked those theme shows very much, you know, with black and white, man and wife, God knows all kinds of nonsense to make things more interesting and amusing to the public at large. So this was an interesting thing actually—screwball, if you wish, seeing it in the light of our experience today. But still, it seemed very amusing and interesting to do a thing like that, also, to make it interesting for the European public because the show was destined to be seen in Paris at the Galerie de France. So, well, it was showmanship in a way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you go to Paris while it was there?

LEO CASTELLI: I did not go to Paris. I didn't see it there, no. But I had been in contact with the Galerie de France, and they were very eager to do a thing of this type. As I think I said on

a previous occasion, there were these comparisons between Rothko and de Stael. If you could see the photographs of the things that we then showed there, it wouldn't really seem so bad as a comparison. There was Dubuffet with one of those figures and a de Kooning Woman. There was Matta and Gorky. Well, everybody knew that there was an influence there of Matta on Gorky. There were some comparisons that perhaps were not so good, but there were a few that weren't bad at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did the painters have to say when they saw the show up?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, you know, at that time, people were not as pretentious maybe in that way as they are now. There were very few galleries around—Janis or Egan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Betty Parsons.

LEO CASTELLI: It seemed to be a miracle that one did anything at all. We discussed that dearth of show places. So everything that was coming along that had to do with American and European painting put together, that looked imaginative, was imaginative—even if they were perhaps a little bit screwball—was a welcome happening or event. How we thought of it, I really don't know. There was this thing there that American painting was becoming very important. We began to understand that this movement could finally stand on its own, that it was no longer dependent on Europe; and we wanted to see at that point perhaps not so much the similarities as the divergences, in spite of similarities perhaps in form, the difference in spirit.

Oh, yes. There was another comparison—a Kline/Soulages comparison—that was not bad. Everybody was talking about that comparison between Kline and Soulages at that time. So that was that show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's amazing the reactions of comparison-type shows and the things people say about them. But they don't do them anymore. No one has done a show like that for a long time.

LEO CASTELLI: I would sort of be against doing theme shows altogether. It is interesting, but again things are always stretched, as you find out in retrospect. For instance, that *Primary Structure* show of Kynaston MacShine's at the Jewish Museum seemed to be at that time a very well-conceived show. It was, too, but for the time. But then nobody could foresee that many of those people in that show really had something entirely different in mind—had different things in mind than others. For instance, just take Morris and Judd. At that time it may have seemed that there was a similarity in the spirit of the two, but we found out later that they were as different as artists can be in every respect. So, at the time, you do the best you can. You think that there you have a valid standard of comparison and you can analyze a movement with a certain chance of doing something. But it is constructive anyway because it has to be done at one point. It was probably that that show, which took place so long ago, had its importance in its time. And then we can think back and say, "Well, it's interesting to see that one could do and wanted to do a thing like that at all." That's already very interesting. What we are doing now, for instance—putting together again a group of people at the Whitney of a certain type. That will also seem at one point probably a show that really had no unity whatsoever. The Guggenheim show has no pretense to unity. It's just so many painters from various parts of the world. And—well, that's that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like Dorothy Miller's *Ten, Twelve and Fourteen Shows*.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, that's right. It's like a Dorothy Miller-type show. Those shows where you try to prove something are infinitely more interesting although infinitely more risky, too, and difficult to put together. But I think they're worth doing. Some are quite successful, some less so. For instance, in Lawrence Alloway's *Systemic Painting* show, there was less of a theme there than—Even then one could see that whatever he wanted to prove wasn't really there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. Well, it changes. Theme shows are just impossible sometimes. Well, getting back into the middle of the '50s before you opened the gallery, you were still dealing privately in a sense?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, the private dealing really was a little bit incidental. As I said, at that time I was terribly involved with the art world. I wanted to be part of it, was part of it. There was a real hero worship of artists, or some artists in particular, and of that world in general

and probably some kind of attitude that actually could not be easily found in New York at that time. It was more, I think, a European attitude about art and about writing. Writers and artists in Europe are real heroes. Here they really are not. There is no tradition of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, and they don't mix very much either.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, there are collectors now, rabid collectors—the great ones like the Sculls or more recently a man like Joseph Helman—well, real worshippers of art. They do it well or they do it less well, but their incredible enthusiasm can never be denied. In the case of Scull, you can approach him with all kinds of things, but something that cannot be questioned is his very deep involvement. Helman, a more recent addition to the art world who is out in St. Louis, is really quite a phenomenon, too. There you can see the case of real fantastic involvement. So, I had that type of involvement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who were the people that you were most closely associated with or interested in?

LEO CASTELLI: I think that my real hero at that time probably was de Kooning. I liked Pollock very much, but he was difficult to deal with.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He lived in the Hamptons, too, for a long time.

LEO CASTELLI: He lived out in Springs but he used to come and go. I was also out in the Hamptons pretty often. I had a house there. We had de Kooning at a house that I owned for two years running for the whole summer. Pollock used to come, and we used to go to see him. So I did know Pollock well. I mean, I saw him often; but, really, rapport with him was very difficult because, when you saw him afternoons or evenings, he was usually very drunk. Occasionally something interesting would be said but—

PAUL CUMMINGS: He doesn't seem to have been a very, very good conversationalist.

LEO CASTELLI: No. He would say very interesting and important things occasionally. He was highly intelligent and particularly when he wanted to be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he wasn't really somebody that talked a lot.

LEO CASTELLI: We would not talk often; but, when he would say something, it certainly could be very, very interesting. The person that I saw most was de Kooning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's more of a conversationalist, isn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: He's very pleasant to talk to, it's true. One would not talk too much about (well, one never does) art, really, with the painters. Whenever you meet, you speak about a million things; but you don't speak about theories about art. One speaks about practical things with him, what goes on in Europe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And exhibitions.

LEO CASTELLI: And what goes on in the galleries and things, but one doesn't speak about aesthetic theories. Nobody is interested in talking about that. Kline I used to see. With Kline, really, one wouldn't talk very much. There was his famous stream of consciousness talk, which was extremely entertaining, full of extraordinary ideas. If one could have taped at the time, God, one would have volumes on Kline as I mentioned. Then there was this whole crowd at The Club.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you go to The Club frequently when it first started in the early years?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, in the early days, I was one of those (as I told you) almost charter members. It was sort of affirmed by some people and denied by others that I was part of the original group of 20. Anyway, if I was not part of the original group of 20, I was 21.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What purpose do you think The Club served other than just a place to meet and talk?

LEO CASTELLI: And be together. To exchange—not ideas primarily. To feel that one belonged. One would also have guests who would deliver lectures like, I don't know, somebody like Max Ernst and then a lot of people like Rosenberg or some Japanese Zen

expert...

PAUL CUMMINGS: Suzuki was around.

LEO CASTELLI: ...or on Existentialism. There was William Barrett who spoke several times on Existentialism. All those things that interested us, that were talked about, were discussed there more or less competently. There were also talks about them that occurred every Friday. I guess it was Friday. It was a very active thing. Then it resulted, as you know, in that Ninth Street show of 1951.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: It was not its swan song, because it went on functioning for a few more years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it changed.

LEO CASTELLI: After a while, people lost interest. Many of the people, like de Kooning, got involved with other problems, and myself. So little by little, it fell to pieces, but it's still there. It still exists, does it not?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it's been revived.

LEO CASTELLI: It's been revived.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what led you to decide that it was finally time to open a gallery?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, mostly, I think, the fact, the very banal fact, that I did have to make a living, that I saw that there was no other way for me to make a living and that I had to become serious about it if I wanted to go on paying my rent and my grocery bills.

That thing with Janis had been sort of helpful. There were some occasional joint ventures that brought in some money, but obviously it proved to be insufficient after a while. Also, Janis began to feel—. After all, he was running a gallery, an expensive place, and there was no reason for him (at that time I did sort of feel peeved about it) for him to just share profits when he had all the work to do—to pay the overhead, publicity, and what not. There was no reason for us, for instance, to buy something together for \$2000 and I should get \$1000 and he \$1000. So it seemed that the beautiful days of naiveté were over. This relationship with Janis seemed to be too sketchy. He also began to feel that, after all, he couldn't do me all those favors anymore, that it was not appropriate.

We had some kind of project going for a while for me to open a branch in Europe, which really would have been a fantastic thing to do at that time. Probably it would have changed my life, my career, and perhaps also a great deal of things in the promotion of American painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, tremendous.

LEO CASTELLI: But I had no capital and he did not seem to be interested enough to provide it and also felt that perhaps whatever he was doing should stay in the family. He had two sons to take care of. I went to Europe back in 1955 and explored possibilities there, talking to various people in other galleries how they felt about this project. Everybody seemed vaguely to feel that it would be very interesting and they were encouraged. Then I came back and I spoke to Janis about it. He said he would discuss it with the family, etc. Then one evening we met and he said that they had discussed it all, thought about it, and felt that perhaps he would not want to put any money into a venture of this kind.

After that I tried to get some kind of grant from—I don't know. I spoke about it to Alfred Barr, who was vaguely interested and who made a few suggestions. At that time, and even now, it's difficult to get money for a project that seems to be very much up in the air.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How interested was Barr in what was going on at that time?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, as you know, they were not terribly involved in Abstract Expressionism. They came to recognize the importance of the movement a little later. They were not with it right from the beginning. The only artist that I know of that Barr got enthusiastic about right away and felt was an incredible man was Jasper Johns when I first showed him in 1958. Really I don't know whether he acted that way in other cases, but there he came. He was

bowled over by the show and then spent literally hours looking at the paintings and coming back and wanting to see Jasper to find out from him what this was about, how it was motivated, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's very interesting, because he never seemed to have visited The Club or was not—

LEO CASTELLI: He did. As a matter of fact, I want to tell you of an episode there. When we had the famous Ninth Street Show, well, he came. There was a big streamer over the street. I don't know whether other people told you about that. Then after closing the show, we all went up to The Club, and Barr was there. No, no, no. To be correct historically, Barr came to the show, and he looked around and, as a matter of fact, got very excited about it. Then he said, "Please do come over to the Bar and tell me about it. How did all this come about?" So I went with Barr to the Cedar Bar while the show was still going on and told him a little bit about how it came into being. There were photographs that were made of the installation, and he was interested to the point where he wanted us to sort of write. I don't know whether it happened at that time or later on; but anyway on the back, corresponding to each painting, he wrote the names of the artists. They probably have the document at the Museum. So there was that, the excitement. And, oh, Barr came to The Club very often.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he did?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, he did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because I don't think anyone has mentioned him.

LEO CASTELLI: He did come. He did come. I remember we went up to The Club and; well, for whatever I did there, I appeared, I think, with Barr or a little later; and there was that very touching burst of applause for my entrance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting because either people don't want to talk about Barr's activity or lack of activity, but it's very hard to find out.

LEO CASTELLI: People have forgotten. The end results seem to be poor in what the Museum has done for that movement and now, more recently, for other movements. For instance, they have ignored the Pop movement completely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, were they just getting enthusiastic about abstract expressionism?

LEO CASTELLI: They were never enthusiastic about abstract expressionism. It took them a long time to understand Pollock and de Kooning and Kline. They got to Pollock a little earlier, but it took them quite a while to get to de Kooning. Kline they probably understood a little earlier than de Kooning.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, but de Kooning kind of held off, too, didn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he held off because he was peeved at their attitude. He understood that they really didn't particularly understand what he was about and what he was doing. They missed the great de Koonings that they could have bought, like *Excavations*, for instance. Do you know when they got excited about de Kooning? When he did that *Woman*, and that was when?

PAUL CUMMINGS: 1953.

LEO CASTELLI: 1953. The first great *Woman* that they have.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, 1952, 1953 somewhere.

LEO CASTELLI: Anyway, it seems to me that it took them a long time to understand de Kooning. But that's when they got really excited about de Kooning. That's the first major work of his that they bought. They had bought the very beautiful black one that they have, but that would be considered just a routine purchase. It's a relatively small painting. There were paintings around like *Excavations* that I myself would have just died to have and that the Institute then bought, and collectors like the Steinbergs at that time, you know, Al Newman who bought that other marvelous de Kooning painting called—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know which one you mean.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it was here in the de Kooning show anyway, another major painting that just went to Chicago, bought by private people. No, the Modern was not after the great works of de Kooning or Pollock. Now they got themselves, thanks to the Janis gift, *Number One*. But they had no Pollock of consequence when other people were buying them. Ossorio was buying important de Koonings. No, they were not very with it, as they were not with Pop art.

You know that they haven't got a major Lichtenstein except a very little one to begin with and then one early one that they'll get from Philip Johnson, perhaps another one, I don't know. Well, as for instance, Dr. Ludwig there in Aachen has his collection now at Walter Fritch's Museum in Cologne where he has, I don't know, something like 13 or 14 major Lichtensteins. So does Lou Sochs, for instance, whose collection again has been sold to a German collector. So there are actually more major Lichtensteins in Europe than there are here. There are some in private collections like Scull's. Or Rowans in Los Angeles has got the big Tempo.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious about the collectors, say, up to 1955 or 1956. There were not very many who were really—

LEO CASTELLI: There never are very many. There are not very many now either. There aren't ever very many what they call "collectors." There are some people who buy paintings but they are not collectors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right.

LEO CASTELLI: Even though they buy paintings, but they occasionally, and then, when they have sort of more or less filled all the walls, then they don't buy anymore. The real collector goes on buying irrespectively. So there are not too many. Collectors like the Tremaines, like Scull, are rare. There's Ludwig now. Oh, there was Crochart who specialized in Pop art. There's Carter Burden who is more focused on Stella and the color field painters. He's a rabid collector. He also buys others but those are—

PAUL CUMMINGS: His specialty.

LEO CASTELLI: He goes on buying one Stella, two Stellas, three Stellas, five Stellas, ten Stellas, and so on. The same with Noland. There's Eugene Schwartz, who is a pretty good collector, too, now. They don't come to mind so easily because there are none. There are museums now. Some museums—not the Modern—but, for instance, the Whitney buys, thanks to Lipman especially. He has really revived the Museum with his acquisitions of sculpture which were daring.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They had nothing before.

LEO CASTELLI: Then the Guggenheim buys good works but one at a time. For instance, they bought that Morris piece when they had that show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Places like Buffalo though and Chicago and Walker—

LEO CASTELLI: Buffalo is already getting old. Walker hasn't got much money, but Martin is always still very good and very active and very much up-to-date. Now, we have a better situation in Detroit where you have Sam Wagstaff who really has a very, very fine eye for the most recent things. He buys Judd and Morris and whatever is subtle and up-to-date. Minneapolis has a good setup with Walker and with a very good gallery at Dayton's Department Store. Felice Wender's gallery is really run like an important gallery. It's worthy of New York the way she runs her gallery—very intelligently, with good shows, with good daring purchases. Felice Wender is really a great dealer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's amazing because I was out there 15 years ago and there was none of that.

LEO CASTELLI: In the Middle West, there was some hope already quite a while ago, like Ted Coe in Kansas City. But that did not progress very much because there are no collectors there. There has to be just more than an enthusiastic museum director. You can say the same thing of Milwaukee. Tracy Atkinson is a very good young man, but he does not get enough support.

St. Louis is good. The museum collection is not extraordinarily developed, but they have a very good curator there, Emily Rauh, and an intelligent director in Charles Buckley and especially one fantastically enthusiastic collector, Joe Helman. He can just move the whole of St. Louis by organizing very daring shows. One he did recently was similar to the Whitney show, and that got there before anything of the kind ever appeared in New York. So you see, one good collector supported by one museum can turn the tide.

Now we have the example of the miracles that are accomplished by museums in Europe, for instance. The Stedelijk in Amsterdam has done pioneering work on American painting or the museum in Eindhoven, another Stedelijk museum run by a man like Leering. They do shows about the new trends well before we do them here in New York or in America. A modest place without funds like the Kunsthalle in Berne, financed by Philip Morris, curiously enough, did a show of these new trends similar to the Whitney one but much more complete.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A huge exhibition.

LEO CASTELLI: Much more complete, the like of which has never been seen here. So the Middle West, I would say, is terribly interesting.

California is very special. There is not much collecting going on there. There's been a sort of brief efflorescence there of collecting. Those people like the Friedmans or the Weismans, very eclectic collectors, bought all kinds of things—Clyfford Still and de Koonings and Pollocks and what not. But it was just limited to four or five people, and it has not developed as much as we hoped. But there is an over production there and good dealers. Blum has been around for a while. Dick Wilder was very daring. Now more recently, a young man from Vancouver, Douglas Christmas, has the Ace Gallery there. So there is activity there. There are many good local artists that are also shown here in various galleries.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think they really have to get a New York gallery and show here before they can even do well in California?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, no. That's not true at all. They can begin in California. That's the advantage of California (of Los Angeles, that is), that some artists or an artist like Petit or Peter Alexander can begin their career there and be noticed then in New York. They don't need to have their show here before they get noticed. So that is the advantage of Los Angeles over any other—

If some artist appears in Chicago, nobody cares about that. They won't expect anybody in Chicago to be able to do a good painting or a good sculpture. We do expect good artists to appear in California, and it's proved by so many good artists that have appeared there like (just to quote a few) Kienholz, Bob Irwin, Larry Bell, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, there's a whole group developing who will come out of there, I think. Very interesting people will come out of California.

LEO CASTELLI: They do come out. They have come out. More will probably come out. Some people, like Bruce Nauman has come from—Well, he's come from San Francisco, oddly enough. He comes out of that funk art movement that started there three or four years ago and that sort of died and then produced really one, perhaps two, artists.

Then there are good "light" artists there. There's Terrell. There's Doug Wheeler. Those are very good. There is now Bob Irwin, who works with light and shadow images. They are very good, and they are getting to be known all over in Europe in various shows like *Dokumenta* or in galleries in Europe. In fact, Sonnabend certainly has promoted more artists than anybody else in Europe. She has shown many of the California artists apart from the ones that she has from New York. She has shown McCracken, Larry Bell.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, we're way ahead. Let's—

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. We are ahead of our time. So then to come back to Janis, just as he said that it could not be done. Then I said, "Well, it's a matter of life and death for me. I just have to work out my own salvation." Since I had done a little bit of work from upstairs on the fourth floor and people knew the place (there had been many parties and they had seen paintings around), it seemed quite natural to turn that place into a gallery. Our daughter at that time was married to Ian Sullivan and had gone to, was going to college; so we didn't need her room anymore. So then this apartment up on the fourth floor was just formed into

a gallery. What used to be our living room became the gallery. The room that used to be Nina's, my daughter—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had two rooms up there, didn't you?

LEO CASTELLI: There was the L-shaped room that was the living room, and there was the back room that used to be the bedroom of Nina. Those were then the gallery. The L-shaped room was the exhibition room, and there was a room back there that was the office, and there was a walk-in closet and that was the storage space. And that was that.

There was that little elevator, as you know, going up to the fourth floor. People managed. They went up with the little elevator. Some felt claustrophobic about it and walked up the four flights, but everybody came.

We lived there, too. There was a little kitchen right at the entrance. The door was kept closed. Then there were two rooms in the back which were, well, our living quarters. One room was mine and the other was Ileana's. There was no living room, no dining room, nothing else. That was all. Well, one didn't eat there very much. It was good enough for breakfast, and the life that we led then was entirely Bohemian. It was up in the gallery and perhaps downtown most of the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious about the first show, which was a group show.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, you have the Ten Years of mine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: And the first show. Well, I had been involved, of course, in—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, were these things part of your collection or were they things you'd gathered?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, there were some things that I owned and some things that I gathered for the occasion, borrowed or otherwise. They were all for sale though. A show like that, like the first one that I did, would be rather difficult to put together—even for a Janis or for a Perls or for a Matisse today. There were many masterpieces in that. One thing I did, that I think was done for the first time, was mixing so-called European masters with American masters. I think that nobody had done it before. Janis was still in 1957 not doing it. He would keep those shows separate.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You didn't have a stable then or any particular artists in mind?

LEO CASTELLI: No. I didn't have a stable, and there were all kinds of friends that had shown in the Ninth Street show, like Paul Brackt. I also wanted to show a few Europeans. I had very vague ideas frankly for the first two or three months until that show that I did. Let's see, that started February, March, April, May. So it was my fourth show that really became my program, and it was called *New Work*. In that show, I had a painting of Bob's [Rauschenberg] that's now in the Cleveland Museum, a flag of Jasper's [Johns] that's now Philip Johnson's. I also had some people that I got later on, that became part of my stable, like Norman Bluhm, for instance, and Marisol and Alfred Leslie (that I never took on) and Morris Louis (that I never took), David Budd, Friedel Dzubas that I had for a while that was peacefully hung next to Jasper's flag, a crime of that kind, but it was alright. The first show had David Smith. I had Pollock. Next to Mondrian, there was Dubuffet. There was a beautiful early Kandinsky. There was Giacometti. There was Van Doesburg, Leger, a very nice mixture. I didn't get a Picasso.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have any idea of the people you were going to represent?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I began to have an idea after my "New Work" show in May 1957. Then I began to think about Jasper and Rauschenberg.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find them the first time?

LEO CASTELLI: I had known Bob Rauschenberg since the Ninth Street show. I was saying today at lunch [that] one does not find artists. They just occur. One doesn't know how. They certainly do not appear at the gallery with slides and then you take them on the basis of that. They do appear at the gallery with slides, but you hardly ever will take an artist on that basis. If you do, it usually is a mistake even if you do go on with them. No, artists exist in

groups. They gravitate around the de Koonings, or they are part of the more subtle kind of the environment. Like, for instance, Jasper Johns was in a group in which there was Rauschenberg, John Cage, and Merce Cunningham, a grouping that was not exclusively a group of painters. John Cage was the great force there at that time, not so much Rauschenberg or Johns. So you know those people. You meet them.

Jasper Johns was a real discovery in a certain sense because, although he existed, not many people knew about him. I saw him for the first time in a show at the Jewish Museum. That was in March of 1957, and that was the *Green Target* that the Modern has now. I saw that green painting. It didn't, of course, appear as a target to me at all. It was a green painting. I didn't know that he was doing targets. Well, going around and seeing the familiar painters of that time—. It was a show that had been organized by Meyer Schapiro and other people. There was Rauschenberg and Joan Mitchell, and, oh, all that younger generation. Well, I came across that green painting, and it made a tremendous impression on me right away. I looked at the name. The name didn't mean anything to me. It seemed almost like an invented name—Jasper Johns.

Then three days later, I went to Bob's [Rauschenberg] studio because I had to make up my mind about a show I was going to give him and so on and discuss his joining the gallery. Well, Bob was showing me various paintings. There were some larger ones that he wanted to pull out of the stacks, and he had some difficulty. I asked if I could help him and he said, no, no, we would leave that for later because he said Jasper Johns would come up any minute now and he would help. Of course, I had been sort of pronouncing that name, Jasper Johns, in my mind for the past two or three days wanting to phone the Jewish Museum people to find out who he was. So it struck a responsive chord. I said, "Do you mean the man that painted the green painting that's at the Jewish Museum?" And Bob said, "Yes, he has a studio down below."

At that moment, Jasper appeared. So, I said to Bob, "I'm so curious now about seeing Jasper Johns' paintings, to see what this green painting relates to that I would like, if you don't mind to interrupt our looking at your paintings and go down right away and see what happens down there."

So we went down. It was just the floor below. There was a fantastic display of flags and targets. You know the target with the plastic eyes, the one with the faces. The *Green Target* was at the Jewish Museum, but there was a big white flag, a smaller white flag, numbers, the alphabet, anything—all those great masterpieces. There was about a million dollars worth of paintings that were worth nothing, just there. Yes, I would say absolutely a million dollars worth of paintings. I am not overstating. I could prove it to you.

I was so stunned that I said, "Would you like to join my gallery?" It was as simple as all that. Jasper Johns didn't waste many words and just said, "Yes." So that was done. And then—ell, there were those two shows that occurred the next year in 1958. The first was Jasper's in January with the cover on *ARTnews*, the target with the faces, and then a little later, two months later, Rauschenberg's show.

The Johns' show was tremendously successful. There are any number of anecdotes about that. A man you probably do know, Jan Street, came the first day. Barr came perhaps a day later. He saw the show and said, "I would like to buy the whole show." I said, "Well, that can't be done. That would be just idiotic on the part of everybody, but you can have one or two, maybe even three, paintings, but not the whole show." Then he got very angry and said, "Well, if I can't take the whole show, I won't buy anything." So I said, "That's all right. Don't buy anything." Many years later he said, "What a fool I was. I should have bought even one painting." There was that appearance of Barr, and he spent incredible hours at the gallery looking at the paintings, relooking, calling Soby or Dorothy Miller on the telephone, telling them they "must come up here immediately." And then between the Museum and the staff of the museum and the prestige, they bought practically the whole show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did *ARTnews* get so enthusiastic so quickly?

LEO CASTELLI: I don't know. Tom Hess came. Again, I can tell you that episode. That was even before the show went up. The paintings were around but were not as yet hung. He looked at those paintings; and, among other things, he saw the target, the faces, the Museum piece. He said (just imagine how sloppy I was at that time), "Can I take that along in a cab?" And I didn't even ask what he wanted to do with it. I said, "Yes, of course, you can

take it." He said, "Well, you know, I want to make a color photograph of it." But he didn't say that he wanted to put it on the cover and I didn't ask. Then we had that wonderful surprise of having it on the cover. He, too, sort of felt that it was something new and interesting. He didn't come around to understanding Jasper just then but he did a little later. It seemed fascinating enough to him to put on the cover. That created a sort of fantastic scandal at that time. I think that nobody forgave Tom Hess for a long time for having put that odd thing on the cover of *ARTnews*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it was so different from everything else.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, from everything that he stood for. He was a great de Kooning man, a Pollock man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: This was the death knell actually to the abstract expressionists. I think probably that Jasper was more responsible for the rapid ending of abstract expressionism than anybody else, more than Bob Rauschenberg, I would say. Because his image really was different and became really the focus of all new kinds of things that sprang up as a result of that. Stella comes out of Jasper and Bob. He certainly triggered Stella, who was sort of more or less abstract expressionist to begin with. As Stella will tell you, through the stripes of the flag, the flag itself was the solution of the problem. The stripes led him to develop his famous stripe paintings because he had the same idea in mind that Jasper had to objectify the painting. He found that Jasper's was the solution. He went, of course, then a step further to the shaped canvas and all that. So Jasper, I would say, was probably the major influence, the turning point actually, in American painting with that show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very interesting. You've mentioned they were all involved with Cage. Cage, for a long time, seems to have had a circle of friends who were very involved with him and his ideas.

LEO CASTELLI: He's an incredibly brilliant mind. I don't know whether you've read his prose, which is really probably about the best prose that is being written here in America today, his essays.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I've been reading *Silence* again.

LEO CASTELLI: So he was a brilliant mind around a group of young people who were not just involved in the formal aspect of painting but in the intellectual and philosophical sides of it, and he would be a great influence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very interesting that Cage ended up doing what all the critics have always wanted to do, which was to have a circle of influence in a way.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Harold Rosenberg was very influential in the midst of the abstract expressionist movement. Very interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, in a completely different way though, wasn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, in what way do you think his circle was different from Cage's circle? In what way?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, his relationship as an individual to the other people in the group up.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, they are two very different characters. After all, Cage is a sort of saint, a sort of guru, really so; whereas Rosenberg is a man of action. He is a man who was involved in the political struggles of the 1930s, a Leftist, a Trotskyite, belonged to this whole group of brilliant intellectuals of the period—the Cousins, himself, the people of the *Partisan Review*. They were a very interesting group of very politically-oriented writers, and he was one of them. So, you cannot compare him to Cage to whom politics is of no interest whatsoever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've often had the feeling in talking to Harold Rosenberg that he would very much like to have had the kind of coterie aspects that Cage does.

LEO CASTELLI: He had it to a certain degree. Now, there's Greenberg whose circle has a coterie aspect like Cage's.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: I would say that Cage and he and certainly Rosenberg, the three of them, played an important role in having a group of people around them by whom they were influenced and whom they influenced in their turn. So, I would say that these three probably are the ones that we can mention. I can't think of anybody else of that type.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, who's been available and active over such a period of time.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. You have the same phenomenon all through art history. If you take, well say, the more recent history of painting in Europe, you have a man like Apollinaire, the poet.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Breton.

LEO CASTELLI: Breton and Apollinaire. That's about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't think you'd ever had that ever before in this country.

LEO CASTELLI: No. Again, this country—probably thanks to the Rosenbergs, the Cages, the Greenbergs, and the fact that it developed an independent kind of total independence—became a real center of production as Europe had been for so many centuries. It also developed its own phenomenon, developed new kinds of galleries. You can speak of one. No, there were galleries here that were interesting; but the ones that were more similar to what's going on now perhaps were not the Valentine Dudensing or the Curt Valentins, but rather Stieglitz. That was the spirit, perhaps, that was closer to what we're doing now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

LEO CASTELLI: ...or what Peggy Guggenheim and Betty Parsons and Egan even recently—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's amazing the people that Betty has had in her gallery.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. So, we got our art, our own indigenous original art. We became the leading city in the country, the leading city as far as art is concerned, and then produced a phenomenon similar to the ones that occurred in Europe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's interesting that the Museum was interested and got involved in that first show. Then what happened? They knew about you but they weren't—

LEO CASTELLI: Well, they were always very friendly toward me; but I never asked them anything. I didn't bother anybody. My attitude from the beginning of my gallery was one of extreme reserve; and although I knew the Museum people pretty well—Dorothy Miller, Barr, and so on—I always felt a little bit embarrassed and shy with them. To me, they were all great people. Although I really thought that I would accomplish something quite important right from the beginning, I didn't feel yet that I had proven anything. So I kept, I would say, a respectful distance. To meet people like, I don't know, Rosenberg or Greenberg even—I really could have seen them often and could have talked to them more often than I did, but I didn't feel at that time that I had very much to contribute. I was inexperienced, and I just didn't want to bother them with irrelevant conversation. I thought that they knew so much more than I did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, let's see, Tworckov was an early member, too, wasn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: Tworckov was an early member, too, yes. All that Egan group especially. There was Tworckov and Kline, de Kooning and Egan himself was part of The Club.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. I mean in your gallery.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, in my gallery? There was Tworckov, yes. He came late. He was a great friend of Jasper's and Bob's. They liked him very much as a person and as a painter. So, when he became available—he left the Stable—I felt perhaps, well, I would like to have him. Bob and Jasper were very much for that. So, I had him for a while, but he did not quite fit. At that time, I thought that everything could or would fit. Then I found out that my gallery itself became a type of coterie. Yes, it is that. A live gallery that is an organism can only function on that basis. Although it's strange that the coterie extends from Rauschenberg, Johns, Stella, through the Pop art group and now to Morris, Judd, to Serra, Sonnier. Where is the coterie aspect? Well, it is a very cohesive group, although it extends from that pole to the

other pole. There are a few irrelevant people, but those get either shunted or eliminated. There is actually only a group.

I was talking to Frank Stella (we had dinner together yesterday), and we were analyzing a little what is happening. And he said, "But you have so many artists!" And I said, "No, Frank, I haven't got many artists." Then I told him the artists that I like that are functioning in the gallery are maybe ten.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then some experimental.

LEO CASTELLI: And then there are some other things that are, you see, experimental: Nauman for instance, who is quite new, and Serra and Sonia. Well, Sonia I really don't know much about. But it seems to me, although they are younger, they are more part of the group than some people that I've had for two or three years who, for some reason, have not been functioning and probably will be ejected, you know, like the organism does eject gradually.

PAUL CUMMINGS: People change and they want to do something else.

LEO CASTELLI: No. The fact is that there are mistaken choices, and those just cannot stay. They cannot be kept. Sometimes it's a long and painful process. Sometimes it's easier to—Generally speaking they realize that they don't belong. I've never really sent anybody away. They do realize that they don't belong. It becomes a very difficult and impossible situation for them, and then they go away. Sometimes they stay very long and don't realize it. Sometimes they realize it right away and go away right away. But they're never told actually. It just so happens that one understands that they don't belong.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They feel like changes and get out, too.

LEO CASTELLI: No, no. Whatever really belongs is there from the beginning to date. Whatever did not belong—. Well, there was one moment where I didn't know. I had Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg. Okay. And then Stella. My enthusiasm for Stella was similar to that which I had for Johns. Strangely enough, I had the same kind of immediate reaction to that, because I knew Johns and I understand perfectly well that this was totally related to what Johns was after.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find out about Stella?

LEO CASTELLI: Somebody told me vaguely there was this young painter who was very good. Probably one painting had been seen in a group show at Johnny Meyers back in the spring of 1959. That person who saw that painting probably told me, "There is a young painter who you probably will be interested in. Go and see him." He gave me an address, and I went. It was on Broadway. Again, it was, as the French say, *le coup de foudre*, you know, just immediate reaction. It was fantastic work. Well, practically nobody understood it at that time, you see, except again Barr and Dorothy Miller did understand Stella because there was that episode when she was preparing one of those *14 Americans* or *16 Americans* shows in 1959 and she was still looking for some artists. She had included already Johns and Rauschenberg in that show. I sort of imprudently or wisely, I don't know, told her that there was this young painter (I just had seen him a few days before) that I had really been terribly taken with and would she like to come and see him. So we went and she looked and she said, "I must have that young man in my show." I said that was just absurd. Nobody has ever seen him. He's 23 years old. After all, the people that you have in that show are people that have had shows and are known, and you shouldn't do that to a young fellow. By the way, I have planned to show these black paintings of his in my first show I told her. So what do I do? She said, "Never mind, you will find something else to do, and I must have him." I did find something else to do, and she had him.

Again, there was a painting that they had shown, and at the end of the show they wanted to buy it. They used to buy one painting of every artist in the show. The trustees or whoever decides there said it was absurd to buy that painting of Stella's, that it was much too big, never mind the money (I think it was something like \$900), it was just too big, they didn't have enough space to store a stupid painting like that. Barr at the time, from what I heard later what happened, made a long speech explaining what the painting was about and ended by saying that, if the trustees did not accept his opinion, he would resign because he would feel that his staying at the Museum would be sort of useless if his advice was not taken on major aesthetic matters of this kind. So Barr was very good about Stella, excellent. Although they never pursued anything, that was the great mistake of the Modern. They bought that

Stella and from then on they didn't buy Stella anymore for years and years and years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They seem to use a shotgun technique. You know, if they get a painting, that's fine; he's represented.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Well, for instance, Howard Lipman, who I was talking to the other day, said to me that he bought one Morris, one Judd. He said now I would like to buy more. Of the major sculptors that I'm buying, I would like to have three, four, five of each and go on buying them. I find it a shallow technique of buying just one painting and consider that I have done my duty. It's just a ridiculous approach, but that approach has been followed by the Museum. Well, for a long, long time little by little, they acquired thousands of Pollocks by gifts and other ways, as they acquired thousands and thousands of Picassos. But they didn't seem to be interested in doing that with the American artists for many, many years. Their one example seems to be enough. They feel they have accomplished their duty.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Look at the Warhol they have. It's a very early Warhol.

LEO CASTELLI: Nothing. The Pop group they have completely neglected, completely. Now they're doing that Oldenberg show. Okay. That's the one they were less against for some reason because there was more of an abstract expressionist trend there in the beginning especially in those plaster things that he did. That was a mood that they understood, but they didn't understand Lichtenstein at all and still don't understand him. They don't have the vaguest idea about what Warhol is about either.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Eventually, eventually. Well, I think we could just keep talking about, you know, after the Johns and Rauschenberg shows and the next year and just kind of go through.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. This is a rather chaotic kind of thing, but it will necessarily be so. If it's of any interest, I just jump from one thing to the other as they occur to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure, sure.

LEO CASTELLI: Otherwise, I would have to sort of evolve a rigid scheme. Your questions bring me back to order anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How about people like Sam Hunter or Leo Steinberg or Alan Solomon?

LEO CASTELLI: I'll have to talk to you about them and other people in the art world, yes. It will be very interesting for me to tell you about my relations with them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because they've all sort of been—

LEO CASTELLI: They've played a very important role. For instance, Steinberg critically with this one essay of his on Jasper Johns, about which I'll tell you more, really created a minor revolution. Solomon has been of extreme importance with his two Jewish Museum shows, the Rauschenberg and the Johns show, and even more so with the incredible 1964 Biennale. I will tell you more about that. It is a shame that people of this caliber really are not properly used. Through circumstances, they lose their job at the Jewish Museum. They still make an heroic effort and are used for a Biennale, like the 1964 Biennale, a very intelligent organization. Then there is no use for them anymore. It's partly due to the character of the man, sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's in part due to the public wanting a new star all the time.

LEO CASTELLI: Then there was that fantastic book of Solomon's, *The New Art Scene*, which really is a very important document that had a very indifferent reception when it came out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting. Fred McDarragh did a little one years ago, a little paperback.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. It's a very important document.

PAUL CUMMINGS: ...which is still in print. They still sell thousands of copies of that a year all over the country.

LEO CASTELLI: This, for instance, (I will suggest it to Alan) should be made into a paperback.

It's a wonderful— It's a really marvelous document.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very expensive.

LEO CASTELLI: It's not that expensive. It's ten dollars or twelve dollars. Anyway, it certainly should be done in paperback. It's a document of the first order.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Shall we go on?

LEO CASTELLI: Okay. But I have to go. Let's stop here now.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: This is reel four, and it's June 18. So after the *New Work* show?

LEO CASTELLI: *New Work* show. Well, I don't know whether I actually realized at that time whether this was as significant a show for me as it turned out to be. I think I did. It's a difficult thing to say, because there was a feeling—

We had a party at my first secretary's. That was Ilsa (then) Goetz, and I remember she had a roof garden. We were on the roof garden and most of the artists—certainly Jasper, Bob, and others—were there. There was a feeling of elation about this show. Maybe that party did not occur at the opening; maybe it occurred at the close of the season. I can't remember exactly when, but there was a feeling that something important had been accomplished with that show. But I still—If I look at my *Ten Years Castelli Ten* catalogue—I better have a copy, Barbara, just to see how much I went on fumbling and how—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then you had Norman Bluhm and Damian and Marisol.

LEO CASTELLI: Let me see what happened after that, because it's interesting to see. *New Work*. You see here Bluhm, Budd, Dzubas, Johns, Leslie, Morris Louis, Marisol, Ortman, Rauschenberg, and Savelli with collage. That's the beginning of the season. There would be also— Oh, there would be the Norman Bluhm show. Let's see now what the consequences of that show were. I had Norman Bluhm in that *New Work* show and Norman Bluhm appears as the first show of the season. Then Marisol.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find Norman?

LEO CASTELLI: He was somebody who was around. You know the artists who are around. Norman had been in Paris for quite a while before. He had just gotten back more or less. I was very interested at the time, as everybody was, in Sam Francis. Well, he seemed to be a Sam Francis. He was then.

We considered him a good painter, one of those that one had discovered because he also had worked in Europe and had made his reputation in Europe rather than here. Bluhm seemed to me to be doing work that was in a similar direction and terribly interesting, which he really was at the time and, frankly, continued to be.

He left the gallery because he felt that he was not at home here. He felt that the competition, especially from Rauschenberg and Johns, was very strong and that that was the dominant mood, perhaps, of the gallery. And he left, but not in anger. He felt that he was not at home. That was all. I still think that he went on being a very good artist. I let him go with regret, let's say.

So, but to see the consequences of that show, I see that I had a show of a European painter whom I probably had contacted in the summer or before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Damian.

LEO CASTELLI: Damian. Then there was Marisol, who appeared in my *New Work* show, Jasper Johns, Dzubas, Rauschenberg, and then again the Europeans. So, you see that I still had that idea that I would have interesting Europeans. Both Capogrossi and Damian (especially Capogrossi) seemed to be interesting and sort of acceptable here because of their (well, in the case of Capogrossi) quite original image—in the case of Damian because of a rather rough quality that made him pretty close to (or rather made him seem pretty close to) American painting, not the precious kind of European painting that we didn't like any more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: Then, as I can see here, at the end of the season, I still was involved in having shows of the classics. I still thought that I might do something with that. As a matter of fact, the so-called classic show, every young gallery who can possibly do it Bob Eckel [ph] is an example does, as long as you don't have a stable in which your painters become classics like Johns, Rauschenberg, now Stella, and Lichtenstein, and so on. If you don't have classics, you have to have painters on whom you can make some money if you want to develop your operations. If you want to stay very, very small with no overhead, then you can go on showing only modestly priced Americans. Otherwise, you can't survive if you are an ambitious gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know the blue chip ones are very important to the finances.

LEO CASTELLI: They are important for the finances. They are important also at the beginning to attract people. At that time back in 1958, there were relatively few of the important collectors, if any, important collectors of European art that would even turn around to buy American paintings. They were beginning to buy, say, Pollock and de Kooning; but it was just the beginning. So that would attract them, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So even to get them to see the Americans you had to show major Europeans?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Just to come to your gallery and say, well, this man who's got a show like this with Leger and Delaunay and Picabia here, and also has Pollock and de Kooning at the same time, that means that he does something. That was the idea. As I said, I think in our previous conversation, I was the first one, I think, to mix American with European and so forth classics. And that was certainly a ploy to attract collectors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And it worked.

LEO CASTELLI: And it worked. So I had all those shows of which one, two, three, four, five were the direct consequence of the New Work show. So, it was really a programmatic show. I was very much involved, and I still am involved in group shows. I like those very, very much—shows that without any kind of theme just show good work of the artists that I have in the gallery. They always give me great pleasure, like the present one which is not complete. But when you see it, it will be, I think, a very good show. They're, in a way, more challenging and also more practical than a one-man show. Of course, you can't go on doing those.

Since I have so many artists, I cannot indulge in that favorite sport of mine—of doing group shows. I have it here at the very end of the season, probably almost wasted. I would like to have another one—really be tough about it and have another one at the beginning of next season. End with one, begin with one. No?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now the 1957-1958 season was your first full season?

LEO CASTELLI: The 1957-1958 season was my first full season, yes. And it ends with this Pioneers Show, so-called.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. How was the reception of the artists in that year? How did the exhibitions fare?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, let's take them one by one. There was a nice, normal reaction to the Norman Bluhm exhibition. Damian, I really can't remember.

Marisol's was a very nice show. She used to do those rather primitive wood carvings at that time and everybody loved it. There was that famous cat there, and Marisol with the big crown of plaster thorns. It was a very nice show.

Then Jasper Johns, as I think I mentioned already, was a big sensation. There was a great deal of derision, but there was also a great deal of enthusiasm about it. I told you about the episode of Tom Hess' picking up the painting with plaster faces and it appearing on the magazine cover. The reaction he got from his faithful retainers was a bad one. They were mad at him as I understand—and the enthusiasm of Alfred Barr, the excitement. There were several episodes in that connection that I think I did not mention. One was that Barr was so excited that he spent hours, that he wanted to see Jasper.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You talked about that.

LEO CASTELLI: I didn't talk about the fact that he got very involved with my *Target*, the target with plaster that is mine and that has a green penis in it among other images.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, on the top, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, on the top. He would really have loved to have that rather than the one with the faces. He considers it more important. But then, he had qualms about having trouble with, you know—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The trustees.

LEO CASTELLI: Not the trustees so much as the public. Imagine now. But at that time, this limply hanging green penis would excite peoples' susceptibilities. But it was so. He was very worried about it—probably justly so. He said he had enough trouble remonstrating with groups like the Daughters of the American Revolution about the whole activity of the Museum, which was considered un-American in many ways. So that perhaps he wanted to avoid trouble and could he perhaps envisage having that case closed.

So, I said I would not know what to tell him. But since we had already asked Jasper to come up, we wanted to talk to him. He was coming [so] why didn't he ask him what his feeling is about this. So, he asked Jasper when he came. Jasper said, "Well, if it's entirely casually closed, I really don't mind; but I do not want it to be programmatically closed. Since it's nailed down, it's not possible to open it; but, as a program, then, I would rather prefer that you do not take the painting."

Barr is immensely honest, as you know, [and] said, "Well, under these conditions, I cannot take it then because I would have to violate your intentions and I don't want to do that." So they took that other one; they took the *Green Target*.

I think I told you that Soby up-and-bought one for Mrs. John D. Rockefeller II or III—the second, I think. And Dorothy Miller got one. He got himself one. So there was great excitement about it.

That was one thing. The other thing was the famous episode with (I don't know whether I told you that) with the *Flag* that Philip Johnson bought and how he bought it and what happened.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, let's go into that.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Barr wanted the *Flag* very badly, but he felt that he could not buy it because it would raise a terrible storm of protest on the part of practically everybody—desecrating the flag and things like that. He wanted to secure it in some way or another, so he figured it out (he told me.) He'd get Philip up here to buy it and keep it until people get used to the whole thing and then, well, get it from him. So Philip came, looked at it, and said, "Well, I really don't care very much for it, frankly." Barr said, "Oh, it's not very expensive. It's only \$900. You can do me that favor." So Philip said, "Okay, I'll be glad to do you that favor and I'll buy it for you." So he bought it.

Then, the next thing was I see it in his office in the Seagram Building. Was it? Yes, it was the Seagram Building. No, it must have been somewhere else because, at that time, the Seagram Building wasn't ready. I'm being anachronistic. But it was there. I've heard from some other source (I believe it was Dorothy Miller who told me this) that, after a year, Barr realized that nobody was really very excited about the *Flag*. It was accepted as an idea by practically everybody. So it seems, according to the story I was told, that one day Barr sort of approached Johnson and said, "Now I think that you can give me my *Flag*." So Philip Johnson said, "Your *Flag*! No, it's my *Flag*, and I really got to like it so much that I want to keep it for a while longer." So he's keeping it until he—. Well, he's promised his whole collection to the Modern. But it's still his *Flag*; it's still there. He does not want to part with it until he must. So that was another episode in connection with the *Flag*.

Then another thing that I remember is Sweeney's coming. Sweeney at that time really was not very involved with the new things that were happening in American art, and I remember his being very scathing about the big white flag of Jasper's, considering it a big joke. But Sweeney came around not too much later. Now he does understand and has a great feeling

for whatever happened at that time. So people came around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I think you didn't show Europeans after that for a while, did you? Capogrossi was—

LEO CASTELLI: That was about the last. I gave them up. The reason for that was that I had really very close relationships with the most of my artists. There was the great friendship, the real friendship that I had with Jasper and Bob. We saw each other all the time. We were close friends, and my relationships with the others were also pretty close. I used to go often to their studios to see what they were doing. I would see them here at the gallery for a chat.

The gallery has always been very much sort of a club. It still is now as you can see. If you spend an hour here, the people come and go and sit and talk. This atmosphere existed also at that time. The artists liked to come up. At that time, there was much more time; and we could all sit and talk. It was a very nice atmosphere. We used to have sofas. I had to suppress the sofas, as a matter of fact, (another little sidelight) a little later on because people just wouldn't go away. They would sit there for hours. First I tried to do something about it by putting the sofa downstairs instead of having it upstairs here in this room. Then people would go downstairs and sit downstairs, and they wouldn't move. So in the end, I had to give the sofas up and have these hard benches that we have now where they don't like to sit so much.

Now, Dzubas' was a nice show, too. But again, normally he would have been understood more easily as an offshoot of abstract expressionism like Helen Frankenthaler. He comes out of that. He's already an offshoot like Helen, as we can see now. [Audio break.]

LEO CASTELLI: We were analyzing how I got down to that stable little by little that then gave the gallery its special configuration, aspect, how it was arrived at rather tentatively.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, the testing is in trying different things.

LEO CASTELLI: In trying, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm interested in how you picked some of the people as we go along.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Let's see how I picked them and why I picked them. I haven't thought about it. Sometimes there were actually false starts and blind alleys.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sometimes you have to do an exhibition to make up your mind, too, I think.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it's really not so. It doesn't work that way. You make your mind up, God knows, on all kinds of instinctive reactions that you have. Usually they show. Of course, after the fact, the show becomes a very important factor in how you feel about an artist. But then, you cannot make the decision on the basis of a show that you haven't had, and you can't tell an artist (you could really, but you can't)—An artist is sort of anxious and especially now where artists are picked up right and left by every gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ten years ago it was very different.

LEO CASTELLI: Ten years ago. Artists like Stella, or a little later Lichtenstein or Warhol, would not really lend themselves to be experimented with and told that I'll give you a show and then if I'm satisfied sales-wise I'll take you on. It won't work that way. You have to show faith, real faith, in the artist before you give him a show. You have to judge him on the basis of his work as it stands there against the wall. So that's not possible. It's a complex process actually, sometimes more in the beginning than later on. You find them almost yourself on the basis of a clue that you get from somebody else, just a casual remark almost by accident. You make a decision, and you don't know anything about that artist. He's not part of a group.

Like Stella came from nowhere. I can't even remember who mentioned him to me; it was so unimportant. Stella I consider a real discovery, just as I consider Jasper Johns a real discovery, my discovery because I didn't know about his existence. He had been picked, thanks to the efforts of Rauschenberg, his friend, to appear in that group at the Jewish Museum in 1957. All the reputation he had was based on one painting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One picture in one show, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: In that particular show actually, Rauschenberg almost had to run down the committee; although Meyer Schapiro had been interested in Johns right away. He had like him, so he didn't have to make much of an effort to convince him to show Jasper, an unknown young man. I consider Johns a real discovery. I didn't know anything about him. I had never heard his name. Practically nobody had, as a matter of fact. There were very few people who did until the day I saw one painting at the Jewish Museum and three days later he was in my gallery.

With Stella, it was even quicker in the sense that I had heard about him from somebody (I don't know whom anymore), and I went down to the studio and I got him the same day. Another one whom I also consider a discovery really—Lee Bontecou. She shared a studio with a friend of hers who was a painter, and Dick Bellamy had gone down to see the other girl. After having been down to the studio, he said to Ivan [Karp], "I saw the paintings of that girl. I didn't think they were very interesting, but there's an artist there that Leo might like." (He sort of knew my taste a little bit.) Bellamy apparently was not interested in Lee. So, I told Ivan to go down and see and he did. Then Ileana also went to see, and they both felt it was terribly interesting. It's really fantastic, as a matter of fact, but I don't know what one can actually do with those things. They're frightening. The report was in a sense enthusiastic; but, in another sense, it seemed almost impractical to show an artist like that. So I delayed my going down to verify. I think it took me about a month before I got down there. When I went in, my first reaction was to feel that Ivan and Ileana were just mad not to rush me down there; because I found it so fantastically interesting. I got her right away; I didn't hesitate for a moment. So this I consider a discovery. That was Lee Bontecou.

Another one that I consider a discovery was Roy [Lichtenstein] who came out from nowhere with those fantastic things that he brought to the gallery which were not particularly good but seemed to be supremely interesting and full of possibilities, although they were very, very uneven and some were even positively bad.

Andy [Warhol] then we saw with Ivan. We went to his house on Lexington, and I felt that they were pretty close in many ways to the spirit of Lichtenstein's. It seemed to me, since Pop art didn't exist, nobody knew that it was a movement at that time. I had seen quite rightly that they were close in spirit.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The early Warhols were the cartoon paintings?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, the cartoon paintings, the nose jobs, and the dancing steps. There were some soup cans already, and at that time they were isolated soup cans. Had I seen the repeat ones at the time, I would have understood right away that they were based on an entirely different principle. But at that time, I didn't understand. It seemed to me that he was doing soup cans, and the other one was doing comic things—things that he would take out of newspaper advertisements, as Roy did too. The Ben Day dot at that time didn't seem to be—Already you could see that it was a little bit of a trademark, but it was just the blowup of something that he found in small print. It seemed the logical thing in blowing up newsprint to have the Ben Day dot appear much larger.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But the Warhols were—

LEO CASTELLI: Warhol seemed to be close to Lichtenstein. Therefore, I voted for Lichtenstein who I had seen before. I told Andy that he seemed to be pretty close to Lichtenstein; therefore, I couldn't have two artists competing in the same kind of direction in the gallery. He was very distressed about that. I asked him if anybody else had been interested in his work, and he said Eleanor Ward had been. So I said, "Then do go to Eleanor Ward because in my gallery there would be this conflict. There you would be happy. She wants you very badly." So he went reluctantly, but finally got back to me after it became quite obvious to me that I had completely misunderstood what he was about, which was quite natural because he kept telling me that it was different. But how could he explain it? There was nothing to prove it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He painted his things, didn't he, rather than the Ben Day dots?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, there were big newspaper first pages like *109 Died*, the marvelous painting that Ludwig has now. It seemed to be (and it was) based on the same principle; it was the Pop art principle, which I then sensed. I didn't sense any relationship between Andy

and Roy on the one hand and Rosenquist on the other.

Rosenquist I went to see and I liked. But I felt that, in an odd way, he was too close to Surrealism, to Magritte. At that time, there were many paintings that suggested Magritte very, very strongly. It was on that ground that I did not take him at that time, and a few days later Dick Bellamy took him on. Ileana saw it at the time. I really did think that those totem poles he had then were distinctly bad stuff. There were also a few of his new things there. But then, on the basis of those earlier things that I considered really clumsy, I said that a man that can commit such horrors as those wooden things with the wings up...

PAUL CUMMINGS: The totems, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: ...could not really be good; and it was an accident if those other things that he was beginning, those emblematic things which he was beginning to do, were good. Generally speaking, I feel that he really did not quite belong in the stream anyway, whatever stream there was then. He really didn't interest me. He was a hard-edge painter with some competence.

Segal did not particularly interest me either. I didn't even see him. He went straight to Dick.

So Lichtenstein was a discovery. Andy, well, perhaps was one, too. I saw him among the first, but also other people had seen him so it was not really such a discovery.

That's about the end of the discoveries because, from then on, young people would gravitate toward some leading painter and you would gradually find out about them. Nobody just happened suddenly as Jasper or Stella did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious about some of the people you showed the second year who were with you for a long time.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Let's go back.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like Savelli or Vicente.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. You see, I had a certain attachment, after all, to *Abstract Expressionism*. I had been involved with it, and my hope was always that some better men would emerge than just secondary followers from that movement—which actually happened. But those two men were Jasper and Bob, and they didn't seem to belong. They seemed very, very different. Later on we found that, after all, they came straight out of that; but at that time it was not so obvious. So I was expecting to see them come out to relate more closely.

Tworckov, for instance, that I took on (he left the Stable) seemed to be a choice that is not really easy to explain; but it is explained by the fact that he was one of the good abstract expressionists. Bob and Jasper liked him very much. He was a painter's painter more than somebody that collectors liked. So, since he became available, I took him. It is one of those things that is difficult to explain. Well, he was Italian, he was lost, and he was around a great deal. He made collages at that time that were quite interesting. It was more out of weakness that I gave him a show just to help him.

Scarpitta, on the other hand, was an interesting situation. This is one of those things that happened very rarely. He came to the gallery with slides. He was a geometric hard-edge painter of some interest. I didn't think that he had invented gunpowder, but still he was interesting enough for me to try him out. Although, it turned out that he was really not a major painter. Well, he just stayed on. Occasionally, whenever I could, I went on giving him shows. His last paintings, the paintings that he did for his last show here, were really of more than routine interest; and it was really quite successful. I think many people were surprised to see that he could have such an interesting comeback.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I thought his show was very nice—that recent one.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. He had a show at the Albright-Knox which was really quite good, and he was really a great success this time. Also, Scarpitta was an interesting case, because he came with those shaped canvases.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. That was marvelous.

LEO CASTELLI: There I instinctively saw a possibility that unfortunately did not get realized.

He was really the inventor of the shaped canvas, and it's a shame that he got completely deviated by his fantastic enthusiasm for the New York School of Painting, for de Kooning, Pollock, and Kline, and that group. Instead of sticking with what he was experimenting with and carrying through to his own original conclusions, he got involved with de Kooning and Kline. That was the end of Scarpitta.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know that those early canvases, and even some later ones, were terrific images, really strong.

LEO CASTELLI: They were terrific. My choice of Scarpitta—I could still consider, on the basis of those canvases that I saw in Rome—. It's like Bontecou. It was a good, interesting choice that had many possibilities.

Bontecou has also been lying low for several years now. That first spurt of great invention she did not really continue. She got stuck. Maybe she got stuck for internal reasons. She got married and had a child and maybe she—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Changed her outlook.

LEO CASTELLI: She changed around and became gradually a very different artist, as was indicated by that transparent piece that she had at the Whitney Annual.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

LEO CASTELLI: It seems quite promising.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She's the only girl with the exception of Marisol that's been in the gallery, isn't she?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Oh, Marisol is another case. I didn't keep her because she went away to Rome, stayed away for two or three years. When she came back, she was sort of rather uncertain about what to do. I asked her what were her plans. She said, "Oh, the gallery has changed so much, and I don't know whether I belong or not." So I said, all right.

A few months later, she phoned and asked me to come to see those new things in her studio and I went down. They were of the type that she has been doing since then—those groups, those satires on all kinds of persons, portraits. I really did not like them. I thought that they were, I don't know, contrived. They were not, for me, serious enough. I told her then that I was sorry but I really don't dig them, and then she went to Janis after that.

I am glad that I didn't take her on, because her art had lost the depth that it had in the beginning. That was Marisol.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Scarpitta, after the shaped canvases and some other things, started building his automobiles?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. I must say that I gave him that automobile show that we brought up here to the gallery with tremendous effort. It was quite an enterprise, and they fell completely flat. I was really generally enthusiastic about them. I thought that they would have a great deal of success; because there was something very Pop-ish about it, very obsessive and curious. But people just didn't—. Nobody dug them except myself and maybe another person or two. Then he went on doing those automobiles.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wonder if it was because they were too real for a lot of people?

LEO CASTELLI: They were too real. They had a little failing, a little fault somewhere. They were almost incredibly good. I don't know whether you saw the warehouse show of the automobiles.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

LEO CASTELLI: There are six of them there now, and they were really beautiful. There were the old ones and four new ones. Again, it's difficult to say where they failed, but they failed somewhere. Too real, but that really doesn't quite explain it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I wanted to see the show.

LEO CASTELLI: So that fell flat, but he stayed on with me and gets a moderate support from me through the years in spite of the fact that really nothing happens. Now I have permitted him to get himself settled in teaching jobs and so on, and very soon he really won't need me any more. But there have been long years in which I would give him the support that he needed to go on living and pay his rent. Fortunately, he has a wife, Pat, who works and earns a good salary so that the strain on my finances hasn't been too hard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And you have Gabe Kohn.

LEO CASTELLI: Gabe Kohn I picked. I rather liked his laminated wood things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. It's interesting the relationship between the cool things that he had and the cool things that Daphnis is doing in the sense that the Scarpitta things, which are cool and large as opposed to—

LEO CASTELLI: There is a relationship between Bontecou and Scarpitta, his shaped canvases, and Gabe Kohn. Again, they are rather strange configurations done in a very attractive way with those laminated things, which everybody likes. I mean, I do. It has to do with boats and things, you know. I like his work very much, but there we had some—. Well, he was difficult anyway to begin with, and then what happened was that his pieces were very badly made. They fell to pieces. They were not properly glued together and so on. He had problems. His ideas were good, but the execution was pretty poor. Then one really very good piece that I had sold to somebody was falling apart. I had it restored, and the restorer over-restored it and shined it up. Gabe was very indignant about that, and I had trouble getting it away from the collector, back to the collector. He accused me of tampering with the work of an artist. He made himself so unpleasant that I felt, "Look here you can have the piece back." And that ended our relationship—which has happened very, very rarely. I think this is the only case where I parted on bad terms with an artist.

There were jealousy cases, but the parting there usually was not catastrophically bad. They sort of began to be jealous and annoyed at the fact that they thought (which was the truth really) that artists like Johns, Rauschenberg, Bontecou, Roy, Andy were taking over and getting all the attention and that they weren't. But that was due to natural causes. They were the ones on whom attention was focusing, and no amount of work that I could do could change that. So they would go away but, generally speaking, not in anger—except perhaps Vicente, who was a particularly jealous man and who resented especially Jasper and Bob. He had been a pretty close friend in earlier years before I opened the gallery; and he, of course, particularly felt hurt by the fact that he didn't get supposedly the same attention as Rauschenberg and Johns.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You can never judge what the public is going to do either.

LEO CASTELLI: That's right. Friedel [Dzubas] left also because he was jealous. Then finally Norman Bluhm left, because he felt that he did not belong. Others, like Daphnis, although they didn't have much success, did hang on. In a thing like this, there must be a lot of dropouts. Also, there are certain people that have been warmly recommended by artist friends, and you let yourself be convinced (although you are not entirely convinced) that they are terribly good—like, well, what's his name now? Well, there was Jon Schueler. But he was there from the beginning and seemed to be an interesting departure from abstract expressionism, a more lyrical type artist than abstract expressionism. But he turned out to be insufficiently interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Al Newbill.

LEO CASTELLI: Al Newbill also seemed— No, that was a real mistake, I think. Well, there was my secretary, Ilsa Goetz, who sort of found him; and she felt he was very interesting with her kind of optics. I sort of let myself be convinced, but I knew right from the beginning that it wouldn't work. So after one show, he fell by the wayside.

And Ed Higgins. Both Ivan and I went to see him. We found him very, very interesting to begin with, and he also turned out to be a dud really. There was this piece that the Museum of Modern Art has which was a really good piece, and I almost based my taking him on this piece alone. Again, I was not a hundred percent convinced, and I should have followed my instinct there and not have forced the issue.

Yves Klein, who was a foreigner, I was really interested in; because, again, there I saw in him

a real Dadaist, a man who was able to show an empty room or those blue, blue paintings. Then he turned out to be, in my estimation after I had the show, a little bit too precious, not really just somebody who did something that was very spare. They were precious, precious blue paintings.

Kiesler I showed because he was a real old friend, and I wanted to give him a show once. There were some interesting things there—those shapes of Kiesler's that I showed, not the paintings so much as his models for Henry's house—[that] were really of some interest and I don't regret showing him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had a Bill Giles exhibition.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, Giles. Giles was a great friend of Bob's and Jasper's. They saw each other very often. He seemed to be really promising, all kinds of strange things. Then he turned out to be absolutely intractable. He had that show, which was nice; and then already during the show he was in a bad mood and all that. I asked him one day, "What is the matter with you?" He said, "Well, I feel that you don't treat me as you do Jasper and Bob, that I'm just considered a young nobody here." I said, "For heaven's sakes, I've had Jasper and Bob for so many years now, and they've proved their mettle. It's your first show." "Yes, but you're not convinced; you're not enthusiastic." So I said, "Well, Bill, if you feel that way, then we'd just better call it quits after the show"—which we did. It was a very quick and painless parting there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But that's a kind of standard problem with him.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've had that experience with him and so did his other dealers recently.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he's been quite a while with Frumkin now, hasn't he? No?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No more.

LEO CASTELLI: He's no longer with Frumkin? Well, where is he now?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nowhere.

LEO CASTELLI: Nowhere? I'm sorry to hear that, just for Lee, not for him. You know that he has never come even to see one of his wife's shows here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

LEO CASTELLI: Never. He's never set his foot in the gallery any more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it fits though. That's too bad.

LEO CASTELLI: Then there was Bernard Langlais, which definitely was a mistake, because he was much too primitive, although he had some interesting things when I first saw him. But he was too primitive. I should have seen that right away. There was no subtlety there, although there was some interesting invention to begin with.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How about Twombly?

LEO CASTELLI: Twombly has been an old friend. I've known him for many ears. He was an interesting and important artist already back in 1954-1955 when he showed with Rauschenberg at the Stable. He is a very subtle artist. He went away, as you know, and spent all those years in Rome. Then I had a good show of his, I think the first one, still with the American-type material. Then he sent me over a show without coming even, and it was not—I didn't like it very much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was that? The 1963-1964 show? It was the second one.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, it was the second show. Oh, here is another little mistake—Gerald van de Wiele. He seemed to be pointing in a new direction with this very rich kind of imagery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now he does lovely landscapes.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, so I hear. These Scarpittas are really very contrived and not very good at all. It's a show that I can do without, with much pleasure. Yes, there was a series here that he called some emperor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's right. Yes, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Commodus or something like that. They were not really very good. They were very sort of Europeanized and precious. I sort of held off with Twombly, because I knew that he would mend because of his personality and all that. One could sort of trust him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is that a big factor when you decide about someone?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I do not consider it enough. I should really base my choices—. Even if something seems quite good and interesting, I should base it on personality. That's the only guarantee that you have really, the personality of the artist. You have that in a man like Serat. You have it in a man like Nauman. You have it in a man like Peter Young. Sonia I don't know well, but he seems to be personable. You have it, of course, to a supreme degree in Johns, Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein, Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, and Bontecou. There are certain weaknesses that you detect in people like—. Well, sometimes the weaknesses are real weaknesses of character, but in many cases they are just weaknesses of mind. I mean there's not enough—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not enough scope.

LEO CASTELLI: There's not enough scope in the person's thoughts and feeling. So, that would be an important factor in the choice that one should always consider. I should not pick a guy whom you feel does not understand the complexities and subtleties of the artist's involvement with his period. So really, one should be very careful about that. As one should be careful about it when you form relationships with people in your gallery. I would say one who works for you should be judged on the basis of whether there is that relationship between you and them and not just that he or she happens to look as if he or she were efficient. Then, of course, one makes errors there as you make errors when you pick girls or girl friends. You may be attracted by certain superficial characteristics and then be immensely disappoint because you have not properly considered more important factors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long did— I've forgotten your first secretary's name again.

LEO CASTELLI: My first secretary was Ilsa Goetz. The second one—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did she come to work for you?

LEO CASTELLI: Who? Ilsa?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, she had been working. She had been around in the art world, and I knew her socially, and I was opening this gallery. She was without a job at the time. She was practiced, and it was very simple to, well, to take the one that was handy, that I knew and who had a certain experience and was capable of setting up a mailing list and could handle all kinds of practical things that I had absolutely no idea about. That was Ilsa.

Then I had Connie Tremble, who came to me through the *New York Times*. She advertised herself as a girl Friday, and she really was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She was here for a long time.

LEO CASTELLI: She was here for a long time, and she was very good. I was heartbroken when she left because her husband got a job in Washington. The next one was Nina (then) Sutherland, who was also very, very good. She got married and left, and again I was heartbroken. Then Kay came to me because she was around. She had been Henry's secretary. She was very good, but I had some personality problems with her. We really didn't have much contact on a human level as I had had with the other three, especially with the two, Connie and Nina, whom I still see. She's just a marvelous, sunny child. She still is the same.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She's marvelous.

LEO CASTELLI: Connie was really a faithful and devoted kind of person. Nina is extremely intelligent. At that time, she would say never, never leave that gallery; I want to take over later on. But then, of course, Charlie came along and she did leave. Then with Kay, who was very efficient and very good and with whom I had a very good relationship, there was always that sort of rather lack of comprehension of each other's moods that we had, and we didn't function too well together. Now, of course, we love each other much more than we did when we had those personality problems here in the gallery.

Now there is Barbara here with whom I really have the kind of relationship that I like. She functions very, very well and understands my problems without my even telling her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did Ivan come to work for you? He's been here for a long time.

LEO CASTELLI: Ivan came quite early. He came, I think, late in 1959 or early 1960. He's been here ten years. He had been with Martha Jackson. Actually, it was Ileana at that time who felt that we should have somebody (she was more practical-minded than I was) that was very experienced and was a good salesman. I seemed to be a very poor one. She didn't want to be—. She was even less involved in that part of the operation. So we got Ivan. I really don't want to talk about Ivan now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's a whole story in itself.

LEO CASTELLI: It's a whole story, which is a terribly interesting one; and I would like to talk about it at great length. It's been a very curious and terribly interesting relationship that we've had, very good really.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was Ileana involved in the day-to-day activity of the gallery in the first year?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, yes, she was around. The gallery hadn't been around very long—. She didn't stay very long, because she left me and the gallery—first me and then the gallery, too, in early 1960. She got into some kind of depression at that time. Well, we hadn't been really getting along very well for years on a personal basis, although we always had been friends really. But as far as man-woman relationship is concerned, it didn't work at all. But she was in the gallery and very concerned with that. She'd been sort of very helpful all along in our difficulties. We really went through some difficult years right after the war up to the moment when I set up the gallery. She had been very patient with me, as I had been pretty bad in many respects. Then probably she got into some depression owing to physical conditions and so on. And she just left. Well, I had all kinds of problems that were intolerable, but she really didn't mind that so much. I would say after all that we had just a friendly relationship, but still it's a little bit much. It's difficult.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It makes things very complicated sometimes.

LEO CASTELLI: So, really she had to leave and she did. Then there was some acrimony for a couple of years. Of course, we had so many common friends. She was, still is, a great friend of Bob's (especially Bob's) and Jasper's and Roy's. We had all these friendships in common that we had developed right from the beginning. So, that made things rather difficult. It was sort of like a tug-of-war of who was remaining friends with whom.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. It gives the friends problems, too.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. You have that always in situations like that. We got it ironed out after a while and we are now, as you know, really very good friends and we cooperate on all kinds of ventures. She's done an absolutely incredible job in Europe. People really didn't realize what her accomplishments were there and, of course, I'm glad that I could help her do that. Well, you see what took over then instead of our little personal animosities was the job that had to be done and that sort of healed our relationship more than anything else because she started doing things that were important and I realized the importance and then it became a common cause and a common concern. Once the history of those years is really written objectively—. We'll talk more about it, because it's something that has not been talked about enough.

So I think that we'll stop here.

[END OF castel69may_2of8_reel_SideB.]

[BEGINNING OF castel69may_3of8_reel_SideA.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I just want to put the date, which is October 1st. Part 2, Reel 1.

LEO CASTELLI: We're only now in what year?

PAUL CUMMINGS: 1961, '62 with Lichtenstein.

LEO CASTELLI: Let's get Lichtenstein.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You did talk about Warhol and why he went to, I think, Stable?

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But nothing about Lichtenstein.

LEO CASTELLI: When?

PAUL CUMMINGS: '61.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Lichtenstein was actually in '62. Lichtenstein's first show then was from February 10 to March 3 in 1962.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, when did you first see him?

LEO CASTELLI: When did I first see Lichtenstein? That's interesting because it was on the occasion of the Rauschenberg or just a little before the Rauschenberg show of November 7 to December 5, and that explains why this was so memorable. Rauschenberg and I had the idea that we would make that show with no beginning and no end. It would start as a group show in which there was a Rauschenberg and then little by little then we'd see if that corresponds. I don't see how we did it frankly, because I see that there was Nassos Daphnis for October 17 to November 4. And Rauschenberg actually was on November 7. Let me see now what Rauschenberg showed it was actually and if that corresponds to my, to the memory that I have of it. Oh, it was September 14 and, anyway, that must have occurred then within the Rauschenberg show, actually.

It did not last its regular time, but the idea a quality that we would start with a group in which a Rauschenberg would be included and then little by little we would take out paintings of the other people. There was Lichtenstein in it and I don't remember who else. We would replace them with Rauschenbergs in a week or so. Just day by day we would take them out. Then, say, by the end of the week, it would be a full Rauschenberg show. Then, after two weeks or so, we would start taking the Rauschenbergs out and replace them with other paintings and lead into the next show, which then was another group show again, yes. So actually, we started with a Rauschenberg show as a group show for a very brief time, very brief indeed; and then we led into another group show. That was the idea. I can't remember now exactly how it was carried out except for one thing—that I put a Lichtenstein in the first group. It was the first Lichtenstein that became publicly visible. It's the *Girl with The Ball*, which is now at the Modern about which there is a tale, too, an interesting one.

It belongs now to Philip Johnson, and this is a painting that I love very much. It was the first Lichtenstein painting that— It was in a group of paintings that Lichtenstein brought along, and that must have been somewhere in the fall of 1961. I liked it very much, and it sort of almost is the painting that decided me to take on Lichtenstein. There were others—some that I didn't like at all, others that I liked—but none that I liked as much as the *Girl with The Ball*.

So, the *Girl with The Ball* was in that famous group show leading into Rauschenberg. It was the first that I put on the wall after having those paintings around for perhaps a month or two at the most. Rauschenberg saw it and he said, "What is that?" He was really sort of shocked by it. It was shocking at that time, believe it or not. It still shocks some people today, very rare.

And John Gruen, for some strange reason— I don't understand his violent revulsion at the Lichtenstein show. Did you read his article in *New York* magazine? It's very, very strange. He's a friend. He is also really friendly with Roy. I don't understand why he wrote that nasty bit of literature about his show. Even Canaday sort of relented and had some nice words to say about Lichtenstein. Well anyway. So he was shocked. And I asked him well what do you

think of this. This is a new artist I have taken on.

Sometimes I would ask one of the other persons, important artists in the gallery what he thought about an artist before taking them on, but generally speaking I did not—at least not in the early times. I would just make my choices and then see what happened.

Of course, I valued Jasper's and Bob's reactions very, very much. If they didn't like something that I picked, of course, that would be something that I would not be very happy about. Sometimes whatever I picked and they didn't like it might become very good, and they would sort of change their minds. Sometimes the choices were not as happy as they seemed to me. But even in the case of Lichtenstein, he was shocked, but didn't want to say anything about it. He just said it's a very odd picture and say I'm really surprised. Then, he came back since this was a show that concerned him, and he was coming almost every day to see what we were doing and then set up his own show for a few days. He came back and then he looked at that painting again. And he said, "Well, I thought it over. I really do like it very much. I think it is very good. It is very interesting." That was Rauschenberg.

Johns, on the other hand, was also rather taken aback and indicated (without saying much) that he really didn't like it at all—not even as it was in the case of Barr with some hesitation, an idea that he would have to think it over; and then, Paul, for a long while he was very negative about Lichtenstein. I think he was negative about this first show really. Then I had a group show of drawings—Lichtenstein drawings and Johns drawings. Of course, he was involved in that show. He looked at that Lichtenstein show and he said, "Well, I'd like to have one of these." And that's after several months, was the way in which he then declared that he liked Lichtenstein.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This was?

LEO CASTELLI: That was Jasper.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was Jasper, right.

LEO CASTELLI: Bob sort of, after a few days, found Lichtenstein good, too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find Lichtenstein? Who brought him there?

LEO CASTELLI: Lichtenstein, just pure and simply, came to the gallery with a bundle of paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

LEO CASTELLI: And nobody had seen him before. Ivan, who was usually scouting around before I do, goes to studios often, hadn't seen his work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was teaching in New Jersey.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, teaching in New Jersey and there he was. So both Ivan and I thought it was very interesting, everybody for his own reasons. I mean, each one, of course, has his own reason: Ivan because, generally speaking, he was interested in things that were campy and that thing really was pretty campy; and I because I understood the Dada element in it. We were very keen on that kind of thing after Jasper's flags and targets and so on. The fact is we all agree that the great liberating influence for them was Jasper—that then they felt given the green light to do something that they had sort of thought about but they thought was impossible for a gallery to present to the public.

Well, Roy had been discussing the public and these things with Rutgers people there where he was teaching; and they probably had said that, from the shows that they had seen of Jasper's (the first show especially), that we would probably be the only gallery where he had the chance to be accepted. So he came to us with paintings. Both Ivan and I looked at them, and it was a very exciting thing.

I liked the *Girl with The Ball* especially. Others were quite interesting. Some I found not good, and then I wondered why they were not good. Discussed it later on. No, not later on. Pretty soon, actually, there was a question of—Or rather rapidly, I decided to take him on, take a chance on him on the basis of two or three things that I thought were very good. Then I started discussing him and became aware of why certain paintings didn't seem good to me

at all (that is of this group) and went and discovered that one of the main elements of success was the blowup. There was, for instance, a very crude black and white bathroom with toilet bowl and basin and bath tub which was life size, large but just life size about or even a little smaller. So this was what gave me the cue that blowup was an important element.

Also subject matter, of course. That I understood much later. The *Girl with The Ball* had that special sex appeal. Only it's sort of primary infantile, adolescent sex appeal [that] his comic strip characters have, and that was there for the first time to a very large degree. Even very sophisticated collectors nowadays recently are willing to go to extreme lengths to get a good Lichtenstein girl, and it is because there is this attraction to the comic strip girl. It is a sex symbol I would say, absolutely. So there was that element that we didn't really even confess to ourselves that there was that in it—the girls.

But anyway, to come back to Lichtenstein's show, I think that it was rapidly decided that he should be a member of the gallery. Then he had that show of his in—

PAUL CUMMINGS: '62.

LEO CASTELLI: February 10 to March 3, '62. So, you know, we first saw him in the fall of '61, and in '62 he had his first show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Very quickly.

LEO CASTELLI: That first show included some quite interesting pieces which are in the present Guggenheim show. Some are missing because they were not available. Some of these are missing because they are the very early period, which Diane Waldman decided not to put into the show. Some people complained about that—that they should have been in a cubicle included. But then the show, that was supposed to be not small but not an immense show, was becoming bigger and bigger and bigger and creeping up if he had put two or three more things—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It'd be the whole museum.

LEO CASTELLI: It'd be the whole museum, which sort of had to be a concession. So the concession was that they took the museum's pictures, and so Diane sacrificed the very early comic strips.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was the story you were going to tell about the *Girl with The Ball*.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, yes. There was a story about that. I was very happy about that and decided that was one of those that I would keep for myself as being sort of the one that really started my love affair with Roy.

Then one day Philip Johnson came along and he said, "I saw the *Girl with The Ball* on one occasion or another and I'd like to have it." So I said, "Philip, that is the one that I had decided to keep for myself." So he said, "Come on. I want it very badly, too. And you know that, after all, you do a useful job in my office; so come on, just sell it to me." So, I said, "Well, must I give it to you?" He said, "Yes, you must, absolutely." So I said, "Well, all right, Philip." He said, "Of course, I want to give you any price you ask for it since you are sacrificing that painting you want so much." So a painting like that at the time would have been something like \$400. So I said sort of jokingly, "All right, I'll double the price. It's \$400; it'll be \$800 instead." So he said, "Fine. You're joking but I'm serious. You'll get \$800 for it." So he got it, and this is one of the paintings that he has given to the Museum of Modern Art. So that was the *Girl with The Ball*.

When he had his first show, a little episode that is a visit that I got from a French museum man, Jean Leymarie, who is now the director of the new, I think, the Modern. I don't know exactly what this is called. Anyway, he's an appointee of Malraux and he replaces a man who was rather conservative. He wrote a book on Giacometti among other things. Anyway, at this time, he was a director of this museum and he had shown actually quite early—maybe in the late '40s already—Pollock and some of the American painters in his museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. I haven't seen him now for many years but, at that time, he (that was

in '62) he had been at Sao Paulo Biennale. He had been perhaps one of the jurors or whatever you call those, and he was passing through New York on his way back to France from there. He came and told me that he had been stopped in Peru as I did on the same occasion when I was in Sao Paulo. He looked at Lichtenstein's show and was terribly impressed right away, you know, with great ease and said that it reminded him very much of the frank, open brutality of the regime. He found him good right away.

Somebody who liked Lichtenstein very much right from the beginning was Marcel Duchamp, too. He used to come at times, too. He'd stroll down and come to the gallery. He liked him very much, as he did Rauschenberg and Johns. He liked Lichtenstein although he never really got to know him.

Somebody who admired Lichtenstein more than anybody else of their generation, I think, was Dali. He wrote an article about him—very funny one in *ARTnews* about two or three years ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's the "Hey Me" thing.

LEO CASTELLI: Did you see it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Anyway, it's not very important. You can find it easily. I was mentioning it as a curiosity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wonder if we could get on to some of the other people, unless there are specific things that happened about that first exhibition or people who were, you know, shocked and made great discoveries.

LEO CASTELLI: You mean again about Lichtenstein. Well, looking at these installation shots, I remember that somebody who was always in the forefront with buying things was Richard Brown Baker, who bought one of those paintings. Another one who liked it very much and bought this painting here, but then he sold it subsequently, was the famous count, Panza from Milan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he has an enormous collection of American paintings, does he not?

LEO CASTELLI: He's a very odd collector in the sense that he started working up the collection of Italian and French artists, for instance, well, all kind of Italians to begin with; and none of them really turned out to be great artists or art for all time. Then he got interested in French painting, and then he had—What's the name of the Spanish painter Martha Jackson sold him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tàpies.

LEO CASTELLI: Tàpies, yes. ...and then he had— He bought— He got interested in a painter; then he bought massively. For instance, he had great numbers of Fautrier—middle '50s or late '50s. He had all these Fautrier and all these Tàpies. Then he got interested in Klein and Rothko. He also got interested in de Kooning, but there weren't many around. He was not interested in buying one painting ever. He was interested in buying many. So, if there was one de Kooning around, that didn't, wouldn't— It would interest him for an artist, but he would not actually be interested as a collector.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If there were ten, then he'd be excited.

LEO CASTELLI: If he could get ten, then he would get excited. So, since there were plenty of Klines and plenty of Rothkos available around the time when he bought them (it must have been in the '50s), he really bought Kline and Rothko massively.

I went to see his place. It's near Milan, Bareze on the lake, really very beautiful, an old 17th century palace right in the middle of the park. It reminds you of *Last Year at Marienbad*. There I went to see him in maybe the early '60s, and he had all those Rothkos and those Klines.

There was a Rothko living room. I mean, there is this castle with fantastic antique furniture in every room, a really very big affair. You go up a solemn, very imposing staircase with all the ancestral portraits, and then there are all these immense numbers of rooms and

corridors and such. Anyway, there was a room, living room, full of Rothkos, just Rothkos, and the dining room just Klines. Really quite amazing. Eighteen major Klines and as many Rothkos.

So then his next love was Rauschenberg, and he bought massively in the early '60s. He had at least 12-15 Rauschenbergs, very early ones. He's got some masterpieces.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. I wonder how those things would look in a European setting like that.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he was absolutely unique. I mean, there was nothing else like that. He bought massively out of this show. In fact, he didn't buy them out of the show; he saw them in the studio. It was my show of 1960, '61. This one here. It was the famous show I was talking about. The one that developed out of group into a real show. It was the one of '61. Then he actually bought them in the studio, so he must have come before that show, the early fall of '61. Then he bought quite a few at that show. Before that, he had bought earlier ones and very good ones like the untitled with the big photograph of the man in the white tennis suit and so on. So this was Rauschenberg he was involved with.

Then he got involved after that with Lichtenstein, and he bought quite a few of those. Then, as far as I'm concerned at least, maybe he bought Oldenburg, too, for all I know; but I don't think so though. Then he bought— Who was next? Morris. He got very involved. He got huge pieces—those fiberglass pieces of Morris.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Does he sell things when his interests change or does he just accumulate?

LEO CASTELLI: No. When he gets less interested in somebody or other, he starts eliminating the pieces that interest him less. He doesn't start selling everything. He sold a few Rauschenbergs, not many.

Oh, he got very interested in Rosenquist also—Warhol, no, never—but Rosenquist, Lichtenstein. I don't know about Oldenburg; I don't think so. So Lichtenstein, Rosenquist and I know that he sold a few Lichtensteins here and there and Rosenquists, too. Then Bob Morris, very interested; but not Johns for some reason. He just looks at the magazines, all the magazines in the world; and then he gets an idea of what's what. Then he writes me or writes Ileana Sonnabend to Paris.

[END OF SESSION.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Today is the fifth of December, part two from this reel. You just finished talking about the Lichtenstein show at the Guggenheim.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, in fact, when I last talked to you, the Guggenheim show was not on at all. It was just a project.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was going.

LEO CASTELLI: It was going to be, and it occurred, and I think—You saw it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: It was a splendid show, really, quite remarkable show, which had obviously some shortcomings. But even the best show must have some paintings that we could not get, that would have made it more perfect. There were some inclusions that were not as good as they could have been had we been able to get certain pieces that we couldn't get. But the installation, chronological installation, from top to bottom was particularly instructive. I think people could see the reasons of development of his art from the early times to the present.

So I think that that time we were talking about the project, looking forward to it. It's now been. We found out that it was really a very successful project.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what kind of reaction did you get personally from people?

LEO CASTELLI: About the show? People liked it very, very much indeed. The reaction was very good.

It so happened that there was an Oldenburg show that followed it by a week. It came a week later. So there was this comparison between the two giants of Pop art. Of course, there are Oldenburg followers and Lichtenstein followers; but even the Oldenburg followers would sort of express the feeling that perhaps the Lichtenstein show was the one that was better installed. It was more clearly articulated than the Oldenburg one.

Now, as you know, the critical (whatever that means) reception on the part of the *New York Times* was more favorable to Oldenburg. Although Canaday sort of saluted Lichtenstein in a way, rather a nice way, by saying that perhaps if Lichtenstein had never come about that would not have been a great loss to art history; but he recognized his merit, that he was a real magician actually in what he was doing. But he seemed to be more convinced about the merits of Oldenburg's art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of reaction do you get from the collectors after a big exhibition like that and the reviews have been public?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, the reviews of the *New York Times* really are not terribly important. Nobody attaches great importance to what Canaday or what Hilton Kramer has to say about an artist that's controversial. They really sort of assume that either Canaday or Hilton Kramer will be against it, and that won't be disturbing. However, if either Canaday or Hilton Kramer turn around and have something kind to say about one or another of the artists, then I would say that's the kiss of death—or else they will be impressed by the fact that finally they have come around to—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So, really, the critics can't win no matter what they do.

LEO CASTELLI: No. Critics like Canaday and Hilton Kramer can't win. Of course, we have fortunately other writers in the magazines—in *Artforum*, in *ARTnews*, in *Arts*, in all the other magazines, in *Art in America*—who are taken more seriously really, who are more with it and with their times. Harold Rosenberg, who is after all an old Trotskyite social minded art critic, comes around slowly and his opinion has really some value; whereas, I would say Canaday has none frankly. Kramer may have because, after all, he has a certain background, a certain standing. But I would say that Canaday's opinion is really absolutely irrelevant.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting that the newspaper critics, although they have enormous readership, have so little impact.

LEO CASTELLI: It is really quite amazing that the *New York Times*, which is such an important paper—oh, it's one of the great papers that we have in the world—should have such an indifferent art section; although they have occasionally some article on some artist that they turn over to one of the others. Then good articles are written in the *New York Times*. Grace Glueck obviously is not a critic, but she is at least well balanced in her art gossip. She pays attention to everybody, to everything. So, she's good. She's somebody that is considered desirable on a paper like the *New York Times*. I would say that if, apart from Canaday and Kramer, there was another permanent critic there who would represent the opposite point of view, that would be very desirable. I don't know why they don't do it, why they don't have some younger and more forward looking critic there on their staff. I think that, well, Canaday is Canaday; and he's capricious and arbitrary and frank; and that's all you can say about him. Then Kramer would be the serious, ponderous art critic, more involved with the art of the past. Then you should have a younger, more forward looking man there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let's go back to how the various artists joined the gallery. I think we've talked about some of them.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, right. We will finish them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The last few, in the '61-'62 season, you showed Moskowitz.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. Moskowitz was a discovery of Ivan Karp's. He seemed to be very promising. He, at that time, did those window shades. Well, he probably got the idea from Jasper Johns, who had done one single window shade in black. He probably got it there. Everybody got ideas from Jasper Johns at that time. We were very impressed; but then there were some abstract, more sloppy Abstract Expressionist attitudes in Moskowitz. And he got stuck with that window shade and really didn't do anything except that for quite a while. Then he got into all kinds of personal, psychological troubles and dropped out. That is all I can say of Moskowitz. He got married to one of Tworlov's daughters, as you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I didn't know that.

LEO CASTELLI: He was a very good designer. He got a job as a designer. I see him occasionally, and he seems to be quite happy and well adjusted. He told me recently that he had started painting again and, if one day I cared to, he would like to show me what he was doing. To which I said, "Of course, yes, with pleasure." Okay, that much for Moskowitz.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. How about Chamberlain, who came in '62-'63.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Chamberlain we all knew, had known for a while. He had appeared already. Didn't he appear at the Hansa before Martha Jackson? Maybe. Anyway, we knew him from Martha Jackson. He was there when Ivan was there at Martha Jackson. So Ivan, when he came here, almost I could say brought him over from Martha Jackson to this gallery. He has been functioning in his discontinued and hectic way ever since—doing some great work and then going through long periods of not doing anything. He still is somebody to reckon with, I think.

He's done recently, I think, a great series of galvanized iron structures in the same vein as he did the ones with automobiles and auto wreckings. Of course, they're not perhaps intact but they're very, very good. Then before that, he had done those foam rubber sculptures, which were really very, very good. At that time, people were more squeamish about the durability of materials. Had he produced them now, they would have been an immense success. At that time, people just were very hesitant and very doubtful about getting things that they think or feared would disintegrate very rapidly. They turned out very well. Some people wouldn't mind so much any more whether it would endure or disintegrate, because one has gotten used to works of art as just traces in the snow in winter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Completely disappear.

LEO CASTELLI: Disappear or very unstable things like Serra's structures, which are made out of, as you know, made out of lead.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He also spent a lot of time in the last years, or started making movies. Didn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: He's done movies, yeah. There were two of them that I, of course, went to see. Allan Power of London financed them, produced them. Of course, what you feel there is the influence of Andy Warhol. He did not invent the multiple screen, although he had seven screens. When I talked to him about it or something and gave him my opinion about the seven screen affair, I didn't talk about the other ones he had done in Mexico; because I think that there was no particular contribution there, although there were some good scenes. The seven screen one was interesting because obviously, if you are playing seven screens as against two, it is a greater feat than two. He had some very good sequences on two or three screens, but it was not uniform. Some of the films were completely dead and didn't make any contribution. He said that it was very difficult to orchestrate because, in order to be able to see what he was doing, he would have had to have that set up all the time to test; and it was awfully expensive to set up with seven projectors. So he agreed with me that there were many bad spots there but that this particular one had taught him a great deal and he intended to do better next time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, another one, another one of those.

LEO CASTELLI: Richard's still around and alive and still to be counted on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You then had Gerald Van De Wiele.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, this was a brief encounter. At that time, Ivan and I would rely on friends who perhaps would look around for some kind of new trend that could develop in some area. Let's see. Let me see now. The year that Van De Wiele—

PAUL CUMMINGS: '62, '63.

LEO CASTELLI: It was in December, January, '62, '63. What was happening there? We had a group show and there was a marvelous Chamberlain, Stella show, the black and white show which I still remember, very fine. Everybody remembers it. It was a great show—the juxtaposition of the geometric thing and the respiring forms that had been laid there which

was a sort of enormous show. After that, there was Jasper Johns. That was the '63 show. Tworlov, Daphnis, Peter Druett. Well, at this time, we felt maybe that something else could be imagined now because it was really premature. I would say it was a great era of Pop art, so what the hell were they looking for? Pop art had just begun with—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what was it about him, his work, that appealed to you? It was, as I remember, quite different

LEO CASTELLI: It was very different and we were looking really almost programmatically for something that would be entirely different. It would go back to some kind of painterly attitude, rich ambiguous imagery. ...had to do with maybe fruit, leaves. I don't know what.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. I remember seeing clouds with colors in it.

LEO CASTELLI: It simply seemed interesting because it was something and it wasn't. It was ambiguous. But then it turned out that, of all the people, nobody got interested in it or very few people got interested in it; and then it was false caricature, which— You must know that you do that always, not constantly but pretty often. You make some mistakes, otherwise we would not be an experimental gallery. One makes mistakes; usually one forgets about them. I don't think about Van De Wiele anymore or about many other wrong moves that I made— not so many really. But, really, experience should have taught me no by that time. My experience was not sufficient, but even now I sort of get involved with something that is a false departure. It's false because, first of all, you have to pick a man out of the real movement. You cannot take an isolated man. That probably will be fruitless.

You have to see some kind of movement that is emerging. For instance, the conceptual movement was emerging with various manifestations. You saw it coming up, developing, in Morris, of course, whom I had already. And you saw it quite clearly—not so clearly really but now it's clear—in Nauman. Then there were all kinds of people emerging suddenly like Serra, like Sonnier, like Saret, like Bollinger, and so on. But there the problem is to pick the right one, and you almost have to guess, I would say. But it's quite obvious. For instance Saret, who really I saw at almost the beginning of his career, I can't like—a little bit too lyrical. I thought, for instance, that Bollinger, who I knew also right from the beginning, was a little bit too unimaginative. And then when Serra came in about the same time, I really saw that there was much more vigour, much more imagination. Also, the personality seemed more interesting. You see that. You go by not only what you see, but then the guarantee is the personality of the man. Usually a man who is not interesting as a personality, although you can be wrong there, he is really not— He may be a very good artist but not a great one. After all, the greatness or budding greatness will in some way express itself in the individual; and it was quite clear in Serra and not so obvious in Bollinger or Saret. He's a good artist but it's more lyrical, more—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Soft.

LEO CASTELLI: Softer. Now I don't know very much about, not naturally, about Keith Sonnier's personality; but, again, that's a softer type of work. But, if you had to choose, I'd distinctly prefer Sonnier to Saret. I found him more imaginative, using materials more intelligently, and so on. So it is very difficult. You have to make those decisions, and you often can make the wrong one.

Here was a very indefinite movement, and why I picked those two who apparently seem to be considered now the best ones— Is it luck or is it just perhaps an unconscious in your living experience that comes out then, even unthinkingly, making choices? I don't know how that goes actually. It is very difficult, believe me. One often is very much in doubt about what to do about a certain thing that occurs. Then I was very much in doubt.

PAUL CUMMINGS: At what point would you recognize the development of a conceptual movement or a group? Do they know each other?

LEO CASTELLI: As a matter of fact, I did not see it as conceptual to begin with. At that time that I saw them as a group (and at that time they were not considered), there was no label attached to it, in that show that Lucy Lippard organized at Fischbach, which she called (I always forget the name of it) Eccentric Art?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic Art or something.

LEO CASTELLI: Eccentric was the word in it, and there you had all of them. You had poor Eva Hesse, who, as you know, is very sick and probably won't survive.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

LEO CASTELLI: She had a tumor, and she was operated on, and I heard from a friend of hers that she was not doing well. So, in this show there was Eva Hesse, there was Nauman, there was Serra. These three I remember distinctly. There were others, but these I remember. Well, I really didn't quite understand what the show was about, quite frankly; and I wasn't particularly struck by anything in there. I remember the things, but I didn't know what to do with it. It was well before anybody even mentioned the name. It was just another crowd of youngsters. So there Lucy had seen something already well before anybody else did. Then, of course, Dick Bellamy and David Whitney sort of started identifying some of these people. I think, well, I know that David Whitney identified Nauman especially; and Dick identified Serra and Peter Young at that time.

See, Peter Young at that time— At the beginning, at the very beginning when Dick found him, he (I just mention him incidentally) showed me some of his things. Well, they were not bad, and he did not impress me as adding anything particularly new to contribute. I can see now that perhaps I was wrong because— I don't know about Peter Young yet—what has happened with him. He doesn't paint now. I think that he started dotted paintings—very, very good. I don't know what they are about frankly. They don't do anything to me, but they are just very good paintings—the only ones with the styles of across the nation type paintings. I saw them again in collections and, after, I really got to like his dot. Even his geometric ones, I think are very good. I saw those that I had not reacted to particularly later on, and I found them very good and asked myself why in the very beginning I had no particular impression from them. I don't even know whether Dick had any particular impressions from them. He seemed to think they were good; but then Dick, you see, is also very— He formulated it for me quite clearly not so long ago saying, when he is taking all these young people, they are intense. They are dedicated, and he really doesn't know who is good and who isn't. Of course, there is a certain choice that he makes on the basis of personality and, of course, what they look like; but he won't be able to say that any of them will come out as important artists. He's got now Ken Showall, and he's got Landsfield. He's got all kinds of people there. He himself says he is interested in what will come out of them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What will happen.

LEO CASTELLI: What will happen. There, of course, is an initial choice. Of course, they are not just junk. They are all interesting and important young men, but none of them may be one of the real great ones or one of the main trend ones, you know. I can't say. Then people say, oh, you've got a fantastic eye and you pick the people without having accuracy. This is just nonsense. Nobody does that. If you try, if one tries, one is slightly more sensitive to what is going on; because we are involved for so long. If we know really what to look for on the basis of what we know— Then again, you see for instance, there is this trend of younger people, who do paint canvases again; and, well, they are Peter Young and Christensen to begin with. Well, Christensen didn't make much of [an] impression on me for quite a while, and then I thought at one point he was very, very good. But, for a year or so, he was—

Well, at this time, I was geared to different things. I was not interested in paintings for effect. I was entirely involved in conceptual performances of Morris, or Nauman; and I had just taken on Serra. But maybe if I had been focused— You see, I had had a false start with Van De Weile, so I had sort of thought that it wasn't possible to do anything new in painting for a while longer. Now all these things came about with Christensen and Peter Young to begin with, and at this time I was not prepared to recognize that painting had any future. Maybe it still doesn't, but at this time I really was adamant about it. I felt that it was not possible for a young artist to be a painter, that he had to do something else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very interesting, because all of the people you've mentioned have no interest in a kind of realistic imagery. It's still—

LEO CASTELLI: No. We speak about realistic imagery, too. I have not at all forgotten about that. But these, of course, were picked by people—by Dick and by David Whitney whose judgment I have an immense regard for. So, therefore, I consider their choices more, act more on them, take them more seriously than, say, Ivan's choices in that particular field. Ivan's choices in the field of realism are evidently the superior ones. That's the field that he

knows better than anybody else; so, whenever he sees something in that particular field, it is a very intelligent and very good choice like Clem Clark, who he recognized from the very beginning, or that new man from Florida. What's his name now? Duane (Hanson), the one that does those figures, you know. Did you see [him] at the Whitney?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't seen the show.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he is a horrifying man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the standing figures?

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. Well, you see, he even went down to Florida to see the man; and he showed me slides of what he was doing. I really said to him, "I think they're terrifying and very interesting." But I did not want to get involved with them, actually. I don't know why. But, anyway, I suppose that this kind of trend is not something that I'm deeply interested in. I was interested in Pop art but for its formal qualities, you see. I was not interested in it for it's—it contemplates a lot, of course. I was delighted with the comic strip use (Roy's use of comic strips) or the use of complex imagery in the case of Rosenquist.

When I mention Warhol, they don't really belong in that category at all—a very special class. For instance, in Andy Warhol, it's not, let's say, the Pop content, whatever it was; because, actually, we found out that he was not a Pop artist at all. It was probably his serial imagery, the fact of repetition, that made something (to me) more important than what the images were about.

In the case of Lichtenstein, it was really his formal qualities that I was interested in rather than the content—although the content also played a role. But it played a role in so far as a bicycle wheel for Duchamp, or something that was really Dada, played a role in art—not the specific thing. The fact that people said, at that time, that it was satire on consumer society, this part really was very uninteresting to me. You see, I really got interested in Lichtenstein for exactly the opposite reasons. I was interested in him because of his realistic imagery, campy, you see, his interest in camp; and it was plenty campy in the beginning. You see, mine was Dada. My interest in Lichtenstein was, is his Dada aspect. Ivan was interested because it was his type of camp. So, it was a very different point of view that we adopted. Actually, as it turned out really, let's say the camp aspect or Dada aspect, camp aspect, if you wish, is still there in Lichtenstein when he does those art deco things. I think the formal qualities of his painting is so dominant that it became almost to disregard the camp aspect of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know, I think even the cloud is now camp or his landscapes with the dots.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, yes. Well, anyway, so that part I leave entirely to Ivan because it is his main interest and concerns me only up to a certain point. Then, in that case, it's really very good. You just have to go down to his gallery and see all the new discoveries that he makes in that group. In effect, I am surprised that he held out here at this gallery so long where there was quite distinctively a position on my part; and he tried again and again to interest me in Clem Clark and other people that he liked so much, that then had to go to Jim Caldwell. So, I'm very, very glad that he has the field all to himself now, where he'll be a real master. I don't expect him though to make great discoveries in another field. He may hit upon somebody good, I don't know, because there are so many good artists and there aren't enough galleries to take care of them. Of course, he's got Ian Bedfield, and he's got [Gary] Bower down there, and he's got [inaudible]. That's a new one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then he also has Yrissary, who is very—

LEO CASTELLI: But Yrissary, I would say, is something that really doesn't belong in Ivan's gallery. That is, it has to be more factual or whatever Ivan does. I think Yrissary's work is quite good, but he doesn't belong there. He doesn't belong here either, but he doesn't belong there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting how pictures look different in different galleries.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who else can we get along to here after that?

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. Let's see who emerged after we discussed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was Higgins the next one or did we talk about him? I guess he's the next one in '63, '64. Higgins was the next new one in '63, '64.

LEO CASTELLI: Let's see. What shall we discuss next? Well, let me see. Jasper Johns. There were shows that I did back in '62, several group shows I did at the beginning of the '62-'63 season which was this one here. Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, the first one was the Stella and Chamberlain.

LEO CASTELLI: No, this one here, that was before—a group show. Oh, yes, I see, there were two. These group shows were an interesting part of the gallery. I really love group shows, and sometimes they're just beautiful and very successful. I had one at the end of the season last year and one at the beginning of the season, which I consider really very, very good—where we put four electric chairs of Andy Warhol with a Stella and with a Lichtenstein, which looked just so beautiful.

I'm looking back at this 1962 group show where I had that incredibly good flag of Jasper Johns and an incredibly good black Stella (which is now at the Idaho Museum), Chamberlain's, a marvelous Rauschenberg called Prelude. I look very fondly back on those. So, let's go on to the year here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did you have ideas, a special theme, behind those group shows; or was it just collecting?

LEO CASTELLI: ...just a selection of pieces that would look well together, nothing more. Then, I see that that year, in '63, there was the Jasper Johns show in which his large map of the United States was shown for the first time; and there were some terribly good paintings there. For instance, one of them was *Diver*—this one here. It belongs to the Lists, and I saw it now recently again at the opening of the Pasadena Museum. It looked very splendid there. There were some really great paintings in that show. This one here is now at the Museum in Oslo.

At this stage, we had Jack Tworikov in it, who did not function too well in this gallery. He was a precursor of quite a few things, but he never was really quite in the class of the others. But, certainly, his show of plastic things—those plastic sculptures in '63—was quite an early good thing. This was probably the last show of shaped canvas paintings, which was painted very prematurely and never found any kind of recognition. But he did these things naturally on the fact that they were just interesting ideas, but he didn't really stick to these ideas. He didn't develop it in such a way as to become a very good artist.

Jasper Johns, before showing at my gallery for the first time and for the first time altogether, had been doing flags and numbers and targets for something like three years. But, you know, he stuck to his guns and didn't jump from one thing to the other.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's always the problem.

LEO CASTELLI: The problem is that you had to have fantastic magnitude, patience. Well, that's the character of genius as against just—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What other personality characteristics did you look for in these people?

LEO CASTELLI: They're very, very different because persons are so different. My two initial painters, Rauschenberg and Johns— Their characters couldn't be more opposite. One is quiet, reflective; the other one is outgoing. They are both, how can I say, genius. So evidently, there has to be some things that just don't appear right away; and people who are intellectuals, who are involved in great pursuits, wouldn't say that Rauschenberg— How can I say that? He is extremely bright; but they would agree that Jasper certainly at least meets the requirements, could, if he had to, become a philosopher. He would have the capacity to do so. He is a little bit of one anyway. It wasn't the case with Rauschenberg. That is to say, he's a brilliant man. He is bright and demanding, but they would not detect something that they would approve of in their kind of field. But then, they would be completely mistaken. If they would take the trouble to talk with him, they would find out how extraordinary and bright and cogent his ideas are in spite of the fact that they may seem a bit helter-skelter.

I won't even mention Stella, who is a great theoretician, who would be obviously the equal of a philosopher who he might meet and discuss problems with. Now then, it shows here, I think— Oh, that's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's the next season.

LEO CASTELLI: The next season, right, because I see a drawing show here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've always shown drawings over the years, haven't you.?

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, when I could. That's right, drawings at the end of the '63 season. In that we had the famous *Diver* drawings of Jasper Johns that you can see in this apartment now. It was a very, very good show. Next to *Divers*, we [had] a little group of Stellas here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would you like to say something about the show at the Metropolitan?

LEO CASTELLI: Would I say something about it? Well, I like the way that Henry went about picking it. I'm against picking a show on the careful basis of just considering the artist and what he is like at a given moment and the perfectly balanced state, not only the highlights but also perhaps the artists of not major stature but who make an important contribution which led to something. I don't like that.

That kind of show I think is, of course, important and necessary; but they really, generally speaking, are quite dull. So what you're given are his own preferences, and I would say to a large degree the consensus that exists about what's the important and good in this period—judge this period. Of course, there are many omissions that are arbitrary and many inclusions that are arbitrary. I mean, he really did not want it to be something that a critic picks, something that was absolutely perfect for everybody. He would have opposition from one school or another.

I disagree with certain choices of his. I disagree with certain experiences of his and so do other people—but within a very narrow range. I would say that I don't agree with two or three inclusions, and I mean only two or three inclusions in a huge show like that. Obviously, it's almost negligible. Then, of course, the choice of the paintings is debatable. He could have perhaps made better choices here and there, but then again it's very difficult. It would take maybe five years to really make the perfect choice, as there is a question of availability and all that, too. Then, the way he has displayed sculpture is very debatable. I think that's really the worst thing of the show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like little, decorated accents.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. That was bad. He should have given proper independent space to the sculpture. That was bad.

He also has shown his preferences for certain movements by giving those people bigger space. That's quite obvious. And he has shown his lesser interest—say in Pop art, which was one of his interests several years ago—by just putting two people in the same room where it was not necessary. You see, he has two rooms, let's say. In these two rooms, there is a Warhol and Rosenquist, say. So, he could have given a room to Rosenquist and a room to Warhol, but he didn't. He mixes Warhol with Rosenquist. I couldn't say precisely what he did but just as an example, as an arbitrary example. So that shows that he sort of felt like mixing, he says, because it's more interesting. But the fact is that he didn't consider them important enough in their own rights to devote a whole room to them as he did for Jasper or for Stella or for Noland, etc. And again his mixing Judd with Morris and using examples of Morris which are not so very different from Judd— ...taking a period where they coincide pretty close, where he should have really set the other qualities of Morris which are really the more important ones as against the more geometric, more highly structured type art of Judd. So there is this mixing, but all and all it was a gigantic enterprise which, any way you cut it, it was almost impossible to carry it out to even approach satisfying everyone. No, it was a great enterprise that I am very pleased with.

I'm afraid that here I must stop, because I have to go home.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. It's January 22. This is Part 3 on this reel. Well, could we just finish

talking about these four or five and how they came in the gallery?

LEO CASTELLI: Artschwager, to begin with, just appeared through the good offices of Ivan, and I found his Formica pieces really quite interesting. Although, in a way, it was already no longer the first blush of Pop art. It was already, I would say, secondary phenomena; but it was interesting. There was more than Pop in there actually. He transformed, he made, he used Formica furniture image to express something that seemed to go beyond Pop art—something that had to do with making a thing that's useful useless. That had been brilliantly done. I understand that it was Artschwager who executed brilliantly Oldenburg's *Bedroom*. What he did, obviously, was to take art from there, which was pretty good. It was not really great. ...very important kind of development but pretty good as it went.

His paintings I found perhaps less interesting. It was Ivan who was more enthusiastic about them. I was talking about the paintings that Ivan liked especially and is proving that now in his choice of artists for his gallery. I think that he still wants to show Artschwager paintings.

Artschwager is a question mark for me, was always for me a question mark and still is, but an interesting one, I would say. He's a curious, has a curious personality. I'm going to see him next Wednesday to discuss things and see where he wants to go from there. Maybe he's stuck with these blips and those things that he does with the hairy material.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, they're very strange.

LEO CASTELLI: They're very strange, and there is still something there that I feel is hopeful. Now who is the next one?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let's see. Then Rosenquist, who came in '64-'65.

LEO CASTELLI: Rosenquist came, let's say, as a main artist. Did I ever tell you how he came into the gallery? Well, he worked with Dick, and Dick wasn't doing well at all back in '63 maybe—always short of money. He also had personal problems at the time—drinking too much. He was, generally speaking, jittery, pushy when he had too many worries. So Jim, as a result, was also very jittery and very nervous; and when they asked me could he join my gallery because Dick was making him too nervous and he couldn't stay there— He had a family; he couldn't just live. So, I said, "Well, I can't do that, Jim, because you belong to the gallery of a friend of mine; and I just won't do it. Stay there and perhaps things will improve."

So, I didn't hear from him for a while, and then once we traveled on the plane from New York to maybe Minneapolis or some such middle western city. And he and I thought about this whole matter. He said, "If you don't want to take me, then I'm going to Janis. Do you want me to do that?" I said, "I certainly don't want you to do that. I'd like to have you." So, I told him, "Look here now. What we do is we get together, the three of us—you, Dick, and I—and talk this matter over and see what we can figure out. So, we did have a meeting; and Dick said, "I'm very sorry to lose you, but I prefer you to go to Leo's, if you feel you must leave, than you should go to Janis." But I hear today, by accident from Christopher Finch, that he had heard at that time from Dick (or later perhaps) that Dick already was advising Jim to leave because he felt that he couldn't do well enough for him. So, Dick had already encouraged him to leave. So, that's how Jim came to the gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you known his work before Bellamy showed him?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. I had known all these Pop artists, this first group of Pop artists, before anybody had made any decision to take one or the other. So, I had seen Jim, I suppose, at the same time approximately that Dick saw him. Maybe Dick saw him a little earlier. And since my reaction to Jim at that time— You see, that was so fresh. The category was so fresh that all you had to go by was the link with something. In the case of Jim, the link at that time seemed to be very, very close to Surrealism. For some reason, I felt negative toward Surrealism. It had been really my first movement, of course, and perhaps I had not adjusted to its new possibilities and transformations. So that I was [a] little bit rejectful of everything that seemed to come out of there.

On the other hand, whatever related to Dada, I liked very much, was very welcomed. Jasper, in fact, I had found immediately so attractive because of his Dada connection. Much more lead from there, but the Dada connection made it attractive to me. Whereas, I thought something that seemed a Surrealist connection made it sort of not so attractive to me at that time.

So, as you see, I picked, at that time, an obvious approach. Obviously, I had this approach to Lichtenstein and later on Warhol. Really, I didn't pick Warhol at the time, you know. But anyway, Warhol seemed to be— I liked Warhol right away, too, but couldn't take him at the time because he seemed so close to Roy at that time. I didn't really make my mind up, but then I heard a few days later (after I had seen his paintings in the studio) that Dick had taken him. So, that was the end of that.

Then I got to like Jim, of course; and I sort of learned to understand what there was about that. Maybe there was a point of departure slightly different with each one of them—one more Dada and the one more Surrealist than the other. ...but that they were about something really entirely new with roots in something that was very contemporary, very American, and was not a rehash of an early movement. So, that was so much for Rosenquist.

Now, Rosenquist, if you want me to go on, then did that sensational *F-111* piece if you remember. And I had another show before that and then more recently—just to mention these things briefly—the *Horse Blinders* show. It's curious how he tends not to be able to get away from his billboard dimensions. He simply had no wish to do small paintings. I tell him that he has done very good relatively small things—I mean 12-footers, something that you could put on one wall, that you don't have to surround the whole gallery with—and he doesn't feel like doing them any more. So, after the *Horse Blinders*, again, it's a painting that consists of two very long panels, 23 feet each, again to fit the two sides of the gallery; and this one is not going around. It is not connected on both sides; but it's connected by some other materials, by mirror mylar, a plastic material that reflects like a mirror so that again it's reflected.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. He likes reflection.

LEO CASTELLI: He likes reflection very much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Light problems, reactivities.

LEO CASTELLI: Then he has another series of things I'm going to see tomorrow, by the way, in his studio downtown.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, *F-111*, that was the first big one, wasn't it?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that come about? Do you know?

LEO CASTELLI: No. He just imagined that he wanted to wrap a painting around the room. He did a very good one after *F-111*, the second show that I had in which I had a really fantastic painting that's now at the Metropolitan but unfortunately belongs to a Japanese museum so one hardly sees it ever. It's called *Gold Plan*, and it's those four, sort of six or eight, boys standing there on the grass.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. That's a strange painting.

LEO CASTELLI: In that show, there was a painting that went all across the entrance wall of the gallery, the gallery wall when you enter. There's a big opening and where the opening is, across that part, he had a mylar ribbon, which was painted so that actually, when you went in, you went through the mylar thing; and that was relatively interesting. What was more interesting, once you got in, you were enclosed by paintings. There was no exit. So it was a very interesting thing that he did. And then now, well, let's see what comes next. He does good prints and likes to go on doing those. He does drawings recently.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

LEO CASTELLI: He has drawings and all kind of imaginings, but he still hasn't quite taken off the ground importantly. He is full of ideas and sort of jumps around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It must be enormously time consuming doing huge pictures.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he does them very rapidly. He does it still with that very easy and rapid technique that he used for billboards. No, it's really—Once he has really determined the image quite clearly, then it comes easy; but it's long, large thing before he fits the pieces of the puzzle together. ...not that easy, really. It seems easy when you see it done.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How about Robert Barth, who you gave one show to?

LEO CASTELLI: Robert Barth came up with something quite interesting. It was not a new departure, but it was a very curious phenomena. This man who didn't belong anywhere, who was or still is an industrial designer, something like that, suddenly made those very strange structures; and it was almost a minute thing. I suppose I was rather fascinated by it. We knew that it wasn't really something that had any future in it. The fact is that was just a splurge. Then, as a matter of fact, as it turned out, he did then other pieces, which were very interesting, too, form wise. But they were so badly constructed. I mean the engineering problem was so badly solved that, in spite of the fact that they were quite good shape wise, they were so unfunctional that they were unacceptable. They were put together with wire to make them keep together, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not really strong.

LEO CASTELLI: No. They didn't—You know, they were things like one inside the other. They were quite interesting shapes, but he hadn't solved the problem of how to put them together so that there wouldn't be any poor solutions. I was a little bit doubtful anyway after the first show that he gave. He was not even an artist. When you have to deal with somebody who's not a real artist, who by accident stumbles upon something that he does once, you feel that he can't go anywhere from there. So that was Barth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How about Judd, who you also showed that—

LEO CASTELLI: No. Judd is different. Judd belongs to that entire group of artists that I inherited from Green Gallery when Green had to close its doors. That was in the summer of 1965, '64-'65, '65 I think.

I got back from Europe a little earlier than usual, in August, and Bellamy had tried to reach me and found me as soon as I got back. He said, "I have something to discuss with you and can I meet you?" So we did meet. He said, "Well, as you probably imagine (it was quite evident earlier in the year), I have to close the gallery; but I would like you to have first choice of all the artists that you're interested in in the gallery." So, obviously, we were very sad, of course; and I was very grateful for his offering me first choice. Of course, he said it would depend also on the artists, whether they wanted to come or not, don't worry about that. So of course Poons seemed to be a great find, turned out not to be. There was Morris; there was Judd, Poons. There was Wesselmann and Samaras. Now Wesselmann I really never found attractive. Personally, I don't— Well, he perhaps is in the first rank of the early Pop artists. He appeared like everybody else, but, I don't know, I never took to him as I did, for instance, to Oldenburg, who I've always liked and still do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did Samaras interest you at that point?

LEO CASTELLI: Samaras never interested me. No, no. I found him sort of more fascinating as a personality than his work. Well, there was Surrealism there in a sort of small, small way, smallish way which I really didn't feel had the kind of breadth that I wanted to find in work. So, I never considered him, although he would have like very much to come. I had to reject him, and I didn't consider Wesselmann either. I did consider the other three, of course. Poons without any question already did his beautiful mature work with the dots. The other two, however, although I wanted them, I had some difficulty in making the decision because the gallery at that time was far from doing well. I knew that, although they assured me that they needed nothing practically, they wouldn't be costly artists. I suspected that they—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It would start adding up.

LEO CASTELLI: At that time, things really were not going well. It was the beginning of the season, and I didn't know where to find the money for my ordinary corporation. ...so that I hesitated very much, but I knew that I had to do something. So, at that time, this was a serious problem.

I spoke to Jasper about what he felt, and he said that obviously I had to take Morris. I had almost gotten Morris at an earlier stage, because Jasper had wanted me to come down to his studio and see the things he was doing. At that time, he was doing those things in sculpture, those curious things. I saw them at that time. I didn't even have much time to think about them, because the next day I heard Dick had gotten him. I felt at that time that he was a little bit—I hadn't seen too much of his earlier things, the metal things. If I had been shown

in Hartford—Anyway, those seem to be Post-Surrealist, frankly, and pretty close to Jasper; so I would be hesitant about it. I could have said yes I wanted it; in which case, I might have gotten him. But then, Dick had already decided that he would take him. So, he went to Dick in the beginning, back in '63 or whenever that was. So then, Jasper felt very sure that—Then Barbara Rose also recommended very much and was very much in favor of him.

Then, as far as Judd was concerned, I knew that Stella liked him very much. He said, "Yes, you must take Don absolutely." There was a problem there (and I discussed it with Barbara, too) that I was a bit unhappy with the gallery, what was there. It seemed to be swamped by Pop artists at that time. Andy Warhol and Bob and Jasper weren't as active any more, so it seemed to be a gallery that was going in that direction. So, I felt a bit isolated, and Larry pointed it out to me for it seemed important to add to the gallery other people that you would feel more in sympathy with. Of course, Poons. There was no question about not taking him. So I took the three which seemed to be court order. At that time, we went with Judd. Robert Morris is expensive, too, but functions better; so there is not too much of a debt then. Of course, this could be cancelled or reduced if I took over one, two, or three of those large pieces; but what would I do with them? If anything, there is fantastic storage problem with them anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. I can believe it.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, unbelievable. They are difficult to handle, those two—still are, although Judd does turn out to be easier in a way because his pieces now are elegant and they sell very well. They can be put in any kind of an apartment. Whereas, Bob becomes rougher and rougher, and he is more and more difficult to place. With all this, it still makes me pleased that I made the decision. It was a very important one.

Poons, on the other hand, after a couple of shows, with the coming of Larry Rubin, felt very...didn't feel very much at home here. So, he's bound to stay there. After all, he is much closer to Olitski, to Noland, to that group, which Stella really is not. Although there is some affinity between Noland and Stella, still they operate from an entirely different place. So the only affinity actually is between—There is some kind of affinity between Stella and Poons when he had the idea of those curious patterns that appealed to Stella very much. But then, when he went more—Well, actually with Poons is that he got more and more under the influence of Olitski, and that was when there was no more room for him anymore. He felt isolated and unhappy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've always thought that was rather curious, because it would be hard to see how he went from his very rigid structured to the very soft.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. Poons was difficult in every possible way, extremely irresponsible. Maybe he has a slight problem. I think he does. I don't hold it against him, but he was very, very difficult to handle after the first show. So, then, when he declared that he was going, I didn't feel much regret.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He'd been very, very successful. Wasn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. The shows, both shows, were very successful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maybe it was too much, too soon.

LEO CASTELLI: Anyway, that didn't turn out well, so he disappeared from my life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about Christo, whom you gave a show to?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Christo is somebody that I had met in Paris at one point, years ago. When he said he wanted to come to America, he naturally wanted very much to be with me. I really had now no room for him, and what he was doing was not the kind of thing that I was interested in. It was nothing in the line of the things that I was interest in. But, I felt that he was so dependent on me to get his first exhibit in New York, and I wanted to do him a favor. Then I showed this big piece here but without the intention of ever keeping him in the gallery. I have had good relations with him. By the way, he is managing very well. His wife is fantastic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She's the one who operates—

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. She shows on the West Coast. She didn't need a gallery. Since he works now more and more in Australia—Timbuktu—

PAUL CUMMINGS: All over the world. Incredible. What about the newer artists in the last year or two?

LEO CASTELLI: The newer artists, of course, occurred again in the stage when— Again, I really do owe them to Dick Bellamy in part and in part the interest David Whitney had through Bellamy back from the beginning.

Nauman. Oh, I think I first saw Nauman's work (but I hardly noticed it) in that show of Lucy Lippard's.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. You've talked about that.

LEO CASTELLI: *Eccentric Art*. Eccentric— What was it called?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Expressionism?

LEO CASTELLI: No. *Eccentric Art*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The Fishbach show.

LEO CASTELLI: ...which was one of those basic shows and very admirable in retrospect. She did a great job in detecting a new change that nobody had seen.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Picked up.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. She picked up. And there I remember Serra's piece. I don't remember the name really, but I remembered the long piece made out of rubber and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: ...which now belongs to Panser. It is a famous piece. Then I remember Eva Hesse's work, and I hardly remember Bruce Nauman's. I recognized it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was some kind of light.

LEO CASTELLI: It was soft stuff. I remember him. He came again. I became aware of him after Lucy's show when I went to David Whitney's studio on occasion. Then it was lying around, and I still didn't think too much about it. Although I remembered vaguely that this was the man whose work I had seen in the *Eccentric Art* show. Then I became really aware of him and interested in him when I saw a small show that Dick had up at [Noren Movinsky's]. There he had some pieces of copper. I liked it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did he strike you, Say in that show he really seems to be the one that —

LEO CASTELLI: I found it curious, interesting; but I didn't have really a great, an incredible interest in him. Although, little by little, this thing was gathering momentum in my head; and we talked it over with Dick. Dick said, "Yes, I think you should." —because he was just taking a little bit and try to make people aware of them. Then he, generally speaking, would think that this one would be for Leo. This other one would be for somebody else, etc. So, he had listed Bruce Nauman for me. After seeing this show and thinking about it"—rather not thinking but being unconsciously involved for a few weeks, I think—I told Dick that I think I should take him on. He was really surprised. He said, "I've observed you here. I knew that you would finally get interested in him, but I thought it would take you longer." So that is how I got him. Then I had the show which I still am very fond of; and the people, most people, found horrifyingly awful—except Jasper, who liked it right away, and a few other people. But, generally speaking, people thought it was just awful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why the negative feeling about it?

LEO CASTELLI: I don't know why people felt so negative about it, because they felt it was— Maybe they saw the funk element in it still. They're used to a sort of irreverent kind of little movement that had appeared in San Francisco in the Bay Area and was called Funk Art at the time, so that this was just Funk. They didn't feel the serious pun idea and general

processes that was interesting, processes of Bruce.

Then I had the other show with the holograms in it, which to me was a great show. Here nobody except Jasper, Andy Warhol, and Philip Leer understood that. They were very involved in it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is interesting.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. They really understood him. I also liked the show very much and [was] very pleased with it. There was no really— Nothing was sold— People didn't—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Has he gotten any reaction from the collectors or has it been rather difficult?

LEO CASTELLI: There are some people who like Bruce very much, like Scull, who was interested in everything that Bellamy was doing. So, he would find these things before anybody else, because he was in constant touch with Bellamy. There were, of course, quite a few people like Joe Helman who now opened a gallery, as you know, in St. Louis. There was a little flicker of wild enthusiasm and there still is. I think it's still going. In Europe, they think that he's very, very great and all the more glamorous. All the videotapes have sold there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? That's curious. ...and not here?

LEO CASTELLI: Not yet, no. New York is difficult. It's strange why people don't realize that that is the probably the last place (except for a few individuals) that really is pioneering. This is not an easy place to make one's mark in. But, anyway, I'm still very—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wonder what people, the Europeans, know.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, they understand this movement better than we do, again, as they understood Lichtenstein better than we do or Warhol better than we did. So, they were always ahead of us in a way. ...also because of that dearth of things there things there. If there something really good appears, it seems to them they see it easier. We shift here. We have lots of things; it's difficult to choose here. There they have no choice. Since these people like Nauman and Serra or Sonnier or Peter Young or others have appeared more recently to them, they seem recklessly good. We're still hesitating and not being quite sure whether they are the good ones or perhaps another group that's emerging at the same time is not the real answer to our prayers, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's very interesting. You still think, though, when you— I mean, did you think of Nauman in relationship to a group of artists?

LEO CASTELLI: No. He doesn't belong to any kind of group; but he certainly is an incredibly interesting member, say, of a wider group which we call the conceptual group. He's, in a way, quite more of a loner in that particular group; because there's a Dada element that the others don't have at all—nor Sonnier, nor Serra, or anybody that I know of. He's really come straight down from Duchamp through Jasper, and he's the latest manifestation of that experience and in a very, very subtle way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened to that, you know, you look at the relationship you can see —

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. That's a whole chapter there that we have to go into much more deeply, because there we still are in a quite exploratory phase as to who's what and what happens and who is interest in this and why and how. And there is a mystique, about Nauman especially.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I've heard for years, you know, people from California say this is somebody everybody's interested in out there. I first heard of him three years ago or something.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. He doesn't do any actual work now. He just makes brief notations and perhaps a very sloppy sketch which is then the piece that has to be carried out. Often I really don't quite understand what it is, and then he explains to me what it is about it, how it will work and is; the two projectors, one on the floor, one on the ceiling, that meet midway and then you see a double image down. ...things like that, you know, or video. You have a video

camera and a television set. Then next to it there's another video camera; and the opposite end next to the first television camera there's another television set. So, you walk and, while you walk, you see your neck advancing in one of the screens; and, if you come back, you again see the neck. It's a walking act. You see it one way on the screen. I mean, odd things—It photographs you as you appear.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very interesting how people are getting involved with all the electronic equipment and all the—

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, but he uses it in a different way actually. It's not— It's interesting for him to produce ideas and images, not for a gadget. The gadget part doesn't interest him at all. It's just for him an instrument to produce an image, and that image is always an image, usually of himself, or of a perspective.

Okay. We'll stop here now.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: Let me say it's December 16, 1970; Paul Cummings talking to Leo Castelli. Well, we just said we could start this series with the collector and could we maybe start again chronologically?

LEO CASTELLI: We start chronologically, and quite a few of the early ones will come to mind. They have disappeared long since. Some have died; some no longer collect. Even important collectors who have come up a little later, two or three years later, also those have vanished. There have been incredible changes that have occurred from the beginning back in '67 to date. Well, first the collectors that I remember sort of fondest, the ones that really got involved with what I was showing in the gallery, are the Peters; and the Epsteins were related as friends anyway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was?

LEO CASTELLI: The Supreme Court Judge Epstein. What was his first name? I can't remember it anymore. Ethel Epstein, she was really the collector.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Peters was?

LEO CASTELLI: Dawn Peters and Harry Peters. They were the first to appear as people who were really interested, who would come to the gallery often, who were involved and wanted to see everything that was coming up that was new—right from the beginning. I think that I got them through somebody that I may not have mentioned so far, and that's Ilsa Goetz, who was my first secretary. I saw her a few days ago. She's married to Danes; I don't remember the first name. You know, he used to be Dean of Architecture. He and Ilsa are involved, I think, with that new museum—that new one Roy Neuberger set up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

LEO CASTELLI: I think Brian Robertson is director of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, at the State University.

LEO CASTELLI: At the State University. Perhaps this is just an impression that I have. They live in Connecticut. Anyway, here was Ilsa Goetz who at that time was far from being married to Danes and was my secretary. She was experienced in the field; or at least, at this time, I thought that she was very experienced. But she really was. She had worked, I don't remember in what gallery anymore, for a length of time. She was an artist herself, quite sensitive, very sensitive as a matter of fact to what was going on and had that experience that I simply didn't have. I didn't have the vaguest idea of how to or what to do if you wanted to print a catalogue, to begin with. My first catalogue, by the way, was designed by my friend Friedel Dzubas, whom I had in the gallery for a few years as a member.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he worked as a graphic artist, didn't he, for a while?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he was handy. He was a talented young man, and he's still my friend. ...hasn't been in the gallery for a long time because he felt that he did not belong. He is, as you know, at Emmerich, and he is still painting very nicely. I had, in a way, known him much earlier than that. He's full of bright ideas. Even before the 9th Street show, I had known him

at The Club, which came earlier—maybe in 1950. So, I have known him for many years. He's been a good friend all along and still is, although I see him rarely now.

The first catalog disappeared. There's not one of them left. It had a lot of color, I think, with a big line that was going from top to bottom and then a cross line where there was the names of the artists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

LEO CASTELLI: Of course, I had, fortunately, a record of all the shows that Friedel was in from the beginning; so there was a record of that show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I remember seeing that announcement.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it was announced at the Bykert.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That gallery was upstairs.

LEO CASTELLI: The gallery was up on the fourth floor. I know that Sonnabend lived there—two rooms in the back and the kitchen. The paintings were in what used to be our living room and then became the gallery. In the back there was a room which used to be my daughter's room and which now, as you know, is the new gallery. But that was her room and she (I think by that time she had gone away) was in college.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was the exhibition of European and American paintings?

LEO CASTELLI: It was a mixed show of the Americans and the Europeans. Well, I can give you the list of things that were in that, but it doesn't seem important to waste time on that since there is that ten years book.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the Epsteins and Peters, who were early?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, now we get back to the collectors—the Peters especially. They were younger people, lively and very nice and very involved. Whenever I had a painting—I'll take one of those *Ten Years* catalogues, because they remind me of things that they were interested in that they bought. Let's see what there was there. Well, there was this marvelous first show. I'm looking at it now. And there was that great Pollock, then Picabia and a David Smith.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Also Dubuffet was in that show.

LEO CASTELLI: Dubuffet and Van Doesburg, Giacometti, de Kooning, all that. They bought the Van Doesburg. They were very interested in that, in the de Stijl group, and that kind of painting. The Peters, I mean.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they were collectors already. Were they?

LEO CASTELLI: They were collectors already. Oh, yes. They were collectors already. I think they may have gotten this Van Doesburg or another one. That's quite possible but nothing else in this particular show. They were all, what he considered then, very high prices.

After that, I had a show of a young School of Paris painter called Damian. He was Romanian, actually. They bought a few of those; they liked them very much. Then Marisol. They must have gotten something of Marisol, I imagine.

And Norman Blume was my second show. No, that's '57. I'm sorry. No. The first show is not the one that I was looking at. No. That far back, I didn't think of photographing shows that took place. Then after that, I had Jon Schueler, a sort of atmospheric neo-impressionist painter. No. What do they call them now? Lyrical Abstraction. That really describes what he was doing, perhaps in a different spirit. Probably, if I looked at those and the things that, say, Pettit does or so many of the younger people now at David Whitney's, one would see a great difference.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, sort of those big cloudy shapes.

LEO CASTELLI: But anyway, that was my second show; and I don't think they liked that type of thing very much. The Peters. Then there was a curious French painter who still exists, as a

matter of fact, called Leisert. The same idea then was that I would sort of take advantage of my knowledge of what was going on in Paris. Well, Drouin, with whom I had started this whole adventure back in '38 actually, was then supposed to help me out in his knowledge of what was going on in Europe. He still had a gallery at this time. It was a small one but [he] knew his way about. That was my idea, that, thanks to Drouin and other people, I knew there I would find—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You could go back and forth.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. I would go back and forth and find things there that would be of interest here. That was the sort of thing. It was an idea which I sort of expressed in my first show by mixing Americans and Europeans. Then, of course, there were friends of many years like Paul Brach, who I had got to know on the occasion of my 9th Street show or rather our 9th Street show. Let's not be presumptuous. He just had appeared from nowhere. He had studied in Des Moines or some university in the Midwest. He had been around for a long time, and we would see each other often in East Hampton where he also had a house. So he got an exhibition.

Then came really my great first new show. Well, the second, so I say, because the first exhibition was really good, and what came in between was sort of tentative and exploratory. But then came that show that really began to give an idea of where I wanted to go. That show had, apart from Blume, some artists that I did not particularly intend to show but I had picked a little bit on the basis of the fact that they were young and promising and perhaps slight diversion from the prevalent Abstract Expressionist style. So there was Blume.

There was Dzubas whom I mentioned, Jasper Johns who was important, Leslie who seemed to be the more promising younger painter of the second generation. Then there was Morris Louis who just had emerged from nowhere, Marisol, Aultman [ph] for some reason, and Rauschenberg whom I knew, and Sevely [ph] who really was more or less a hanger-on because he wasn't intended. You see, there was those friendships, that interfered considerably with my choices in the beginning, with people that I had known for a long time, who were close friends—like Paul Brach or people who were Italians and who were around all the time, sort of pathetic and felt that they must have a show here because they came from Italy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did the Peters and the—

LEO CASTELLI: Now, the Peters first got— They didn't really react to Johns or perhaps on the occasion of that show I showed only that *Flag* there. That was the single painting that now belongs to Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art. I think he's going to give it to them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. You had talked about that.

LEO CASTELLI: That was in the show—this *New Work* show for which, by the way, Anita Ventura, who hasn't been here for many years now (she's out in San Francisco, I believe), had designed a catalogue, a checkerboard-type catalogue. She designed many catalogues of mine until she left. I would think that that show actually did give a real hint to anybody of what was coming. It seemed just maybe like a hodge-podge of various painters, but I really had a feeling that it was important. Well, first of all, because I had Jasper and the Flag and I had been terribly enthusiastic about Jasper and then, of course, Rauschenberg. Generally speaking, I felt it was a very good show and an indication of what would happen in the future.

I had already, of course, decided to take on Johns and Rauschenberg; and, well, my stable actually was emerging. We had Rauschenberg, Johns; and Blum I had decided to take and Dzubas; and Marisol was in my gallery. These are the people that belonged to the gallery. So I didn't make much of a dent; but I had one of those ideas where, you know, very commercial ideas. I would consider very commercial now to interest various collectors to show something and not only what they bought from my gallery but something of interest that they had in their collection, that they wanted to show. So there was this Collectors' Annual, and I would really like to know— Perhaps Barbara can tell us what the composition of that show was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they were mainly borrowed pictures?

LEO CASTELLI: They were borrowed pictures. They were not mainly, they were completely borrowed pictures. (Is Barbara there? Have her call me as soon as she's off the phone.) Ah, yes, that would be very curious. I think that it would show something that they had bought from my gallery. Although, they couldn't have bought very much because not quite a year had gone by since I opened. So, it would be very, very curious to see what was in the Collectors' Annual show of December 17 to January 18 of 1958. Perhaps there's no trace left of that, but I know that I can remember that certainly the Peters and the Epsteins were there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were the Epsteins also collectors before?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. I think they were also collectors. I sold them de Koonings, especially de Koonings. Yes. This one here. They got that one here and then I may have sold this one to them out of here. I probably did out of the show. Sure. I don't remember to whom I sold this stuff. Well, we could go back to it. What really would be interesting— When we speak next, I'll have prepared. I have the records of all the sales, and that will give me clues.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, when people came in and—

LEO CASTELLI: ...when people came in and who got the things and who disappeared and who's still around. Yes, that might be a very good idea to get the old invoices here, which are all handy. The other day, I was looking for something, and I was amazed to see who was there at that time already. That might then give me a clue to whom— Well, maybe the records are gone. God knows. We were trying to find out about when Giacometti the other day, and we didn't find any trace of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, were most of the collectors who started coming here people who, most of them, were really collectors or were there people starting to be collectors?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, actually what happened, Paul, is that as it gets new people around—like all the people who went to galleries, who went, say, to Tibor de Nagy, to Betty Parsons, to whoever was around there at that time. Well, it's a wonder they knew, too. I didn't know the collectors, but they came in. I knew all the artists and the museum people and the hangers-on, some collectors, too, of course. I had been around since, say, '48 or '49, very actively with The Club and so on. The Club was not exclusively an artist affair. All kinds of people from outside came to listen to lectures or to various discussions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The members of The Club were really just artists, weren't they?

LEO CASTELLI: The members were only artist, yeah. I was, I think, the exception. Oh. there were later also other dealers that joined the group.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think initially you were the only one.

LEO CASTELLI: Initially, I was the only one there. By the way, this book of Irving Sandler's came out. Or did it come out? Did you see it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's out, yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, because I asked for it and I didn't get it yet. That should contain— If I go through that, that will refresh my memory about quite a few things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how did the collectors collect then?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, they would find things that they liked. Here I had a really great season. If I could put up a show like that today, it would be considered a great show. At that time it practically passed unobserved, because Janis had fantastic paintings which he can't put together any more either now. So they would buy. I had good things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would they get interested in Johns and Rauschenberg?

LEO CASTELLI: No. When you come to Johns, I wanted to— Well, here, this was my non-age. That was the first year, let's say, which concluded in January with the Collectors' Annual. Then you start with Jasper Johns, and then a whole new era begins actually with Jasper Johns. That's the beginning of my gallery, actually. That's, you see, the first, let's say. The first show was important because it indicated my taste.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A quality level.

LEO CASTELLI: A quality level of the thing. It was not just Johns. It was great quality all through, very varied, a mixture of Americans and Europeans which was sort of unprecedented.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You really then had the idea of combining the two from the beginning.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Nobody had thought of it then. Janis had never mixed the two. Anyway, actually, the premonition of what was going to come was [the] New Work show. It was three months or four after the beginning of the gallery, and there I still sort of monkeyed around with various people, bringing new Americans. It would be sort of a little bit divergent from abstract expressionism, like Norman Blume, who in the end was an outcrop of San Francis, really. ...then again the European and then Marisol who sort of was of my taste for extravagance or back to Surrealism, to Dada. She was, after all, a pretty Dadaist figure. Marisol, by the way, had been introduced to me by Friedel Dzubas. He knew her and he was very enthusiastic about her work. She did those wood carvings at that time. He told me originally to go and see her work. It was really good at the time, rather like primitive wood carving.

I think that I will get some clues from old invoices. That might be a very good idea. Before the next time you come, we're going to leaf through those and prepare them.

Then there was this Collectors' Annual, and this was strictly a thing, as I said, to just attract attention. ...that all these people were my friends and for them to meet at the gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was what? That was December.

LEO CASTELLI: Seventeenth of January, 1958.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As I remember, in those days and even still today, galleries do what they call Christmas shows or something like that. Do you think that's an idea that's a viable gallery concept, or is it just a way of filling up a time when nobody really wants to have a one-man exhibition?

LEO CASTELLI: In part, it's both of these things. People still do things, show inexpensive, let's say, secondary matter media and hope that there'll be some activity around to make business since there is no activity going anywhere. There's a kind of hope there. The fact is that everything dies down, say, a week or two before Christmas and then life resumes in January. So, this is sort of an optimistic idea that one has that people will come and buy perhaps Christmas presents, but then you should really put it up much sooner.

But this was pure, sheer propaganda, a social sort of Madison Avenue type promotion of getting all these collectors together, see, and finding out that they all were coming to the gallery, they all were buying from me. That was sort of a sheer public relations thing, of which there are quite a few, as a matter of fact, that people still do. Maybe there is a hint of it in some of my shows, too; but I don't think there is actually any more. Maybe unwittingly something of this kind does creep in. Some of this Madison Avenue still does creep in, although I was always very much against hard-sell. I never wanted to push anything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting when you think about it. The gallery, for some reason, caught the imagination of such a broad range of people from collectors to art writers to museum people to—

LEO CASTELLI: At this gallery here?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: That's fairly easy to explain. I had been around and people had expected me for years to open this gallery. So, it wasn't just a gallery that was springing up out of nowhere. Sometimes that does happen. Somebody who nobody knows suddenly decides to open a gallery. Maybe he comes from Boston or from Europe or God-knows-where.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had a sense then of people watching you and expecting something?

LEO CASTELLI: I did know all these people. I had already been selling paintings out of my apartment. For instance, just to give you one example, among my early clients (before the

gallery occurred) were people like Sadie May, who bought certain pieces that I had brought from Paris like Pevsner. I remember very well a very good Pevsner piece. Ben Heller, before the gallery opened, had bought that marvelous drawing, the large drawing of Gorky's. That was well before the gallery started—back in '55, '56. For instance, Eslen Rosen of Baltimore bought a Mondrian that I had. And certain things I had done through Sidney Janis. I had had, for instance, very good paintings of Klee that had been sold by Janis for me and got Jean Philip, for instance, who started his gallery before I did. I was considered an experienced person. Just imagine, I didn't have a gallery even.

Herbert Ferber who he knew—Jean Philip was a young whippersnapper then—had advised him (Herbert Ferber knew me from Club days) that he should sort of seek my advice about all kinds of things, especially hanging a show; because he still remembered that I had hung that 9th Street show. It was one of my great dramatic masterpieces, because everybody complained about everything that I did. So, for two days, I kept shifting paintings around to satisfy everybody there. This had stuck in the memory of Ferber, this patience that I had.

I remember that I hung one of the first shows that Gene Thaw had. It was called the New Gallery, by the way, like my daughter's. The first show that he had, I think, was Marca Relli unless it was what's-his-name, that Hungarian artist that's still around. Frederick. Oh, for heaven's sakes. He's been around for so many years. It will come back. I think maybe Marca Relli was the second, but I remember that I elaborately spent hours hanging these things, composing a very complex show. I was particularly proud about—not the Marca Relli so much because that was pretty good stuff anyway—Frederick what's-his-name, which really was very academic, very competent academic abstract painting. I was really very proud of it.

Anyway, this is the case. I was known; I did things for people, for other galleries, that is. The artists knew me. I had clients, pretty highly praised ones like Chemay [ph] or Ben Heller and many others, I imagine. At that time, before I opened the gallery, before the Sidney Janis era, I had lunch practically every day with Sidney. We were discussing things and people and so on. So, I was pretty familiar with the art world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you did a number of exhibitions for him.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, we did a joint thing. Its just exaggerated to say that I did them for him. We did joint exhibitions. For instance, there was that comparison of the French and American painters, which I think we discussed already here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: What else did we do, did I do? Well, that was one of the things in which I really participated quite closely. We did a Fauve show together there; I just contributed a few paintings that I found. I was there also together with another person who has vanished in the distant past. She was called Hilda Predict [ph?], and she was the secretary of that man who handled Klee and Kandinsky. What's his name now? The [one] who died back in—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Valentine.

LEO CASTELLI: No, no, not Valentine. The other one. German.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Dudensing.

LEO CASTELLI: No, no. I got to know Dudensing, too. No, the other, the third one, the one who got all the Klees and Kandinsky's. Nierendorf!

Well, she was Nierendorf's secretary. When he died, I think I mentioned that I got all those Kandinskys. Well, anyway, she also was after— That was after his death because that Fauve show occurred probably in 1950 or something like that. She was around, working, doing things; and she was also involved, in fact— Oh, in fact, she must have maybe worked for Janis for a little while. Yes, if I remember rightly. Then she faded.

We were looking, all of us were looking for Fauve paintings all over the place; and I think I found a few. She found a few, and Janis really found the bulk. It was his idea anyway. It was much more his period, his travels to Europe. He knew everybody there who counted, so he got it. There was that son-in-law of Matisse (What was his name?), who wrote that book about the Fauves at that time which appeared in 1950. Sidney probably knew about the fact that the book was going to come out, since he was in touch with all those various galleries

and so went about getting those paintings before the book appeared. It was one of those stunts we always indulge in. So, I had the experience of that pretty long and pretty close association with Janis, although I did relatively few things with him. He is still around, and we still talk to each other and discuss these things. I really would say that then we saw each other practically or certainly every week at least once—very, very often.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what about when you opened your gallery? Did collectors that patronized him start coming to you?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, what happened there was this. On the same day that I opened the gallery (I may have mentioned that to you), the World House Gallery opened.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, across the street. Yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: Across the street. Did I ever mention that episode to you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I was a bit involved with the World House Gallery—the whole thing there—because Kiesler, as you know, designed the space, which doesn't exist anymore—or Kiesler. Rick Bartos and Kiesler, who was a close friend, told me about this thing happening; and, as a matter of fact, he said, "Why do you bother with the little gallery that you want to open?" There is a really important field for you, plenty of capital and so on. Perhaps if they actually had approached me and asked me to do something about that gallery, I may have considered it; although I didn't feel really, perhaps competent enough to run a place like that. But, as it turned out, this idea was just in the imagination of Kiesler and not anything that Meyer had thought about. He wanted to run the place himself. He had very precise ideas of calling it World House, because he wanted paintings from all over the world to be shown there. You know, God knows what. It was an absurd idea, and I told Kiesler that under those conditions certainly there wouldn't be any place for me in a gallery like that.

I was very severe in my taste all along as you probably know, and nothing but the very greatest would be enough for me as I conceived it then. Of course, I would put up with smaller talents to begin with, because you had to begin somewhere. But the aim was to have the first, the greatest gallery. At that time, everybody sort of a little bit smiled about this attitude of mine, and I sort of had that image of myself on the day when both of these galleries opened—of being David and the other man Goliath and this was the aim. I think I mentioned—I told somebody (maybe Kiesler) that he would see (very elegantly, I must say) that he would see who would survive—I or Meyer with all his millions, his beautiful space, etc.

So, it was an event anyway in the New York art world because, after all, I knew Tom Hess. I knew everybody around, and so it was not just somebody that was not known that suddenly appeared upon the scene. So, everybody who went around to these various galleries—Curt Valentine had died, but there were, of course, people who went to Betty Parsons, to Kootz. These were the galleries—and Janis, of course. There were the three or four galleries that did show important American painting. There wasn't much more then, was there?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

LEO CASTELLI: I don't think so. Well, anyway, everybody who went to these galleries would come to see what I had, since I had David Smith among others and de Kooning and Pollock and so on. So it was just another gallery to go to, to socialize at. It was pleasant at that time. Openings were really much more important functions until perhaps a few years ago. Now they are very perfunctory, I would say. There is no longer that feeling of importance that you give to the event.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's interesting because I think of, well, maybe three or four years ago now, when the galleries stopped serving cocktails or punch or something. It seems that whole transition of what the opening was—Tuesday nights you would go up and down Madison Avenue to ten galleries.

LEO CASTELLI: That's right. Drinking was much better then really than Gallo wine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know something? They would have other things, but I think that sort of convivial atmosphere had a great deal to do with building up enthusiasm and talking

about things and—

LEO CASTELLI: I don't know. Maybe. But also it had much deeper, deeper roots, very complex ones that developed through the years and have reached now the point where openings are no longer openings. In fact, I think I really was one of the people who dealt at least one of the death blows of the opening, as it was conceived, by inventing the Saturday opening.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. That was the beginning of—

LEO CASTELLI: I was always against— ...never served drinks except on great occasions like opening the gallery down here. There was a cognac opening—after dinner. Only cognac was served—again, one of those childish things. That Madison Avenue thing we were still fond of at that time—ten years ago, all of ten years ago. But, generally speaking, I was very much against the social aspect of the openings. I always was firmly convinced that people should come in order to see the paintings and perhaps meet the artists. Therefore, the crowded thing that was happening on Tuesdays, when all the galleries had openings and when people were going from one place to the other, drinking, not looking at the paintings, chatting with each other (which was nice, too)—

Now I begin to really revert to those idyllic times. But, the fact is that, at that time, I was perhaps puritanical about these things and it was "art for art." That's what I thought what galleries were for, and openings were perhaps solemn occasions where things started and there were possibilities to meet the artist. So, (I don't remember exactly when but that could be determined very easily) when I started my Saturday openings, the aim of which was precisely to kill the "opening,"— There was a very real purpose behind that. I thought that that was the day when people were very relaxed and whoever cared to come in for a moment just to see other people would really come to see the paintings; and they would have an opportunity to do it from ten o'clock in the morning to six o'clock, or rather till three o'clock probably when more people would come to see the artist. It was really for doing away with the openings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. It got to be terribly expensive, too, for some places.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, well, the drinks— No, it was not that. Nobody really— No. It got a little bit more sophisticated, perhaps more cynical. I don't really know. Maybe it seemed so childish. There still are openings in those chic galleries like Wally Findlay and those—people who you don't know who the hell they are and God knows where [from] congregate to speak ecstatically about the whole—

PAUL CUMMINGS: ...pictures they haven't even looked at. Yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, we'll have to stop here now. We want to speak about the openings not because they're terribly interesting in themselves but because they are the development away from that solemn occasion, is an indication of something more serious and deeper that has happened in the art world.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: It's the 14th of January, 1971; Paul Cummings talking to Leo Castelli. Well, we were talking about Ivan Karp.

LEO CASTELLI: I met Ivan, of course, before he got the gallery. Where did I meet him first? Ah. I have no precise recollections of the circumstances, but certainly he was around at the Hansa Gallery—at that time. He and Dick Bellamy were running the place, and I have but a rather imprecise recollection of him from Hansa times. I remember Dick Bellamy more clearly, more specifically, because, perhaps, of his odd appearance. That stood out in my mind. But I had of Ivan, too, except that I have no precise recollection of meeting him at a given point. Everybody in the art world used to go to the Hansa openings and, of course, one would get to know Ivan, too. That was the thing then, maybe even before I opened the gallery. When did Hansa open, '55, '54?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was open before then, wasn't it?

LEO CASTELLI: I really don't know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Central Park South it was at one time.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. I think about that Central Park South office. I remember more vividly—

PAUL CUMMINGS: After that closed, I think Ivan went to work for Martha Jackson for a little bit.

LEO CASTELLI: He went to Martha Jackson for a year.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then he came here.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, anyway, I know that Hansa was in existence before I opened my gallery. So, it must have been at least '56 if not '55 or open in '54. We could find out from Ivan the dates of the Hansa. It would be interesting to find out. I rather vaguely remember also seeing him at Martha Jackson's perhaps occasionally. I was still, at that time, going there. There were various things of interest that occurred there. She had some interesting shows. I don't know whether they occurred in Ivan's time, but I think they occurred later—those pioneering shows of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The new media.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. I don't know when those occurred frankly. Anyway, I have knowledge of Ivan's being there and remember seeing him there occasionally but not any specific memory of what the occasions were. Actually, how did I get him? At that time, Ileana was still here in the gallery, and I remember that she felt that we should have somebody to help us in tackling all the problems that began snowballing. So, it was her initiative actually, not mine, and we got Ivan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, did she know Ivan before?

LEO CASTELLI: No. She knew him just as much as I did, but perhaps Ileana was more involved in going to galleries, to artists' studies, than I was at that time and later on, too. So, God knows how she had more knowledge about Ivan than I did, but she did. Well, Ivan then appeared on the scene when the gallery was already downstairs, and that must have been in the fall of '59. That's when I opened the gallery downstairs. So, we may have gotten him in '59.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was here for what, ten years?

LEO CASTELLI: He stayed on and on and on until the end of the 1969 season, and he managed in '69 to embark upon his career as a gallery owner.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The thing that always interested me about the whole thing is the incredible difference in personalities. Ivan, for example, was so raucous and carried on.

LEO CASTELLI: That probably was the reason why we did get along. Another reason is a trait of my character which sort of doesn't like change in people around me. I like to stick to the same people, whether it be friends or wives or etc. People even sort of accused me of being, often accused me of being weak about that—getting rid of artists, for instance, anybody, persons that are around me whether they be artists, employees, whatever. I certainly won't ever take the first steps to get rid of them. This is interpreted as being weak, at not daring to tell them that I can't stand them anymore. It has often happened that lots of people that I was associated with, specifically (since we are speaking about gallery life) artists and also employees, I wasn't particularly happy with but still they stayed on and that made gigantic efforts to change things, to improve the situation. Obviously, sometimes that proved to be impossible; and, generally speaking, people who really did work out after long patient forbearance were finally the drop-outs; but it was never my taking the initiative.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's always looked at least from the outside, watching as an observer what went on in the gallery, that Ivan developed into a kind of unique character.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He started really being on his own or something.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, yes. He did all kinds of things, and lots of people told me that Ivan had created a little empire within the larger setup. He was really doing his own business happily

which really, as long as it was not against my interests, I didn't mind about frankly. I wanted him to be independent and do his thing—like traveling around lecturing, which he did very often. But the salary I was paying him, which was not a low one, compared with museum galleries. Still, it was not quite sufficient, obviously, for a man who had good taste in all kinds of directions—collecting, eating, etc., etc. So, evidently, he had to replenish his purse from other sources and, as long as this was not at the expense of the gallery—getting certain artists outside of the gallery, taking people to lofts to show them after really always first giving me a chance, discussing the possibility of taking this artist on— If I did not happen to like the artist that he was speaking of taking on, he looked around getting, of course, for his services, paintings. He generally would take advantage of that situation, which I knew about and found absolutely and totally legitimate.

In fact, it was on the interesting side of this activity that sometimes actually got me in touch with some artist that I really liked, like, for instance, Lee Bontecou. She was sort of found through him; and, well generally speaking, he also kept me very much in touch with the art world at large. He would go around much more than I did and tell me about what he'd seen and make a real effort to interest me in certain artists. I remember quite a few, like John Clem Clarke, for instance. He was very much involved with him, and he certainly found him before he had an idea of leaving the gallery, and certainly he insisted very much that I should take him on.

Although appearances are seen otherwise, I think that he was, generally speaking, quite loyal and honest; though he did a few things that you may find were slightly objectionable. But, I don't think that he ever did something that was not honest. In spite of the fact that lots of people say that there were all kinds of underhand things that he did, I do not believe it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I heard that the last few years that he was here his taste and interests seem to shift.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, yes. What happened, actually there, is that he got more and more interested in Post-Pop directions; and I felt that those were secondary developments as I had witnessed in abstract expressionism. I had had that experience; and I knew very well that, after the great ones had established themselves and went on doing whatever they were doing, it was the same or very intensely varied always on the masters. All that came after, until Bob Rauschenberg appeared upon the scene; or the color field painters are also an outcrop ultimately of abstract expressionism—all those like the Alfred Leslies or the Joan Mitchells. Alfred Leslie, I must say, was too close to de Kooning. Joan Mitchell had an idiom of her own, but it was not really entirely interesting. It was minor. So I had had that experience I just will mention briefly but could go into more details about it.

I felt that the same thing was happening to Pop art, that the various people like Bob Watts were really quite talented. I think he dropped out. I was really interested in him, but he was not consistent. He had quite a few really vital original ideas; and, had he been a different type of artist, he might have become one of the really important major ones. But then he dropped out altogether and jumped from one thing to the other and didn't have the consistent output but remained just like (I even consider to say) Wesselmann, not of the first magnitude. Although, he even must give all due respect because he appeared exactly at the same time as the others. So, if one is perhaps less good than, say, Warhol and Lichtenstein but one who belongs to the original group— Well, I really felt that he had really nothing to do with Pop or really very little. Anyway, I also felt that he was not major.

Then people like Bob Stanley appeared almost at the same time. Again that was already— It was already epigone. I felt that now this other group, which was slightly, had a slightly different approach— Morley is one of the early ones, then John Clem Clarke. Now we have Estes and we have Goings and so on—Leslie himself, who went over to this so-called Super-Realism and Chuck Close, etc. They all work from photography; and, in that sense, there is a similarity there between them as a point of departure through, say, Rauschenberg and Warhol, who used photography as a point of departure, too. But they used it in a different way. I don't know. It's interesting but it didn't seem major to me. As a matter of fact, John Clem Clarke maybe was the most amusing one; because it was funk, too—that idea to take badly from the machine and enlarge them. He's quite good really. Did you see the show?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

LEO CASTELLI: He's pretty good. He's quite successful, quite deservedly so.

Anyway, to come back to Ivan, I didn't feel that he was the one that I wanted; and my taste went rather to these trends that I felt were major developments of the preceding groups. Still he presented me also with things that came out from painting. There was one of them, whose name I can't remember now, but he did sort of band and strip painting that was quite good. It was pretty close to Frank's, to the early black paintings of Frank's, much more lyrical if you wish. So there, again, I felt that certainly was pretty good if it was not a major find.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about his interest in Pettibone?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Pettibone. Again, there is something in Ivan that likes the funky, campy things very much. Well, witness his book and, generally speaking, when you see what he collects and so on. There is something in Ivan that likes camp. I like camp, too, but—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You have to limit it.

LEO CASTELLI: For me, it's not really camp. It's more the Duchampian Dada, Duchampian Magritte, Dada unpredictable that I like—which is campy very often, too. He really likes the real camp. I do, too, and I certainly do like Tiffany lamps and things like that, or women with flowing hair and things like that. He seems to really have a real passion for it, more than just a liking that I have. Therefore, you find that he picks certain things that are not easy to comprehend. Pettibone has some merits. You tire very, very rapidly of him, of course. In the beginning I rather liked this idea of the miniature, like his miniature thing of the whole collection that people could have, put it in a suitcase, and then when they travel set it up and have the whole collection on one wall. That is understandable. This is our understanding—Ivan's and mine—his more in paintings and mine going back to a different period of what is the Dada element or campy element, if you speak about applying art in—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did he handle certain collectors more than others?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, yes, yes. He had his own collectors before he went and for some time before he left and sometimes for a long while. Then, somehow or other, I'd step into the act. He would have his own collectors, but I knew them, of course. He was taking care of them. Perhaps he prepared them then for me to do something with later or not to, if they proved to be duds. Certainly he confided for quite a while. He did good business with, say, a person like Felice Wender of Bakers. She was young. She was not mature, and it was a good thing that he took care of her those years until she developed into a really competent dealer. Then he had people like Sidney Lewis, who lived somewhere in Virginia and would sell— He has a department store and all that. Roy met him through Ivan, and they made all kinds of exchanges. He gets hi-fi systems and ice boxes and rings, whatever you can think of. He's a very, very bad dealer with artists.

It's like Kootz back in the mid-forties who gave Picasso a marvelous white Cadillac worth \$12,000 maybe. Picasso was impressed no end getting this thing, and he got for Kootz a fifty or sixty thousand dollar painting. This always happens, you know. These are very bad deals that artists should not indulge in. They can buy those things for cash, and they would be much better off.

Anyway, Lewis was one of his particular clients; he would come very often. I don't know, I hardly ever had anything to do with Sidney Lewis. They say now that Sidney Lewis is one of the chief backers of Ivan, if not the backer. I don't know about it. He was pretty secretive about that; he would not really reveal his finances. He would write all kinds of collectors, all dealers that would come up suddenly. I had some Stellas, for instance, that he wanted to sell rapidly. So, he says, "I can sell that." Then he would produce that woman on which he would not give me any explanation. It was the Berenson Gallery in Miami, and the price of those things was \$10,000, I remember, at that time. I would sell them at a ten percent discount for \$9,000. So, Ivan said, "'I can give you the price of it.'" So, I said, "All right, fine. The price is \$10,000. Whatever you get over ten is yours." And he sold it for twelve; that was high.

Those were things that he did that are not— Well, I tolerated it then, and I shouldn't really have tolerated it. It really didn't do me any harm, I think. I hope. So, he did things that I would never do. I would not jack up the price of anything, because a poor provincial wouldn't know what was going on. He would sort of naturally do it, quite naturally without a bit of conscience.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he likes trading, you know.

LEO CASTELLI: He likes trading. He's a real trader, and my origin is not a trader one. Now I have learned the business, too; but, in the beginning, I must say I was rather ashamed of doing business. It didn't seem to me (I don't know whether I mentioned it to you) ever a gentlemanly occupation. I had some kind of a stupid attitude that you find in Europe with boys or girls, or boys especially because girls did not work in my time there. ...always for the boys who come from, let's say, a father who has made his career; and then there is that rebellion against the father's commercialism. You want to be very pure, or you would prefer to be probably an artist or a painter or a writer or something that would be a good occupation. It wouldn't apply to here, because here it begins— Perhaps it's the beginning of respect for a lot of things, but there being a painter, being a writer is a highly honored occupation. So, that's what you would like to be if possible. If you can't, you would settle for teaching some kind of noble subject that you develop in, like history of art or history of economics. At least, young people in that situation that I was in would generally rebel against their families and not want to be involved with commercial enterprises. It was a great handicap that I started under, and I had it through a long period of time till I learned that you can't have that attitude. Now I do a thing of business pretty well, like everybody else, and don't consider it anymore something that a gentleman should not indulge in. The whole concept of the gentleman seems to be very much in question these days.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's really disappearing.

LEO CASTELLI: We have not by any means exhausted the subject of Ivan. As I mentioned at one point when I started, and it goes back pretty far, we were taking care of two different areas; and there was hardly any relationship between what I was doing, what I was interested in, and what Ivan was interested in.

Although he, of course, respected Jasper Johns and Jasper Johns' work very much, he hardly ever handled Jasper Johns. Rauschenberg he respected but was not particularly enthusiastic about what he was doing after his silk screens. So, he was not involved with Rauschenberg. Lichtenstein, of course, he was involved with very much; but he saw Lichtenstein, as I think I already mentioned, in a different light from me. He saw more his campy aspects; and I then, I think, told you I tried to discourage those. I think that maybe Lichtenstein wouldn't have fallen into that trap anyway, but maybe there was a slight contribution on my part to discard that trend and get him to do things that were more like— Let's call them serious for want of a better term.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ivan would always mention that he loved the crying girls and things like that.

LEO CASTELLI: I liked them, too; but I liked them for different reasons than he did. He liked them very much for the subject. I did too, but in Lichtenstein I always saw the formal quality more than Ivan did. Ivan gave a preponderance to the subject, I think. Of course, he's an old hand; and he knows also how to distinguish a good period of that type or a bad one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He also got very interested in Warhol, didn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: He was also very interested in Warhol, but there again you have a fantastic campy quality there. He did not really (and I perhaps didn't either) understand the tragic quality of the, say, car crashes; and we didn't handle that very well. Those were really understood in Europe; and here we considered him very, very difficult to sell. And we didn't do the job. Well, we liked those easy ones like the Marilyn or Liz or—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Flowers, yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: ...or the flowers, etc. Ivan had a certain respect for Bob Morris, but he never handled that very much—or Judd. Frank I handled almost exclusively, although Ivan liked Stella. And then he had his little things. For instance, he got very involved with Ramos, and that sort of never jelled with me and was abandoned.

He was always very involved with John Chamberlain, but then it got to a point where he also got discouraged with him. But John is still alive and has done some beautiful things. But he was one of his. He still is, and I have trouble handling him.

He sort of pretended to us, through the first years of our relationship, that he was sort of

very brutal; but he's a mouse really. He had his favorites that he would handle, and he had also a relationship to the artists. I had my relationships with Jasper, with Bob, with Frank. Well, I had other relationships, too. It's really an inexhaustible subject. In the beginning, he just was doing this because he felt that he had to have some fixed income; but he was interested mainly in producing his literary work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. He wanted to write novels.

LEO CASTELLI: He has written something like three or four novels. Only one was actually published, but that proved not terribly successful. So at one point, when a child was born with Marilyn, I think that he had decided that he would never really become a great writer or be able to make a living with that. He sort of decided secondly to do this really. I think that the idea of opening a gallery must have already appeared at that time in his mind. So, there must have been—oh, well, let's see—at least two years before it actually happened, that he must have sort of thought about it. I think it was a matter of getting funds. Then that was comfortable. He had no worry, and he could operate, as we said, quite freely. To change from something that was comfortable in order to do something that he didn't know how it would come out took a lot of time to decide about. The last straw was, as you probably know, the fact that I took on Flavin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

LEO CASTELLI: I didn't mention that? Well, there was some kind of personal thing between him and Flavin. First they had been great friends, and then I don't know what happened but Dan testified, I believe, or whatever he did, in favor of his former wife, Lois—took her side. I don't know in what form or shape, and it seemed that Ivan (he never really said that, but other people told me) resented it very deeply. He said that he didn't want Flavin in the gallery for aesthetic reasons, also for economic reasons. He said he spent too much money, he's going to ruin the gallery, he's pretentious, this and that, and so on. When I said to him that I was very sorry but that I had decided to take him on, he said, "Well, that's too bad because I must go." That's the formal reason that he did leave the gallery for, but he left it sort of figuring out about the gallery. He must have discussed this with maybe Sidney Lewis or other backers, but he never told me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's also a logical step for someone like him.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, entirely logical. Frankly, when he said that he was going to do it, I told him, "Well, the pretext may be a silly one or one that I cannot quite understand, but I certainly feel that you're doing the right thing." If he just had told me that he had thought things over and that he felt that now he can fly with his own wings and develop certain things that he's interested in and which I'm not, I certainly would have told him that (if he asked my advice) I felt that he would be entirely successful in doing it. Well, that's what happened.

Of course, speaking of the difference of character, he got on my nerves pretty often because of the difference. He got on the nerves of some of the artists like Rauschenberg or Johns, who didn't like his manners very much and felt that he didn't belong here. But he's been, thinking back through the years, immensely useful to me and to the gallery; and perhaps it should have become apparent two or three years earlier. But he fulfilled an important role here in this gallery for many, many years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was always someone that was talked about as a character, too.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. After all, I had taught him a few things; but he also taught me quite a few other things and how to handle people. He may have learned other things from me; I don't know what. Maybe he would say that he hasn't learned anything from me. I certainly did learn a lot from him, and again I have absolutely no regrets having had him for so long. I think, had I not had him, maybe things would have developed very, very differently. It may have been more closed, a classy kind of affair which perhaps wouldn't have been a good thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The press kind of liked him, didn't they?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, yes. He was generally liked, I think. I still like him very, very much. I'm going to see him this evening. I have no hassles and no animosity whatsoever. There wasn't any when he left. I was a little bit surprised that he would take that kind of pretext to leave

or whatever it was, and maybe he felt it very deeply. But I wished him well from my heart and still do. He was here just a few days ago. I hadn't seen him for quite a while. I will see him a lot more often now because we'll be downtown. I really have a real pleasure seeing him, and I enjoy to see him. My feelings for him are extremely warm.

And he was really strange. He did not much involve me in his life, and perhaps I didn't involve him in my life, which was true. I tend to do that with many people, and there are just a few artists and others who really know about me. The others I really have good friendly relations with, but they don't go very far or very deep. So, maybe with him, precisely because of the difference of personality, we did not feel like communicating on a human level. You know that, for instance, I went to his old apartment when he had that studio-type apartment; but I never was in the new house down on La Guardia Place. He never asked me. Maybe he expected me to ask him to see it, but it never occurred. So I never saw his child, for instance. I have also very friendly, warm relations with Marilyn. I know that he invited all kinds of people, artists and so on, to his place; but he never did invite me. Maybe that's true also, I don't know, of Ileana [Sonnabend], by former wife who belongs to a different kind of world; but she was always quite friendly with Ivan, too. We had him at our house, not often but we did have him. Anyway, there are all these mysteries.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's always interesting.

LEO CASTELLI: They're more of the subtle things that belong to a novel rather than to art history.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but it explains a lot of how things happen and why people do various things. But were there particular...I mean, like the Sculls. He always would say kind of strange things about them.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Scull. He first tried, of course. The Sculls were very important at that time; we see now. Also Scull was very involved with certain artists that were his friends—not with Lichtenstein. Scull never got very involved with him, but he was very involved with Chamberlain, for instance, who was really close to Ivan, and Ruth Bellamy, who was also in a way close to Ivan. That was an ambivalent kind of relationship there. Then he got to really detest Scull—really rightly so, in a way, because Scull really presumed enormously. He was immensely and he remains immensely arrogant. Ivan really couldn't stand him after a while. There are lots of people that he resented and rightly so. There was never really something that he was wrong about. Those people really are tough to take, and after a while he just didn't even have any patience with them anymore. The fact is that perhaps there was rivalry there. After all, those people showed some restraint with me but none with him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

LEO CASTELLI: So, maybe he felt that. But he was right. I would consider him as being right in the case of really resenting Scull's behavior very, very much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting because, in a sense, Ivan was such a defined image in the art world and such a personality. I don't think I ever attended one of his lectures, but they were really topics for discussion for weeks afterwards.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, yeah, yeah. Also the imagery, the words that he used were— For instance, they are so quaint sometimes. He would say, for instance, when we have ordered something, he would say we have "ordained."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: ...the sort of pompous form or kind of elocutions that he had. Then he would just talk endlessly and incredibly glibly. Sometimes really, if you listened carefully to what he was saying, it didn't make any sense whatsoever. It was just a rich fireworks of imagery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Oh, his images were really extraordinary. Well, how did he get along with Ileana?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, they did get along well. They did get along well in the beginning. When Ileana began operating her gallery in Paris, he was rather— Well, then there was something that he did not like. You see, I was sending— Ileana was getting quite a bit of material— Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein, and Johns, and whatnot—from the gallery. He was really very

annoyed at that because he wanted those things and didn't see any reason why she should be— He felt that that was bread that was taken out of our own mouths, you know. So, he resented it, and Ileana took the attitude of trying to pacify him or retire him by being very nice to him, giving him opportunities to make some good deals at selling all kinds of things that she had, like Dubuffet or whatever. She would entrust him with a sale, give him a very good commission so as to pacify him. She knew very well that he was rather hostile—not to her as a person. They got along very well. They understood each other, but he felt and she knew that she was getting too much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One of the things that's always interested me about the gallery is the fact you sent your artists' work to Europe all the time.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, yes. That has now undergone an incredible change, as I was telling that girl, Phyllis Tuchman, who wrote that article in *Artforum* about the German collections. Did you read it in *Artforum*?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I saw it; I didn't read it.

LEO CASTELLI: It's interesting. There was, thanks to rigid rules that I imposed upon myself, a monopoly that Ileana had for quite a while in Europe. I think that it was a wise thing, although it was done because of special reasons on my part. I wanted to favor her and to help her; but I think that, in the long run, this disciplined sacrifice that I imposed upon myself not to deal with any Europeans—dealers or collectors or even Americans that went to Paris and would buy there Rauschenbergs or Johns instead of buying here—were immensely useful in the end. Because that sort of monopoly that she had for several years did create a market. Otherwise, it would have been all very imprecise. She gave that whole structure through post-Abstract Expressionism.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. She was really selling her pictures rather than showing things for you.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. Well, she dealt with museums. She promoted shows. She did a great job there. She could do it for quite a while because I imposed this discipline upon myself (against Ivan's tendency and logical to keep these things for ourselves) [not] to sell them to European clients when they would come here. For instance, for a long time, oh, a matter of over a year or perhaps even two, when Ludwig, who turned out to be such an important collector, came here, I would tell him, "Look here. I have a Rauschenberg, a Johns, something that I can show you; but I really cannot sell it to you because I would invade Ileana's territory." "Yes, I know," he said. "I go to Ileana's, but I happen to want these paintings." So, what do we do? So, then I would tell Ileana. So she says, "Well, I really don't particularly like you to sell something even if you send it to me and then I sell it to Ludwig; because that means that you sort of force me to sell something to Ludwig when I have a waiting list of other people that I want to sell these things to before Ludwig. You sort of take away my free choice in my dealing." But, in the middle of Italy, that kind of structure approach could not be sustained. Well, I didn't get money after all, and Ludwig would come here, and little by little I started selling to Ludwig—of course, with Ileana's consent. She knew that it was just not possible for me not to do it, and little by little our situation has now developed where practically her whole monopoly is completely broken. She can't get as much material as she used to, and there's a real crisis about that now.

You see, other dealers had developed strongly, like Sperone in Italy. First it was the Germans, but now Sperone in Italy has developed into a very, very strong buyer of things. For a long time again, I succeeded in maintaining the position that I was not selling anything directly to Sperone—that it went to Ileana and then Ileana was to sell it to Sperone and that she would choose what to sell and what not to sell. But again now in this situation, the crisis situation where actually the only people who do buy art, the Italians or the Germans or people in the Middle West— Collectors are very scarce now, and little by little I felt obliged to sell to Sperone directly, you know, just to survive. He accounts probably for at least one-third if not one-half of my sales. If I had done that through Ileana—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, it would cut—

LEO CASTELLI: So I had started dealing directly with those two or three European dealers, which I had not done before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It has always interested me, because there are so few of the other

American dealers who have taken their artists' work abroad and talked to other dealers. You were really one of the first to do it on a continuing basis.

LEO CASTELLI: That's probably (through the fact that, first of all I never, again) my uncommercial attitude about the thing and my feeling that this was terribly important, that here we had important artists that had to be shown, that had to get into museums or into collections. The money angle had absolutely no relevance for me. There was a job of showing these artists, of having them recognized as inheritors of whatever had happened in Europe before. That seemed to be the thing that had to be done; and the commercial aspect really was very, very unimportant and of secondary nature. So we would consider that this was done not because I had some kind of Machiavellian plan in that I thought I will do this and become very well-known there, then that will be much in our favor. I had an inkling that the American collector would respect an American artist much more if you sold in Europe.

The situation was such at that time that no American artist that would not be spoken about and collected in Europe was worth considering by many collectors here. There are still many of them who were just buying Miro, Picasso, and such. They were beginning to buy Pollock maybe, but the rapid imposition of people like Rauschenberg, Johns, and Lichtenstein—Warhol was done largely because of those efforts of Ileana, who also had the same attitude that I had; and she believed 100 percent that these were the important people now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting that the real Abstract Expressionists have never been shown that much in Europe.

LEO CASTELLI: It was perhaps that had I had to deal with them— I was just as involved with Pollock and de Kooning, especially Kline, not so much at that time with Rothko, who I did not understand as well. I only got to understand him much later, really. Had I had them at that time, had I the right to, I would have done the same thing for them. I had also very, very strong belief in their importance.

Janis didn't at all see it that way, and he preferred to— His attitude was, well, there are few collectors who buy them anyway and those collectors do come to New York and I'll sell to them without having to give away half of my commissions. At that time, he was working on a very antiquated (and I still think he works on a very antiquated) basis of taking the pictures on consignment and retaining a 33 percent commission, which has been an obsolete system in France already for the past century. It works very differently now. You buy the works of the artists mostly. Well, I was working on the consignment principle; but there was, of course, the advance system that sometimes, somehow balanced the situation. Janis was working on that antiquated system, and I was discussing things with him. He said, "Well, all I can give them really on that 33 percent basis is, if I want to be very generous, is 17 or whatever it is, one-half of 33 percent." He knew no European dealer in his right mind (since those were, after all, artists that they couldn't put across so easily) would be satisfied with that ridiculous commission and especially since they also had to pay for crating and transportation. So it didn't work. There was no imagination used there by the dealers of the abstract expressionist era at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Also, I think they also couldn't get a better price from the artists. The artists would say— Well, you know.

LEO CASTELLI: The artist was also very rigid. Yes. The artist is to blame, too; but the dealer is to blame because the dealer— I can always convince an artist of a situation. I've been convincing them since I have a separate print department and this has taken a development, the selling of the print as an accessory to what one's doing. I didn't expect to make any money. I didn't expect to lose money, but it was just as a courtesy. Now it has developed into a different kind of business, and the artist has that antiquated attitude that prints should be handled like paintings. And that's impossible.

So, today I saw Roy; and, among other things we discussed, it became very important for me to discuss the mechanics of the selling of prints. He saw it right away. He saw that it's impossible to achieve a real principle, because you see what happens actually is that, if you sold everything retail, it could be maintained; but the fact is that about two-thirds of the prints that you sell go wholesale or go to other dealers. Therefore, other dealers would not be content even with 35 percent. Often, when you sell a painting to a dealer, you give him half of your commission; but 35 percent won't be that because the handling of prints is much more expensive than the handling of a single painting. You have thousands of items, as you

know; and the whole aspect is different. So, I explained to Roy today that it just can't be done, that he had to absorb the discount. Let's suppose that the basis is 50-50. Then let's suppose you sell a print to a dealer and give him what you really require for a print that's not too saleable, let's say 40 percent. Then he just has to sell what remains over 50-50, not just take as a basis of retail price. If you do that, then the printing loses money.

So, if you explain to them what the realities are, they will understand. They don't want you to take advantage, and they're perfectly right. If you explain to them that you don't take advantage, that it's just a matter of survival for you, they will understand.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you like the idea of some people, when they commission a print, they will say, "I want a hundred prints and I will pay you X amount of money for a hundred prints"?

LEO CASTELLI: That's obviously the best solution for that, if I could do it that way; but all these printers are ambitious. You mean the artist or the printer?

PAUL CUMMINGS: The artist.

LEO CASTELLI: No. The artists, my artists, want to have the same treatment when they do prints as when they do with paintings, of course. But, no, what's important there is the printer's attitude.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. They want to become publisher.

LEO CASTELLI: They want to become publisher, and that's just out of the question. As soon as you involve the printer and the publisher, you're out unless you can do what you like with the artist. If you can say to the artist, "Here's \$1,000 and that takes care of the hundred prints," and then sell the whole thing for \$100,000, then you can do that. But, if an artist is conscious of what's going on—like Lichtenstein or Jasper or Bob or whoever they are—it just cannot be done; because there is not enough margin for two people. There is just enough for one to get away with it. But I explain that perhaps to you more immediately; because it's a very interesting thing that, since you're printing, you publish a magazine, you should know more about the mechanics.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I know and everybody has a different way of doing it.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, but then with an important artist there is only one way to do it. With a young artist, they'd do anything to get something printed, of course; but even there I wouldn't want to take advantage of them.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: It's the 9th of April; Paul Cummings talking to Leo Castelli. Let's continue with the collectors that developed here and how they came and what they did.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I can't remember anymore what, as I mentioned, appeared in the early stages of the gallery. I can think of the Peters, that I must have mentioned, and the Epsteins. Then, of course, not so long after that, the bigshots started to come in. They came in. They started coming in, I would say, after my first Jasper Johns show. Well, it occurred pretty early. It occurred one year after the opening of the Gallery, so it didn't take me too long to get some of the big fish. I think that was really a turning point for my gallery, the Jasper Johns show. As I certainly mentioned earlier, Barr came in and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, all the people.

LEO CASTELLI: That brought in also serious collectors, who were talking to Barr and to the Museum people. So, I really don't— Let me see who bought those pieces in the beginning. It was the Modern mostly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Philip Johnson. Didn't he buy one?

LEO CASTELLI: Philip Johnson. Yes. He actually bought it supposedly for the MoMA, because Barr told him to buy it and he didn't particularly care for it. Then, as I told you, there was this episode here. He reneged on his lack of interest. I don't think any of those big fish, like the Tremaines, came to that show. They must have become aware of it later because then they bought. They must have come in later, I think. Yeah. They came to the studio. Let me see if

their competition with the Sculls started then. When did it start? Scull came in. The first piece that Scull bought of Jasper Johns (and I think the first piece that he bought from my gallery, period) was the Jasper Johns. That white numbers that he found though in Paris was a show of Jasper's in Paris at Rive Droite, and he saw it there and bought it there. Actually, when I first met him, he came and told me that he had bought that piece. Then he got very involved with Jasper Johns and started buying heavily. The Tremaines also got very involved—both of these. It was just very unpleasant for me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, yeah, they're very different kinds of people, aren't they?

LEO CASTELLI: They're very, very different. There was a long tradition of collecting with the Tremaines, especially Emily. He sort of, more or less, follows what she's doing. She had started (many, many years before) collecting very, very seriously—Cubist paintings. The complete collection in their case was— Everything of historic importance was there from the Cubists—good examples of the Cubists, Mondrian, Giacometti, and what-have-you. Then quite late, they got involved with Americans. I remember they bought a Kline. I think that they even asked, no perhaps they didn't ask, my advice; but that was the Kline show, one of the Kline shows at Sidney Janis where they bought their first Kline. Then Rothko they had understood before. I think they had bought that already somewhat earlier. Then it was Jasper Johns. But they still bought at a time when we already thought that there was not much of value that was being produced by the younger generation in Europe. They were buying people like Pomodoro and things like that, and I think it was only a little later that they really understood that all the action was here and gave up buying secondary European painters or artists.

Then, to come back to that competition that occurred—. Well, we just said that they were collectors of old standing involved with the museums and doing things with extreme seriousness to the point where now, after thinking a great deal about who should get their collection finally, they finally thinking about New York and about other places, Cleveland, they finally decided to give it to Washington, to the National Gallery in Washington. I don't know whether you know about that. That will be a gift from them to the National Gallery, and what she's doing now is trying to perfect the collection, eliminate secondary material, replace it with better material or with other things that they don't have. For instance, they had quite a few Warhols, say, or Lichtensteins. They would eliminate those that they felt were secondary and replace it with paintings of certain people that they hadn't gotten.

Stella, they bought quite early, and there again they wanted a particular piece, and I sort of got it for them. It was in a collection of another dealer, David Mirvish in Toronto and they wanted this particular piece because it corresponded with their Delaunay. So, they were bent on having that, and they paid a high price for it because it was precisely that piece that they wanted and he really didn't want to sell it. David Mirvish.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, the Sculls had collected for a while before that.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, the Sculls. Let's come back to him. So, the Tremaines are now perfecting their collection according to the [inaudible] selling certain things and selling others. I think, will get as good a collection starting with the beginning of the century up to our times as can be put together.

Then there was that Jasper Johns kick that they both had—the Sculls and the Tremaines. I think that they might have started collecting Johns the year after the first show—both the Sculls and the Tremaines—because I remember their getting a flag painting of Jasper's, a triple flag, one on top of the other. That's a '58 painting. So, they got it fresh from the assembly line in '58. It must have been before '58, so that they were already around a few months after Jasper's first show.

I don't think that they bought from (or did they?) from the show itself. They got from that show one painting, *Tango*. It's a rather odd blue painting, a little bit out-of-the-way painting done in encaustic done in the early times. It appeared in my show, and it had a little music box with a little key. The music box is something I don't know "Holy Night" or something he found, and he just tampered with it and broke a few of those little teeth that those little music boxes have so that it produces a very odd disconnected, disjointed sound. This was the only time that he actually used something foreign to, well, visual material, let's say. Usually he, well, he produces, of course, all kinds of objects, but not sound. (Rauschenberg did that, too, as we know, when he put radios in some.) Anyway, they bought that. They may

have bought it during the show. I don't remember. But then right after that, they bought that *flag*, and then they were in great competition with Scull about a group of paintings that he did in 1960.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What caused the competition?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, they wanted to have priority. They wanted to be the first to buy the best. So, for instance, there was that show that we had in 1960. That was the second show, and there were several paintings there. One was the *Device Circle* that the Tremaines got and they picked that. And Scull picked two: *Out the Window* and *False Start*. Then there was a great deal of recriminations on the part of Scull that they had had apparently priority of choice and therefor had gotten *Device Circle* and he couldn't have that one. I think, as a matter of fact, that he had priority and chose wrong—not wrongly—chose those two paintings before the Tremaines did and did not pick *Device Circle*. Then, when he found out that the Tremaines had picked *Device Circle*, he got very mad that he had not picked it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. So, no matter what they would have picked, he would have been angry.

LEO CASTELLI: Probably. So, the Tremaines have a nice group of Johns. They have this *Tango*, and they have his flags. Then they have this *Device Circle*. Then what happened is the *Map*—the *Map* that now hangs in the Museum of Modern Art, which belongs now to the Museum. They wanted it very badly, and Scull wanted it very badly. So, to cut the Gordian knot, Jasper said nobody can have it. It has to go to a museum, and whoever offers better conditions will get it during their lifetime. So, it seems, as far as I can remember, that the gift conditions of the Sculls were more agreeable. The Tremaines were mad with the Modern and didn't want to give anything to the Modern at that time. I don't know what happened. Anyway, Scull got it and he was supposed to give it to the Museum after a certain period of time or upon his death or something like that and could take a deduction sort of piece-meal. But now he decided to just finish the whole business and give it to them outright, and that was the end of that. It hangs in the Museum, and he got himself a nice tax deduction. He got it valued at \$130,000.

As a matter of fact, the Art Dealers Association, which does this evaluation as you know, asked me to give them a value, and they had asked also Ivan. So Ivan phoned me and said what do you think we should value it at? So, I said, "Well, I think that it should be \$150,000. Ivan said, 'Yes. I feel that, too.' And that's what we said. Then, this was discussed at the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Art Dealers Association (of which I'm a member, by the way) and they said don't you think it's a little bit much under the circumstances, especially in that last auction after all those paintings of Johns didn't achieve the very high prices that were expected.

So they did not feel safe about this estimate. Let's consult some independent sources, maybe the German dealers who handle him and perhaps a Swiss dealer, who has a real sense of value, is well informed. So, we did that and we got replies back. One said 120 and another said 140. So, we decided to have it registered at 130. So, you can see what a nice deduction he got there. He probably paid six or seven thousand dollars.

Anyway, the Tremaines were actually mad and, for a long time, they reproached me with having done that to them. Well, there was this competition that went on. There was that fantastic love that Scull had for Jasper's work, and he got any number of them. Whenever he wasn't shown everything that Jasper was producing, that was the reason for his being very angry.

Jasper sort of began to resent this kind of thing, and he felt that there was no reason why Scull should have all the '40s painting although they flattered him very much. They invited him everywhere. He could do anything with them. They would bring him marvelous presents—watches and what-not—because their friendship was so intense. Jasper reacted worse and worse to this and finally didn't want to see them anymore. It was a great tragedy. As a matter of fact, at the time it was so great that Scull did not want until the last moment to lend his paintings to the Jewish Museum for the show there in '64. Jasper painted the painting which was called *Arrive Depart* (that was before finally Scull relented and lent his paintings) in which there is a—skull appears, the figure of a skull.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? That's marvelous.

LEO CASTELLI: Ah, but then he got many commissions. He commissioned, for example, back in 1960, a marvelous *Number Five* that he has. Then *Two Flags*, the ones that he put up at auction. They went up to 105 but didn't get sold because he wanted more. There was a higher reserve than that. Then he got a very beautiful painting called *By the Sea* that was of little flags.

Oh, there was another tragedy about the *Map*, another *Map*. After he had gotten the original *Map*, which he hadn't gotten really for himself, he had to give it to the Museum. He found out that there was a *Map* that Jasper did for a special purpose—in order to get money for the Merce Cunningham Dance Group. So he did that, and he did a very beautiful one. And Fred Weisman wanted a Johns. So, even before the painting was done— At that time, I saw him pretty often—Weisman. He was pestering me about getting a Johns. I said, "Well, he's doing this benefit thing and; well, let's assume that if you like it you can have it." So he was waiting for that benefit to occur, and it did in 1962 I believe. It was ready just as I had a Jasper Johns show [in] which *Diver* and those paintings appeared for the first time. So, I got it at the same time that the paintings of his show opened. Did I tell you about Mrs. List coming to the opening?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

LEO CASTELLI: Seeing that that *Map*—. It was hanging in the back room here; and Mrs. List came in and said, "Ah, that's the one I want." So I said, "I'm sorry. You can't have that because I promised it to Weisman."

I had just spoken on the phone with Weisman and he said he was in New York and he was coming shortly to see his *Map*. It was very funny because he asked me, "Well, how do you like it?" I said, "It's very beautiful; I think you'll like it." He had never asked about the price; and he said, "By the way, how much is it?" So I said, "\$15,000." He said, "Fine, fine." But the fact is that Jasper, when he discussed the price of the painting, had said, "Well, let's try to get as much as we can for it. It's after all for Merce." So, I asked him, "Well, what do you think is a lot for it?" So he said, "Well, I think \$9,000 should be a lot for it." He hated that painting, by the way. He still doesn't like it because he manufactured it. He thinks he manufactured it, but it came out so well really. So I said, "Well, why not try for 15 since it's, after all, for a good cause." So he said, "All right. If you think that you can get 15, why not?" And I got it very easily.

Then Mrs. List, as I said, came in; and she said, "That's the painting that I want." I said, "No, I have to wait for Weisman; it's his painting." "How much was it," she asked me. I said, "It was \$15,000." "Well," she said, "you tell him that I'm offering him \$25,000 for the painting. I offer him a \$10,000 profit on the painting if he wants to relinquish it."

Just a few minutes later, Weisman walked in; and I said, "Here is Mrs. List, who wants your painting. Talk to her about it." She repeated that and he laughed and said of course he would not give it up for love or money.

Then there was that fantastic *Diver* painting, that very large painting (it seemed then a very large painting) in the other room. There was really nothing else that was available; everything had been bought. Then she said, "What do I buy now?" I said, "There is this large painting. It's very beautiful." "All right," she said, "I'll buy it. How much is it?" So I said, "That's \$30,000." Her husband, Abe, was there, you know, as usual sleeping away. She said, "Abe, we're going to buy this painting." He said, "Yes, we're going to buy this painting, and how much is it?" I said, "It's \$30,000, Abe." He said, "Could you give me a little discount on it?" I said, "No, no, I wouldn't want to do that. I know you've got it." So, he said, "All right, if Vera wants to buy it."

Then I felt a little bit guilty about the whole procedure. It was so odd. She seemed to me that she had just bought it out of spite because she couldn't get that other one. I told Abe (and she was standing there; they were just on their way out), "You know that you have to take it now. You can't think it over." So she said to me, "It's all thought over. We're buying the painting."

List is another collector, not as enthusiastic and as committed a collector (at least as far as my painters are concerned) as Scull and the Tremaines were at that time. She had bought quite a few good things, among them a very good Rauschenberg called *Overcast Two* and, of course, this masterpiece of Johns, and other things. Poons, a good Poons she bought from

me—a very good Stella and more recently a Morris. She's been buying good, important pieces through the years; but it seemed to me that there was not the commitment of the other ones, especially Scull.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what were the qualities that attracted Scull? What would he say about pictures?

LEO CASTELLI: He knows his pictures very, very well. He has no theoretical knowledge, but who does actually? That's anybody's guess. But any rate, he has no real education, formal education, about painting. It is anybody's guess what knowledge (theoretical, practical) a collector may have. Some are most sophisticated; some are less. Maybe Scull is not that sophisticated, but he thinks he's understanding the painting.

Actually, it is a very interesting chapter. I don't think it can go on for very much longer, because they really don't know how and why, what the motivation is in all these people. Generally speaking, I would say that the strongest present motivation, whatever the other approaches may be that count in addition to that, seems to be a real understanding, sometimes unconscious understanding, of what the painting is about, what the painting is. I think that is the standard motivation for anybody, even people who really buy very wisely with sort of the idea in mind to set up an important collection with the inclusion of everything that counts—very careful collecting. Even those have to react strongly to whatever they are buying, or else collecting would collapse very, very rapidly if there is no enthusiasm there. So that is one of the most important qualifications for a collector.

There are people who buy paintings here and there, on and off; and the main reason is because it's fashionable. It's because they hear about it, because they read about it. But if there isn't that bug there, the same bug people have when they must go betting the races or go to the fights or ice hockey or basketball, whatever— It's the same strong, very strong instinct. So they have to be collectors, important collectors. But there are also people who buy pictures occasionally, but they are totally uninteresting as collectors. Even collectors like the Sculls or the Tremaines or the Ludwigs or Mr. Gantz or Philip Johnson are extremely rare; and the moments when the real collectors sort of falter and weaken and lose interest and switch to something else—something that's not in your gallery but in another place, a movement that they get more interested in—then life becomes very dull in the gallery if there are not a few of these committed people around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Interesting, because so many people talk about investing in art today, buying pictures.

LEO CASTELLI: The people I mean just don't give a damn about that. They don't care. They are very happy afterwards if the prices go up. Then their action was confirmed. But the moment when they are buying, they don't give a damn if it is up or down. They are buying just because they think it's the thing, the good thing, the important thing. I think the consideration there is a real historical sense that they have of what is important, and they want to get that. Certainly one of the basic motives, if you wish, is they want to get at it. They want to help choose the important. The money consideration in a real collector just doesn't exist. To be proven right when the prices go up, that is an immense satisfaction. They take advantage, also, of the fact that these prices had gone up; and then, when they give these things and get good tax deductions, it is very satisfactory. It pleases them very much. But it's actually a secondary consideration. I think the main consideration, one of the main considerations, is that they want to have a great collection of which people will say, look here, these are the people who really understood what was going on and had selected, invariably, the right paintings. It's a cultural prestige that they want more than anything else.

It's also what they discover very rapidly, the social prestige attached to it. After all, you may consider this as not entirely disinterested motive; but it's really a good motive, actually. Those people then got up on the social ladder, and their contribution then is an important one because they then begin to dally with the people who have absolutely no interest in these higher things. And they do exert a certain influence, a very important influence, on their environment of rich people, with whom they begin to consort because of their collecting, they get involved, say, with higher-ups in the museums through them with the whole elite group; or they may have, in that big group, people who are really very interested in cultural things. But then they probably would be very reluctant to admit that the Rauschenbergs, the Johns, and the new painters are of any value. The Sculls then, who are

the upstarts, actually will, as they go up the social ladder and consort with those people, influence them in accepting the avant-garde. So they play an important role.

In spite of the fact you may think it is mainly that they do it for reasons of self-aggrandizement and to fulfill their social standing, all this has complicated motives, social motives. This is how society is, after all, alive and kicking. If everybody did everything only for pure unselfish reasons, it would be a boring world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Very dull, that's true.

LEO CASTELLI: So there is this very lively contribution that these people, who begin modestly but with pure enthusiasm to collect— The Sculls are really the most classic example.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that collectors like that change? The first few years they were collecting things here, the artists weren't as famous, and the Sculls weren't as well known. Do you find that after five or six years there's a great and obvious change?

LEO CASTELLI: Very incredible changes in attitude toward the thing. When I started this gallery not so long ago (only 14 years), people had begun to dig the abstract expressionists. I mean the museums had begun to buy Pollocks and Rothkos and Klines and de Koonings. That had just started. Before that, there were a few mad people who would buy those American paintings and American sculptures, and I would say when I started the gallery already the Abstract Expressionist had become well-known, desirable. It's about that time in the middle of the '50, I would say, not before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting because one thinks of Scull as a collector from this gallery more than anything else.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, no. The Sculls started out before knowing me. They started buying really, with great enthusiasm, Klines, de Koonings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: He had French paintings, some French paintings. It was Heller I forgot to mention and who I had known for many years before the gallery. He, as you know, is a great collector of Pollock and Kline and Rothko, and he never really caught on to the stuff in the gallery. That was about the end of Heller's collecting of art.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: It is the 4th of June, 1971, and if we could just go into the idea of collectors, art buyers, and various accumulators and then go into specific collectors again—

LEO CASTELLI: Why do collectors—?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do they do what they do.?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I suppose it is a basic human trait. Quite young we start collecting already— And I don't think well the example, of course, of our elders is there. But we start so early. My child, for instance, at the age of six was collecting pocket knives. He had really literally dozens of them, and he was certainly not inspired by the collection of paintings. I couldn't see any relationship between his collecting knives and our collecting paintings. But also gathering probably is—. It seems to have to do perhaps with gathering and putting away food for the lean years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Don't you think there's a difference (or maybe there isn't) between a person who collects tool objects from somebody who collects very expensive things? Or is the economic situation the only quality?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, there are other factors there that play a very important role. It's not just pure gathering like a hamster.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: Also, my little boy collecting his pocket knives already goes up a degree higher than just the pure gathering of a hamster. Now being involved with high cultural

values. It's not everybody's interest, of course. Wealthy people or people with a good cultural background, say literary, who really don't care about possessions of this kind or being surrounded at least in their own homes are satisfied with looking at them in museums or other people's houses. There is some kind of psychological need that is probably felt there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When people start coming to the gallery, does it take a long time to figure out if somebody is going to be a major collector rather than an occasional buyer?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it is easy to spot the collector with a capital C; because they go at it with a fantastic, certain violence. You can see them really shining with desire, the eyes shining with desire. When you must have something, there is a real deep stress when somebody else other than themselves as I told you when we were discussing the feud between the Tremaines and the Sculls. A tremendous distress occurs when the Tremaines get something that the Sculls wanted very badly. But again, there are some really very primitive impulses there because one case for instance the Sculls had first pick, whatever it was, in a Jasper Johns group of paintings that I was going to show, and they made a choice. Then, the Tremaines had second pick and they choose a painting which the Sculls had hesitated on and not taken. So well there all kinds of human passions at play there. Imagine, since the stakes are high and the passions are high.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do collectors' interests change when, for example, the artist they get interested in and buying his work becomes more famous, more sought after, and the prices go up?

LEO CASTELLI: There are all kinds of factors that do actually modify a collector's approach.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do enthusiasms increase, or is that not even relevant today?

LEO CASTELLI: Sometimes there is the financial angle that certainly provokes the change. Now, a man like Scull who never could afford to spend too much money though he prides himself on getting those works when they were still relatively unknown, because one of his joys too is to be proven right and to have picked those things when they were not consensus prejudiced. So that certainly is a factor.

But then the monetary factor plays a role because, obviously, if those people that picked right artists and who have acquired more prestige and whose prices have been gone up due to his activities, he has been partly responsible the cause of the prices of Jasper Johns and Andy Warhols going up, but when they do go up he can't afford them anymore. Then there is a double motivation of not being able to afford them and also of again saying, "Well, I discovered those. I've gotten a good number of them, the masterpieces of the early period. I am no longer interested in what these people are doing now. Their time has passed. New talents have come up, and I'm going to devote my energy to new talents." And so he goes from one movement to another, but still goes on buying from the younger people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There are collectors who don't really buy until it has been approved, too.

LEO CASTELLI: Of course. Yeah. There is sort of a roster of artists who are approved, and this roster comes up again and again when an important show takes place say abroad or on the occasion of opening of a new museum like the one in Pasadena two years ago. Then, you see exactly what the roster is. And again, I myself, and a few other people—gallerists, critics, collectors—do contribute to the roster being what it is. There are in a curious way on this roster about 20 painters, let's say, if you take the American movement starting with Abstract Expressionism. There are two or three, maybe, doubtful ones; and those two or three are a constant.

Let's take one almost perfect show that Leering did in the Eindhoven Museum. You take first the Abstract Expressionists; and usually a show like that begins with Gorky, Pollock, de Kooning, Kline, Still, Rothko, Newman. There are seven, and these are the big seven of Abstract Expressionists. There are actually six with Gorky as the forefather.

Then you have a transition; and you have Rauschenberg, Johns (they're in every show). Then you have the Color Field. First you have Louis, Noland, and disputed Olitski was, for instance, not included; and people like Alan Solomon, who are always instrumental in creating or revising the roster constantly, would also eliminate Olitski. There is another group who, of course— And I myself would include Olitski. So there is these three. Then we have Stella,

who stands a little bit alone.

Then you have the Pop group. With the Pop group the ones who are musts are usually Oldenburg, Lichtenstein, Warhol; and sometimes Rosenquist is added. But not always. He's also a doubtful one. So we have two doubtfuls so far. After that, we arrive here as far as Judd and Morris. There these safe bets stop.

But that's what people do buy by common consent. All the rest is just mere decoration. It's not considered as being on the high level. For instance, if you take Abstract Expressionism, Gottlieb is not considered one who belongs to the august group of the big six or seven. Johns and Rauschenberg are undisputed. They form a transition and there is nobody to compete with them.

Although he had—No Dine came a little later. The really important work of Rauschenberg and Johns, which was very influential, occurred; and, after all, Dine and the Pop artists owe a lot to Rauschenberg, Johns, and Abstract Expressionism. Dine, for instance, and also Oldenburg are the product of both trends—both Johns, Rauschenberg, and Abstract Expressionism as Johns and Rauschenberg are also, highly influenced by Abstract Expressionism in the formal approach to art. So then certainly Segal is not considered belonging to the group nor is Indiana [inaudible] nor is Wesselmann, who is hardly ever included in the Pop group of this type. After that of the Color Field, again well you have Helen Frankenthaler who is a doubtful one—even more doubtful than Olitski in spite of all the drumming up of the Greenberg group.

Then when it gets to so-called Minimalist sculptors, they're up to something entirely different: Morris and Judd. There are absolutely no rivals there. Although I haven't mentioned one sculptor that belongs everywhere, and that is David Smith. Tony Smith again is not considered or was not maybe he can get there. He just came up fairly recently with important sculpture, I think. He didn't make any sculpture for a long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wasn't he being an architect?

LEO CASTELLI: He was being an architect, yes. So these are the accepted artists, and then all the museums in the country have to have them. One wonders why people buy anything else, because it's just such a fixed idea that reigns that by common consent these are the important artists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find that, an artist is more and more not accepted or sought after by museums, individual collectors become equally as interested?

LEO CASTELLI: Usually the collectors, I mean the important collectors, take precedence over the museum. They are really the indicators—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The first ones. The Sculls. The Tremaines.

LEO CASTELLI: They started it and always preceded the museum choices. The museums actually have not been in my memory terribly daring—

PAUL CUMMINGS: In acquisitions.

LEO CASTELLI: In acquisitions. They've done pretty well. Not the Modern though, because the older generation caught up slowly to the new trends. They were so involved for so many years with the European movements. It was difficult then to switch to American painting and understand that it had become very important. The Modern was the one, the museum that got to understand these new movements later than the museums with lesser traditions like the Whitney or the Guggenheim.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well do collectors have not much influence on an artist? For example, if an artist is working away and all of a sudden a dealer finds three or four people who become very interested in him, will that have an influence on him?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, generally speaking, he won't have any influence on his work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: As far as giving money to do things and maybe using better materials?

LEO CASTELLI: He will, in the beginning, be very helpful—like Scull was helpful in the beginning. He helped start people artists like Chamberlain a great deal, also Morris and

many others. But it's a two-edged sword, because then those artists feel after a while that they've become too dependent on it and on that particular collector and don't want to go along anymore. Sometimes there's a struggle. Scull tended to want to own Jasper Johns too much as a person, as an artist, and wanted to have too much of his work. Jasper after a while revolted. He didn't want all his work to be in Scull's collection. He wanted to get around somewhere else. So there is that conflict that occurs. I think that the influence of a collector on the artist is of relatively brief duration. It has to be a very rapidly revulsion that occurs on the part of the artist. But they are, some of them like Scull, have been very, very helpful in the beginning; and they do complain that artists are very ungrateful, not really being able to see what makes them that way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do many collectors want to become involved with the artist in any way or do they not after a while?

LEO CASTELLI: Generally speaking they like to become involved with the artist—I mean the good collectors. The others—oh well some—some who would like to get to know the artist, but it's just a matter having met a celebrity. It's not that they are really interested in artists, art. There are a lot of collectors who like to be involved in the art world, per se, not only with any particular artist. But certainly they like to be around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Go to the parties.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, to know firsthand what makes the artist tick. Any good collectors would do that, and good opportunities are provided by the openings, numerous openings. They are, I think, of great importance to the art world because artists and collectors and the museum directors and the critics constantly through the year meet there practically every week. There are more solemn occasions like a good opening at the Modern, at the Whitney or the Guggenheim where there is really a more festive reunion that occurs. This certainly is a very important thing to keep the art world together and for the participants in it to see each other again and again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's a social kind of interplay that is important.

LEO CASTELLI: It is very, very important.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about collectors who don't live in New York where artists are accessible if they live in Kansas City or Chicago?

LEO CASTELLI: Obviously, those collectors are out of luck. They haven't got the contacts. This is what makes New York such an important art capital, because there is this constant rubbing of elbows, this constant contact with all the artists, all participants in the galleries. And that is what makes every other center—good as it may be—like Minneapolis.

There's an exception. They make an exception, for example, of Los Angeles. That is a situation rather similar to New York on a smaller scale. But for the others, obviously, there are no important artists. [inaudible] So you have obviously, a hopelessly provincial situation. There are lots of important collectors, let's take—or dealers for that matter who really run a good gallery, like say Felice Wender Dayton's or Joe Helman in St. Louis who really try to have the contact with the New York art world and with the artist themselves. The collectors, museum directors as much as they can therefore, they go beyond provincialism. They're also visited by foreign dealers, foreign collectors, so that there is at least some—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's really quite new isn't it? Those galleries are not more than three years old.

LEO CASTELLI: Those galleries, except again for California—.The whole thing that galleries were such an important status earlier except for California— Galleries in St. Louis, Minneapolis, and Kansas City are just small, provincial non-entities. But they have developed, because of Helman and because of Felice Wender has really important international galleries. That's had constant contact with California, and with New York, with the other cities in the middle west, with European collectors and dealers who pass through there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find that this has allowed the collector to shop around if he's interested in somebody? He can look into all these galleries and by telephone or getting catalogues through the mail or—

LEO CASTELLI: The provincial galleries? Well, a gallery like, let's say again, especially Dayton's has issues publishes important catalogues that are diffused everywhere, every collector gets— She has, for instance, at one point — She had, at one point, a show of almost all of Jasper's prints which means more than 100 prints which were all for sale—a unique collection of the early prints of Johns that were for sale actually. So that, of course, was an event of almost worldwide importance. She would get probably phone calls, telegrams from all over the world about certain prints, rare prints. A tremendous sale. If, for instance, some little hole in Switzerland that has an important auction house and issues one of those fair catalogues, then, of course—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody comes.

LEO CASTELLI: Everybody writes or comes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: We've wandered away again from our specific collectors, but what about the person who buys pictures or drawings or paintings occasionally?

LEO CASTELLI: Those are really the most frequent ones. The great collectors, the important collectors, are exceedingly rare. One can really number them on the fingers of one hand. I don't need even two hands. There are some budding collectors that come up suddenly; and you have high hopes that here is one that will develop as a collector, one who has that perfect collection and also be daring enough to buy the younger people, say Longo or Serra or Sonnier. Sometimes the hopes don't last very long and sometimes something develops. But the other ones. Who the hell are they? They must exist because—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who do you consider the major collectors besides Scull and the Tremaines?

LEO CASTELLI: There aren't any more around, that kind of thing, in New York.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. There are some Europeans that have been—

LEO CASTELLI: There is Ludwig who is a major collector. He's the only one of that caliber, even greater caliber than the Sculls or Tremaines. He's probably the most important collector of that type that buys really important paintings that I have come across. He has more buying power than Scull or the Tremaines ever had, or at least he uses more money. Maybe they have just as much as he has but they don't wish to use that much, at least for paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how much can you do with someone in developing them as a collector?

LEO CASTELLI: You can't do much really except discuss these things with them, because you are just as interested in all this as they are. They're interested, you're interested, and you talk about these things as interested persons. They come to you for advice. They all want the very best. Nobody would want to buy a secondary painting. There are some collectors for whom a Stella or a Rauschenberg or a Johns is already a sufficient thing of itself. But the good collector (and sometimes not so-good one) will want to have the masterpieces. Well, it's also natural because, after all, in the case of Johns, for instance, they have invested as much as 60, 70, 80, 100 thousand dollars. So they really want to be assured that they got the best for all that money. Then they would ask me, "Well, is it really the best?" Sometimes I say it is really great, a great painting, an important painting you respect it for other factors. In many cases, I say, "Well, it's a good painting, a very good painting, and it's the only one as far as I know that's available in that class. Of course, there are better paintings of Johns than maybe this one; it's not the absolute best in painting."

PAUL CUMMINGS: How much does the social side of, or the public social side say, lending paintings to museum exhibitions or—

LEO CASTELLI: Collectors like Scull or the Tremaines or others are very proud of having been in an important show. Their name appears. It also shows the others, people who are not familiar with what they're doing, that they own many important Stellas, many important this, that, and the other. Then, after a while, they get blasé about that. They don't want to lend anymore because they don't want to be deprived of their paintings and often they come back damaged. Soon this kind of joy of lending paintings blows over.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are there people who—to use Russell Lyne's sort of things, *The Tastemakers*?—are there museum directors or curators or critics or writers who have influence with collectors? Or are they fairly independent and rely more on the dealers?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, of course, everybody contributes. Whatever happens in *Artforum*, it seems to be a very important tastemaking magazine now. Now *ARTnews* for some reason is not and has never been of its quality—or *Arts* for that matter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wasn't *ARTnews* though at one point during the Abstract Expressionist time?

LEO CASTELLI: Earlier perhaps. I was rash in saying that they never were. They were at that time because Tom Hess was a real enthusiastic sponsor of Pollock, de Kooning, and Kline, and those people at that moment. Yes, he functioned,—he acted as a tastemaker but now no longer, in spite of the fact that there are very good articles written about various people. One recent example, let's say Betsy Baker's article on Roy's murals was a very good article. *Arts* has very good articles occasionally (*Arts* magazine), and still it's not a tastemaking magazine. Those articles happen to be there. They may come in handy one day, but the moment when they appear they have no particular influence. People don't say "Ah! Here there is an article, Betsy Baker's on Roy's murals." But that seems to be the thing. But there is a certain influence of *Artforum*. Whatever *Artforum* touches seems to be the product of one mind—Phil Leider's mind, Therefore, he being a real tastemaker, whatever appears in this magazine has importance. It's a very curious thing. Even if it's written by Pincus Witten, just the fact, since it's much more selective than the others, the fact that certain artists are constantly mentioned, published in this magazine like Stella—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or Bob Morris in a series of articles.

LEO CASTELLI: Jasper Johns and Morris, etc., etc. Those seem to be the more important artists because—or Serra because it has so been decreed or Nauman for instance has been made a great case out there. So decreed by [inaudible] Phil Leider. Now that he will leave the magazine, maybe the magazine will not play the authority anymore. I think, in fact, that it won't. John Coplans won't have the same authority that Phil Leider has had. Impossible to have it. Authority like that is just wielded with very few people. Clem Greenberg wields it and does Phil Leider did it. So actually the two popes at least in the magazines—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting because you know Phil Leider is never really around on the scene.

LEO CASTELLI: No. That's why I mentioned him [inaudible]. It's a very eminent. Those two have been the most influential, let's say, writers, critics, editors. Well, Clem isn't but I mean they're in the same category of important writers or speakers about art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But Greenberg was, I think—his writing established him, didn't it, as a—

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. He came to the rescue at one point when really his approach had been completely set aside by the fantastic, violent emergence of Pop art dominated the field for at least the first five years of the '60s and then he came to the rescue and, as a matter of fact, he won considerable victories proposing his group of painters quite a few collectors switched from their allegiance to Pop art, Minimal art. Jasper Johns—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Alan Solomon had tremendous influence, didn't he, when he was at the Jewish Museum?

LEO CASTELLI: I know Solomon was very, very influential up to the point when he left the Jewish Museum. And he still did a great job that he continued if not his influence that he continued at least keeping up whatever he had built with his Venice Biennale was probably the best work that he did. It was even better, better structured, than just a mere one-man show of Jasper Johns or Rauschenberg. Probably his masterpiece was the Venice Biennale show in every respect. There, he reached his peak. That was in 1964 after he left the Jewish Museum. Then he still did a considerable job with Expo '67 in Montreal. That was also a considerable job. But again it was more out of the way things. Then he organized that show, the Pasadena show, and that was in '68. But that was already perhaps something to be taken for granted. It was just a repetition of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, does a large public manifestation like that bring people into the

gallery who haven't been there before. Does it bring collectors who say, "Gee, I've been looking at him for years and now I've decided?"

LEO CASTELLI: It's really not terribly noticeable. They may come in; they may drift in. That's why I find it in bad taste and perhaps not even useful to show one of the artists and make a special pitch in all the magazines: "Andy Warhol represented by Leo Castelli." I don't think it's any particular news. These things are of much slower maturation. They happen, of course. They happen—it's very important, but they do not—. I would say that it's an accumulation of things. I think it doesn't happen that because there was a great Jasper Johns show at one point in the museum that suddenly people will flock here to the gallery and say, "Would you have a Jasper Johns?"

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do the collectors influence beginning collectors? Say established collectors somebody like Robert Scull will have friends who would look at his art and say—

LEO CASTELLI: Well, this is a very interesting thing. They usually have a slight influence, but a great collector like Scull will not produce an immediate other great collector. It's like the sons of a great man usually turn out to be fairly mediocre people, or at least the company that they keep. They will not influence directly anybody who can say, "Here is a creature of Scull's." Again, there'll be a great influence, but it will build up slowly and somebody will become a collector probably because of Scull, because of Phil Leider, because of Greenberg. But there will be. I would say—It won't be a coup de foudre. It will be a slow accretion. But there is a doubt in my mind whether collecting as it used to be will continue in the same way. I don't think so. Conditions have changed enormously.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because of the way the artists are working.

LEO CASTELLI: The way that the artists are working. There seems to be a change of approach there. It seems to be a little bit old-fashioned to buy paintings to put on the wall. Somehow I have a feeling about it now. To me it seems old-fashioned and, therefore, I think, since one is a good weather vane, that that feeling must be shared by quite a few people who perhaps ten years ago would have enthusiastically started collecting and put together great collections. It seems it's quite an antiquated activity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what do you see as the future then?

LEO CASTELLI: It will be replaced by some other approach. I think museums should become much more active, rather than individuals. Maybe, but again that's an old-fashioned approach. Corporations probably will fill their corporate buildings with better art than they used to. Again, that would be just transferring it from one building to another. They would do it in the old-fashioned way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There are so many of the younger artists that are making things that are difficult to display.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, they are impossible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the traditional way.

LEO CASTELLI: It's very interesting; but, after all, you can't expect people to buy things like that or to display them. A man like Serra has produced, in the last two years, pieces that are so heavy, so cumbersome, so difficult to install except for the Guggenheim and out in California and Minneapolis— Well, still we managed to set up three pieces. You know that it costs something like \$1,000 to set up a piece like that of Serra's it takes some type of equipment. So still in spite of that, there are three pieces: one is here; one in Minneapolis now for the Walker; and one in Pasadena for the *Art and Technology* show. So that's three, miraculously, three pieces. I think there are five altogether, and three out of those five are set up. As a matter of fact, there is a project of showing all the five or four of them at the Metropolitan. So, you see that there is a will there to do the impossible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When something is so complicated and expensive, where does the patronage come from?

LEO CASTELLI: It comes unfortunately from the galleries, which is suffering from a tremendous burden. Well, not for instance, the piece in California that, thank God, was financed by Kaiser Steel that was in connection with the *Art and Technology* show. The ones

—the three that we made here, the Guggenheim, the Walker Art Center and another one, were financed by me and Helman jointly. We have spent \$20,000 on making those four pieces; and, besides that, we do continue to give some subsistence to Serra. So it's a costly operation. For the moment, those things are [inaudible] financed by concerns like galleries that are financially [inaudible] by all calculations don't have the financial capacity [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: The money gets tied up like that. If something is so expensive to set up, you know one doesn't want to buy it and move it around the country frequently.

LEO CASTELLI: Now they need one in Boston. Well, the museums or various enterprises do pay for installation and transportation and things like that; but there is the initial manufacture is very expensive. You have to make them. If you don't make them, you can't show them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

LEO CASTELLI: So, we are in trouble there. There's very little marketable material.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, wasn't Scull interested for a while in some of the earthworks things?

LEO CASTELLI: He did finance some of the earthworks, yes. Again, he did that because it is his idea that he wants to go on being involved in every possible thing that occurs in the field of art. So he does it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find that there are collectors who kind of get filled up, in some ways, in their houses?

LEO CASTELLI: They also have been filling up. There are many more angles there than just what we have begun to examine. Of course, they do get filled up. But then, in the case of a Scull as well as in many others, it doesn't really matter. They keep those paintings in a warehouse. For instance, Scull has certainly dozens and dozens of paintings [inaudible] in his apartment. Maybe there is also a certain fatigue that sets in living ten years with all these paintings and changing them around as well. Perhaps you'd just like to stare at blank walls again after a while.

There is a lifespan to practically everything that a human being undertakes. There is a lifespan of an artist. His greatest energy, creative energy, probably lasts about ten years or not much more, but ten years seems to be quite a long time. The collector probably has a span of that kind too, unless he's been institutionalizes his activity. I mean, then it could go on forever.

For instance, to give you an example, the Tremaines have gotten [inaudible] they hadn't been terribly active for a few years, and then suddenly their energy was revived by the project that they have to leave their collection to the National Gallery in Washington. They, therefore, want now to perfect it: to eliminate certain things; to balance it out. That has produced new energy. They find something different in painting and look at it in a different way. I think that they were a little bit tired after so many years of collecting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very exhausting to really keep track of everything and think about it.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: This is the 9th of January, 1973. Paul Cummings talking to Leo Castelli. How did it come that you started the gallery on West 107th Street?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it was 108th Street, 103 West 108th Street. How come did I started it? I really didn't start it at all as a gallery. It was supposed to be a warehouse. But then the space was so marvelous that, of course, it was irresistible not do show in there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was it to do exhibitions up there? Did you always have to take people up there or they went themselves?

LEO CASTELLI: It was really very impractical. People really didn't like to go up there. As long as you could get a cab here in this section and go up there, it was fine. In effect, it was easier to go up there than to go to the new downtown place, as far as the location is concerned. I defy anyone to hire a cab up there. But then, to hire a cab up there was a

difficult problem. It also was a very tough neighborhood. So, maybe Saturday visitors, when they thought there were more people around, felt encouraged to go in spite of the inconvenience and the dangers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did the artists like having shows up there?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, this was a gallery actually for pioneering types. Those artists that were pioneering like this group here that I showed, like Serra, who began to show there for the first time and who could not have been shown in this gallery here—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Some of the things were quite large and heavy.

LEO CASTELLI: They were large and heavy; and it was a marvelous, marvelous— It was a former garage; and we had a marvelous elevator there, which could carry up anything heavy and large. There was this messy piece of Morris', for instance, that would have been impossible for anywhere except in a place with concrete floor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And lots and lots of open space.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, lots of space. Well then, in many cases, like in Chamberlain's case, of course, he wants to show lots of these sculptures to begin with; and we couldn't schedule it for the downtown place. So, rather than not do it, we did it up here and, of course, as you know, Chamberlain is a vanguard-type and remains so; and he didn't mind at all being up there instead of being in a little gallery downtown. As far as Scarpitta's automobiles are concerned, of course, they couldn't be shown anywhere; and this was very easy because of the elevator. He showed them, as you remember, up here but that had been a fantastic enterprise.

By the way, I see here that we had other shows that lasted a little longer. We had this show. This seems to be '69, isn't it? This show actually was done as a favor to Ivan, because there were some of the painters that he wanted to show. This was at the time when he began his new gallery, or rather following.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the title of that exhibition?

LEO CASTELLI: It was called *Four Painters for Spring*. They were actually painters that Ivan had chosen, not I, and that he then also showed downtown. I see here that we went on with the warehouse until we began the new gallery downtown. There was a Ron Davis show up there. It was a double show. I think we had it uptown and downtown, too. Oh, then there was Serra's show there—first one-man show of Serra's. Those dangerous pieces that collapsed in —

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right. Were there a lot of problems with those, installing them?

LEO CASTELLI: Not so much installing them, that Serra took care of. But then the person we sold them to after a while saw that they were not usable because they would collapse.

Then there was a show of Raphael Ferrer and then there was this marvelous Sonnier show that I had there. Whatever happened uptown, it was quite a pioneering thing. Slides were taken when the show was on, and they were done here. All we had in the main room were slides of whatever got done. It was a good show. Then we had a Johns show. That was the last one, I guess, of the season—again with certain enormous pieces that would have been difficult to show. That was already in— That was the end of the season in 1970 when we began with the new place probably.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did that inspire the idea of getting a large space someplace else?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, again, we had that need. Actually the reason why we gave that gallery up— We could have gone on in spite of the dissatisfaction with certain aspects of it, especially since it was our warehouse after all and it had lots of conveniences—the big elevator and all that and it was very vast. We could store practically anything there. It had so many advantages that I would have probably kept it for quite a while longer if we had not been evicted.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's right. It's going to be torn down and something was going to be built there.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, it was going to be torn down. Actually the place was expropriated by the city for lower income housing projects, so that sort of pushed us to make the decision to find another place. Then, by that time, Ivan had established himself quite successfully downtown; and there was a traffic going there. It was farther away than the uptown place, but it had the advantage of having a few established galleries there. There was Ivan; Paula Cooper, who has been there for a long time; and other galleries were coming up. I think that Max Hutchinson was coming up already at that time. Well, anyway, when it came to picking a new place, we actually had been very pleased to have movers in the building where we were operating.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Hague.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. So, actually, with Hague we started looking at other places. At that time also, rents were up enormous midtown. I remember being horrified at the rent that Larry Rubin was paying in midtown in the new building there on 57th Street and the corner of Sixth. They were going up and up. Emmerich also. Emmerich's rent was still fairly low there in the Fuller Building, but he feels that in a few years that will go up. There was that moment of euphoria among the real estate people. It seemed like the sky was the limit. And also here. Suddenly, after paying a relatively modest rent for many, many years, those people felt that my rent was too low; and I had to renegotiate my lease. There was a fantastic increase of rent. So I felt very insecure about this whole thing. I felt if it goes on that way we won't be able to operate up here anymore, and we had to find a place less expensive and downtown. I don't remember exactly what the figures are, but the square foot was less than \$2 downtown as compared to \$15 midtown. I think it was fifteen, perhaps it was even more. So we felt that if this trend continued we would soon not be able to operate because of excessively high rents.

So there were all these factors. Then Emmerich, of course, wanted a warehouse and a gallery downtown. Apart from the conservation of rent, he wanted to find a place where he could, in case of necessity, put his paintings and his gallery without spending enormously high amounts of money. So we got him and Hague and then we went downtown looking for a building or something.

We found a very beautiful building that used to be a paper mill, dates back to the 1870s. It's half cast iron. I mean, just the third floor is in cast iron. So we then decided really to redo it in a very serious way, redoing all the electricity and plumbing and everything and have a really good, good place. It was really someplace that was different. Each gallery—

Well, we had two galleries. Hague occupied the ground floor, as you know. I picked the second and Emmerich picked the last floor. He liked the idea of the skylight, the natural light there. Then we had two floors available for rent for Sonnabend and Weber, our tenants. They do help. It helps us to pay our taxes and things. It's a good formula. Each gallery owner did then what he pleased with his own floor. I did it one way, Emmerich another, and so on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, didn't the increasing size of the artists' work sort of push one towards this need?

LEO CASTELLI: The artists push us? No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: ...because their works became larger and larger and heavier?

LEO CASTELLI: No. Actually, this gallery that I have on the second floor with poor access or not brilliant access for large works— It's not ideal. I should really have taken a gallery on the ground floor like Nancy Hoffman has now, the new one just opposite. You've seen that gallery?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Because now it turns out that I can't show really some of my most important artists like Serra or Judd with large pieces in the gallery, because we just can't bring them up. Even for Stella, it's sort of difficult to bring them in. We devised a slit from the Hague floor, which has a very high ceiling, to the upper floor; but still we can't bring up anything that's larger than say nine feet square. When it came to bringing in a piece of Judd's that I wanted to show now in the next show, it was so enormously expensive to bring it up to the second floor that we decided to show it at the Whitney where it was pretty expensive, too, to show on the ground floor.

But then, there were all these factors that sort of are instrumental in deciding. But I'm very happy about it. It might have turned out that it was not really very interesting but at least a warehouse and showroom. But then, it became much more. It became a real gallery. The whole area, you know, has become the New York scene. It no longer was up here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It changed so radically down there.

LEO CASTELLI: It's constant movement on Saturdays down there, a real joy. Here, except for a Stella opening when you have a crowd again, there are very few people who come; and there is no real enthusiasm.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how do you find it down there now that there are so many more galleries, restaurants, shops, and all the other little attributes which seem to be springing up.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It has developed, I think, in the last couple of years—a little community quality.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. It has a real community quality, but it's only beginning. It will be more and more. You see that already this year. Two really large galleries have sprung up right in front of us, apart from the small shops and things like that which introduce a gay note, and a little gallery where they sell quilts and things like that. So I think it will develop more and more. There'll be more little coffee shops and whatnot to serve this community.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How'd you find the collectors in the first year down there? Were they going down there?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, the collectors who look for things tend to come here, like Dr. Ludwig from Germany or other people who come from California or from St. Louis, for instance. They come to town. They want to see what is there of Jasper Johns or of Lichtenstein or Rauschenberg or whoever, Serra, Nauman, and so on. They know that the work is downtown, not uptown. What's uptown is only—they've gone out, little by little—what you have on the wall. There is no space to keep anything here. So they do go downtown; they don't care. To see a few paintings, they'll go to the North Pole. This is not the North Pole. On the contrary, they can go to lots of galleries. It's well worth the trip. After all, there are so many galleries to see in the same building. There are four. Then, there are all the others. So, no problem. Everybody goes down there. Nobody ever said, "Oh, it's too far; I don't go."

There are some people—you know, hangers-on who live uptown—who go down more rarely, of course. They regret the good old times when they could, on a Saturday afternoon, run around Madison from 57th to 79th and see everything in a small, compact—now they have to make an effort.

But the most important thing is the local crowd there. It's always around. They can begin a very clubby kind of atmosphere there. People go to the galleries and stay there—sit there and chat and meet other people, especially the young people. They're all terribly happy that that kind of thing exists down there

PAUL CUMMINGS: How much of your time do you spend there now?

LEO CASTELLI: It's difficult to say. My administration is up here, uselessly sort of, because what I do up here I can do just as well down there with Barbara. After all, we are really mobile. We have things in our hands and all we need is a phone book or rather our files, phone files, and a few folders where we have the things that we have to attend to. We could do it here or there just exactly in the same way, so that we have some duplication because of the two galleries.

One's now a little too displaced, so that maybe I'll give this gallery uptown a different character. I'll use it for good print shows and drawings, small things, drawings especially, that you can then keep around, too. I mean, you have small work, and there is enough storage space to store 50 drawings or so. So you can always put new things on the wall. You can produce drawings, but you can't produce more than three or four paintings. So paintings, if they're up here for whatever reason, for a show—just as soon as the show is over, they go down again. All these Stellas, for instance— I certainly won't keep any of them

up here. They'll all go downtown so that people can see them after the show is over.

This year I have a very heavy schedule here uptown, too—the major ones being Stella and Lichtenstein (the new still lifes) and Kelly. These are the three major ones here. It's Still and Stella now. There are four major shows here. Next year I think I'll try to convince everybody—Well, there are some people who still hang onto—Stella, for instance, likes the space better than the space downtown. He likes the fact that it's square that he doesn't have to put so many paintings in one row. So, he just said "I like this better."

But now what happens is that I'm in poor shape for the major sculptors. I was recently in Los Angeles, and Douglas Christmas has a gallery there in Venice. (It's in the suburbs of L.A.) He has a gallery which used to be Bob Irwin's studio, and it's really my envy. It's a marvelous rectangle, perfect rectangle, about 45 by 30 feet, with no windows or anything, just skylights. Well, there is a glass facade, but you don't see into the gallery. There is a wall. There is just space there where the secretary and other people work, and then you have to go through a corridor to get into the main gallery. So the artist is in a perfectly isolated space with no communication with the outside except the skylights. He had a fantastic centerpiece there, which I never could show anywhere.

So, I got very jealous and I began sort of toying with the idea of having a big space downtown. You can still get them fairly inexpensively and use it for large sculpture. I could pay for it just by giving up my first floor, which becomes useless if we transfer the graphics up here. So that would pay for a new space downtown which I would keep very simple. Of course, there would have to be somebody there, but it has to be studied.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'm curious because an artist who's with a gallery down there—they moved into a larger space, and he said it was really interesting because it was a challenge to him to kind of fill up the space. Do you find that the artists are making larger things to go into those larger rooms?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, not really. Older artists like Lichtenstein or Rosenquist have acquired habits, or Jasper or Rauschenberg, of doing things the way they do. For instance, Rosenquist obviously has always done monumental pieces right from the beginning, space or no space. Now, if the space is say 1,000 square feet larger, he'll fill those, too. He's been in the habit of doing those billboards, so it won't change that. Now, Lichtenstein has his form. There will always be pieces of various sizes and then some very large piece as the cornerstone of the show. That's what he does. Jasper Johns has always done certain larger paintings and then, generally speaking, smaller ones. Rauschenberg has done what he's done.

No, all these people won't be encouraged to do (the older people) to do anything specifically larger. People like Judd and Morris have always had the ambition of doing as large a piece as possible, as difficult to store as possible, in any kind of space, even out in the field. Serra has the same tendency to make things as difficult as he can size-wise and weight-wise. No, I don't think that—Of course, there will—...not in my gallery uptown because, again, we have difficulties of moving the things up there. They just like the space, and they show whatever they show exactly as if it were for this gallery. There's no distinction really in what they're doing.

Of course, the dream of Serra and Morris and Judd is of immense fields. In fact, Serra actually carries out his intentions; since he's done, now recently in Toronto with Roger Davidson, a piece that's three-quarters of a mile long in concrete. It covers the contour of the land up and down, and it's the largest piece of sculpture, I think, in existence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I hadn't heard about that yet. That's fantastic.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he's done a pretty large one at Joe Pulitzer's in St. Louis already, where he occupies something like an acre of land with his sculpture. But now he occupies even more. And then the, well, the great, ambitious projects of Heiser or De Maria are still fresh in our memory where nothing but the mountain or desert is big enough to place some work of theirs into.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, it's interesting because dealing with artists who make things on that scale and that size is very different from somebody who makes drawings. You can say I like it, buy it, and take it home but—

LEO CASTELLI: It's very difficult, believe me. Fortunately, some of them do make things that

bring in a little money. Serra does drawings; he likes to do them. So does Rauschenberg. Others don't do anything that, for the moment, seems to be saleable at all—like Sonnier who does video mixes, say. They come in the form of cassettes or tapes or films or also little stills that he does occasionally, but the people don't consider his works works that they can hang in the home yet. But they'll get to it, I guess.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how do you, you know, what say—

LEO CASTELLI: So, it's not manageable. It means that really, from an economic point-of-view, it's sheer nonsense. A gallery owner, who really wants to go on doing things and not stop, if nobody else does it, it's just to go to extreme lengths to spend the money that he makes on artists who produce sellable things in order to just sink them into that endless pit of the other ones who are unproductive but terribly interesting and, therefore, worthy of support. After all, what we have here are three or four galleries actually (with the help of a few collectors here and there, a little bit from the museums because they do show things of these artists and so give them their stamp of approval) to carry the whole burden, like Atlas on our shoulders, of making it possible for art to advance or to explore, to do things that are costly and that are just commercially absolutely nonsensical.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, what do you do in a case of somebody who decides to make a sculpture that's three-quarters of a mile long?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, there nothing then. We are in touch with those people. Roger Davidson got enthusiastic about Serra's work. I don't know if he saw it maybe in L.A. There was a big piece there on the occasion of or even before maybe he came to New York and saw the show that I had here in the warehouse. And then, Serra, you know, just looks for land to do something; and so Davidson said alright I have some land there in front of my house and you can do there what you like; and he asked Serra what he wants to do. So he said well I want to do something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does he make drawings and plans?

LEO CASTELLI: He makes plans of what he wants to do, and then Davidson tries to find out how much it will cost him. Then, if it's an enormous amount of money, say in this case \$30,000 about, he'll say, "Okay, I'm willing to put it up, but that's about all I want to spend." So then I say, "Okay, do it, especially if you have it there." They want to have it there. Many, many pieces of Serra's have been done this way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting because these are things that you really can't say next year, "Dig it up and move it someplace."

LEO CASTELLI: Of course not; they're fixed.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They live there.

LEO CASTELLI: They live there. There's the Princer piece that lives there. There's a marvelous piece that Judd did for Philip Johnson, a complete piece that lives there and so on. I mean, these are pieces that don't bring any money. Sometimes the artist gets perhaps \$1000 or so because it will help him to pay his rent for a few months.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The construction costs are enormous.

LEO CASTELLI: But the construction is really—the main purpose of these things is they are very happy if they get done, because that really adds to the reputation of the artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what does the collector say to you who subsidizes or finances something like that? He can't sell it or dispose of it.

LEO CASTELLI: He doesn't want to sell it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or exhibit it in any place.

LEO CASTELLI: The collector does it because he loves to do and is pleased to do it. Nobody forces him to do it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: He does it because here he has something in the land that he's pleased with, that he's pleased to look at. It's there and it adds to his prestige as a collector, obviously, to have the biggest sculpture in the world. Sometimes that isn't even a consideration really. There are lots of collectors who are not Sculls, who do everything they do just for their prestige.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, but for their own passion.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Well, Scull has passion, too, but one of his many passions is also his prestige.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, but how do you find—Is it difficult to find people who are willing to do that?

LEO CASTELLI: It's not difficult. It's impossible. I mean, they just occur by some kind of a miracle. You can't count on them. There are two or three who occur like that every so often. For instance, he wants to build an enormous tower on the land of somebody in California called Terry Inch [ph], and there again we are very happy if he just provides the money to build it and then we can photograph it and then it's there. But he probably won't get a penny out of it. But in the case of Serra, he does drawings and they are very much in demand and we manage somehow. He's not very demanding. He's marvelous for the time being.

As soon as they get more money, of course, then they get less modest and, of course, they usually do want more. They get used to more comfort, larger studios, and so on. But, for the moment though, most of these people are very modest; and the only thing they really want is to see the work done.

But for the dealer, it is very expensive; because Serra will go ahead and do all kinds of things. For instance, now he has been sort of monkeying around with a piece for the Whitney; and he finally decided to do a piece, which probably cost me \$1000 in metal for the iron. But what can you do? You have to finance a thing like that, otherwise nothing happens. So, it is really very different.

This is one thing, and the other thing is the whole video film cassette business which, of course, is different. There you spend a lot of money on equipment, on experiment, on creating an organization. But there seems to be some possibility there of really creating something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What were the things that really interested you in the videotape? What was there about the people using those things that appealed to you?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, you know, it's a medium Rauschenberg used; and before him, Duchamp used found objects. This is obviously something in which you can project image or color. It's fleeting but that's the character of our times—that we consider the idea of permanence. If a work of art which survives the centuries disappears— As a matter of fact, during the Renaissance, I understand they had an enormous number of pageants that the artists designed, Leonardo and others, on which a lot of money by the rich was spent and then they disappeared. So, let's consider this whole art world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like the Rose Bowl parades.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. It is pageant, and let's forget what really remains is a document. Now, of course, we are in a better position to keep track of these things that happen. As I do here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, with photographs.

LEO CASTELLI: So, even if the show, whatever it's greatness was, or even the pieces of the show disappear or cannot be used anymore for whatever reason—because they can't be stored, because they are too cumbersome, it would cost more just to store them than just to throw them away— Even if that happens, we have documents. It's like maybe the ballet which is also something on which a lot of money is lavished and which disappears. It is there one evening, and then it disappears. Nobody says it is money thrown out of the window. Or for that matter, something like flowers that people—which is a great industry after all. We import tulips from Holland or flowers from all over, and they are there for a few days. There's a whole apparatus there, a lot of money involved, and then they disappear. So I don't see why art should be, or it is thought of it should be, more permanent than these

other manifestations.

PAUL CUMMINGS: We didn't in the earlier tapes get to talk about people like Nauman—what there was about him that interested you and why you took him into the gallery.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I guess where he got me was his whimsicality. I mean, that was the first element that I detected in him. The first things that I saw were those soft rubber things that didn't impress me very much. They had appeared already in the *Eccentric Abstraction* show of Lucy Lippard's back in '66, I believe. That did not impress me. There I was more impressed by a piece of Serra's that had all those rubber things hanging and neon lights, and it was a good piece. And Eva Hesse I noticed because she did beautiful drawings. That's about the three that I noticed. Serra...the rubber pieces of Nauman's; the soft pieces which didn't make much of an impression and Eva Hesse's very beautiful drawings; and that Serra piece.

Then, the next thing of Nauman's I saw was a little show at Noah Goldowsky that Dick Bellamy had organized, and there what I liked very much about him that really made me perk up was his whimsicality. For instance, there was a piece there that Scull has now—a block of plastic, polyester in which there was the impressions of knees of famous people. You know that one, and he did other things of this kind: the template of a shoulder. Well, that I found very extraordinary, whimsical, very witty. Of course, Dick was looking for somebody for him. Dick always picked up these young artists that he felt had some kind of talent and then tried, of course, to find a home for them. Of course, I did take Bruce with great enthusiasm.

Serra, I don't know how he—. Well, these things are in the air. Suddenly everybody says well there are these artists that are interesting for some reason; and, at that time, the artists that were interesting were Serra, Sonnier, and Nauman. Nauman is the first one that I got, actually. Serra I got a little later. Sonnier, too. Probably the guess that you make at that time (I don't know how it comes) that you guess right—You get them really not at the very, very beginning like Dick Bellamy, who roams around in the studios and all kinds of people like that impress him.

But, why did I take, for instance, Serra rather than another one that he liked very much? David Whitney showed a lot of those other people that Dick or he discovered, and really none of them were successful except those three that I picked up. Now, you may say if I picked one of the others maybe they would have been successful. I don't think so, frankly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is that because the personality of the artist is that important?

LEO CASTELLI: Sometimes I felt full of doubts, actually. I had relatively little doubts about Nauman, because there was an element there that was very familiar to me—like in Jasper Johns earlier. It was a Duchampian element that I took to, that I liked right away.

In Serra, there was a quite obvious enormous strength of personality which impressed me. I felt that was something that would be there whatever he did.

I had really more serious doubts about Sonnier; and he is the one, as a matter of fact, who has not really done too much. He does fantastically interesting things, but he doesn't really quite gel. He's the best man, the only one actually, that does incredible television mixes, uses colored machinery with a fantastic savoir faire and subtlety. But still, there is nothing there that has gelled as much as Nauman, of course. And Serra has gelled. Right away. They're household words now, these two. Now Sonnier really isn't, because probably the other medium that you asked me about in the beginning has not become so evident, a very important medium, although everybody like Serra and Nauman has used it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: More and more and more.

LEO CASTELLI: More people. Well, again there there will be more and more people and most people will not be able— If they are not able to distinguish, say, between de Kooning and another minor Abstract Expressionist, they would say, "Well, it is the same thing. It is a big smearing of the canvas." If they weren't able to distinguish between those (the great ones and the minor ones), they are not able to distinguish between a really good artist that uses that medium and one that just uses it because it comes handy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting because who else have you taken in—Joseph Kosuth?

LEO CASTELLI: Joseph Kosuth was a different matter. There is a theoretician there with a fantastic mind. That's a different shaft of the so-called Conceptual pieces. First of all, there you get to the point where you ask what the hell is going on here after Nauman, after Serra. After all, something new has to happen constantly. Art is a constantly developing affair. So you begin to think unconsciously, not that you sit there and figure out what's going on.

Of course, there is Ivan among others with his pioneering spirit and whimsicality who well quite logically since that was always his preference picks all these campy New Realists. What he likes there is camp. It is not that he thinks that it is supreme art. It is the camp part of it that appealed to him in Lichtenstein, in Andy Warhol, and so on. Well, we know, after all, camp was part of Lichtenstein and part of Warhol; but to me, already in the beginning, it was not the main element. But to Ivan it was actually, so he then moved in that direction. He always looked for that kind of thing. I was not interested in camp, although it amuses me. Camp is not whimsicality. Nauman is not camp.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

LEO CASTELLI: I think, for instance, Ivan probably wouldn't care a bit about Nauman because it lacks the element that he's interested in. So there was that direction which obviously didn't interest me. Then there was the Lyrical Abstraction that was on and on, and I was tempted at one point or another David Whitney and others Nick Wilder and Emmerich especially and Ruben here to think that maybe something good would come out of that. I made some half-hearted attempts to take a painter that was still doing paintings, but obviously my heart is not in it. I tried to just give them a chance, but then after that I feel it doesn't work.

So what was there? Then there was that group of so-called Conceptuals. You had Larry Weiner and you had Huebler and you had Kosuth and you had Barry and you had their European counterparts, very good ones like— Richard Long in England, Henry [inaudible] in England, Dibbets who I am going to show now here.

That leads to something else—how I got to include finally non-American artists in my tent of people—Dibbets, as you see, later on Hanne Darboven from Germany. It seemed to me that here was a movement that was developing very beautifully in Europe. Some of my friends and colleagues like Sperones, whom I have had a close relationship with for a long time— He was the one that introduced Andy Warhol and all those people to Italy in the early times, and now he sort of felt that this was the movement. He felt it. Konrad Fischer, another sort of Dick Bellamy type in Germany, felt the same way. So there were some very bright and sensitive people who felt this was the movement, and it seemed a very convincing to me background whatever visual and other kinds of pleasure they derive from them. There were shows there, important shows that occurred, of those things in Europe, like in Amsterdam. It occurred there already quite early so that you begin to have an idea of who these people were, and it seemed to me it was the only vital movement. You may find it leading nowhere, but at least it was exploring new possibilities where the others were just rehashing old ones.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know one thing that interests me about that and people who use language and words and all those things is that there has been a good decade of activity of that in Europe in the concrete poetry and all those interrelationships.

LEO CASTELLI: But this is slightly different from that. It is really strangely enough— It is difficult to explain why. It is not poetry. It is different.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I wonder why it has been so slow to be picked up here.

LEO CASTELLI: It hasn't been picked up here even in spite of the fact that museums have taken a hand in it. The Whitney quite early has shown these people including Nauman at that time and Barry Le Va and all the good people like that. The Guggenheim had Bells and people involved in all this kind of material. After two solid years (I guess two years) since I started showing Kosuth and a few of these people— After all I had two shows of Huebler's. I hate to even call them two shows now.

The strange thing is that here you can see that perhaps the dealer does exert some influence on or the world at large and on the artist. Perhaps with a dealer as the interpreter for the world at large is the fact that those people who just used to do those little booklets like Weiner in which there were two words to and fro and fro and to and other very simple dicta repeating themselves constantly, they begin to do things that are more visual or

entirely visual. For instance, there is a very good film projected now we'll project the end of the month or beginning of next that Weiner did. It lasts one hour and a half. It is a rambling affair with three actors that just go from one place to the other, who do their thing. But it's quite beautifully done. So he, from doing those things that were non-existent evanescent, has done something that is visually interesting. Also Barry has done those. You see those projected words instead of hanging a sheet with eighty words or so, they are projected now at equal intervals on the wall. There are so many connotations there—memories that, in spite of the fact that you don't know why the hell these words are there and why one follows the other in their particular sequence, it has a certain presence which makes it interesting even to somebody who rejects this whole thing in toto. It's the writing on the wall. I don't know— It's connotations of the past. It appears in a curious way without devising a method of making a frame of this light disappear. It is just a pure word. It appears and there's a factor like rock music, like music that repeats itself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you find the collectors that have been patrons of yours and that come here? What are their reactions?

LEO CASTELLI: Some are interested but they don't buy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does anybody buy them?

LEO CASTELLI: Sperones in Milan does; in Europe they do buy it. They spent \$1,500 for three words of Wiener's. It is important and it is worth \$1,500. Or there are those Kosuth definitions that have a visual impact. You saw my show downtown—the definitions where you have the image of the object and the verbal definition. I find them aesthetically very satisfying. —

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it is a small group of people who are buying.

LEO CASTELLI: So people obviously— They cost \$3,500 and it seems a lot. But they pay sometimes much more for something which maybe has a few other attributes but that is not more valid or important as an idea than that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting that it seems to have evolved as a kind of an activity from objects into ideas. A lot of these people do these little booklets and pamphlets and things like that, do people buy those?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh. the little pamphlets cost so little that people buy them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, I mean the booklets with the pages of words and things.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, those are bought. They cost \$2, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With the ring binders and the things?

LEO CASTELLI: Some of them are \$2, \$3, \$5. Or there are those Ruscha books, for instance, that people like and they buy them. That much they spend.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you have the show in the other room.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, those. You mean those? This is a show. The whole thing is a show. Do you remember the one of Kosuth that I had with the clocks all over?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Panza bought that. He spent \$4,500 on that. He didn't get anything actually except the text and the clocks. That's all. Then he has to install it—the tables and the chairs and the books. He got the books, too, and the clocks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the room really is one total piece.

LEO CASTELLI: The room is a total piece. That was sold. The one that I had done here recently was not sold. It still exists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But do they think in terms then of doing a room with so many panels on each wall, with so many books; or does it grow out of "this is a book I want to show"?

LEO CASTELLI: No, no. That show of Kosuth's that I had up here is based on some kind of theory of linguistics, so there is a basic idea there that he tries then to convey if you look at his own work, which actually is just the writings on the wall. Then what the whole thing is based on is if you read it carefully then you look at the books. They are important works by or an important work of an author of some abstruse linguistic theory or mathematical theory. In fact, I had mathematicians here who came to the show and looked around, and then they sat down and began to read the books. They would spend half an hour or more there reading those books and talking, and they would say that's very fine, that's very good. For them it is very good, excellent, absolutely competent, no eyewashing, the man knows what he's doing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's interesting. But it's a whole new kind of attitude of looking at visual things, isn't it using a book, using word panels on wall?

LEO CASTELLI: I don't know. It may be a passing phase but it conveys something psychologically and visually, especially the one with the clocks which had a complex time theory as its basis. It also conveyed something rather frightening—the clocks around showing different hours. It conveyed sort of various ideas of the future world ruled by computers, by mathematical formulas, by I-don't-know-what. There's something frightening about that. This last one was not, but the clock one was rather frightening.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well it had all the precision of that and the fact that once one decision that goes on and on and on and on.

LEO CASTELLI: So they naturally could be much more difficult to understand, to perceive. Although a painting of Jasper Johns they may perceive flags and some element, but is it more meaningful to the ordinary onlooker than the Kosuth piece? I would say frankly not except that he has got something to hold onto.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Also with Kosuth, he's bringing a different kind of object and a different idea into an art gallery and saying that this is, you know, again an extension of Duchamp or Breton.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it's an extension always of Duchamp, after all, and perhaps before him other people that, to a less obvious degree, had brought in all kinds of ideas. After all, Leonardo did a lot of cerebral work in his drawings. We can go back to him if you want to—and probably quite a few odd artists. Poussin was one of them. He also had a lot of strange theories about this [that] he put down in his diaries, and others, too. So, it's now new. I guess that the Egyptians in their art, what we consider art, was actually writing. It was in the stories. It was visual history. The trouble is it was not conceived at all as for the purpose of pleasing people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's a later development of—

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, it's a later development.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, with the relationships of these artists, it seems again like another international scene.

LEO CASTELLI: It is an international scene. I come back to that. It is for the first time. While you probably will find the Europeans different from, even in this very abstract medium, different from the Americans, there is a difference in the way of expressing themselves. But still for the moment at least, I'm experimenting with that. I think that it is a movement that for the first time actually has an international flavor. All these American artists—Conceptual artists like Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner and so on—spend a lot of time in Europe. They travel around. So there's a lot of bridging, of communication, among all these artists constantly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about Dibbets who you said is the first European that you—?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, there precisely. Because I think that this was a movement and was clearly international, I wanted to see what the whole range of it was. Therefore, I had to start including Europeans; because my presentation of this case—of whatever you call them, Conceptual artists—seemed to be less strong if I limited myself just to the local product.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting because you've sent so much to the other parts of the world. Now the other world's coming back to you in a way.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. Well, it was just an idea as I had before from the beginning to present a well-rounded idea that I had of how art was developing, main lines of development, although I had, of course, to neglect certain directions. There my taste actually dictated omissions and inclusions. If I could have done everything, I would have had to include also the Color Field painters, that group. That was too much. And generally speaking there wasn't compatibility between Louis and Noland and the others. Stella was a marginal case, of course, because, after all, he derived at least initially more from Johns than from—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Pollock.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, from Pollock.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: This is the sixteenth of January, 1973. We could go more into downtown.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, the uptown gallery I had, and a warehouse which I was tempted into using as a gallery. That was the beginning of the whole story. The various reasons were, as I believe I've said already, economic and a question of space and storage, and clearly speaking we went down there because there already was some kind of life that had been going on there for a while, artists had —

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did Emmerich come into it?

LEO CASTELLI: Just a minute, I'll tell you that. Artists had lofts there, had bought some of the buildings and made them into cooperatives, and there was Paula Cooper in early times, Ivan Karp with the experience of the large warehouse gallery uptown, decided to take one downtown. So there was already a ready-made climate there. But we did not expect it to work so well, to become so much of a scene, more and more galleries getting added.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you feel it's working well, as more galleries open?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, of course. Fischbach, I found, I didn't even know that she had established a gallery down there, passing on Spring Street between West Broadway and the next one I saw on the second floor a banner with

Fischbach written on it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Abe Sachs opened a gallery there this week.

LEO CASTELLI: He did?

PAUL CUMMINGS: On Prince Street.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, in fact I didn't even know about that. But Nancy Hoffman is right opposite us and another one a little higher up that's been there for three months or something. So it's just fantastic the mushrooming, with Warren Benedict started down the street for a while, so there's no end.

How Emmerich got into the act is sort of mysterious, let me see, how Emmerich came into that obviously we see each other, we used to see each other frequently also at that time. And he may have discussed the problems of space. At that time the rents were going up and everybody was very worried. Larry Rubin was paying, I think at that time a very high rent for his place down on 57th Street, and Emmerich had a good contract but he was complaining about the lack of space and I was giving him my experience of the gallery uptown and everything and that I was looking for space, the type that wouldn't go up. He knew about Ivan and downtown prices, I don't know, less than two dollars a square foot. I told him all that and then I said, "If you're worried that the rent is going up, why don't you avoid paying rent and buy a building." And also of course he'd been working with Hague shipping.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You just worked together, fantastic.

LEO CASTELLI: And found a fantastic building.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, just to kind of finish this little bit, how do you find being in two places?

LEO CASTELLI: For the moment this is sort of like an outpost there which I like very much. Each time when I go down there, which I would say is three or four times a week, if there's an opening of course I'm down there very often during the week when there's something or other to be done, and I go there like a visitor always to see the place in wonderful shape. I've got a fantastic crew down there, Brad just keeps everything running smoothly. There is a problem there, we have some overlapping of things, we do some double work here because we need information from down there up here and vice versa, they need some information from our registry up here down there. This could be handled by one person so that that's a little bit uneconomical for the moment. I hoped and toyed with the idea of really being downtown and not uptown keeping perhaps this floor here for graphics and perhaps, not to the point of excluding some graphics, specializing in drawings, graphics and drawings, because it's still possible to show drawings up here, I mean they don't occupy much room, whereas it's almost impossible to show paintings. When you have to show it's there, but then it has to go and you can't show a single painting up here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That reminds me that it seems all the way along in the history of the gallery you've kept very good records of things, photographs and documentation.

LEO CASTELLI: They're pretty good, with lavish expenditure, unfortunately we got into the habit little by little of having everything photographed including all the exhibitions, installation shots of every exhibition, even the smaller ones. So that's a very good record.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, but even the individual works have been —

LEO CASTELLI: That's also pretty well done. There was a period when I had sloppy employees when things got neglected. Now I have a very accurate one and he keeps incredibly good records. He also puts little photographs on every card, so it's a very good system now. But again, a good system of that kind depends very much on his diligence and good handling.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. Well, we had talked a little bit before about the shift of collecting and collectors. Has a new group begun to emerge downtown? Or is that sort of hard to say yet?

LEO CASTELLI: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean people who are particularly interested in what goes on there, that uptown are not.

LEO CASTELLI: Maybe collectors who are interested in what's going on come downtown too, obviously, for some of them it's more difficult. When they had time or they wanted to devote a few hours in the morning at the gallery it was very easy from 57th up to here, it's become more difficult so they don't come as often as they used to. But then there are those who just hardly ever do business here and prefer to spend a little time downtown because it's just so much more exciting. Do you go downtown on Saturdays?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sometimes.

LEO CASTELLI: Sometimes there really is a lot going on, apart from the fact that there is this whole building to see and that there is an opening every week somewhere.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And there also are places to eat down there now, which years ago there weren't.

LEO CASTELLI: Nice places to eat. It's beginning to grow. There'll be more eating places and I guess more galleries. And there are also little shops now, for instance there is a little shop run by a girl that's been around for years, a friend of Ivan's and she's got very beautiful quilts, and other little shops like that and there'll be more and more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know it seems in the last couple of years there's there's been a great shift in the visibility of the collectors.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, there aren't any. Well there are no longer personalities, flamboyant personalities like Scull.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but what happened to all of that do you think?

LEO CASTELLI: Obviously there are many factors that you have to take into account.

First, it's the paintings themselves that don't lend themselves anymore to being displayed. Let's see, well, Lichtenstein still paints paintings that people may want to buy. Rosenquist has done it a little, there were some enormous paintings occasionally but people were a little bit tired of that. The next wave, the Minimalist artists, Judd, Morris and Flavin also lent themselves relatively little to collecting, to display. After that even more difficult people like Serra, Sonnier and Nauman came up who, apart from a few early things of Nauman's which were pretty difficult but at least you could hang them in your house, could not be really shown or bought easily by private collectors. The whole substance of art has changed, and that seems to be one of the major reasons why the ordinary collector can't do anything about them anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But has this been replaced by a growing interest in museums buying these things or other institutions?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, museums have been fairly active here in showing these new things — the Guggenheim a couple of times already or more made a show, the Whitney also a couple of years ago had shown these Conceptual artists, new artists. The Modern has shown occasionally smaller shows.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how about the museums around the country?

LEO CASTELLI: There was a, well, one of those things, giving younger artists a space, they haven't had any major show. There was one I remember in which Morris was included with those garden things, those —

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, right, right.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With all the lights.

LEO CASTELLI: With all the lights flashing. But they haven't done much. Now the Guggenheim has given commissions, but they haven't been lately in agreement, haven't been immensely active.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But in Europe they have though haven't they?

LEO CASTELLI: In Europe they have been very active. There have been some key shows there, one in Amsterdam and a better one under the direction of Harold Szeemann in Bern. Then there was an interesting, important show in Turin, the *Art and Scholar* show. There were three basic shows in Europe and then there was the collecting of Panza, Giuseppe Panza which was very important in sales there in Europe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, he's bought from you for years now hasn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, yes he's been buying everything that seemed to be vanguard, seemed to be a new development. He started buying, as a matter of fact, Rauschenberg back in 59, that was his first purchase and he's still going strong. And he missed some important artists, not because he did not recognize their importance like Jasper Johns, but because there wasn't enough around for him to buy a group as he always wanted to do. He never was satisfied to just buy one or two paintings and have a well rounded collection, he wanted to have a massive group of everyone, so he has, as I probably may have mentioned already, a dozen Klines, a dozen Rothkos and as many Rauschenbergs.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And is he still purchasing in the same way?

LEO CASTELLI: And he still does in the same way. Sometimes he discovers an artist that's been around for awhile like Judd. He'd been buying Morris already quite early, but Judd was interesting and still to be had for relatively modest prices and he started now buying. He's bought something like eight or ten Judds. He started buying Judds with a vengeance, having found that he could get a good group, a good selection for relatively little money. He has any number of well, of Naumans he's got fifteen, sixteen, seventeen of those, and the other Conceptuals like Huebler and Barry, Kosuth—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So he keeps right on pushing on.

LEO CASTELLI: And he pushes on in those directions. It seems to be those that are the

mainline of development. He has never bought a Super Realist painting because it didn't seem to be an interesting movement to him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's no collector like him in this country though is there?

LEO CASTELLI: No, absolutely not, I wish there were. Absolutely not, nothing could compare to it, even a collector like Ludwig. There is Anderson now in northern California, he's got his business headquarters near San Francisco.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who is that, I don't know?

LEO CASTELLI: And he's called Hunk Anderson and he started buying heavily and gave a lot of basic paintings to the San Francisco Museum recently. A very good Judd, a good Rauschenberg and so on. He's the only one that buys a little bit in the manner of Ludwig, perhaps not as sweeping as Ludwig has been, still, to a degree.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's fascinating because if you look at the Ludwig catalogue in a certain sense it's phenomenal.

LEO CASTELLI: The new catalogue which is here of his, there is an overflow of things in Cologne, now he has all these things in Athens. Did you see that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've seen that. But it's fascinating how much American art he has.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, that's the best art, he just buys the best.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, he's bought really major people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The preponderance is of American art. He has probably the best Rauschenberg collection in the world for that matter. Not the best Jasper Johns collection, but probably the richest in the sense that he has more Jasper Johns than anybody else except Johns himself maybe. Now since he came in fairly late he couldn't really get all he wanted, but he got some basic paintings like a flag painting, a number painting, and several others. Not to mention the huge world map that he bought. He has a lot there, as far as square footage is concerned. He's got more than anybody else. He has, I don't know, at least fifteen major Lichtensteins, there is no represented collection like his in the world. That's also the fault of the museums here. Because even the best just can't afford or don't afford one single painting of whoever it is, Stella, Lichtenstein or others, but there again although he was not particularly, although Stella was not particularly his direction, still he has several of those, more than most museums in America.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you know here's somebody in Europe who's built up a tremendous collection of American art, do you think that he stimulated other collectors in Europe and the museums?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he certainly did to a certain degree. For instance the museum in Basel certainly has been very much influenced, much stimulated by Ludwig. And Ludwig in his turn has certainly been stimulated by the really beautiful collection that Stedelijk in Amsterdam has of American painting. Before Ludwig came out that was certainly the best collection of American art, the best selected collection in Europe.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, who at the Museum had started that?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, first the Sonenberg, but he hadn't gotten to the point where he was buying Rauschenbergs and Johns and that generation. And when Ludwig came in, he was younger and he had been very much under the influence of Pontus Hultén. Actually the pioneer of collecting of American painting in Europe is Pontus Hultén of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. He already back in 1960, '61 had a show which he called *Four Americans* and in that show he had essentially of that time, maybe it was legitimate, now it seems a little bit hard, he had Johns and Rauschenberg and he had Lesley and Stankiewicz to show the development of various trends. Now we smile a little bit at that group, but that show traveled from Stockholm to Switzerland into Berne. He played an important role, he finished his career let's say at the Berne Museum, where really he was not a prophet in his own country, he was only interested in what he was doing, and except for some other Europeans in other countries. He started his career with a great famous Swedish show that show of Rauschenberg, Johns, Lesley and Stankiewicz, and then his swan song actually was the

Conceptual show that he did there. He did it about the same time that de Wilde did his. The de Wilde show he learned about and certainly rushed to have one too. He knew about it of course—he wouldn't have rushed if he hadn't known. But he wanted to be first. De Wilde I think opened his a few days earlier.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's the *When Attitudes Become Forms*.

LEO CASTELLI: *When Attitudes Become Forms*, yeah. Another person who was very influential at that time was Leering, who now is running the Museum in Eindhoven, he was doing those Kompas shows and there was this beautiful American show, his American Kompas show—New York show rather because he did a California show after that, which was the perfectly selected show from Gorky to Judd and Morris, just perfection. Leering was sensitive to also the figurative group. Also Beeren who used to work with de Wilde. Actually it was Beeren who spent lots of time here seeking the *When Attitude Becomes Form* show here, but he's sort of a modest guy and never really got much credit for what he was doing. Well, his swan song was that show that I mentioned in Berne, and then he went on to doing the Documenta the national Documenta show which, whatever criticism you may have of it, still was a grandiose enterprise, worthy of the spirit of a great man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How have you found these exhibitions as far as what they stimulate? Did each one seem to stimulate another exhibition or another group of people?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it's a very mysterious process I would say, one never can tell what they do and when results will become actually visible, they certainly do work. The two shows, *When Attitudes Become Form* and the Berne show certainly were very instrumental in developing the European taste for Conceptual art. The Guggenheim show here and the Whitney show of the same type were perhaps not quite enough for a city like New York. There are so many conflicting things. There was Greenberg's push for his own people. There was this strong push of the Super Realist painters and then my modest efforts which were not very well supported. And they came also a little bit late actually, I was not there with Kosuth and those people in the forefront. I had still to digest myself, my Naumans and I couldn't get onto that new phase as quickly as I should have. But then, you know my capacities are limited.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting because I ran into Seth Siegelaub out on the street the other day.

LEO CASTELLI: Seth Siegelaub was a great man of the movement, but he was really quite alone I must say. Although I followed him with some sympathy at the time I really felt that I couldn't embark on a thing like that. I actually inherited it. Seth loves activity. But he was the only man who really did something and the role that he played has been very important. But as you see in the conflicting current here in this melting pot that's the New York art scene, it's not as easy to get something new focused as it is in Europe, where very little happens there. When something like that occurs you immediately spot it and pick it up without all those conflicts. Now I'm involved as you know with tapes and films and well just of the organic way, because many of those that I have like Nauman and Morris and especially Sonnier worked with those media, that's just a little bit perhaps my influence on the other ones, not Kosuth, for instance Larry Weiner who was one of the early men in the movement started doing films. There is one film that he did recently that is long—but it's very, very good, it's a one hour and a half film.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, we talked about that a little bit. But I'm curious now, after the museum shows in Europe, did you find that other dealers in Europe would become interested?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, in Europe really the first thing is that you have quite a few very extraordinary dealers that deal with that movement and they're all very modest except one perhaps two. Let's take one, first Sperone. Sperone really had been involved in promoting American art in Italy already quite early, he did always thanks to Ileana who first taught him and also his own desire to do it. He started out quite early in showing in his gallery in Turin (and he had also briefly a gallery in Milan) Andy and Lichtenstein and those people—

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was that about would you say?

LEO CASTELLI: I would say that Sperone emerged, must have emerged something like—at least six or seven years ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the mid sixties.

LEO CASTELLI: In the mid sixties yes. Then all the while there was Konrad Fischer around in Dusseldorf, he is actually the pioneer of that movement in that area in Germany. So these were the two although you can't say that Fischer was a regular dealer actually, he's always been the coy dealer type like Dick Bellamy, not much practical sense, just not giving a hoot about trying to do this thing, admitting this as a financial success for himself and for the artist. It was just being done for the pleasure of doing it and somehow he did it. So these were the two initial ones, which accounts also for Turin becoming the important center for the production of that art rather than Milan or Rome or some other place, although he's got a few people in Rome too and those are the result of another very active gallery that appeared in the late fifties, that's La Tartaruga in Rome and that still has some consequence in producing some good artists. Then Turin has thanks to the joint activity of Sperone and of the art assumed a certain importance. There's also a museum there not very well run but it is the only really good modern museum space-wise that they have in Italy. It's not in an old building but in a modern building and shows have occurred there, like the Art [inaudible] show which was very important. And for instance a show that I saw a few years ago was a show of works of American painters owned by Italian collectors and that was a very interesting show. It demonstrated that there had been a fantastic collecting of Warhol, Lichtenstein, Rosenquist and Johns.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, you had mentioned before about the fact that your business has changed so much in the last few years and you do more with the sort of outpost galleries.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, that's a business—well, first I was just sitting here and not really sitting but expecting that people would come from wherever they were, Europe and otherwise to see what I had and then buy the paintings that they were interested in and I would never run after people, of course. I sort of delighted in the idea that good shows with good artists should do the job.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do fine.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, and I was almost sort of surprised in the beginning when I had those marvelous early shows of Jasper, of Bob, Lichtenstein and so on that actually they didn't produce the incredible effect that I expected right away. Actually I found out that there was a problem there, that collectors say in California would come here, and I remember I told you that already, they would come here, men like Weisman or others and they would ask me to see Johns or Rauschenberg or Lichtenstein and I said that I didn't have them, or I showed them something that didn't seem very important or if it was important they would say well, you see that's where one finds a good painting, they're never at the dealer in California. So, since there was a good gallery at that time in Los Angeles, which was Virginia Dwan, the Dwan Gallery, I thought that if they would get more too it would convince those people that I'm sending out paintings that are as good as the ones that I have here, since it's impossible for me to wait for them to come when they come only once or twice a year and keep things for them. You have to do the job for them, pick the good paintings that you want to have for them and to convince them that they're just as good, that you personally had picked them and sent the interest at heart. And therefore they could trust you that you had the best things around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did that work?

LEO CASTELLI: It began to work, it works more and more, that's what I actually developed. Somebody who did a great job in the past years, now she's resigned from Dayton's in Minneapolis, was Felice Wender, she was very daring in buying paintings and had the funds and the support of the Dayton people. Then through all kinds of jealousies and so on because her department did not function like all other departments she awakened the jealousy of all the other departments and finally she was accused of being an oddball and doing things that she shouldn't do, keeping inventory for too long and all they expected—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, turnover and everything.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes and that obviously did not occur so she resigned after that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is she dealing again?

LEO CASTELLI: Not, not yet, she's just feeling her way. But there was an extraordinary episode that I might as well record for posterity. She was coming here and I didn't really pay much attention to her, Ivan was sort of handling her and selling her the Lichtenstein then. She didn't seem very important in the beginning. Then one day she was sitting here, Ivan had left the scene by this time, but anyway she was sitting here and I had heard that the collection of Merman [ph] being sold because there had been a divorce and so the paintings had to be dispersed and there was among those paintings one that I liked particularly that had an art history. A two flags, one on top of the other, gray that he had done in '58, that Merman [ph] had bought. So that was up for sale. It had been bought by somebody who bought all the things and he then offered it to me and it was something like \$60,000 and he was just on the phone when Felice was sitting there. I said well, how will I ever get \$60,000 together, it's impossible, I can't get you \$60,000 just like that, could you send it to me? No, no it must be sold right away, you must buy it, take it or leave it. So she was listening and she said, "Just a minute. How much was the painting?" It's \$60,000; Jasper Johns. "Okay. I'll give you the money, I'll provide the money." So I said, "Are you sure?" And she said, "Tell him that you are buying it." The next day she sent me \$60,000. That was the beginning of my relationship with Felice. Then, actually we owned this painting together. After awhile I reimbursed her for part of the sum and we went in together and that painting was sold a little more than a year ago to the famous Hunk Anderson who has it in his own collection now. He paid I think \$90,000 for it. So that was a little incident in explaining to you how these relationships worked.

Then there was Helman who appeared in St. Louis, a very energetic dealer, first a collector and then he became a dealer. Locksley who was a great rival of Felice Wender, I could do very little with him because if I sold him a hairpin then Felice blew her top. There was also the Edward Ellis brief venture and she had some really marvelous material there of which I still see traces here and there in Los Angeles through collections and things at the County Museum. I like these outposts very much. The directors came in to organize shows. I would always be there are the openings at the opening of things. But Pasadena was a special pet of mine and a man who is the chairman of the board there and also a collector, important collector, Bob Rowan became their friend. [Audio break] So then little by little, this little network—well there had been the relationship, close relationship that I had had with Ileana Sonnabend here, she had dominated the European scene with all the important artists of the first part.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, was she the first one to start showing your artists?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, she was the first one who showed, marvelous shows that she had of Rauschenberg, of Johns, of Lichtenstein. Several of all of these except Johns perhaps, there was only one of those. But many Rauschenberg shows and they still go on, many Lichtenstein shows, many Rosenquist shows, she showed practically every one of my early artists. Plus Judd, Morris, she has a Morris show now. Some she still continues—Morris, Flavin and Nauman, she goes as far as Nauman. So she'd been doing that very, very early, back in 1960 when she started her gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Been that long?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, '60, '61, I don't remember exactly. So she did really the first great pioneering job was done by her. Well, there was something that I did when she was still around and working here at the gallery. There was a Rauschenberg show at Cordier's back in '59 it must have been, but even earlier than that there had been a Jasper Johns show at Rive Droite in Paris. So '58 and in '59 we had these two shows but from then on she took over and had all these shows in her own gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why did she go to Paris as opposed to someplace else?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, first of all she was working here at this gallery and of course she was terribly interested in what she was doing. The fact that we separated was no reason for her to give up that activity that she liked so well. So she could not, it would have been difficult for her to function here in New York—so that was a very cogent reason for her to go someplace else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean she didn't go to Rome or London.

LEO CASTELLI: She went to Rome to begin with.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

LEO CASTELLI: And there she tried to work with La Tartaruga and that was a mistake, Rome was not right for a gallery and she had a bad experience with Plinio De Martiis and the way in which he wanted to dominate the scene when she didn't feel that he should, that it was after all her gallery and not his and there was a conflict there that occurred and they didn't work together for a very long time and then obviously Paris was a better choice at that time. Now it would seem that practically anything is a better choice than Paris, but at that time that was not so, there was still a great deal of hope that Paris would—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Something would happen.

LEO CASTELLI: It would work out that something would happen there. But from Paris actually as a base, things did happen. Actually she traveled a lot and the Germans got interested in it and then the Italians got on it you see. Sperone actually was the single man that got interested and there was a good concentrated relationship for a while between her and Sperone. In Germany one never knew who the hell would dominate the scene there, there was always the conflict between Zwirner and Friedrich and so nobody really emerged as the main strongman. Now obviously the strongest man because his painters artists rather emerged as important ones is Fischer, he's stronger than either Zwirner or Friedrich who had sort of flitting been around and had done a good job. Friedrich especially has had a very close relationship with America and was instrumental in having Ströher buy the collection of Kraushar, when Kraushar died, it was Friedrich's doing that this collection went to Germany. So Friedrich has been instrumental but in a different way, not establishing his solid base there. He's been sort of flitting around more and does useful work, but he is not somebody who stays in one place. He's got a gallery in Munich too which is not a very interesting place, and then he established himself in Cologne which is more interesting but he still is between the one and the other so he never really gets settled. Now Richter is another one who came a little later. He use to be in Kassell but he found that Cologne was the place. Richter then had been sort of a nice pioneering man but without the imagination of, oh, perhaps he had imagination. Oh perhaps he has imagination but he didn't seem to get this thing financially going too well, and Zwirner got involved in building a new space, a new house for himself and that sort of drained away a lot of money so he's been out of commission for a while. But he's more the commercial dealer actually, good but not the pioneering type. There's good old Schmela who still goes on buying things, that's in Dusseldorf. And also Konrad Fischer is in Dusseldorf and there's a rivalry between the two cities there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know it's interesting because when a major painting goes to Europe it's obviously difficult to get it back for exhibitions and things like that unless there's a fair amount of money for that sort of thing, and they lend paintings in Europe I suppose don't they? Many of these people?

LEO CASTELLI: They do. You can put together a fairly good show in Europe with American paintings that you have there. You can't really do an important show but you could do a good show with what they have of Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Johns if you want to collect everything that's around there. They could more easily do a good Lichtenstein show maybe in Europe than they could here, not more easily but as easily, there must be about twenty-five or thirty major paintings there between Germany, Italy, France and Switzerland.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you still see things going over there?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh yes, quite a lot. Ludwig still buys, Panza buys, then there are the more chic buyers in Rome or in Turin like Agnelli or other people like that or Herbert Sachs. So you see some of the paintings going to Rome and to very chic places that you see in *Vogue* you know, open an issue of *Vogue* and you see all kinds of paintings that you—oh, somebody who's very active in doing this kind of job is Bischofberger in Zurich. He spends the winter in St. Moritz where all the rich people go and sells them these paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does that reflect in the gallery the fact that say the Agnelli's apartments will be photographed and they will see Johns or various people, will that bring people to the gallery?

LEO CASTELLI: I would say that it probably add up but you don't have any immediate—

PAUL CUMMINGS: No specific thing.

LEO CASTELLI: No. It's slow but you see all those people do see it and they come, you see them here and there, you know, it sort of accumulates. There's no direct thing that happens, it just accumulates. There are thoughtful collectors like Ludwig who constantly think about what happens, how the scene develops, he comes here very often so we talk, he talks with other people, he really knows the scene exceedingly well. He's part of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art and so he was there last summer in Cologne, and he takes them around and he sees them at various meetings here and there so there is now an interesting international scene that has developed through that Council.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do you still have dealers in this country then that you work with like in Los Angeles?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Los Angeles. There is Irving Blum who still does show Lichtenstein and Stella and I try to convince him to show younger painters too, which he probably will eventually. There's Nick Wilder who has artists like Nauman, there is Jack Glenn who's interested in showing Judd and Rosenquist. So there are three or four dealers who do still work with me and need material, there is now, after the departure of Felice, Locksley who I did more shows and more—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, he seems to have emerged.

LEO CASTELLI: Although he remains always a little bit private with that kind of set-up that he has in that apartment. And then after the departure of Helman, there is Ron Greenberg, who has taken over and does do a great deal of work with some of the artists like Lichtenstein, Kelly, Judd. Each one actually selects what he likes, very few select the more difficult ones obviously, they wait until there's more activity on them. There's Janie Lee in Dallas who is very, very strong, a very good dealer with whom I do a lot of work. She also of course works with Emmerich and with me. She covers—as those provincial galleries do—the whole range. They are not limited to one type of a gallery. So, there is Janie Lee who is very good and very strong. And there is in Minneapolis as I said, there is Locksley, there is Ronald Greenberg in St. Louis who's very active and does a great job.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you have anybody in England now?

LEO CASTELLI: In England, well, there is a possibility now of doing a more important job, a really major one if Knoedler actually carries out their plan of setting up a gallery there. They've asked me then to participate very importantly in contributing shows of my artists to their gallery. But generally speaking, after the departure of a very, very good man, Robert Fraser from the scene—he went native actually. He got interested in India and Tibet and became a guru, or at least he if he didn't become one he will become one in due time. Robert Fraser was very interested in the early period of Lichtenstein and Rauschenberg.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was Kasmin somebody who worked with it?

LEO CASTELLI: And nobody had actually replaced him. There was Kasmin, but Kasmin was interested only, as far as I'm concerned in my gallery, in Stella, generally speaking he was involved with Noland, Olitski, those people. He plans to open a gallery in Paris now with [inaudible] from Milan, with Larry Rubin from here, so these three would work together in Paris. But they haven't done anything yet, they haven't found a space. Now there are two galleries or three who are interested in the Conceptual artists, those modest galleries that I haven't mentioned yet after speaking about Sperone and Fischer. One called Lisson Gallery and the other one is Jack Wendler and then there's a third one who's been there longer, Nigel Greenwood. So there are these three galleries there, but they are modest, but very dedicated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Greenwood's also a print seller, isn't he?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he does all kinds of things but anyway he does vanguard painting. Then in Holland there is one of that type which is very good: it is called Art & Project. And then in Cologne there's a good one called Paul Maenz. So there are several of them. In France there is one called Yvon Lambert and in Italy quite a few of these have developed: one in Milan Toselli, and then in Naples, Modern Art Agency and [inaudible], a very charming woman called Maria [inaudible]. So in Italy there are more. That's the state of Panza more or less that you can feel there. And it is the activity of Sperone that has provoked all these things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fascinating how those galleries are in very different cities. I mean in

Naples you wouldn't necessarily expect something like that, that's terrific.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: Let's say it's March 2nd, 1973. I thought if we could just run through this list of people, I'll just give you some names and see what happens. At one time Alan Solomon was very involved with you it seemed.

LEO CASTELLI: He was a very good friend apart from all the rest and I think that his death at a young age was a great loss to the art world. He appeared in my life quite early in my career, in my gallery career.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did he come into it?

LEO CASTELLI: He was, maybe he was teaching, he was a professor of art history at Cornell University and he appeared one day. Oh, it couldn't have been later than say, '58, late '58 because I had had my two first important shows, the Rauschenberg, the Johns show in January of '58 and the Rauschenberg show a little later that spring. I know that he came. Well, he may have come to see the Rauschenberg, he did not see the Johns show I believe, but he may have come on the occasion of the Rauschenberg show because he did organize very soon thereafter a Rauschenberg show at the Andrew Dixon White Museum which he was working, that he he used to present shows. And at that time he looked like a very modest young man, he had a hearing aid, his hearing wasn't good, and very short hair, and a rather scant Dacron suit, a ready-made suit. But he was very lively and terribly enthusiastic about what was happening in the gallery about Johns. He didn't—I don't think he saw that show. But he may have seen the Rauschenberg show and he know of course the paintings, perhaps he had gone to Rauschenberg's studio. I don't know exactly what happened, but anyway here he was with his great enthusiasm. He did organize a Rauschenberg show. It could be interesting to find out when it occurred at the museum and I can find out and fill in here. So that was the beginning of my relationship with him. Then, something happened in his personal life, he separated from his wife, divorced her and left Cornell and he got the offer to become the director of the Jewish Museum. Now the Jewish Museum, oddly enough, at one point or another played an important part in my career, in my life. They started to show paintings or sculpture or—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that was about when Alan came, wasn't it?

LEO CASTELLI: No, they did things before that. I told you about that episode of that show of younger people that they did in March of '57, there I remember the date exactly and how on that occasion I had seen my first Jasper Johns. So the space there—It had not been altered yet by the Lists, it was the old building and that space was used for shows. That famous show where I saw the first Jasper Johns had been organized by Meyer Shapiro and some other people. So there was a precedent there and maybe other shows occurred of this type before Alan took over. But Alan took over after the transformation in the new building that was built with Lists' money. So that's when he came in. They offered him the job, I don't remember exactly whether he consulted me. Well, we knew each other but we were not really as close as all that, he appeared from time to time to see the shows and I can't remember whether he consulted me about whether he should accept the job or not, but he may have done that, I think he did as a matter of fact, and I said yes, that that was a great occasion to do more important shows in a more appropriate center and setting. So anyway, he accepted the offer and became director of the museum and he proceeded immediately to do the Rauschenberg show. You can determine that date exactly too, but it must have occurred late in '63 because in '64 we had that famous biennale that Alan was in charge of, the Venice Biennale, and Rauschenberg of course appeared there and got the first prize as you may remember. So that I think that that show occurred in late '63, we can find out about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, the thing that I find interesting is you know the particular artists in your gallery he was interested in and how he really seemed to move them along.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he obviously know the Abstract Expressionist movement very well. As a matter of fact he was a pretty close friend of Barney Newman's among others and he knew his art history very well, the past but also what was going on in America and he was teaching modern art at Cornell so he was very familiar with the modern movement. But he felt that that was being taken care of, or had been taken care of, by other museums, Pollock,

those major de Koonings, and other major painters of the period. And what he was really interested in was the new movement, the new movement that he detected at that time. Pop art really happened a few years later, and he immediately picked that up too. But that was early as I said in '58 and the Pop artists had not appeared yet. And it seemed to him. Well, the shows at the Jewish Museum occurred already when Pop art had appeared upon the scene. But he had really that Rauschenberg show was a tremendous event, you can't imagine the fantastic impact that it had, favorable and mostly unfavorable. The daring of this young man to put a show like that into this museum seemed absolutely incredible. [Audio break] Its impact was tremendous. Also to me it seemed very, very daring. It was a huge show, I don't know whether you saw it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yes. Well, Bob was one of the first artists in your gallery to have a big museum show like that.

LEO CASTELLI: It was the first artist in my gallery to have a big museum show and he preceded many other important artists that didn't have a chance to find somebody like Alan Solomon to do a thing like that. So that was quite an event. Then after that, a year later he showed Jasper Johns there but that was already after the Biennale and it seemed less audacious, things had simmered down. But that first Rauschenberg show was in the nature of a real explosion, I can remember it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what kind of reaction did you get from your point of view of people, dealers, collectors, museum people coming in?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, at that time you know people thought of me as being a sort of monstrous schemer, that I had Alan Solomon in my pocket, that I was practically corrupting the whole art world, the critics. There was that Steinberg episode as you probably remember where I had financed an important study on the part of Leo Steinberg on Jasper Johns and then there was that, well that wasn't so obvious but then it seemed to become totally obvious that Alan Solomon was my creature when he did that Rauschenberg show. And then the Biennale. And then the Johns show. That seemed to be the end of the world. [Audio break] What really was so impressive about [Alan] was the extraordinary daring and facility with which he did these things. There is nobody around of that caliber. There was that entirely new space that he had at the Jewish Museum, an enormous space and I saw him install that show with the fantastic assurance that he had in putting all those diverse paintings around all over the place and the way he directed the personnel. After all he was entirely new there and it was as if he had been there for years. If he had done nothing but installing shows of this magnitude because after all the Dixon White Museum was a very small affair. But there he behaved like a great chief.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well how did all his activities affect you?

LEO CASTELLI: Well it was, the appearance of Alan Solomon, his immense enthusiasm for, well, art that was happening in America. He had a total knowledge of it and he also understood right away what was happening under his nose not like many others, good people. He did not remain just limited to the previous movement, and wouldn't say like so many others, Yes those were the good old times and now what was happening didn't seem of the same caliber, he saw it right away he had a great sense of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The exhibitions he did at the Jewish Museum, did they confirm certain things to the public or collectors or other people?

LEO CASTELLI: I think yes, I think that made a great impression on the public. Rauschenberg actually had not been understood here when he first appeared in an important show like Egan's show back in '53, and then the show I had in '58—well there was some interest in it. He, I think was understood and appreciated in Europe well before he was here. There was a show, an important show that we organized at Cordier's in Paris in 1960, it was quite early and there are some terrific paintings there at that important show and there it was considered there as a big event. He didn't sell much, perhaps hardly anything at all, but it was considered a big event.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think he was understood there quicker than here?

LEO CASTELLI: Well first of all you know we had these things happening here, Abstract Expressionism we absorbed those and then for us it was more difficult to get accustomed to all these novelties. Abstract Expressionism hadn't made a great dent in Europe. It had not

been seen.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh they know Kline a little bit, very little de Kooning, hardly any de Kooning at all. They did not know Rothko. Rothko had not been shown there at all or very little. Still was completely unknown or still probably fairly unknown there, Newman was totally unknown. So they knew just a few things. And then this came with a great impact. And they had more understandable, they could relate it to Schwitters, to Surrealism, to all kinds of things that they knew. To them, the others, the Expressionists, in France which was the dominating center at the time, it seemed that was brutal pioneering stuff, and of course Rauschenburg was considered pretty brutal too but more understandable than the previous movement for them. They also understood Pop art, say Lichtenstein, much sooner and much more readily than the public here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well one thing that interests me is the development of Alan Solomon and his few years really because he wasn't—

LEO CASTELLI: His career was meteoric actually. He appeared then say here at the museum in '63, did the Rauschenberg show, did the Biennale in Venice a few months later, a fantastic exhibition without precedent where he used not only the pavilion again with his customary daring just put two people there Noland and Louis because that seemed to be the better space for them. And then used the consulate that was not being used.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that come about to use that, how did that happen?

LEO CASTELLI: It happened to be available. But it also happened that Solomon had the energy, the dynamism to find out about it, to ask for it. He was a good friend. At that time it was the USIA people that were in charge of the Biennale and exhibitions abroad and well, he happened to be a good friend of I can't remember the name now of the person in charge. I think it was Bob Sivard. And well he would be dynamic enough to want to do a smashing things, bring in all this new movement that happened in America not only just two painters or four painters, but also all the other ones, the four major ones and all the other ones that were just coming up and had not quite matured yet like Jim Dine. That had come just slightly later than the four major ones. He had Oldenburg, he had Stella, it was a perfectly, beautifully structured affair, he had Chamberlain, he had Dine in that show on a minor key, but still each of his artists had a nice room for himself. Then, of course, Rauschenberg and Johns were shown in the Consulate. And that shows after all that I was not very difficult, after all I could have insisted that my artists should appear in the main pavilion and I let him do whatever he wanted to do. In fact I did not interfere, for instance, in the hanging of his shows at the museum. I would never go there and tell him to do this that or the other. He did it all himself and I would be particularly careful. But then our relationship was really so good that there was no need for that kind of nonsense.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the great Venice Biennale where there was so much publicity.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, it still appears and they still talk about it. A book like this one here—it is a new one that appeared by Sophy Burnham.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, *The Art Crowd*.

LEO CASTELLI: You should read it, it is just very good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the effect on the gallery with his exhibitions at the Jewish Museum? How did it affect the operations of the gallery? Did it bring more people in or were the dealers interested?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, I think, of course, the gallery was developing pretty rapidly anyway after the relatively slow beginnings with Jasper and Bob then Stella, did all this pioneering work. And then the Pop art that came along—well there was, it was the age of faith really you know, I had immense faith in what I was doing. I was just very impatient. I could not understand how people were not bowled over by all this, all these things that were happening: Johns and Rauschenberg and Stella and Lee Bontecou at that time, and then suddenly the Pop artists and Lichtenstein and all these people. It seemed to me that there was an incredible effervescence. You can't imagine how we felt at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was enormous activity.

LEO CASTELLI: But there was still a great deal of skepticism. Some of the artists were rejected for a long time. Rauschenberg never really quite made it here. The great fame is in Europe, but he never really quite made it importantly, very importantly here to the degree, for instance, Johns did. But even Johns—after all he produced little and there were just a few aficionados, the public was always limited. I don't speak now of the art crowd, the people who came to see the shows, of course there were lots of younger people, artists and others that were influenced, involved and very influenced. Johns was a great influence especially. And Pop art, as soon as it occurred produced a great number of satellites and so on. But from a point of view of improvement of business, I don't think it was very noticeable and I really didn't care. I was so convinced that what we were doing was of immense importance that the fact that the general public still didn't go along was annoying, but didn't disturb me in the least. I was convinced that I was doing the right thing. But it was very gradual anyway, you know. Of course, I did feel in the year '64 at the Biennale, very triumphant about the crowning of all my efforts when Bob got the prize all the things that occurred around it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But is the awarding of the prizes politically motivated?

LEO CASTELLI: Well everything is political. You see in politics, also somebody does get elected and it's not a simple thing. The great number of currents, under-currents, maneuvers and so on and the prizes at the Biennale obey the same laws that prevail when you have a political election, presidential or at lower levels. It's the same thing. So to expect that this is done very professorially is just not sensible. It is a very political affair. Sure

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well do you think the Biennale has sustained any power since then? It seems much tapered off.

LEO CASTELLI: Well it tapered off considerably. Nowadays the Venice Biennale has lost all its glamour but at that time when Rauschenberg got the prize it was still a pretty glamorous affair and people still believed in it. Then, it began to go downhill. There was a good one that Henry Geldzahler organized the next year and it had Lichtenstein, Kelly and Helen Frankenthaler and Olitski. Now you may agree or disagree about one or the other of these artists, but it was a good well-balanced affair. But then he went out all the way Henry to say that the prize system was just ridiculous. He wrote a manifesto while people were the jury was sitting there to confer the prize which then in a ridiculous way went to a dark horse because there was so much politics there that the people that really deserved it and it could have been Kelly or Lichtenstein or somebody else didn't get it because finally nobody could decide because of so much politics nobody would dare give it to Lichtenstein also political considerations although he was the favorite there. The chief reasons initially were that it was not possible to give a prize again to another American two years after that. And then, there were other maneuvers and other intrigues. Finally a man called Le Parc somebody from Argentina whose work was sort of up-to-date at that time because it moved, was kinetic, got the prize [Audio break]

But in '64 it was so wonderful there. Alan, this shy rather withdrawn man that had appeared say back in '58 at the gallery, had become a real [inaudible] by that time very sure of himself. He'd undergone an operation which then made it unnecessary for him to have a hearing aid, his hair had grown and he had a very elegant long hair, his clothes were very good clothes, they were custom tailored clothes, he had become a very elegant man with a great deal of authority, a good diplomat and all that. He spent all the summer there in Venice just to attend to things, to be there, also because he liked it, and he spoke Italian a little bit, he had learned it during his studies. He had, I think his Ph.D. from Harvard in art history so he had a good, very good background. I think it was Harvard, I'm almost sure. And he had a very funny and lovable assistant, Alice Denny, from Washington and she spent the whole summer there. He learned Italian. And they had a very nice apartment there and there were parties and everything was incredibly nice. He was a very good ambassador there, very ably assisted by Alice Denny whose husband is in the State Department.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, that was a great life. And the next thing was the Jasper Johns show at the Jewish Museum, another great show, and that occurred I think late in '44 or no it must have been the beginning of '55 because there was a show before the Jewish Museum show in London at the Whitechapel Gallery, you can check on that.

[inaudible]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But Alan Solomon did, how many exhibitions?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, just to continue with Alan. he did then the Jasper Johns show that must have been late '44 or beginning of '45. Then, he did another show, another quite beautiful show at the Jewish Museum and that was a black and white show and that must have occurred sometime in '45, '55, no '65. And then trouble began there at the Jewish Museum and he resigned. Then, after that there was that dream of setting up a contemporary museum in Rome and he spent a lot of time on that project and nothing happened. There were various Italian big shots who promised to provide the funds but they never got together, nothing happened and he left there after spending months and months in Rome, a disappointed man. Then there was an interim, where he got this appointment at Irvine, U.C.L.A. at Irvine, a very good job really that would permit him to spend a lot of time—he was supposed to teach there for about six months and in the six months he was entirely free to do what he liked. He also was permitted, or he was given funds. enough money to travel to New York once a month so that he could find out what was going on here. So it was a good job. But he already was not well, he already began to be unwell at that time and had not much energy. I saw him out there, he organized a few nice shows there at Irvine and then he got really sick and spent a lot of time in the hospital. From the hospital he went home and well, there was that last summer in East Hampton when he had a house there. I spent some time with him there in his house on the dunes. And then he really got sick after that and had many tests in the hospital and then well, he spent his last few months in his apartment on W [inaudible] Avenue. And then suddenly he died. He had done that book, that famous book, *New York; The New Art Scene* with Ugo Mulas—who by the way is also dying more or less—who did the photography.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh really?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, he's been sick for many years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What's happened to him?

LEO CASTELLI: He has cancer. He was here in America last year, had several operations and seemed to be better but then it started all over again. The book appeared in '67 but they worked on it, he and Mulas, probably three years earlier. Mulas came here and started doing the photographs in '65 or so, right after the two Biennales and after the two Jewish Museum shows. So this was a great accomplishment. It's quite an extraordinary book I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's all changed so much.

LEO CASTELLI: It was Alan maybe or was it? I don't know. But anyway, we did that other book, I mention it also because he died projecting that new book, the avant-garde book.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

LEO CASTELLI: It was the last thing that he planned to do. And there was this young Italian photographer, Gorgone. [Audio break] —around and he was sick.. Well, he had done many photographs and they seemed very interesting to me. So in spite of the fact that he wasn't too well he said he would to see what he was doing. So I told Gorgone to go up there, and he went up there. But he died that day while he was sort of getting excited and interested about this new project. So that was something that he was planning and that never got carried out. Actually the book is dedicated to Solomon, did you see that? It's something very different from the other one obviously, but at least if focusses on personalities of the artists at work rather than being an ordinary book of criticism where you have photographs and reproductions of work, and there is a critical text. The Grégoire Müller 's text is more critical actually, traditionally critical than Solomon's which is really more about the scene. Now we're planning to do another one with Praeger's. They would like us to go on with this and cover other areas. I was talking to Ivan who naturally would be the expert in the New Realism area and well he hadn't seen this book here; he remembered this book here. He said yes, we have to do this and that and I immediately understood that what he wanted to do was a regular book. I said no, no, no, I mentioned the *New Art Scene* and then he understood that it was more about personalities than about the painter's craft.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well how was the reception of that book?

LEO CASTELLI: The book was not particularly well received actually, it was hardly noticed I think and the artists themselves whom he had done so much for in every respect with the Biennales didn't pay much attention to it either and quite a few of them they were very indifferent to it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The *New Avant-garde* book is just selling like crazy.

LEO CASTELLI: Right. But this had absolutely no success whatsoever. And it is so well-structured too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's a big book and more expensive too.

LEO CASTELLI: It was more expensive yes. It was also printed in Italy and not distributed by one of the well-known outfits, publishers. Maybe it was also premature, but I think it has become some kind of a classic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh it has.

LEO CASTELLI: Well there's so much more to say about Solomon, this is a brief outline of his appearance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well what about the collectors? I know that Mrs. List thought a great deal of him and his ideas.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, she defended him strenuously, but didn't make any headway against the other people there on the board like David Finner [ph] who felt Alan was overdoing it, that this was not the role of the Jewish Museum. Then there were those people in the theological seminary who were totally anti. It was a situation then when nobody could do anything at that museum. They had Sam Hunter after that and well, although Sam Hunter was not as good a man as Solomon still he was a pretty good man and he didn't couldn't stay. And then after Sam Hunter they had I think Katz. Katz was an energetic man, very likeable individual but obviously he didn't have the background. There's nothing that they're going to do with Museum. It became quite obvious that it was impossible to run because of the situation there. So in spite of some staunch defenders that he had, Mrs. List was one of them, they said he was spending too much money, that he was a bad administrator. You know, all this kind of nonsense when the poor man was running this tremendous affair with absolutely no means and no personnel and he was supposed to be the director, the curator, and everything under the sun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did he have collectors who were interested in him, could he bring people into a gallery and say—

LEO CASTELLI: No, it didn't happen that way, his enthusiasm was gentle. We lived, all of us, in a crowd of interested people, mostly really the painters and not much the collectors. But he was very aloof from the collecting world, he was really not interested in that. He was interested in the art crowd that he describes so well in the book and that includes maybe some collectors if they had some human interest to him—like Mrs. List or in the case of the Sculls, he found them really very funny so he included them. But there was not great love lost between him and the Sculls because he found them arrogant and impossible as human beings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is a sidelight, have you seen the de Antonio film?

LEO CASTELLI: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think of it?

LEO CASTELLI: Well for me it is terribly interesting documentary material there. As a film, structurally it doesn't function as well as it could. Maybe you could perhaps re-edit it. It's also too monotonous. After all it is so many painters—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think he presented the people realistically?

LEO CASTELLI: Well not really, no, no. He actually did not exploit the potential of all these persons properly, it's all pretty frontal, pretty flat, there's no depth to it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I thought the way he photographed them in the situations they were in

and some of the other changes in sound—

LEO CASTELLI: Well for instance Rauschenberg's play on that ladder was pretty bad. Everything is sort of flat and frontal. Well, there is Olitski that moves around with that dog in his arm but that's not very successful either. And there's Frank crouching, Rauschenberg is on top of the ladder and Frank is crouching. Some people speak very well, others mumble. Stella is very articulate. There's only one great actor in the whole thing and that's Barnett Newman.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, he's just like a great professor sitting there.

LEO CASTELLI: He's really splendid, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'll be curious to see what it looks like in five years.

LEO CASTELLI: Well it is very interesting, if nothing else it's worth it all for the Barnett Newman section. He's dead not and there you have a rare picture, very much alive and exactly as he was and that's invaluable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like your role in it?

LEO CASTELLI: Well you know one doesn't like oneself usually when one sees oneself in a photograph or a movie. I didn't like myself at all especially since some stupid thing had happened there. He had me sitting there—

PAUL CUMMINGS: With the office background.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, and he was there with the camera and the cameraman and the tape recorder and I felt very much at ease and talked about the past, about Jasper, about the gallery. Then after that had gone on for about half an hour they suddenly realized that the tape had gotten stuck so they retook the whole thing and that's very wrong. One should never do that because when I tried to remember what I said—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You can't.

LEO CASTELLI: And I should have told him to go away and come tomorrow and redo it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do another one.

LEO CASTELLI: So it was a little bit strained for me. Maybe it didn't turn out that way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To go back, back to Solomon for a minute, he also did a theater festival did he not?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh yes, he was very involved in the festivals too and there again he didn't earn any gratitude for the fantastic effort that he had made. I don't know, I can't remember exactly what the year was, it must have been well everything happened so rapidly between let's say '64, '65, maybe '66.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It really was only three yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Three years. And it must have occurred after he left the Jewish Museum, all these things occurred after he left the Jewish Museum so it must have been in '66 that he did that great festival here in one of those buildings on Broadway. Really great performances occurred there of Rauschenberg or Bob Whitman, and others. Dine. Then everybody for some reason was mad at him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, I could never figure out what happened at that point.

LEO CASTELLI: That's one of the things that people—nobody was too happy about it for some reason.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know what it was that aggravated it.

LEO CASTELLI: Did you see that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No I didn't.

LEO CASTELLI: But everybody was aggravated for one reason or another.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This happens frequently.

LEO CASTELLI: Just another thing, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well I just want to ask you something which I think is not a very complex story, and that's about Tanya Grossman who set up her print activities out there where so many of the artists have worked.

LEO CASTELLI: Well she appeared quite early in 1960. Nobody thought seriously of prints at that time. I think that the Tamarind Workshop was around and there was Hayter and that had been a movement long before Atelier 17. But then he did prints and perhaps some other not too well known people. None of the great artists of the Abstract Expressionist movement got involved in prints at all during the Hayter period. So actually it is Tanya Grossman. Tamarind was just a technician I guess. And also there prints of varying different artists—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well that was really to train printers rather than—

LEO CASTELLI: To train printers, so nothing important came out of that. But Tanya appeared out of nowhere and I, I can't remember how it happened but she well obviously felt she wanted to do a prints of first Johns, Johns was the first one. No, she had done prints of Glarner, Larry Rivers before. But then Johns was the first one she approached here in the gallery and Johns started doing those prints with the target with superimposed numbers, of the three flags, one black and white and one white on brown paper and one silver on white paper. That was the first group. The coat hanger came shortly after that. So that started Jasper on an immense printing career, he had a quite fantastic one and then Gemini came in later to reinforce all this with their great organization, although Tanya has developed a pretty good organization too. But in the beginning really it was just homemade stuff you know. She had this place out there and she had one printer maybe and everybody was pitching in there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The one room was the printing room and the other room was the dining room.

LEO CASTELLI: That's right. Have you been out there?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yes, yes.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, you know her. So it started very modestly like everything else. My gallery too started very modestly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Those early Jasper Johns prints that he made there are very sought after now.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, they're immensely sought after. I remember that the *Target*, if I remember correctly, was selling for seventy-five dollars apiece and I think that the *Target* people would pay four thousand dollars or more for it. There are prints of Jasper's that have fetched fantastic prices. Like those cans, I think there were two or three sales of those for about nine thousand dollars apiece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

LEO CASTELLI: And it was an edition of 25 or so he had originally. Now the prints of Jasper come out already very expensive, very good, complex prints come out at two thousand dollars or more, when they appear. But you can't have them. At that time I could have any number of them but now she has developed an organization whereby all the prints are automatically bought by patrons so that if you have a normal edition of 35, 30 are earmarked and I get two actually. That's all I get, one for myself and one or two perhaps for sale. Then Jasper and she also keep quite a few out of every edition. So to get a Tanya Grossman print is, I mean of Jasper's especially—is almost an impossibility. But it's strange what happened, Jasper has remained pretty, although he does lots of prints at Gemini, goes on consistently doing prints also at Tanya's whereas, for instance. Rauschenberg, apart from Gemini, does one thousand and one things at the University of Southern Florida, or South Florida he has expanded his activity to an incredible degree, Jasper has remained more, well, he does the two things, Gemini and Tanya and perhaps a few silkscreens for himself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now and then.

LEO CASTELLI: Now and then. Rosenquist worked at Tanya's but then he got very impatient with her because the process is very slow there and he just didn't feel like going back and forth. And then she was saying, no, no, that's no good and we have to wait, it has to simmer down, and you should come back and you do this way. Actually Jasper one evening many years ago explained to me why the quality of the Tanya prints is so different from the Gemini prints. That's because when they go to California they have a certain time earmarked for work there. They stay out there and do it intensively day after day for two weeks or three weeks sometimes. So it has to be done. Whereas at Tanya's they begin something then they let it go, then they come again. So it has all that vintage quality which cannot be obtained at Gemini because there it is a job. They have produced superb prints but they're always, they look like—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They're cold.

LEO CASTELLI: Cold and mechanical, they haven't got that warmth Tanya's prints have. But certainly Gemini is a superb shop, there's nothing similar in the whole world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like an operating room to go to that place. You know?

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, it's a fantastic operation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The machines and the people and everything.

LEO CASTELLI: Quite amazing, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic. But the whole print aspect of the art world has changed so much.

LEO CASTELLI: It's changed very, very much everything has changed. We should really begin it again and discuss these enormous changes in climate, atmosphere.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you think that happens? Do you think that the original work, the drawings and paintings and things got to be so expensive and people wanted something and —

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, I think that it started out that way, that they were very expensive, they were scarce. Jasper Johns was doing very little, has been always doing relatively little. Rauschenberg also —well, he was productive but then he stopped really doing things that were sellable and also got really not very productive. He got involved with the Art and Technology affair and then he did all that kind of material, he did those rather large pieces. He wasted a lot of time on that as far as I'm concerned. Large metal pieces, sound pieces and what not and or huge electronic things, he got very involved with that. Fortunately, he has dropped it now and he does work that's hand-made where technology doesn't play—not an immediate role because after all now he uses cardboard and cardboard is a technology. The one he uses is once removed, not direct, I think it was a very unfortunate episode for Rauschenberg and many other artists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, a lot of people were intrigued by it.

LEO CASTELLI: It was a wrong. I never, never believed in it. I never have believed in kinetic art or any art that used too much technology. Now for instance a man like Nauman does use technology but he doesn't give a damn about the equipment, what it produces really, almost like a mountain that produces a mouse, he has supreme contempt for all the machinery except just what he wants or he needs. But it's minimal. Instead of glorifying the technical means he just plays them down completely. A characteristic thing of his mockery is that he uses this very complex modern device, the hologram—I don't know whether you saw those holograms of Bruce Nauman's?

PAUL CUMMINGS: A few years ago, yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: What he does is just poke fun of it in his images instead of being serious about the technology of the thing. But, we have to talk about all these tremendous changes, how they've occurred, why they occur. Of course there was a demand for more of, it has been immensely useful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The print.

LEO CASTELLI: To diffuse, to diffuse the imagery of a Jasper Johns, of a Rauschenberg or Lichtenstein, also Stella. Practically all his works exist in prints so it becomes very familiar. It also, I hope and I think, because I'm not around that much, decorates many, many modern offices instead of those inane prints that they use to have before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, one thing that has interested me about the operation of the galleries is that you've always been cooperative with people, like giving slides and photographs and material like that and I've often wondered if you've ever thought how practical that documentary activity was in the sense of people being able to write about everything because they could come and get three photographs or give a lecture.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, that was important to me. When I started this gallery—as I said before—I had a sense of mission and since I have a historical background I knew what material is needed to advance this part of the art, of art history, that you needed documents, that you needed proper archives and so on and so forth. So I had that sense that I was not just there to sell paintings, as a matter of fact that seemed to be the last thing that I was really involved with, but there was a mission to be accomplished to find the best artists, to go on helping in supporting these great trends. It may be even playing an important role in that, well, like the old patrons used to do in the time of the Renaissance or the Baroque period, the popes, and other people like that, and then later during the age of Louis XIV where art was so seriously considered, and then in the 19th century some important people—I mean there was that sense of history that I always felt in connection with what I was doing. And I still feel—although things have changed so much—I still feel that there is some kind of mission that I have. [Audio break] So that's the idea, you know, when I think of the great flowering of the thing which occurred say in '60, '63, '64, '65, the Solomon era. But then, there were ups and downs and perhaps things weren't that simple anymore, all kind of complex countercurrents had developed. There was a strong reaction against what I and Solomon had been doing on the part of the forces of Greenberg and helped effectively by Geldzahler who was all on the side of Greenberg after having been very involved with Andy. There was a change of heart that occurred there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which is very interesting because it seems to now become more and more apparent.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, he has become more and more and more an establishment figure I would say. A very extraordinary man actually, Henry. Did you ever have a chance to talk to him? He's witty, pleasant, articulate and full of insights and things but more now tending to be part of that particular persuasion. He has lost interest, although his great show at the Metropolitan wasn't bad at all. Again, it was a great enterprise, a great thing that he accomplished there. He forgot a little bit about his idiosyncrasies and did it. I think it actually was very, well, with some intrusions and exclusions, a great job that reflected really what had happened, it reflected the events of the '60s. It was a good show. Or rather two decades actually, he really did a great summation of two decades of art in America. Of course as you know, that show was very severely criticized in many quarters as anything of that magnitude, a monstrous mess. But I think it was very good, now I would say that unconditionally.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: The thirteenth of April, 1973, Paul Cummings talking to Leo Castelli in his office.

LEO CASTELLI: Rauschenberg. Well, Rauschenberg is, of the artists in the gallery, the one that I got to know earlier than the others. Of course, I knew the Abstract Expressionists before, but not so much. I got to know Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko, those people in the late forties and at the time The Club got organized. Then Rauschenberg actually I think I met for the first time not much later, say in '51 when he had a show at Betty Parsons. At that time I was organizing that Ninth Street show and it was on that occasion that I was going to the main galleries of the time, Betty Parsons, Kootz, Janis existed already sure late forties. I was looking for various new artists for that show and Rauschenberg happened to have a show at that time. It must have been since the Ninth Street show took place in May maybe to really fix the date, it was a little before that. April, March or April. I mean I got to know Rauschenberg's work and I really don't quite remember when I first physically saw him.

That's strange, but one doesn't remember sometimes. Sometimes one remembers those things and sometimes one doesn't. So that was first occasion and then I picked a painting, I can't remember exactly how it looked, which I put in that Ninth Street show. Then, not much later really, there were the Stable shows that occurred after Ninth Street show in '52, '53, the Stable Annuals as they were called. Rauschenberg was at the Stable at that time and there was even a show, I can't remember with great precision. We could probably find it. It was a show that he had together with Twombly at the Stable. I think it was downstairs and I remember the things that he had there. So by the date of those things, if I could find in the book, I could almost determine when—that would be quite interesting because—

PAUL CUMMINGS: When everything started.

LEO CASTELLI: When everything started. There was a little box with spiky things that he had there and there were other things of that type which seemed very strange to me although not entirely unfamiliar. After all there had been the Schwitters collages and the constructions that Miro did some things of that type. But anyway that was what he was doing then, and I can't remember now whether he had all these objects around in the basement of the Stable gallery, not on the ground floor. That's is my recollection, maybe it's a wrong recollection. There were actually two floors at the Stable if you remember, do you remember the Stable well? And that smell, that haunting smell. So there was that show down in the basement and maybe the Twombly paintings were around the walls and Bob's things which were objects all around there on the floor. At that time he did that piece

where he sowed some grass on a frame and then the grass sprouted and then he hung it as a painting and that was the famous earth piece. He did quite fantastic inventions there in the beginning. I really would like to have a look at the book because if I get the date there I could tell what - '51, I may have seen that famous white painting at Betty Parsons but I didn't get one of those because I remember there was some kind of motif, I don't know which on those paintings. Anyway since we are speaking about the white paintings, I had a show of those in the gallery up here a while ago, a revival of those and the funny thing is that they had to be completely redone because he had used those canvases for other paintings and you can even identify them, where they are.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. I know where most of those canvases went. So now there is a show of those again and they again had been redone, because my show was maybe three or four years ago. He didn't use them again, he wouldn't need that anymore, but they got dirty and so they had to be restretched, repainted and they're out in Los Angeles at Douglas Christmas, there's a show there. Bob actually went out for that show. And now let's see if I can find that famous painting, the red one, the beetle box, '51 also, page 41, that I had in mind. This is one of those pieces or similar to those that appeared at the Stable at the time. Let's see if I can find another one of the period or even later to be able to determine. I think that that show that I saw was in '52 certainly because then in '53—end of '53— he had that famous show of red paintings at Egan's. He had moved from Stable to Egan's and that show had among other things, among other paintings that famous painting called *Charlene*—with the light flashing on and off. That's now at the museum in Amsterdam. And I remember very well that that show started at the end of '53 and went on through to '54 and it was not the old Egan Gallery, he had moved across the street and had agreement with Poindexter Gallery that they were to do things together. Then, that collapsed very rapidly and he became the pure Poindexter Gallery and Egan then disappeared from circulation for a long time until he reappeared in the Fuller Building, where he still is I presume.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, he's—

LEO CASTELLI: Nothing happens, nothing happens there anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's gone, yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, do you, just incidentally, do you see him? Does anybody see him? Nobody knows what he's doing?

PAUL CUMMINGS: He lives on 79th Street and Third Avenue.

LEO CASTELLI: And that's all you know? Nobody's seen him in a long while. Curious man, this Egan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Very strange.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, that sort of brings back early, my early feelings about him. Well anyway so there were these things that went on down at the Stable. There was this famous episode where he smuggled a Jasper Johns painting in with his paintings at the Stable. Do you know about that thing?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, that was a fantastic story, those people who exhibited at the Annual. There was a group of painters, mostly the ones that were in the first Annual, could then propose two or one I don't remember exactly, I think one other painter to join the group the next year. So Bob proposed Jasper and that must have been for the '54 Annual, because Jasper didn't do flags before then, even perhaps '55, I don't know how long those Annuals went on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Quite a while but they changed after a while.

LEO CASTELLI: Anyway, '54 it was, or '55 it must have been, yes. Because he didn't do flags that were as perfect before that. Maybe '54, but '55 is more likely. So he proposed Jasper Johns and well, he showed whoever, there was a committee who went around to see if they approved. It was actually two persons because he proposed Jasper Johns and Sue then Weil, his ex wife, who now is married to Bernard Kirschenbaum . Hers and Jasper's. And they rejected them both, the committee, they didn't like what they were doing. So then Rauschenberg did a large structure, which still exists, and he put into this structure, a painting of Jasper's—a flag— and a painting of Sue Weil's which was sort of representational. And they were enclosed with little doors in front of them and they were closed. It was a typical Rauschenberg painting of the period, his collage and materials and things and everything and he brought it in innocently and said here's my painting. Then when it was all hung and the show started, then he opened the door and here on the left hand side was Jasper Johns and on the right hand side was Sue Weil.

But then there is a coda to that story. I had very bad warehouses at the time, very sloppy kind of treatment of whatever I got, that was one that I had on First Avenue. Nobody ever went there. And it was much too accessible through an elevator to whoever wanted to go in there and people and paintings were stacked badly and it was generally a sloppy organization. Not as good as I have it now. And one day I was looking at the painting after many years that I hadn't seen it. And I opened it and it was empty. The flag had disappeared. So a terrible thing. And we didn't know what to do about it. But as luck would have it. No, it happened that way, it happened differently. We didn't look at the painting. One day somebody came. Oh. Bob Elkon phoned me and said, "I have a very pretty flag of Jasper Johns, I don't know whether it's authentic or not, it's not signed and I would like to show it to you. Can I come?" So he came with the flag and there, it was the flag that was the inside the painting! So I said just wait a second. I sent somebody down to the place and I told him to open that case and see if the painting of the flag was there and the flag wasn't there. So I said well, my dear, this is a stolen flag so please leave it here. He said no, I can't. It would be a terrible disaster. It's been given to me by somebody who would suffer direly if I didn't give it back to her (it was Gertrude Stein, by the way) and please I will take care of it, I'll get it to you. I said alright if you promise that you'll take care of it and get it back and straighten it out with her. I never got the flag back. She made a terrible hysterical scene and said I will bring it back to you. I'll bring it back to you. She never did and the flag disappeared for good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And it has never turned up since?

LEO CASTELLI: Never turned up again. So then Elaine Sturtevant who was doing those imitation paintings did one, a very ugly one I must say, she didn't do a good imitation and that we put into that painting.

So this is an incidental story. A very nice story. All kinds of things come in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, one of the things that has always interested me as an outside observer you might say, is that Rauschenberg and Johns have been now here through all the changes and activities. And many times one always got the feeling some way or another that they were kind of more than just one of the artists in the stable in a way.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, in more than one sense this is true. They were, to begin with, almost *the* gallery. There were three people that were the gallery; myself, Rauschenberg and Johns. As a matter of fact, it was me comma Rauschenberg hyphen Johns, because they seem to be sort of always, everybody mentioned them in the same breath, RauschenbergandJohns. As a matter of fact, later on, Johns got—there were other reasons too—got so irked by this coupling, this constant coupling that occurred that he—this is certainly one of the reasons why he broke with Rauschenberg.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

LEO CASTELLI: Because he just did not want to be constantly mentioned in the same breath with Rauschenberg. Well, there were other reasons of course, they started diverging also on aesthetic grounds and so on. Rauschenberg did not approve of the direction that Johns was taking and Johns didn't approve of what Rauschenberg was doing, especially when the silkscreens came up. I think that was a moment that Johns rejected, that he didn't like at all. And I think that when Jasper abandoned the emblematic image that he had and become very personally mysterious in what he was doing, that Rauschenberg didn't like that too much either. So there was a split that occurred in the early sixties or around '61 and for a time really they didn't see each other at all. As a matter of fact, it occurred already. I can even date it—how things come back!—because I was down at—I always can date it because there are paintings or drawings that then remind me of the exact date. I was down at Longboat Key, that's near Sarasota. Jasper had taken a little place, a little house there on the beach and he invited me to come down to spend a few days there. And I know that Rauschenberg was around in that area too, and that—really Jasper didn't want to see him. I was sort of rather embarrassed because I was a good friend of both of them and not to be able to see him when he was around seemed to me a rather difficult position that I was in. But Jasper said that he did not want to see him. So that split must have occurred quite early, perhaps already in the beginning of 1960 or even late '59. And I can remember it because down at Longboat Key he did a series of drawings of which I have one, an alphabet drawing which he was doing at the time when I was there and so that dates my recollection of the split very accurately. So they were part of the gallery and the gallery was part of my household, from '58 through '59 say. It was just a marvelous group of friends for a long time. It was really only '57 when I got to know Jasper. I knew Bob much longer, but I didn't see him often until I really opened the gallery and we began our serious relationship. I just occasionally saw him here or there at The Cedar or I went to his studio to see some of the things that he was doing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you know one of the things that sort of turns up, I know artists used to complain about it and maybe it wasn't even true that their influence was so strong here that it was very difficult for other people to get through to you.

LEO CASTELLI: That's not true really. There was certainly let's say a pervasive involvement that existed between me and them, and what they were doing was actually the kind of thing that I really liked. But I had many other artists at the time. I had started out sort of lamely with younger Abstract Expressionists that I used to know like Brach, and I liked sort of crazy things always so when Marisol came along with wooden things I liked that because it was screwball and fresh. Then I had sort of a vague idea that I would show some younger European artists but that really didn't work out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I'm thinking of a few years later, say about 1962 or '63.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, that I can utterly deny, because in '62 the Pop group came in and the Pop group was to begin with frowned upon and rejected by Bob—not for a long time, by Jasper for a longer period of time. He really didn't digest it right away and I don't know whether I told you that episode of Jasper frowning when he saw the first Lichtenstein that I had here and Bob accepting it rather after being shocked by them and disturbed, accepting them the next day after thinking it over. But Jasper, it took Jasper longer to accept this movement that after all was his foster child, he was very much responsible for it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, you know how, one thing that's interesting is that there's so much activity generated by the work of those two people—

LEO CASTELLI: Enormous activity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The magazines picked them up and the newspapers and museums—

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, they sort of thought that it was my public relations genius at work there but it wasn't that at all. Actually I was so involved with them, so enthusiastic that I just couldn't stop talking about them, not so that I would pick up the phone and tell Tom Hess that I have got these two geniuses and you must do something about them. I don't know whether I ever told you that episode about the *ARTnews* cover—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes *ARTnews*, right.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, that sort of demonstrates the fact that I did not ever go out of my way to actually do high pressure salesmanship for them. There was a pervasive involvement that you just mentioned with them that made me talk about their work constantly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do you think it was that and the enthusiasm that a lot of people empathized with?

LEO CASTELLI: I had practically a religious faith in them and that's probably why I succeeded without high pressuring anybody in communicating to the outside world. I think if I never had such a fantastic involvement with any other painters after this, well, there was a youthful, you know that youthful love for these two and for their work and my total involvement so it probably did carry over, because just to give you an example, everybody may think that the cover of *ARTnews* that occurred in January '58 on the occasion of Jasper's first one-man show at the gallery, that I had pestered Tom. I knew Tom, but we weren't really very close—I saw him occasionally and that was all. And when he came that day, I don't know how he had heard that I was doing the show, I hadn't certainly told him about it, and he looked around and then said I would like to take this painting—it was a target with little faces—along with me and I said alright Tom take it. And he even asked me. Just imagine now dealing with a Jasper Johns, a little hundred thousand dollars like that. Take it, Tom, take it. I didn't ask him what he wanted to do, I didn't even suspect that he wanted to do the cover. I didn't know what he would do with it. As a matter of fact I was very modest and unassuming at that time and I wouldn't expect to ask questions if any person with as much authority of Tom Hess or Clem Greenberg would come around, I would be extremely respectful and would accept whatever they would say as the gospel.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I am reminded of something you said a couple of years ago. When you began the gallery you had this small collection of your own.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you've never really used the gallery to build your own collection have you?

LEO CASTELLI: Not in a sense. My own collection came about casually and let's say there were two forces that actually built. The collection, the small collection that I had from previous time and especially was bought with Ileana's money because I didn't have any money myself. She had not much, but she had a little more than I did and so actually what happened is that she bought those Pollocks that appeared in two of my shows, or those Légers and Klees etc. that I had, that I then sold and which sort of permitted me to go on with the work of the gallery. But then my own collection, of course one got presents on the occasion from the artists or for one reason or another, as everybody does. I got a few paintings, a few little things, some quite precious from Franz Kline, from de Kooning, from Marca Relli from Friedel Dzubas. When I did that Ninth Street show, artists in appreciation of the work that I had done—gave me gouaches or drawings or whatever, whatever they did, so that was a small group of things that I had. Then when I started the gallery, I did not do the things that say Eleanor Ward did. Eleanor Ward had an agreement with her artists, she was also poor, she didn't have much money to defray the expense, very modest at that time, of publicity and the announcement and lighting, whatever expenses were connected with the show which lasted about a month in the gallery. So to defray those expenses she would keep one painting. That would be the contribution of the artist to the expense of the show. Actually the artist in a certain sense was paying for his show, indirectly in that way, except that then the paintings were worth so little and maybe unsellable. It was just a gesture. But I didn't adopt this system and I didn't buy the paintings, except very rarely. The first painting that I actually bought I think, if I'm not mistaken was Jasper's *Target with Plaster Casts*. Of course I was particularly involved with Jasper and that show was quite successful and I made a little money because as you know, everybody knows the Modern bought so many of them. There was a little money that I got and at the end of the show some paintings had remained

over. There was a big white flag that nobody had bought that was priced at two thousand dollars at that time and the *Target with Plaster Casts*, that was priced at twelve hundred. But there it was not so much the fact that it was twelve hundred dollars that was an obstacle, because Barr really wanted to buy it as I told you, it was really the obstacle of the green, pink penis there that people sort of found a little bit rough, as you can imagine—and that's not so long ago. So when the show was over and I think I told you that episode, I said Jasper, what do we do now with these two paintings. I said I would like to keep one and Jasper said he would like to keep one. That was really my first purchase. Then one other painting that I wanted very badly was that Bob's *Bed*. And then when his show was over I really bought that because that was the first painting of Bob's that I had seen and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was so appealing to you about that? Why did you want that particular one?

LEO CASTELLI: First of all, by all standards, even now after he has done so many things, it remains one of his greatest works, I think. And what appealed to me at that time, because it was the beginning and didn't have the standard of comparison with other things, was the fact that it was so significant to me. The bed as one of the important things in a man's life. I mean, he's conceived, he dies, or a woman gets raped. I mean that symbol of human life. Maybe there wasn't all that much meaning, probably not. But the fact is that often the painter does a thing and he doesn't know what's in it because it comes out of his unconscious, and then I seeing it, I interpret in my own way and also find some of his unconscious operation. But anyway, I got that. So generally speaking, it was not so much to begin with to collect things. But I would love to have them around, to have these things in my apartment. First of all I didn't have any apartment for quite a while, and I lived in a very strange way after Ileana and I separated. Up to this time we had a fairly decent apartment.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You lived up here, didn't you for a while?

LEO CASTELLI: For a while here. When we started the gallery we lived decently so to speak because the gallery was on this side, here and back, there was a large L-shaped room and then another room which was sort of an office and there was a kitchen right at the entrance and then in the back there were two bedrooms and that's where we lived and then we had the gallery. So there was that. It was a pretty strange kind of living but anyway that's how we lived until '59 when this floor became free and I moved up. Then we gave up the apartment upstairs altogether and Ileana left. I don't remember exactly, she must have left in '59. And then I lived in total disorder I think for a couple of years or so, just in that room up front in the gallery. There was just a bed in there and I lived there amidst sculptures and paintings and were just—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, was that in the first room in the front there?

LEO CASTELLI: In the front, well, in the front there were two rooms at that time. There was a bedroom and a living room which was divided and there was also a little kitchen up front and then a bathroom and there I lived I think for a few months until we started work on that gallery. Then I really was nowhere for awhile, here and there, at friends mostly until I got an apartment, until I met Toiny. I met Toiny in the summer of '59 and then she started putting some order into my life and said that I couldn't go on living that way and that I should have an apartment. Then, I got this apartment in a very nice old Washington Square type house, I think on 16th Street and I got a very nice apartment in that house. I can't remember when I got that but it must have been—again it seems as if I had it for a very long time. But it was very brief really. Probably Only for a couple of years. It must have been 1961 or '62 because in '63 then I got this apartment after Jean-Christophe was born. So I must have been living around like that for a couple of years: here and then elsewhere. And then perhaps a little over a year, I had that apartment in 16th Street. But I had some of the furniture that I have now for instance that long Shaker table and all kinds of things and at that time I began hanging the paintings in that apartment. So that it was actually back in 1960, must have been '60.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had a very busy year, back then.

LEO CASTELLI: When I started having an apartment I had the *Target with Plaster Casts* hanging there and the *Bed* etc. and some of the paintings, I can't remember all the things that were there. Then in '63 I moved into the apartment and that began really my collection. I think that Bernice is largely responsible for the fact that what is there is there because I

tended to be pretty easy going. She just insisted that those things could not and should not be sold. I would have probably hung on to just the two things like the *Bed* and the *Target* because they meant more to me than anything else but then she felt that she liked this and she liked that and so they would get into the apartment and then of course they wouldn't leave the apartment anymore and she would find a little money of her own to actually buy them so that it would be sure that they wouldn't be sold for one reason or another. So that's how it came about. I still sometimes or other tend to want a painting pretty badly or she does but now the operation is so expensive that I can't hang onto a painting anymore. And they are so much more expensive to buy. For instance, if I wanted a Lichtenstein as I did recently, one of those still lifes, I would have had to put away like ten thousand dollars which is much more than I can really afford to with the fantastic expenses that I have here now to keep this place going.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the places and the people.

LEO CASTELLI: And all the people. Some people really are very good and hold their own, others are deeply in the red and so on so it is a time when I can't afford to indulge in fancy expressions.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, speaking of figures being in the red, when did you start supporting the artists, giving them advances and loans and whatever?

LEO CASTELLI: Well actually the system was really a very screwball one I must say. I was giving these advances which wasn't much, I can't remember exactly. We could go, one day, for the chronicle, we could go back to old records and see how much they were getting in the beginning. That would be interesting. It would all come out of the records. But let's suppose I was giving Jasper five hundred dollars and Bob five hundred dollars, perhaps even less, God knows at that time we were all so modest. So I think that I must have started doing it right from, almost from the beginning, at least from the time of the first show of Bob and Jasper's. Now what happens now generally speaking is that if a painter is in the red I just buy the works to cover. Sometimes I really am not particularly interested in keeping a particular series of works and then well, I just keep that running up and well, maybe then I would cover it again with something that I want to have or several things that I want to have, or just leave it at that hoping for the best, as I do with so many artists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, what about the whole business of the commissions and the projects?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh the commissions that doesn't function too well, actually. It's a difficult problem. There have been quite a few commissions but one doesn't seem to be able to make any money on that because usually the materials are very expensive and they sort of beat you down. You deal with monstrous corporations for whom the work will be fifty-three thousand dollars and forty-five cents and that's exactly that, you know. So the commissions I have had—also from private people— didn't yield very much and generally speaking I'm not terribly geared to commissions. They do occur because I have so many galleries that work with me there in St. Louis and Minneapolis. Yes, the commissions is a special chapter. So as I was saying, there are people who try to get them in Texas and in the middlewest or elsewhere, but it never seems to work out. You know that is a special thing. I have contacts with architects and I know them very well like Pei or Bunshaft and they're friends. I've known them for years and when we meet here or there and Pei especially recently said, yes we must get together about doing things with these various people like Serras and Judds in one or the other of my projects. And then I told him okay, I.M. give me a ring if you have something, I can't keep after you. And so nothing ever happens. Probably some people who who run around with a bad artist that they promote gets the job.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Probably gets a lot of them, right.

LEO CASTELLI: I think that especially Marlborough let's say gets lot of commissions for Rosenthal and Rosenthal certainly is not one of the great artists. But probably it's impossible, it's rarely possible to get really good work, serious work into one of those buildings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very difficult. There are so many people involved with the decisions.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. So I haven't had any good experiences with commissions. Of course some marvelous things were commissioned and carried out. Joe Pulitzer out in St. Louis did a

marvelous Serra, a metal piece done in the mountains, very important one, Judd piece done, but really it was handled by Joe Helman who is running that gallery there now.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But the commissions are rather recent though, aren't they?

LEO CASTELLI: Oh, I think that before that monuments of South American generals were the things that they used to put in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean Rauschenberg hasn't done commissions has he?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, Rauschenberg's work is difficult for commission. It has been, generally speaking, difficult for institutions except for his silkscreen period where those could be placed on big walls. But nothing happened ever there. There was the New York State Theater that Philip Johnson did where there was a group of commissions that he obtained and there is that marvelous Jasper Johns' *Numbers* piece which one really should take out of there. It's become a very valuable thing and it's just absurd that it should be there and not in a museum and somebody pointed out to me that it was just insane to keep a piece like that there and I should speak to Philip and see if we can replace it with something else and get this piece into the Modern where it will be handled much better. I think people touch it constantly there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes-

LEO CASTELLI: So there was that at that time. These were commissions that the Lists paid for. But generally speaking there wasn't that much that I got. As you pointed out, there are too many complicated interests involved.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Too many cooks in the kitchen.

LEO CASTELLI: And sometimes the difficulty of the artist's work. Like it's not easy to install a Serra piece anyway, he usually needs two acres for a piece of his and Judd begins to be of some interest but then most people would say what is it? Just boxes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How about Morris?

LEO CASTELLI: Morris. No, no commissions actually. He's being bought for outside spaces, Hofstra Museum has a good piece and now one piece goes to Washington, I think on the grounds of the Hirshhorn Museum, but generally speaking it's not commissions. It's large pieces that he's done on one occasion or another that they can finally use.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what about Johns because he came in—?

LEO CASTELLI: Johns has been more difficult there. Naturally commissions would have been possible, except he did some for private collectors, he did for instance three important paintings for Scull: a target, a large double flag and a large double map of America, white So, he did those three things. Then he did, for Kraushar, a target of the complementary colors. He did those a target and a flag during the Op period when everybody was concerned with optical things and there was that show of Bill Seitz' at the museum, do you remember?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh yeah. *Responsive Eye*?

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah. Then at that time, just out of fun, Jasper did one painting, a flag, a so-called optical flag where he had the complementary colors on top with a point and then there was an area underneath where there was a flag, I think it was in sculpted metal, or just gray relief underneath. Then you would look at the point. There was also a point in the middle of the flag. You would look at that point and fix it for awhile. And then you would look down at the gray flag and you would have a white and blue flag. And he did then the same thing, but that was commissioned—with a target—by Kraushar and then Kraushar died, after his death it went to the Ströher collection in Darmstadt. So that one and a few other things that he did, like that *Numbers* painting for the Lincoln Center. They don't really, Jasper, nobody likes to do it very much. He did that large map of the world which was so to speak a commission because Alan Solomon at that time was in charge of putting the art in that American Pavilion back in '67 and so he asked Bob and Kelly and Noland those artists and Jasper and Andy to do large paintings for that show. Bob did a neon sign painting that now was given to the Pasadena Museum. It's out there, it's out in front of the building. It's still there, that neon sign painting. Andy did his self-portrait, large six by sixes and several of

them, there were five of them I believe there. And Jasper did that enormous world map that's 33 feet long according to Buckminster Fuller's projection, so it's all jagged because in theory you should be able to put it into a polygon.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's gone to Germany too, hasn't it?

LEO CASTELLI: That went to Ludwig, well to Colonge and it's there. So anyway he did that and then incidentally after it came back from that exhibition he looked at it and then redid it completely. I asked him why and he said, well it looked too much like a map. He labored a year transforming it completely into a painting from a map, he thought. So that was another commission you can say, although it was not paid for except for the materials. So there were commissions here. Stella actually does enormous paintings so I sold a couple very large ones, 27 footers. One to the Seattle Airport so it becomes almost like a commission painting for a public building, and one for a bank in Texas again because it was a very large painting for a large room. There didn't seem any point to do another one since it fitted the space very beautifully. Two of those we can consider almost as commissions. But Stella of course would lend himself to doing commissions, but he was not very eager to do them. Whenever one spoke of commissions, then he would paint enormous paintings and he would say well here it is, and you can use them for that particular purpose.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's interesting, that some artists seem to do commissions easier than others.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, yes I would say that usually I wouldn't say that the good artist has more trouble in doing a commission, but it may be a little bit that. Unless it's really something that he likes very much to do, he doesn't just want just to do something because there is a space there. He has to like the space very much and be involved with that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And have an idea for it.

LEO CASTELLI: Because everything that a good artist does who really has lot of work, lots of ideas and things that he does is that even if it's a poster or a lithograph, it's an important involvement and unless he likes to do it because it's for a purpose for a place that he likes to do it for, he won't be very happy. They all make enough money anyway, they're not after money you see. Most of those people who get all those commissions are really need the money and therefore they are like all those Guggenheim fellowship people. It's very difficult to get a Guggenheim fellowship unless if you don't spend a lot of time writing up—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Forms and letters.

LEO CASTELLI: Forms and letters and reports and bother people to write recommendations. An artist who is very busy doing his own thing—whether he needs the money or not—probably won't find the time who would be so geared to do things like that? So one generally finds that all the wrong people get the Guggenheims. No not always, I was looking at the list of the ones that got it this year and some most deserving people like Smithson, Ryman, etc. But sometimes it's just the most mediocre artists who get them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's funny. One painter friend of mine had applied to it ten years and had been rejected and then he gave up, he said that's enough. And a couple years later he got a letter from them suggesting that that year he apply. When they ask you, you know you're going to get it, and he got it.

LEO CASTELLI: Good, I was just smiling about it. It seems so much of the time the money that they got this year amounted to three thousand six hundred seventy five dollars, not quite four thousand dollars and on that money, an artist would really be able to live half a year and devote his time to do whatever he intended to do. In the case of painters usually it was just to have time to do some work without worrying too much about the daily bread. Now, what with inflation and what with enormous prices that even the youngest painter gets for a single canvas that he sells it seems just peanuts. It still must be quite important, I saw for instance that a friend of mine, a writer, got a Guggenheim. For him it probably still is very significant that he has that money because for him it still means a lot. For a painter, four thousand dollars is no money anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think about the fact that young artists now are getting just tremendous prices right out of school almost, do you think that it's good or bad?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it's irrelevant because those that are good are relatively few. Let's see what painters did come up that are just painters who get fairly high prices and have become prominent lately, say like Brice Marden, like Dorothea Rockburne. Well, Dorothea Rockburne, for instance, had worked very hard and unsuccessfully for at least fifteen years before she got to be recognized. And Brice Marden is young, it's true, but still he had worked for several years before his paintings got to be noticed. Now it seems to be sort of standard to give a young artist for a largish canvas three hundred dollars or thereabouts. But do people buy them? And if they buy them, what are—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But ten years ago it was three hundred and fifty or four hundred.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, now it's five, six hundred dollars for a smallish canvas. For a large canvas, and there are many of those, that kind of price to be about twelve.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That used to be a lot of money.

LEO CASTELLI: But you know how it is, every young painter has some people who are interested in his work and who buy one or two or three. Sometimes what they did would be just a marvelous investment if they happen to buy at that time a Pollock or a de Kooning or a Rauschenberg for instance. People did buy Rauschenbergs of the red period of '53 for fifty dollars, just to give him something. Not that it probably was a great sacrifice for them to fork out fifty dollars to make it possible for him to pay his rent. And so for instance those few red paintings that were sold at that time for that amount of money—there's one for instance that the half brother of what was his name, Goodwin. John Goodwin one day, many years ago, asked me to come over to his apartment, it was right across the park on 81st Street that corner building and he had a penthouse there and he had a red painting of Rauschenberg, beautiful. He said he was moving and wanted to just sell everything that was big (and that was relatively large, six foot by four) and I said yes, I'd like to have it and I bought it and I think I paid three thousand dollars and that was well, maybe ten years ago or more. Then, unfortunately, I sold it a few years later to Weisman, that was already fifteen thousand dollars, and a painting like that is worth easily sixty or seventy thousand. So everything was premature. So Goodwin, if he had just waited out instead of selling it to me, and I had waited out instead of selling it to Weisman—well, you can speak of Goodwin who really bought something from a young artist because he needed fifty dollars. He really didn't care about it at all, but he said okay, I'll give you fifty dollars and Rauschenberg of course would insist that he keep the painting. So he had that painting, had he waited until today with that investment of fifty dollars he would have a seventy thousand dollar painting on his hands. It's like a lottery—just a few cases where that may happen, not very often.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's so hard to tell.

LEO CASTELLI: When a young painter is at an early stage, when he's meaningless practically is bought out of charity, out of friendship or else maybe because somebody thinks that it's good, because it perhaps it looks like a Stella, and that person who made it quite ignorantly think that he's as good as Stella, that often happens.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes a lot.

LEO CASTELLI: And it may happen that one of those, one out of one thousand is the jackpot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do you think there are many people who buy young artists like that with an investment motive or potential?

LEO CASTELLI: Not really investment, a bit maybe they hear so many success stories you know, maybe they have an idea in their heads that perhaps that might become very valuable. But generally speaking is that they are with the art movement, they're involved with a pretty good artist. They don't buy them cold, generally speaking, unless it is in a gallery. But most of the time those young artists have some friends in the bourgeois society who really like their work and buy it. That's more the rule.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he buying for investment attitude, that comes later when the prices get higher.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes. There is no idea of investing with those people. — They do it to help the artist. To help the arts.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. But I mean later when he has had shows—

LEO CASTELLI: When he has shows, then they really get interested and the more when he advances the more then the investment angle begins to dominate, there's no question about that. We all get corrupted—

PAUL CUMMINGS: By all the profits and things.

[END OF castel69may_7of8_reel_SideB.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's the 8th of June 1973.

LEO CASTELLI: Let's speak about the financial problem.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well one of the things I used to hear years ago was that some artists had an interest in the gallery. I often wondered if that was a fact or that was sort of gossip, say, fiction somebody had created at some point.

LEO CASTELLI: I didn't quite get the question?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's that maybe Johns or Rauschenberg had an interest, financial interest in the gallery say in the early sixties.

LEO CASTELLI: No that was sheer and total nonsense, sheer fiction. They had a financial interest. They wanted the gallery to do well because that meant they would get money. Otherwise, I managed my finances without consulting them on that topic. Our relationship was just friendship based on aesthetic reasons but not of financial. Of course economical interests as a topic played a role, but they were not directly involved in the economy of the gallery. No, it was my responsibility, duty, which I felt very strongly, to keep them going. Oddly enough, at that time, the American system of taking painting of the artist on consignment not purchasing them was prevalent. Now things have changed considerably. There are certain artists who just prefer the system of getting so much a month toward the purchase of work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did that start changing would you say?

LEO CASTELLI: There has always been a European system and those European dealers would buy—even fairly recently—from important painters' work for ridiculous prices. There was no, as we have now, fifty-fifty basis, or third basis. They would get them for nothing. There is also a great production there. Very different the way the European artists or artists in general worked. There are some here who still produce a lot—Stella does, Noland say, Olitski I think produces a lot. But generally speaking, artists either produce little or let's say sporadically. Sometimes periods go by when they don't do anything or else they produce work that's not terribly sellable at the moment it is produced because it is very new and people, collectors at least, don't know what to do with it, except really people like Panza who have an enormous amount of space and total faith in what young artists are doing. If they write three words on a piece of paper, that for him is just as valid as a work of art as a piece that [inaudible] and valid as any, any large traditional canvas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But have you found that more artists, say in the last half dozen years, prefer selling things than having them on consignment?

LEO CASTELLI: Well really not, actually. It also depends on what they produce. Naturally I'd be more than happy to buy things if there is a reasonable assurance that I also am making a proper investment. I make the investment anyway, you know, I will go on financing the artists or at least try to as far as I can. Usually, I do satisfy their needs, but sometimes I won't feel like accumulating material that maybe I won't be able to do anything with in the future. So actually what happens there is that the artists may remain my debtor for quite a lot of money and my not using that money to purchase anything from them. In the end I probably would and will. But it seems in the case of Flavin, for instance, where he produces a lot but things are not so easily sellable to private collectors. There are installations and things that he does and commissions that he does that go over well. But isolated pieces are difficult to sell because, as you can see over there in the room, they kill everything around. Most of the private collectors cannot install a Flavin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They need their own room.

LEO CASTELLI: So there, of course, he gets very nice advances and I accumulate them and hoping first of all that I can cover them through the commissions that we get and because it seems sort of pointless to accumulate things that I may not be able to use at all, but then in the end at maybe one point or another it's better to have the work. In his case I solved an interesting problem—it is a certificate signed by him that refers to a given work that you don't even have to store because you can make it up anytime you wish.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh from the elements, right.

LEO CASTELLI: That happens also in the case of Nauman. Say a piece that sells for \$11,000 all you have is a nice diagram, and then to put it together it costs a few hundred dollars. So it is not cumbersome, so that I could in the end, if I feel that too much debt accumulated too fast, get myself four, five, six, seven, or eight signed certificates that represent separate works. One tends to do that when one thinks that the things become more—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Viable, yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: More usable, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about somebody like Bob Morris who does enormous things that are heavy and complicated?

LEO CASTELLI: Well Morris also is difficult to buy. I keep them there and sometimes—it happened not so long ago. I have sold few of the larger pieces to someone like Panza, but to buy things like that that seems a little bit absurd. One doesn't really feel like having them—

PAUL CUMMINGS: They are hard to move. And warehouse space.

LEO CASTELLI: They are hard to move. They occupy the space anyway. I store them, so I pay for storage but still I don't want to feel even more weighted down for having them, and for having to take care of them. So in the worst of the cases if they are not mine, but the artist's—it is to his advantage too—he could take them to someplace in the country that he has. He could do that even if they were mine and store them for me. So it depends very much on the type of work that the artist does whether he actually wants me to buy them or not or accumulate them. As I said in my case, I still act as if I did advance this money toward the work: future, present, past. So that's complex. In the case of Lichtenstein, for example, I really would buy everything that he does or practically everything because—most of the work is good and it is extremely easy to place—But then I never can catch up on that because—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody else wants it.

LEO CASTELLI: Everybody else wants it. Unless I want to put something aside for myself which is very difficult mostly because—It is not difficult per se, I could, just as I do occasionally, single out a work and say well, I'll keep that. But then there is so much demand. And also necessities, financial necessities, so then eventually I'll sell something that I would very much love to have put aside. But let's go through—to be more concrete about what I'm saying now through practical examples. We have had quite a few but specifically let's begin just with the first three artists of the gallery: Rauschenberg, Johns and Twombly. Now in the case of Rauschenberg, well, I bought a few things that I liked very much in the early stages of the game. This I've always been doing when I really like something very much. That's how I have a collection at all. At that time it was easy, even if money was very scarce, still it was inevitable, and in the worst of cases got a few thousand dollars to get a very important piece. So since I couldn't sell it anyway and since I was advancing the money and I wanted to have the piece I did buy pieces. Then, little by little when they got more expensive and it was more difficult to buy them. In the case of Rauschenberg, as of '63, I would say, he stopped doing things that were useable, he started all those technological—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Making the objects.

LEO CASTELLI: So of that period, I have a few, a couple of paintings that earlier he did. And from then on, he did things that could not be used, could not be used except some drawings that he did occasionally here or there, of which I have a few. Now he does a lot of drawings which are very sellable and provide most of the money that he needs, those and the prints.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's done a great number of prints in the last couple of years.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, he's done an enormous number of prints, even a little bit too much. But he has done those. And those have, well he has a contract with the printers then of course he doesn't really care, it's not his responsibility to worry about whether it sells or not because he has a contract that they buy the prints, in other words. They produce them, they buy them. Then, it's Gemini or Tanya Grossman's problem to sell them, you see, to see that they make their money back. So that's of course a very important source of income for Rauschenberg and for Johns. And perhaps in a sense it's not a good thing that they are devoting so much time to prints. But they do it because of that, because it's an easy source of money and Rauschenberg did things that were not sellable, and in the case of Johns, he produced very little. So they needed another source of income and quite naturally gravitated toward the making of prints which in both cases was very good because they are two great printmakers. It's a fact that in the case of Rauschenberg, his prints are really a proper extension of his paintings with the same idea. There's no violating of his art there. You would naturally think to do prints the way he does his paintings. Johns, on the other hand, his approach is very different and still there he accomplished such amazing things and new technical feats and good printmaking. That it's also good that he although for maybe practical reasons devoted so much time to prints. Twombly—well, there again, he disappeared for years and years, remained in Europe and I didn't accumulate much there. Then he wasn't very successful here but he became so after a while. Now his paintings are very much in demand and as a result I don't get so many anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: More people want to—

LEO CASTELLI: He's—well more people are after them especially in Europe. I am not taking full advantage of this bonanza. Well Lichtenstein, or Stella—again I just kept a few things. There also they were big and difficult to keep and I tried to sell whatever I could. There were several people that were also involved in his paintings like Larry in Europe, and here Irving Blum, and David Mirvish.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were those arrangements you made?

LEO CASTELLI: No, they are made in very diverse ways. In the case of Stella, for instance, he made very early on the arrangement with Larry Rubin in Paris for which I was not responsible. No, every artist has a different kind of attitudes about it. Stella, for instance, always wanted to be very independent and do his own thing. Others like Rauschenberg, doesn't really want to make any kind of arrangements himself. Except in the matter of prints he's always relied on me and Ileana Sonnabend to arrange things for him. He never was involved in that part. Johns also has been amazingly uninterested in doing things for himself except again in the prints due to the fact that he has so little actually. That's probably one of the factors, but he's never gone around and tried to get other galleries. He just let me do whatever I could do with the few paintings that I got. Now Lichtenstein has also been amazingly good that way but he's never made any arrangements except through me and still does so I am still making arrangements—which is another chapter we'll talk about in a moment—with other galleries.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: Rosenquist has been sort of difficult baby. He has tended to do, a little bit, the counterpart of the technological approach of Rauschenberg's. They're enormous paintings that would fill up the room and were difficult to sell and hardly any sellable small paintings. But lately he's started—the last show, the last paintings are more modest but they're still—Andy Warhol after being very good, making all those paintings in large numbers, but they sold for very little. But still there were literally dozens and dozens of flowers, of self-portraits, of electric chairs. That was nice and easy to handle until when he stopped well I think the last series of paintings of Andy's that were sold was about '65.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really, that long already?

LEO CASTELLI: '65, '66, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's made prints since then.

LEO CASTELLI: Then, he made prints but again I took relatively little of that. What we did print was mounting together now and again. He made those prints outside of the gallery and

that was a quite nice remunerative for the graphics department down there. So that was Andy. And then there was Morris and Judd who have always been difficult babies. And then Serra, Sonnier, and Nauman, well they are—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Getting more difficult as time goes by.

LEO CASTELLI: Well more or less, yeah. Serra has contributed his pieces, large pieces, are of course impossible to sell. Or when they get sold, then they also get returned because they collapse, they're impossible to put anywhere. So there are some larger pieces but relatively few because they are very expensive to install, they require a lot of room. So everything has been very, very expensive to run. And the making of his pieces, even erecting them, putting them somewhere is fantastically expensive. You figure thousands of dollars to show a piece of Serra. Just to show, the cost of materials is—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic, yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, it takes special rig—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Trucks and machinery.

LEO CASTELLI: It's a tremendous problems. Well, Nauman—there were some sellable things to begin with but now also they become very difficult to handle. It's mostly projects for very large pieces that require square miles of room. So it's not been easy. The gallery has been supported by some pieces that I bought in earlier times have been sold with a good margin of profit. Say a Lichtenstein that I would have bought for a few thousand dollars and then, later on, I sold for several ten thousands of dollars. This has been sort of useful, but this is giving out too. So, you know, you struggle through and you try to do all kinds of deals.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do the collectors affect this? Do they want to get interested in a particular artist and buy a lot of his work?

LEO CASTELLI: Well they do. There is one for instance like Panza who is interested say, suddenly, no he's been interested in all kinds of artists, Nauman for instance—but Nauman is not only mine, I sold him you know. It makes for survival, but he's been interested for instance recently in Judd and he's bought a tremendous number of pieces. There's been sort of a saved the situation there, because Judd is very expensive to keep. I would say that I don't make money on Judd but at least I am holding my own in the sense that I keep giving him his advances every month, something like \$5,000 a month plus extras for taxes or God knows what he needs all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: So he's been very expensive. But at least now what I am selling to Panza at relatively reduced prices convinced me to hold my own while I'm still at the front I virtually reduce prices to permits me to hold my own there. But there's always one thing or the other that you do sell of Morris that then covers your advances for a little while. It's been difficult. You have to constantly sort of maneuver around, and also to think that every painter individually is a problem, not say well, I'll get money from there and then we'll call the cost on that. Every painter has to see that to make him paint as hard as possible or at least cover his costs. PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: So if I didn't think of every problem individually well that's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like running dozens of separate companies almost.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah, each painter is a company, some making a lot of money, and those making a lot of money, say like Lichtenstein, of course helps to pay the overhead. . You have to think of that too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

LEO CASTELLI: And the tremendous expense that one has with publicity and keeping the photographic archives—

PAUL CUMMINGS: From the two galleries. And warehouse costs.

LEO CASTELLI: One day I'm going to show a little bit what's being spent here, and it should

be very interesting for the future to keep records, with your discretion I'll show you, what expenses are in the gallery. They are just tremendous. And you have to be ready to—you can't start penny pinching and say now we don't make any photographs any more, we don't do any publicity anymore. I tend to say let's cut it down, but then all the magazines are on my neck. Why *Artforum* and why not *Arts*? Why don't you take a half a page and I took only a quarter, and things like that. But their demand is really part of the whole complex of things, the magazine is not somebody that is outside of the gallery, it's part of the whole system. If you take away the magazine, then you don't have an art world, so actually we have to support them. It's not enough support and they're part of it. There's a symbiosis there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh absolutely.

LEO CASTELLI: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find that say when *Artforum* or one of the other magazines does a major article on one of your artists, does that produce a—

LEO CASTELLI: No, it's cumulative. Only what produces sort of immediate results: *Times* articles—those, because everybody reads them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, that's right.

LEO CASTELLI: And if there is a good or very bad article on one or the other of the artists then people will come and see. They won't do it on the basis of the magazine, because a magazine article always occurs after the show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

LEO CASTELLI: So that will be cumulative, it will build up the reputation of the artists. Like Serra for instance, if he appears constantly in every goddamn issue practically in every magazine finally Serra has become a great man. Not that he isn't it. He is considered a very important artist by everybody—even by people who have never seen a piece of his you know, it's just Serra. Serra is the name they see constantly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right. But that's important in the establishment of their work in fact, though it isn't—

LEO CASTELLI: Of course. It is terribly important. So you can't now today I had Kim what's her name that Korean girl who is the wife of Grégoire Müller or was the wife, I've heard they separated.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh for *Arts* magazine.

LEO CASTELLI: *Arts* magazine and [inaudible] was here and we discussed the problem of publicity, and generally speaking the problem of the magazines, how can magazines survive? How can we survive giving ads to seven or eight of the magazines? I can't do it anymore and I told them so and I told them we would really have to discuss this problem very seriously. There should be some kind of system whereby we the galleries supporting you wouldn't have to spend that much money, repetitive money because what sense does it make to put the same goddamn names in *Arts*, *Artforum*, *ARTNews*, *Art International*, *Art in America*, *Art Present* Well *Art Present* and *Flash* alright because that's in Europe, but all these American magazines. Of course, they have a different audience. We came to the conclusion that each magazine really should specialize. I told them that we should have perhaps a conference of the main galleries and the main magazines, sort of a roundtable concept, and see what kind of intelligent solutions we could find to this insane overlapping. Another thing that I pointed out was that each magazine should specialize and then of course it would be my interest to advertise, let's say support advertising, just for the public support, say *Arts* magazine because they would be more involved let's say in Conceptual art, and *Artforum* would be more involved in God knows what more academic, serious articles and subjects. *Art in America* in other things. So one would tend then to support the magazines that really did render you service and not those that didn't. And the magazines should also agree to define their areas a little bit. But again, it is very very difficult. If we only had more organic magazines. Of course we have said that all along. Sometimes it happens also through personal relationships because you have to be friendly to the editor or the publisher, in other cases you feel that they do a good job for you, say like Betsy Baker did a marvelous job for many of my artists in *ARTNews*. Although *ARTNews* is not a fantastic

magazine now, it was also not fantastic under the editorship of Tom Hess. He never knew how to edit the magazine. He is a splendid writer, but he was not a very good editor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know I would like to go back to one thing that happened and that's the development of the auctions. And the experience of your artists in auctions all around the country. And I was wondering how does that affect you when somebody decides to sell—

LEO CASTELLI: It is, yeah, it is sort of something rather anxiety creating, you see, in, well, you are supposed, according to proper techniques, to support the artist properly. You can't submit an artist whose price structure is what it is in your gallery and has suddenly fallen below, considerably below your level. Then people would just say what nonsense is that? But it is all artificially created, and the truth comes out at the auction, comes out of the auction that that painter hasn't got an audience at all and you just created an artificial structure there. So one has to support the artist, but on the other hand, as you acquire experience and many auctions go by, your anxiety decreases and you find out that great paintings or very important paintings in one place your important artists may go to dizzy heights, and then another painting that is not so good may touch very little, well below par. And then people take it for granted, people know that this was a masterpiece and they have a large amount of money and this was a lemon and it sells for little money now then they know when it's the responsibility of the collector to buy lemons. Now it is also my responsibility not to sell lemons. It's true I tend not to recommend paintings that I feel are weak, now you get rid of those really in provincial situations. This is a vast network that you have of galleries all over the place who hang the works of your artists. And it's a very close relationship.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, we talked about that.

LEO CASTELLI: We talked about that, well they tend then to come all the time, they come from Los Angeles, from St. Louis, from wherever, from Europe, Italy, Germany and then they want Lichtenstein. They want to sort of keeping those things that I don't particularly like to put out for any of my collectors and then they go and see and I say well there's nothing, oh yes, there's this, and pull out something and so he says oh, this is a really nice, how much is it, usually low prices because it's a lemon and so they eagerly buy that so they get—I never am responsible to say to a client that something is not good. They get disposed of this way, they go to the provincial market.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, but you know some years later they come back again don't they?

LEO CASTELLI: They come back. That's a problem, they come back, then I am sort of made responsible not for having sold the painting. Somebody who has bought something in Minneapolis and comes to me and says I bought this in Minneapolis and I would like to sell it, how much is it? But I, the thing I want least to do is to purchase the painting, and still I have to put up a brave front and find some kind of excuse not to want to handle it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well have you found over the years that most of your important collectors who have bought a great deal of things from you when they decide to dispose of things do they offer them to you first?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, sometimes they don't. This is a matter of psychology, they are all intimate relationships, continued intimate relationships that you may have with your collectors. Now, if you had a close relationship, of course he approaches you, generally speaking, to ask your advice on whether he should sell it or not, whether it's a good moment, I would naturally do something about it. If you've lost track over time, they may be embarrassed that they're selling the picture. Sometimes active dealers, say like Heinrich Friedrich from Germany, comes and knows that Scull, Ganz, let's say, has paintings which he doesn't really intend to sell, but then he knows also that Ludwig who is my client wants to buy some important Rauschenbergs that only Ganz seems to have, so he, being friendly and going around, he goes to see Ganz and admires his collection and then says, well, you know, this piece here could sell for large amount of money and would you be willing to sell it? So Ganz says well, I really didn't think of it, but how much do you feel that I could get for it? So if he proposes a fantastic sum of money which is what it should be ideally but he didn't dream that the thing he bought for \$8,000 would be now \$80,000, although he should really be more in touch with me about change of work—which he does occasionally. But then sometimes because he's very busy for years he doesn't ask me which he did recently he was amazed to see what had happened. So then, he said that he sold two very important Rauschenberg paintings, that he had bought from me, of course, to Ludwig. Then we talked

about it later on and he told me about it. Of course Heinrich was involved. Actually he asked me how were the prices for that and I said very fine. And at that time, I didn't feel like spoiling his pleasure at the deal. But perhaps he could have asked me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: So I didn't say anything because he was in the midst of negotiations. I didn't say that I could have done that for you just as well. I told him that much later, after everything was consummated and he was happy. He said well, I really didn't realize that you would be interested in it—and next time around of course I would never dream of not asking you because you're a good dealer, but you see you lose a little bit of contact with the collector, and then he, maybe he was also a bit embarrassed to ask me, he didn't know. But it happens that we have some collectors who only would swear by you and wouldn't make a move.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what about things disappear into European dealers if they are bought at an auction? Isn't there a time when you can't really keep track any more?

LEO CASTELLI: Important paintings will trace them after a while, generally speaking. Generally speaking, they are bought by people that we know. For instance, we know that Beyeler has bought most of the good Rauschenbergs in auctions. Or, when they do come before the auction, they ask me what do you think the chances are to get this piece? You know, that's a whole network of relationships that goes on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: And people do consult you all the time. They know and trust you. When the auction was on where the Lichtenstein's *Brushstroke* was sold, Schmallenbach was the director of that museum that bought the piece. He came to see me and said well, how much do you think that this painting will go for? I said I really don't know but it's pretty high, I think. He asks me do you think I'll be able to get it for \$90,000, that's my limit. I said I think you will be able to get it for \$90,000. Then, the auction took place and it went up to \$75,000. Now just for the glory of the thing, I could have jacked it up, but it would be extremely dishonest of me to see to it that the painting of Lichtenstein's was going for \$75 no \$85,000 and give him \$5,000 leeway I could have jacked it up for another \$10,000, but it would have been like stealing \$10,000. It would be just very dishonest to do things like that. So whoever confides in you about the purchase of a painting that perhaps you want to buy yourself that you could get know that you won't touch it anymore so some people will then be trusting. Some people don't trust anybody so they won't tell you what they are doing, but some people do trust me because they know me, they will confide in me and they'll ask me what do I think it will go for, how much should they pay for it, and etcetera. If they come to my gallery to do some business with the paintings, in my gallery I will give them to the best of my knowledge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you find the auctions of the prints affect the artist? There are so many of them now.

LEO CASTELLI: The prints are not well developed yet, they're not as well developed as painting auctions, therefore you have great up and down prices, great up and down. And they are not well attended, there is not a well-developed market there. As far as the paintings are concerned we have a well developed market and no piece will go by for nothing. But then, there is a curious phenomenon that happened in those auctions. For instance, the sale of this Rauschenberg for \$70,000 was a very, very curious thing. People asked me about how much will it go for and I said on the basis of what I knew that I thought it wouldn't be more than \$50,000 or \$60,000, which really would have been the proper price for the thing. It was a very nice painting, it wasn't a weak painting, but it wasn't a masterpiece, and it went for \$70,000 and that puzzled me very much. But as far as I can explain it, there was a curator of a collection, of course the collector himself probably went to see it too and gave her green light. That's the McCrory Collection you know Riklis, a great conglomerate.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: And he has a lady curator, Celia Ascher and she asked me, well, she asked me how much would it be and then she had to go up to 70. She had said to me well, I will go up to any price to get the painting because it is exactly what I want from Rauschenberg,

from that period of Rauschenberg. You see they have sort of a rather neat collection. She had a neat mind, she's a geometric type person. She wanted of course to have a Rauschenberg because it was important for the collection to have one, but whatever I had to offer her or Ileana for that matter whoever it was, seemed dirty, not proper.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not clean.

LEO CASTELLI: And here somebody wanted a Rauschenberg that was very neat and proper. And it's a good piece of the polymer painting period and she said I'll get that at any price. All I can say is there must have been some other dealer who had the same idea of getting a neat Rauschenberg because it shouldn't have gone up that high.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, well it happens you get—

LEO CASTELLI: Well, for example, there was that Albers thing. I don't know exactly what happened there, I think that was something that man Pollock in Canada did out of gratitude to Albers. He bid against himself to get it up to \$40,000, to just show Albers what a wonderful dealer he was, and how the confidence that he placed in him by giving him all this work (which he had withdrawn from Janis) how it was well placed and that created a new movement because often a lot of people are impressed by that and an awful Albers brought a lot of money and that's completely unjustified.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That salmon colored one, terrible painting.

LEO CASTELLI: The other one that one he did in '40 was a very good piece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: But again, it was a ridiculous price.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

LEO CASTELLI: Although I'm told by Lynn Bowser[ph], who has a number of them, they sell them for about for \$30,000. But not 40.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well pretty soon.

LEO CASTELLI: Yes, pretty soon. So the auctions are still bothersome you know. They are not something that you take easily, and I'm always worried about Rauschenberg reaching a particularly high price. Johns, well, there they go very, high but then one expects them to go higher. For instance, when *Tennyson* stopped at \$75,000 it was a moment of disbelief that it didn't go any higher. So, on the other hand, sometimes you have those good surprises, like that Rauschenberg going so high. Although it only went to seventy-five and it could have gone higher. But that was certainly a great event in the Lichtenstein market of basic importance. So you have that. So you have the disadvantages and also the great advantages.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, it's always a gamble.

LEO CASTELLI: Now, we see what's coming, which is something horrendous and that's the Scull sale next fall. Did you read about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, he's selling his collection, practically, at auction. Fifty pieces of which there are something like twelve Jasper Johns and Barnett Newmans, and Klines and de Koonings, and whatever you can wish, the best not the tentative pieces that he has sold more or less successfully in the past, but really the core of his collection.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he's very worried about the collection because it's gotten so expensive.

LEO CASTELLI: Well, it's all eye wash. In a sense there is a reason for that, but there are other reasons, some that I know about, some that, God knows, I don't know anything about. Maybe he really blamed me and I think that's the honest truth. He really needs a big injection of money in his business or in some other business that he wants to undertake. We are so constructed that you are at the same time very forward looking but also very

conservative. To keep a good collection you have to have opposite qualities, actually. You have to be forward looking and be there in time to buy the great things that come up and can understand them, but also to want to keep them. So that's a conservative element and he hasn't got any. This is the first time I've thought about this kind of thing. He just isn't conservative -

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's one thing that you could say about him.

LEO CASTELLI: And therefore, not really interested in keeping this collection. Deep down, he's not interested, he's what we all are in many things in life, we are very anxious to get, but then once we get a thing we don't care anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's the joy of the hunt too.

LEO CASTELLI: The joy of the hunt, and he's more a hunter than the man who then wants to display all the trophies that he's caught.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, obviously there's an enormous potential profit for him isn't there?

LEO CASTELLI: Well he has a huge profit there, sure, but that's part of it too - to also see it realized. He knows very well that it's not only on paper, it's there, maybe it's \$200,000 less but still he has a profit there which is one hundred, two hundred fold from the time he bought the things. So he knows it's there, maybe a little more, a little less, but the fact is that he perhaps wants also to see, actually see. So the people will say here is this Scull—here is a man who spent so much for that collection, say \$500,000 and that he got three million for it and then he can be proud of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: He wants people to talk about him. Perhaps people don't talk about him enough and he has to make a new gesture to be the center of attention. That's a very important factor there as we analyze this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's one kind of collector. But there are other collectors who are really rather reticent about—

LEO CASTELLI: Oh there are collectors who don't want anyone to know what the hell they are doing. But Scull is the display man and perhaps he got tired of not being talked about enough. God knows. But that's certainly an element. And what I said before, the idea of his not having any element of conservative conservatism in his makeup may be an important factor there too. He just doesn't want to keep them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, when a big collection with important pictures like that, that have been documented and published and been in museums, real major works are always going to attract people from all over the world who are interested in art.

LEO CASTELLI: Oh yeah, well everybody knows about it. And we know about it, who knows about it, and in effect he has attempted to sell this collection with the various circumstances to the various groups of people, museums and so on. So, there are a lot of people dealers and great collectors who have seen the collection; it has been handled. I myself have been sort of trying to do something about it on several occasions and also recently. He told me that if you can't produce something (during the last talk with him) within say two or three weeks, I must then make the decision to sell it through Parke Bernet because they need so many months time—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, to do the catalogue.

LEO CASTELLI: And so I said well, if in two weeks I don't come up with something, well, go ahead and do it. But I had, just for the chronicle, an interesting idea about this collection. This collection had been vastly diminished through the years. He had sold, here and there, important paintings so it was full of holes. Actually there was no Lichtenstein then, there was no Rothko there anymore, and there never had been a Pollock.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: He had at one time Noland and Louis, I don't know, maybe he still has them, but I think he sold them. Actually at one point he wanted his collection to be complete and it

was, then I think that he sold those. But anyway, I know that he sold certain things in which I was involved. At one point, somebody from Europe who represented an important European group wanted to buy an important group of paintings for the collection. Well, he knew about the Scull collection in Europe and of course he had seen and knew what was in there. He came and said well, I saw the Scull collection, but I think that it's not the kind of thing we wanted, it's full of holes and full of gaps and then also he wants tremendous prices, especially for the Jasper Johns painting which seem entirely unreasonable so perhaps you could suggest another collection. I said there is no other collection of that importance in America. There are no collections in America, I mean there are a few like the Tremaine collection which is very good but that's going to be given to the National Gallery. There was the Heller collection but that has been reduced to zero. There are no collections. There is the Weisman collection which is pretty good out in Los Angeles but he won't sell, so there are no collections. So he said that's amazing, there must be. And I said no, there aren't. But I had a suggestion then. On another occasion I had picked a group of 45 paintings out of the Scull collection for a sum of 2 million dollars, and my feeling then on this occasion was that I would then use few of the paintings, expensive paintings, Jasper Johns because there were a quite a few, about eight or nine, and then save three for the collection and sell say five of those to fill the gaps to buy a couple of good examples of Lichtenstein, to buy Rothkos back and so forth and if you used a million dollars to buy the collection and then say in a year or so to get really good examples to fill the gaps, I think within a year I can make you, with what I have, a collection that would be worth double of what it is now. He, as a technician, felt that it was a very interesting suggestion and said that it would not, however, appeal to his people just to buy something that's not there. I said well, too bad because I really could have enjoyed it. And we could have done a great job there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is there any way that you have of sensing where the market is going to go? In a particular artist?

LEO CASTELLI: Well you can sense it a little bit earlier than other people because after all I get the waves. But not much ahead of time. It happens in many curious ways, suddenly few articles may appear, a few people may get involved, and then you begin to have a sense. It's a problem. Also three or four other people get interested in a new artist but, I can never sense it before, if I don't have some indications from other people. I can't single-handedly provoke anything, that's always impossible. I mean I can provoke it in the sense that I can perhaps influence some people who in turn would influence other people, but I can't do it if it's not there, and suddenly I have somebody who is absolutely unknown, nobody knows about him or hardly anybody knows about him -

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh no, you can't do that.

LEO CASTELLI: I know that this is a winner and after waiting a winner—they have to work at it. And the help comes also from unexpected quarters and without my intervention.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

LEO CASTELLI: Well, other people may know that artists have descended from me and well, maybe he's not even in my gallery yet at that point but maybe shortly thereafter, it's a mysterious process.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true.

LEO CASTELLI: Of course, you can see an artist and feel very confident in an artist that you didn't know like say Dibetts who I knew very little. I had seen a few things here and there. But then again, you may have disappointments, you may think that someone is very good and then—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Suddenly—

LEO CASTELLI: Well he probably is very good anyway but the reaction of the public won't be as prompt as you thought it would be, maybe it'll take years. And sometimes I'm surprised, I make mistakes too. Sometimes, somebody I think is very good, really, perhaps, isn't so good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think it takes a long time for some artists to be seen and some artists have been very quickly—

LEO CASTELLI: Oh yes. Some artists are seen quickly, some are not. Sometimes it's dangerous if an artist is seen very quickly which means that he has elements that are facile, connecting so many things that have been seen that he's readily, easily accessible. Well, that was the case actually for a few people of Jasper. He was accepted with fantastic speed by a certain number of people like Bob and Soby but for very partial reasons because he connected with something that they knew well. Dada and so on.

They were bowled over by this element that was so conspicuous and so beautifully presented in his paintings. But then it turned out it was just one factor there. Had it been only there, then probably that would have been a very sort-lived trail. Then so many things were cooking there and brewing there and it went well beyond this single element and fortunately he did hold his own.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I just wanted to ask you one thing about your own collection. Have you built much of a collection or do you collect very much or isn't that a major activity?

LEO CASTELLI: Naturally a collector, I think that no good dealer cannot be a collector. You have to desire the painting that you've handled, at least most of them, passionately yourself or else there wouldn't be any conviction about what you're doing. So, of course, I'm passionately involved with many of the paintings that I've handled and therefore, in the beginning of my career, I did buy certain things that at that time were incredibly inexpensive because nobody really was particularly interested in them. And I had a collection, a good collection of early works of Rauschenberg, of Johns, of Stella and so on. Then later on, I went on liking them and wanting them very badly, but unfortunately I had to make money to live. Overhead went up, expenses went up, works in many cases were scarce, and the need of money was always tantamount there. So I had to sell paintings that I would have really given my right arm to keep just to make the necessary money to keep this place going. Sometimes it can be really pretty tough decisions to make, but I had to make them. Fortunately my wife is also a rabid collector and she is really conservative. When she has something she doesn't want to let go. So she's been wisely buying the things, under special conditions, of course, but she wanted to have them herself, not to stay in the gallery. She wants them to be in my name or in her name so that there was no possibility of those things (or in our son's name) of those paintings being sold in the future and we've done that. So they remain and even when times are very tough I know that those are untouchable paintings. So I have this collection of early works which have become very valuable. But of course if I had had more money available or if things had been easier or if perhaps if I'd run a more economical operation—but then that's not in my nature, I wouldn't be at home if I were more economy minded, so therefore the past five or six, seven or eight years has cost a lot and I couldn't keep paintings. And I don't foresee a moment when the situation will improve and I'll be able to get into keeping paintings. What I have is, I guess, sufficient to decorate my apartment and they give me great pleasure although I would like to have special examples. I keep a few things of the younger people of course, they aren't expensive and it's a much easier thing to do.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

LEO CASTELLI: But I can't go and buy a Jasper Johns painting or Rauschenberg's paintings and Lichtenstein's paintings and so on. That's become impossible.

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