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Oral history interview with Emily Rauh
Pulitzer, 1985 Aug. 9

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Emily Rauh Pulitzer on August 9, 1985. The interview was conducted at the Pulitzer country home near St. Louis, Missouri, by Sue Ann Kendall for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

Interview

[Tape 1, side A]

SUE ANN KENDALL: I would like to start out with perhaps the most obvious question, and that is that Joseph Pulitzer had a substantial collection before you married him, but I'd like to ask what influence you feel you've had on his collecting since you have been married to him.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, of course the influence has gone both ways. But we met first when he brought a Courbet drawing that he was thinking of buying into the Fogg Museum to look at their Courbet drawings, and I was working there as assistant curator of drawings, and I showed him the Fogg's Courbet drawings. When I was at the St. Louis Art Museum as curator—and at that time there was only one curator, so I was doing everything, but as time went on, basically Western art and basically more recent art—we did exhibitions and we brought artists to St. Louis and we had programs and trips to other cities, and I think he participated in a lot of that. It was through the Contemporary Art Society and also through exhibitions at the museum. For instance, we had a Morris Louis exhibition; not directly after that, but sometime later, he bought a painting by Morris Louis.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And this was when?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: I went to St. Louis in '64 and left when we were married in '73. A marvelous example of—I think the museum and not necessarily me particularly—influence was when we had a Degas drawing show that was organized by Jean Boggs for the St. Louis Art Museum, and directly after that, Joe bought three Degas drawings. And it certainly wasn't that he had never seen Degas before. But the exhibition stimulated him so much that he bought them. And I don't mean he just went out and bought three, but in the succeeding years shortly thereafter, he bought these drawings.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It's a nice example of the museum bringing in shows that influenced his collecting perhaps. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right.

SUE ANN KENDALL: . . . as well as his collecting then influencing the museum by donations.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Absolutely. And, for instance, the Jackson Pollock painting was one that I and Nancy Neilson, who was the other curator of Western art, saw on a trip to New York when we had decided that what the museum needed to buy next in terms of a major acquisition was an old master painting. And we went, among other places, to Gene Thaw's and didn't see anything we wanted for the museum, but sticking out of a bin was the end of the Pollock painting. We looked at it and got a transparency and brought it back and showed it to Joe and he bought it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Ah hah.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: I don't know for a fact, but the first Rothko painting he bought may have been influenced by the fact that the museum had bought a Rothko painting shortly before. And he was very involved with the museum. And I think he had. . . . I think he had been interested in Rothko's work before, had had trouble with Janis [Gallery—Ed.] getting on the list and standing in line for a painting, which was very much against his way of operating, and so had never bought one earlier. But when the museum had gone through [Jane—Ed.] Wade to Rothko himself, then Joe did the same thing, and then later bought a second one, and then since we've been married, bought a third. But I think in that case, I was totally in favor of it, but he was really the force, the *driving* force, to buy it. I think I have had more chance to see works by younger artists, and in recent times have been more determined to keep my mind open and my eyes open than he.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You mean, this is very recently?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Very recently, right. In the last, say, five years, with this whole upswing of the new

expressionists, the Germans and the Italians, and now also the Americans. I think part of it is that he doesn't spend as much time looking in New York, and I think part of it is that it's antipathetical to his basic tastes. And I think that the kind of art that really interests him, and basically me too, is a classical kind of art.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Could you define classical?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: No, of course not! [laughter]

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's always a hard one.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: But maybe I can put it in a different way. He bought paintings by Pollock and Rothko, but not by DeKooning and Kline. They're all called Abstract Expressionists, but Pollock and Rothko are really much more classical artists, and DeKooning and Kline are much more expressionist. Yes, he bought German Expressionist paintings, but the Beckmann *Zeretelli* is probably *the* most classical moment in all of Beckmann's work. And you can find example after example of that. So I think the fact that, for instance, neither he nor I, when I was at the museum, nor the then museum director, Charles Buckley, were interested in Pop Art was because we were at that point much more interested in color field, which was I think a more classical approach.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What you're saying is that in a way you've both had a particular orientation that ran somewhat parallel.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Parallel, right. And it's an orientation which is antipathetical to a great deal of art that's being created.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Now, right.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Now, right this moment. And so I suspect that we will both come to some of it, and already Joe is saying that he likes some of Eric Fischl's work, but I think finds it not the kind of thing he wants to live with. And I suspect that some of the more recent artists' work will become appealing. The types that we have both found most interesting are the people like Bryan Hunt and Joel Shapiro and Scott Burton, who are much more classical, if you like, than expressionistic. But I think we're both very aware—I perhaps more intellectually aware than he—that it's a mistake to buy the sons of the artists that you liked before, and therefore to buy the son of Judd or the son of Serra is not very creative, and the art really won't stand up. And hopefully. . . .

SUE ANN KENDALL: Second ring. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: . . . Shapiro is not the son of Judd.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I was thinking, too, of perhaps your influence in the commissioned, or in having works commissioned for the property here. You were saying he was already doing that before. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: He was really. . . .

SUE ANN KENDALL: . . . you were married.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yes, and he was also doing it I think before we had any kind of relationship. Because—he calls it commission; I'm not sure it really was—but, because the artists never came here, but there's a stone sculpture by Andrea Cascella, and I think that he commissioned the work from drawings or from other sculptures of Cascella.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Yeah, he mentioned that.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: So the idea of getting special things for the outdoors in this place was something that was going on long before I was involved in his life. The most daring commissions—which are the Judd and the Serra and the Flavin, because these pieces, to use a word that these days is very maligned, are so site-specific that they literally are nothing but a hunk of steel or rusty light fixtures if you remove them from this place; therefore I think those are the most daring kind of commissions—he did those really before I was, we were married. [The Flavin commission was after our marriage.—EP] We certainly were involved with each other at the time. And I think a big influence in this, perhaps more even than mine, was Joe Helman, who had been a builder and was very involved therefore with the concept of land and how land, how terrain changes, and I think to some extent he influenced Judd, and then Judd's work in turn influenced Serra, to take these things into consideration. I think, however, when Judd came up with two proposals of possible choices for the commission, and one was a very conventional Judd sculpture that could go anywhere, and which is now in the Museum of Modern Art, and the other is the piece we have, it was Joe, without any input from me at all, who chose the more daring direction.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So what it sounds like you're saying is that you were not as great an influence as perhaps some people feel?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: I think so. I think I have supported his daring, and I think I was influential in his familiarity with both Judd, Serra and Flavin, because these were artists—well, in the case of—and also diSuvero—these were artists that I had shown at the art museum. Not Serra, but I had brought Serra to talk there, and his talk was, I think, crucial in Joe's becoming involved with his work. Joe Helman had an exhibition at his gallery, but I'm not sure that that alone would have interested Joe enough to commission Serra.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Sounds as though what you're saying is he was predisposed to like this kind of work that you're talking about.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right. Because there were other artists that were shown at the museum, but he wasn't, you know, that he did follow up on, that he wasn't interested in.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How has he influenced you?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: That's a good question. I think just living with the tremendous variety of art, and his deep perceptions about works, and the surprising revelations that come up from time to time, his thinking about individual paintings or sculpture has been tremendously influential—or impressive or enriching. I think that his. . . . He's much more acquisitive than I, although he's training me to be more acquisitive also! [laughs] *[Interruption in taping]*

SUE ANN KENDALL: Has your interest pretty consistently been with, let's call it hard- edge abstraction, minimalist, conceptualist work? What I know of your writing and so on, for the most part pertains to that kind of work, but I'm not sure that's a correct view.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: I think it's moderately correct. Shortly after we were married, we bought an early Oldenburg *Baked Potato*, which I. . . .

SUE ANN KENDALL: I saw that. That's yours?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yes. . . . which I think Joe was not as keen to have as I, and I certainly wouldn't call that minimalist.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Uh, no. [laughter]

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: But, yes, I think on the whole. I mean, the artists, the *recent* artists whose work means the most to me are Kelly and Serra and Judd . . . and Stella, and I suppose Stella is the least minimal of them.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Are those works that you feel are the most telling works of our age?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Oh, who knows what are the most telling? Certainly Jasper Johns is a very great artist. And I think Roy Lichtenstein is too. But I think in terms of really hitting me in the gut, those are the ones. And they're the ones whose work we have that I get the most continuous pleasure from. The *Black-Orange* Kelly that's hanging here now is on a wall that is the only wall where a number of big things can go, and at one point Joe said he missed seeing the black Miro, and so we exchanged it, and I found after a year and a half that I just *craved* the Kelly.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Uh huh. So your response is the strongest to. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: I think so.

SUE ANN KENDALL: . . . the Kelly and Serra and Judd, those pieces.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right. I think of the very contemporary things that we have, those are the works that I find most continually rewarding.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What about earlier works, such as German Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism? Is your. . . . What do I want to say? Is your feeling about them, does it parallel his or not?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: I think very much so.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So you both tend to shy away from the highly emotive expressionist mode.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right. We've been, in recent years, looking for a Kline, because I think Joe more than I felt that was something that was missing. And we never can find the right painting, and I think that says more

about us than Kline probably.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Are your acquisitions now a joint acquisition?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Oh yes. Very much so. There are things that I'm more interested than he, and things that he's more interested in than I, but we never buy anything of any consequence that we both aren't very convinced about. And my theory, though I suspect it's only self-serving [chuckles], is that it's. . . . The first-rate things we agree on and the second-rate things we don't, and there's something about an individual painting or sculpture that's second-rate that appeals to one of us and the other sees through it or isn't interested. But I'm not at all sure that's true.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Um hmm, but one of you is sort of putting the brakes on and the other one is. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yeah. But Joe also goes through acquisitive cycles. There are certain times of year when he just *craves* acquisition. And I would say that at some times in those periods I will hold him down. And then there are other times when, no matter how wonderful something is that comes along, he just is not interested and there's just nothing to do about it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Phases of the moon or whatever, huh? [laughs]

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right, exactly. I think it also has to do with phases of the pocketbook.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Of the pocketbook, right. [laughter] And maybe this is a question you can't answer, but do you feel that you are more involved than his first wife [Louise Vauclain Pulitzer—Ed.] in the collecting?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: That *is* hard for me to answer. I suspect I am. I suspect that she was very supportive and enjoyed going along but didn't have the passionate involvement. On the other hand, it's interesting that the two best portraits that have been done are both of her. There is a portrait by Beckmann and a portrait by Tamayo. And there's also a portrait of Joe by Villon but it's not very good.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So it's hard for you to know.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: So it's very hard for me to say. She certainly didn't have the intellectual or academic interest that I have.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right, and you have that background ____ yourself.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right. And I don't think she ever led him to anything. I think it was always he who was the leader and she who was the supporter, although I think I remember hearing of her also sort of trying to calm him down in moments of over-enthusiasm. [chuckles]

SUE ANN KENDALL: Yeah. You spoke earlier of the Neo-Expressionists and said that you have somewhat more interest than he in those works and perhaps could see acquiring some of those. Do you think that will happen? Do you foresee that?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Who knows! [laughs] It's hard to tell in the future. I really don't know. We have certainly gone very slowly with the artists that came to maturity in the seventies. And I like Susan Rothenburg's work very much, but we. . . . But other than Susan Rothenburg and perhaps Jonathan Borofsky, which is a hard kind of thing to collect, and I think again not Joe's taste, there aren't many artists that did come to maturity in the seventies whose work I really *would* be interested in. And when we see work that's unfamiliar to us together, we tend to often have the same reaction. For instance, although I knew about James Turrell's work, the first real works of his that we saw were at the Whitney and then at Count Panza's, and we both were really enormously moved and stimulated by them.

SUE ANN KENDALL: But again that would have to be commissioned, ____ right here.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: It would have to be commissioned and it would have to be something architectural. And in that sense, I think our houses are pretty limited.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It does seem that there is a real strong tendency towards a certain type of work, and you both share that, because there's certainly a plethora of art styles out there from which one can choose these days.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And yet it seems that you do go along a certain line, certain path. In terms of earlier art that you're still buying, like the. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Hodler?

SUE ANN KENDALL: Hodler, and others, do you have any particular orientation along that line, or is that more Joe's _____?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: No, I think that too is joint and somewhat more haphazard. We've been taking trips to Switzerland—he for much longer than we—to ski, and Joe has an enormous feeling for mountains in general and for the Alps in particular, but they're really very uplifting to him spiritually. And frequently we've taken culture breaks in Zurich or Basel and have become more and more fascinated by the Hodler paintings that we'd seen there, and then when we go to dealers we have seen them from time to time and never saw the right painting or at the right price or at the right moment, or one thing or another until this winter. But he's an artist who we've been developing an interest in without thinking, well, this is an artist we want to own a work by. It wasn't that calculated. We bought a drawing by Adolf Menzel on one of our culture breaks, and he was an artist that Joe didn't know at all. I did because the Fogg has wonderful Menzel drawings. This was very unlike those, but it was just such a spectacularly beautiful drawing. I'm not sure that he would have pursued that if I hadn't been so enthusiastic. On the other hand, if he hadn't really ultimately liked it very much, we wouldn't have bought it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How would you tie the collection together in any way, or would you? In other words, are there any threads that you see running through the collection, and if so how would you define those?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: That's pretty hard to say. He has—for me—he's often said that it's the ultimate statement [of the artist—Ed.] that he's interested in, rather than the tentative first thoughts and the probings. And I don't know, it certainly would be true for the Hodler because this was at the very end of his life, but I don't think he means it in the sense of the late works, but, for instance, the late Picasso drawing that we bought. When I looked at Zervos, I found that the drawing was one of about seventeen of a nude woman that he had done within a three-day period, and the one we had bought was the most classical, the most resolved—in that direction—of the whole series. There was also one that was shown at the Guggenheim in the late Picasso show, which was the most baroque of the entire series and was also a very beautiful drawing, and I would say that those two drawings were the most resolved of the series, although they looked very different. I think that's perhaps what I mean by resolved.
[Interruption in taping]

SUE ANN KENDALL: What's important to you when you evaluate a work of art?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Oh, I think so much of that is intangible. But it's how it appeals to you, how it moves you, how meaningful it is to you. And then what you know of the entire oeuvre of the artist and how important it is in that context.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Would you call yourself an intuitive kind of person then when you are selecting? I mean, how it strikes you, how you react to it?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yes, I think it is intuitive. But you do bring into play your brains and your knowledge, and I think when you're spending large sums of money, you don't do it frivolously. And you make sure that the painting is in good condition, and that you know as much about it as you can.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And by knowing as much about it as you can, does that entail a lot of reading on your part, of what other critics say, and [others]?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Sometimes, but not always. Usually, we know pretty much about the artist's work before we buy a work by the artist.

SUE ANN KENDALL: By having seen a lot of the works, or having read?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: By having seen. Well, both.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Both.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: And the Hodler, for instance, is a good example. I don't think we've read very much about Hodler because most of it's in German. But we certainly have looked at a lot. The same thing would be true with Menzel, but we did. . . . We weren't able before we bought it to do much research, but I did do a fair amount of looking to see what it was related to afterwards, because it was so different from the Menzel drawings that I was familiar with. We had pretty clear evidence before we bought it that there was no question it was by Menzel. But, for instance, before we bought the last Rothko, we obviously knew a great deal about Rothko's work and how that fit into it, without doing any more specific reading.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right, right. Well, intuition can take over if you're already informed, too; I think that makes

a difference.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right, exactly.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You were trained at Harvard, also Bryn Mawr?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yes.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you get a lot of training in—I guess one might not be trained in it. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Connoisseurship?

SUE ANN KENDALL: . . . but connoisseurship, yeah.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right. That was the *major*, major thrust at Harvard when I was there.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Yeah, it still is, isn't it?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, no, unfortunately. [laughs]

SUE ANN KENDALL: No?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Things have changed fairly dramatically. But connoisseurship really was the thrust when I was there, and it was also when Joe was there. So I think in that sense we have also a similar approach. And as a private collector, you don't have to worry about the social context in which the work of art was made and whether this is a good example of the tenor of the times, or whether it was against the tenor of the times, or any of that. I mean, I think that's much more for scholarly pursuit than living with and enjoying—and getting a great deal out of a work of art.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How does, then, your collecting—I think that what you just said probably relates to this—but how does your collecting differ now that you are private collector versus when you were a curator in a museum and acquiring pieces for the museum?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, I'm afraid to some extent, to a large extent, I fell into the category that most museum people do, which is to think about what your collection has and what holes need to be filled—and I think there's some validity to that. On the other hand, the more I go to museums the more I think that the ones that are really interesting are the ones that have depth in the work of certain significant artists.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Regardless of holes that there might be in the collection.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Regardless of the holes, exactly.

[Tape 1, side B]

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: There are collections like the Stedelijk where Edy DeWilde has put together an extremely diverse collection, but with great depth in the artists that he believed in. And I think it's one of the most fascinating museums in the world. I'm afraid I thought about the holes, and there were at that time, when I was at the museum, enormous holes, so that that was pretty important. But looking back on it, there was also a slant, which was pretty much color field work, which happened to be the bent of the director and myself. However, as a private collector, you really don't set out—or at least we don't—with, "I think we should look for a this or a that." And every time we have, we've never succeeded. I mean, there was a period when Joe felt that he really was sorry that he had never gotten a painting by Mondrian, and we looked at lots of Mondrians and they really were in terrible condition or insignificant paintings at tremendous prices, so that's, you know, it's gone, that's finished, that's just not going to happen. And so I think we allow ourselves to be much freer in that sense than a professional museum person is.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I wanted to get back to the question of connoisseurship, and somehow I got off that track. How do you apply the kind of connoisseurship that you learned at Harvard to something like a Judd or a Kelly or a diSuvero?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, I think that while I was at Harvard, where there was not a great deal of contemporary art being shown—or even in the whole Boston area there was almost nothing—but it was an area that had always influenced me and my parents had what was then contemporary art, and in those days—I mean, not a great deal—but in those days people would come and say, you know, "What does that mean?" which nobody would be so gauche as to say today, even though they felt it. [laughter]

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right. They know better.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right. I guess my bent was always toward contemporary art, and so even when I was at Harvard I was—and not really contemporary contemporary, but twentieth century art—pushing in that direction. And the woman I worked for, Agnes Mongan, was not at all interested in twentieth century art, so that was an area that sort of could be mine. And I was encouraged in that by the director, John Coolidge, who was very encouraging of *anybody's* good ideas, and it was at that time that Michael Fried was there, and Rosalind Krause and Ken Moffett. And John Coolidge allowed Michael Freed to do the show of Noland, Stella and [Jules—Ed.] Olitski, which was a really revolutionary show at that time. And so there was a certain amount of impetus and support and thrust in looking at these artists' work, at the Fogg. And I think it came more from the graduate students than anything else.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How important is the idea behind a work of art to you, versus the execution? Or the intellectual content, if you will?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, I think when you're dealing with abstract art, particularly rather—I hate to use the word minimal, but I guess for the purpose of this conversation it explains what I mean. If you don't understand the meaning, and if there isn't a meaning behind it, then it's pure decoration. And certainly there are decorative qualities, to let's say the Judd sculpture, which are enormously appealing but without the intellectual content, it's very shallow. So the two really have to go together.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Do you feel that's true of earlier art too, which is considered less conceptual?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Like what?

SUE ANN KENDALL: Maybe it isn't. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: What sort of earlier art do you mean?

SUE ANN KENDALL: Well, take early—even within the collection—let's say the Cubist work.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Oh, but I think there was an enormous amount of conception or concept or thought or idea behind the way Picasso developed his Cubist paintings. So that I think that's terribly important to the appreciation and rewards from looking at these works.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And would you also say that's true of say Abstract Expressionism?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yes, very much so. So that Pollock was obviously not just throwing paint at a piece of masonite.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right, right. So that even in earlier art that is not called conceptual there is a concept there, there is something behind it.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yes, I think "conceptual" was probably just coined to indicate that there really was a thought behind art that people thought there wasn't. And it was taken for granted that there was thought behind all other art.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Well, in the late sixties, too, there was so much verbiage that sprouted. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yes. [chuckles]

SUE ANN KENDALL: . . . around the art, that as the art itself became more and more reductivist or minimalist or whatever, that I think one tended to emphasize that part of it, perhaps more than before.
[Interruption in taping]

SUE ANN KENDALL: I'd like to steer the conversation in a little different direction at this point, and talk about the relationship that you have with some of the artists that you've commissioned. I'm assuming that you know those artists, some of them anyway, fairly well, and that might be illuminating for people interested in the collection. Let's take Ellsworth Kelly.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Kelly we haven't actually commissioned any work, but we bought, shortly after we were married I think, the *Blue-White Angle* from Blum Helman, and then we bought the early, small black-and-white painting from Ronnie Greenberg, that I just happened to walk in the gallery and it was sitting on the floor and I said, "Oh, can I take that home and show it to Joe?" And then I guess it was in those days that we must have first met Ellsworth, but didn't know him a bit well. And I think that most of the works that we. . . . Well, then the next painting was the *Black-Orange* painting, that again was bought from Blum Helman and that Kelly had nothing to do with [the purchase— Ed.]. And then the idea came up of doing a [Kelly—Ed.] sculpture show, and I thought, "Well, this is something I really would like to do. I really admire his work." And through the four-year process of working on that exhibition with Patterson Sims and very closely with Ellsworth, the four of

us—meaning Joe and Patterson and Ellsworth and I—became very close friends. And Joe and Ellsworth have a very, very, I think, simpatico relationship, and I think it's for that reason that Ellsworth agreed to do his portrait and that Joe agreed to allow to have it done. I've been pushing that he have his portrait done, because I think it's terrible that there is no major portrait of him, when there is a Rodin and a Sargent portrait of his grandfather, who wasn't really that interested in art.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Yeah, right.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: And Joe was a bit hesitant, and their relationship has been extremely relaxed and I think they both enjoy each other enormously. My relationship with Ellsworth is quite different, in that often he will come to me for advice, or he will use me as a sounding board.

SUE ANN KENDALL: For. . . . And in what way?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: For problems. Such as the idea of doing an exhibition of his drawings arose, and he didn't know the curator who was proposing it, and he didn't know if it was a good idea to do it with her. The commission that hopefully he will get in San Diego, which is a very major one, has had its ups and downs, and at one point when it was having its downs he called and wanted to really talk it through and should he withdraw, and this kind of thing. We've also gone to Ireland together, and that was a marvelous experience for, I think, all three of us.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How has knowing—oh, maybe not him—but knowing the artists that you have gotten to know through your collecting, affected the collecting?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: I don't know. Some ways, I suppose, it has meant that we've been able to buy a work like, for instance, the *Dark Gray, White and Gray*, the three-panel painting by Kelly that's hanging at the museum now, which I suspect he would not have allowed to be sold to just anyone, that he would have rather kept it than have it not go to the home that he thought was a good home. So in that respect, it certainly has helped our collection. And he's given us drawings, and he gave us the maquette for *Gray*. He's been enormously generous to us. In the sense of, "Because you know the artist you therefore like his work," I don't think that has been the case, because I think we liked the work before we got to know the artist. I think it has meant that we have a much better and deeper understanding of the work, knowing how he sees and how he thinks has meant a great deal in the understanding of the work.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That must be a real joy.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yes, yes.

SUE ANN KENDALL: As an added dimension to having the piece or the pieces here.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What about your relationship with Judd?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, I don't see Judd very often, and whenever we do see each other, it's a very warm, friendly relationship. I think he was very appreciative of Joe, and I think he credits me more than I deserve to be credited for that commission. And I also showed his work very early on. It wasn't so early in his career, but it was very early in my career, in that it was the first big exhibition I did when I came to St. Louis. And I think that he's always been very loyal to me because of that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And you also know Richard Serra.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right. Richard I've had a very intense relationship with. He's a very intense person, and I never quite know what to expect when I call him. But in fact, we have always had a very, very good relationship. And he has always gone out of his way, particularly in terms of this commission for downtown St. Louis, to do what I've asked and to be helpful. Because that was a tremendous political and social problem—not just politics political, but in the larger sense of the word. And he was marvelous when it came time to have the dedication, and he gave very generously of his, of himself—talking to students, lecturing, showing his films. He was marvelous. And I think he's one of the most brilliant. . . . I think he's probably *the* most brilliant artist alive. And he's incredibly verbal. I think that. . . . It's been a very stimulating experience knowing him.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And Mark diSuvero?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Mark, too, I've known since that first show, which was called *Seven for '67*. Judd and diSuvero were both in it. And at that time I picked a work for the exhibition which is now called *A Praise for Elohi*, which was bought out of the exhibition by St. Louisians, and given to the art museum and it was his first major piece to go into an art museum, and it was his first major outdoor piece. It was the first piece that really

used much steel. And I think because of that we have always been very warm and friendly. He had to come back to St. Louis a number of times over that piece because he had to change the engineering a bit. It was getting more use than he had realized it would, and it was not safe, and he made some alterations on the piece. And through this process over a period of time we became very friendly. And when he came to install the work that we commissioned, *The For Rilke*, he spent about two weeks here, and that was marvelous. In fact, he stayed in this stable, and he turned all the sculptures with their faces to the wall. And the reason was he loved to look at the backs. And in fact, it was he who first. . . . Really it was Maria Theresa, who was at that time. . . . I don't know if they were married yet or not, but who one day was sitting at the back of our summer house living room looking at the back—or diagonally at the back—of the Kelly *Blue-White Angle*. And it was the first time that I really had focused on that diagonal back view, which is quite a marvelous one and is also quite related to his whole vision process at that time, and relationship to lots of the paintings he was doing.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So he made you even look at things in a different way, which is wonderful.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right, exactly.

SUE ANN KENDALL: When you've commissioned these artists—and this may differ for each one—have you worked with them at all on their proposals, or have you given them free reign?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: On the whole, they've had free reign. Serra and diSuvero and Judd each picked their location. With Flavin, Joe said to Flavin. . . . There is a long wall along the entrance to the summer house and there had been espaliered trees there and they'd died recently. And Joe said to Dan, "Will you espalier the wall?" And I thought Dan would have a fit. Not at all. And then Joe said, "Well, will you put them on rheostats?" And again I thought that Flavin would blow up, and not at all. And so this was the first he'd ever done with a rheostat.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Uh huh!

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: But then, Flavin came back to Joe—to both of us, because by that time we were married—and said, "Can I use the inner wall?" The first concept had been just the outside wall, but that wall runs parallel to a wall that's in the house, that you can see as you walk along the path. And Joe said, "Sure, you could use the inner wall." So it was that kind of give and take with Flavin. But with Flavin the specific site was selected for him. And in the case of Kelly and Bryan Hunt, which were not commissions, we thought of the places where we wanted the sculpture that we bought to go, but they were involved in the final placement and they approved of the places we had thought of. And with Kelly, he was the one who really adjusted the angle.

SUE ANN KENDALL: They're all very sensitively placed. That's one of the first things that I noticed—and not just the ones that were site-specific, but, as you say, the Hunt and the Kelly. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, but going back, earlier, to the sculptures, the Maillols and the Despian and the Arp and the Lipchitz and the Matisse that are in the area right around the pool of the summer house, those were all placed by Joe, many, many years ago, and never changed. And I think the placement is really marvelous.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It's wonderful. I asked him about the disposition of the collection eventually, but I didn't ask specifically about the ones that are out in the landscape. How do you perceive that?

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, we have talked about giving this place ultimately to a body—and we're not sure; we have talked specifically to the city of Ladue, but with the control of it in the hands of the botanical garden, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and the art museum, because we don't think that city and county agencies run things terribly well, in as sensitive a way as we would like to see. It got nowhere. The city of Ladue was not terribly responsive. I think because they don't like the idea of having people other than citizens of Ladue coming to this pristine community. And I think Joe's feelings were hurt, because he thought he was making a very grand gift.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Indeed.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: And so we never proceeded on it. We had talked to the director of the art museum and the director of the garden, and both indicated that they didn't have the funds—nor do we—to endow it. Therefore, they couldn't accept it themselves. But if an entity, like the city or the county or the state, would run it. . . . And there are no parks—or there's one small park, one and a half parks in Ladue, and as greater St. Louis develops, there is going to be very, very little open land in this part of the city, and this is one of, I think, only two or three properties of this size that still remain.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What a treasure.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Yeah, and what a terrible loss it would be, and the houses are rather bizarre houses for

land that has this commercial value today, and people who would pay the price for the land probably wouldn't want to live in houses that are as simple and as small and as idiosyncratic as these. But their very idiosyncracies would lead to wonderful public use, because they both have basically one big room, and they could be used by a nature camp, and et cetera. And we had thought of it as a park that would be with controlled access, that perhaps only a hundred or two hundred people a day. . . .

SUE ANN KENDALL: So it isn't spoiled by overuse and. . . .

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Exactly. So it's something that's still very much in my mind and perhaps we'll pursue it at some later date.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Yeah, it'd be a shame to have them not take that on, I should think. That would be a delightful use.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, and it provides such a marvelous nature possibility too, because there's the lawn part of it—formal plantings, et cetera—which would be the sort of thing that people would have in their own yards, and it could be even further developed certainly than we have. And then there is the field which we're now turning into a prairie, a Missouri prairie. And then the woods. So that you have three levels of nature that could be explored and developed.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And then this wonderful artwork in addition.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Right.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It would be a wonderful testimony to your contribution to the area, as well, if that could happen.

[Interruption in taping]

SUE ANN KENDALL: I'm about out of questions, but I'd like to ask you what more you have to say about the collection.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: Well, in our talking about what you and Joe had talked about—and I didn't hear it so I don't know what you've covered—but the three things that seem to me most extraordinary about *his* collecting are the quality and the passion and the continued commitment that he has had over a very long period of time.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That comes across very clearly in talking to him.

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: And the fact that, although he's never been on the cutting edge of contemporary art, he's continued to collect contemporary art all along, with certain moves into the past, but continually being open to new art, and I think that's very rare. I'm now looking at it as the museum curator or the art historian. I don't think there are many contemporary art collectors who continue past one generation, that was their generation that they felt really simpatico with, and then they either stop buying when their walls are filled or stop buying when those artists go beyond their price range, or buy what I call the "son of," which are the derivative things from those artists. And he has, yes, certainly stopped buying certain artists who go beyond his price range, but I don't think has bought the derivative things, and certainly hasn't stopped when the walls were filled!

SUE ANN KENDALL: Um hmm, um hmm!

EMILY RAUH PULITZER: And the third thing was the real daring and real courage, not of commissioning Judd and Serra and Flavin at the time he did, but of going along with their idea of doing work that was only possible for this place, and that really only spoke to and about this place. And I think that was very courageous, but I think it also speaks to his love of this place, and his responsiveness to an artist's responsiveness to this place.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Okay, I thank you very much. I think your perceptions are very interesting and will shed even more light on the collection.

[End of interview]

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