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Oral history interview with Audrey
Sabol, 1987 June 10

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Audrey Sabol on June 10, 1987. The interview took place in Villanova, Pennsylvania, and was conducted by Marina Pacini for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The original transcript was edited. In 2024 the Archives retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. Additional information from the original transcript has been added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution.

Interview

[00:00:03.76]

MARINA PACINI: This is Marina Pacini interviewing Audrey Sabol for the Archives of American Art on Wednesday, June 10, 1987, in Villanova, Pennsylvania.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

The first thing I'd like to ask you is where your interest in art began. Did your family collect?

[00:00:29.03]

AUDREY SABOL: No, not at all. No.

[00:00:32.66]

MARINA PACINI: Did you study art in school? Where did it start?

[00:00:36.99]

AUDREY SABOL: No, actually, I studied photography in—when I left high school and went on to the next step. I can't say it was college. It was a junior college. I think because I always liked to paint and draw myself, so that would have been my interest. Then I would be reading a lot or seeing a lot, going around to see how other people solve their problems, what ideas they had.

[00:01:02.49]

And so it sort of drifted into that. When I saw something that I—maybe a problem I had thought about or I was working on and then I saw somebody who really did it, my feeling was oh, great. Somebody really did it. And then I would buy it. And then I wouldn't have to work on that. I could go on to something else. So I think that's how I more or less, in a funny

way, backed into collecting.

[00:01:30.06]

MARINA PACINI: About when did your collecting start?

[00:01:36.78]

AUDREY SABOL: I think it started probably pre-Pop Art, because I was buying some very traditional watercolors that were very lovely and beautiful but done by local artists. Not very good, I'm sure. I don't even—I have no record of them at all. I don't have them anymore. And then when I went on to—when the Hans Hofmann and [Franz -Ed.] Kline and Adolph Gottlieb came on the scene, and there was a great enthusiasm. There was a lot of excitement around the art world.

[00:02:17.80]

And I would go over, I think, to see the shows at least twice a month, whatever the *New York Times*—I think it was John Canaday at the time—whatever he said was hot, new, and had to be seen. And then slowly, through a funny kind of event, which I think I told you about, which involved Billy Klüver and a cartoon, then I was told to go to Leo Castelli, and ask his assistant, whose name was Ivan [Karp -Ed.], to look in the back room for work of somebody called Roy Lichtenstein, and I would see something that was absolutely astonishing. And I did. And I did. It really was astonishing. And from that, it was, I think like I've said before, it was like throwing a pebble in a pool.

[00:03:16.75]

Then the circle widened out and out and out. And then it was [Roy -Ed.] Lichtenstein and [Jasper -Ed.] Johns and [Robert -Ed.] Rauschenberg and Jim Dine and, of course, Klaus Oldenburg. And they were all starting out at the same time. And it was amazing. It was really amazing. That was—I think the art world at that time was—took over from the theater, from fashion, from any kind of event, I mean, that would attract people and cause a lot of comment. It was the art scene.

[00:03:54.73]

MARINA PACINI: Were you living in Philadelphia and going in?

[00:03:57.04]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, the whole time. Sure.

[00:03:57.52]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. So then you were taking the train into New York—

[00:03:59.83]

AUDREY SABOL: Sure, or drive most of the time.

[00:04:01.04]

MARINA PACINI: Okay.

[00:04:01.42]

AUDREY SABOL: At that point, you could drive down to the Lower East Side and park the car without any problem, [laughs] because that's how far back it is. Yes.

[00:04:12.70]

MARINA PACINI: Do you want to tell the Billy Klüver story?

[00:04:15.82]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, I had seen a cartoon in the *Evergreen Review*, I think it was, that was three drawings of a weightlifter. And at the time, my son was lifting weights. And it was just

the funniest and most incredible and marvelously done thing I had ever seen. And I wrote to the Evergreen Review, and they referred me to Billy Klüver. Let's stop so I can—

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

Okay?

[00:04:44.71]

MARINA PACINI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:04:46.30]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, Billy was a friend of this artist who I believe was Swedish. And he got the original cartoon for me, the original drawing. And then he said, "Are you interested in art?" And I said, "Well, yes." And he said, "Well, I want you to—I'd like you to see the work of a friend of mine and the work of some other people that I think are absolutely amazing."

[00:05:14.44]

His friend's name was Oyvind Fahlström. And the other—he then he said, you must go to the Leo Castelli Gallery and ask for the young man who's Leo's assistant. His name is Ivan. And ask him to take you in the back room and show you the work of somebody called Roy Lichtenstein. He said, "It's incredible."

[00:05:43.25]

And I did. And it was. And then from that, as I said before, it was like from—from that, it was sort of opening up a whole—sort of like coming into a little—I'm looking at a gate here. Going into through a little gate and suddenly coming out into this incredible field filled with the most amazing things I had ever seen, which was, of course, Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg and Jim Dine and Klaus Oldenburg and I'm sure a lot of other people whose names I just can't—don't come to mind at this particular point.

[00:06:24.95]

And they were all starting out at the same time in the—one thing led to another one. I think then Billy felt that he had—I think that he had to take me by hand, for some reason, because he, at that time—I think he still is—was working for the Bell Laboratories. He's a scientist. And his connection with these people was really very interesting. So he would always make sure that we got a notice of whatever was going on, anything that we—any kind of happenings that Jim Dine was doing or anything that Klaus Oldenburg was doing at the store, he made sure that we were made—when I say we, now I'm talking about Joan Kron and myself, because at that time, we had started the Arts Council at the Y [Young Men's/Women's Hebrew Association of Philadelphia -Ed.], and we were putting on contemporary shows.

[00:07:24.31]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Now, how did—maybe I should interrupt you here and have you give the background of the Arts Council on how that started and how you got into doing it.

[00:07:32.69]

AUDREY SABOL: I'm not sure how the actual Arts Council started. There were a group of women who were—let me see—who were really interested in contemporary things that were going on and had the background—and the background, the knowledge, and the time to really take charge, bring it in, and decide that they could bring these things into the city. They were like producers, really. There was a very good poetry committee. There was a movie committee. There was fine arts and sculpture. And I'm trying to think. Then there were just general speakers.

[00:08:15.89]

Basically, the Y was the center for—let me see how I can put this. Well, I won't go into the background of Y, but it was the natural—it was the natural place for this kind of experimental thing. I don't think another group in the city, certainly no educational group, any of the

universities or colleges, would have undertaken this, because they would have—they wouldn't have had the courage or—there's something about starting off from sheer enthusiasm and sheer stupidity, or not—I'm trying to think of a good word. Stupidity is not the word, but—

[00:09:00.15]

MARINA PACINI: Naivete. [Laughs.]

[00:09:01.17]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. Right. Innocence. I mean, you think, oh my God, this is marvelous. Let's do it. Everybody should see this, et cetera, et cetera. And so that's the way it was done. And we—I think—I have to go off track a little here. I think that when Ti-Grace [Atkinson (Sharpless) -Ed.] saw what we were doing at the Arts Council, that she figured if the Arts Council—who is a group of basically housewives, you know, could do this, my God, what could be done with the backing of the university and really serious funding?

[00:09:34.63]

MARINA PACINI: Was she involved in—or did she just see the events?

[00:09:37.69]

AUDREY SABOL: No, she was on the periphery. And she saw that—I'm not sure how—you know, I'm not sure how, but I know that she—whether she had heard about us, or what it was, but that was how she came on the scene. And I think one of the things that she didn't count on, one of the problems is that the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Arts, University of Pennsylvania -Ed.] is against the Arts Council, because, basically, I think now that when the Arts Council started to sort of pale a little or to lose the momentum, and—or maybe we felt we had gone about as far as we could go, then that was the time for the university or one of the big establishments in the city—actually, it was probably the art museum [Philadelphia Museum of Art -Ed.] was the one who really should have taken over.

[00:10:28.46]

But as I said, she saw what we did, and how it was done and everybody pitched in. And getting it into an academic situation is a totally different kind of thing. There were too many questions asked. There was often, you know, whether it was really—is this kind of art really valid? All the things that I think people who are naive or whatever you want to call them, don't ask. Their reaction is strictly from the gut or the heart. And they see it, and they think, God, this is so wonderful, marvelous. You know, they're not looking back historically or whatever, that the professors and teachers at a university, or the curators of a museum would.

[00:11:10.99]

MARINA PACINI: Well, does that mean that nobody at the Y questioned what it was that you were doing, ever?

[00:11:17.15]

AUDREY SABOL: Never. Never. I mean, God, we had—our only problem was in funds. And we had two or three really very good people. And one of them, I think, was Joan, who always managed to squeak out some kind of money somewhere to do it, you know, to get it really done. No, they never really questioned us. It was a lady that was that—who was—made sure that when we booked the rooms that it wasn't, you know, doubly booked or anything like that. And she really had no concept of art at all. And she would just roll her eyes most of the time. But she was very nice. And no, it was really sort of like a bunch of kids getting together and giggling and laughing and putting on a show, you know? And there was no—there was no authority. And I think that was what made it—what made it possible for us to do a lot of the things that we did.

[00:12:11.26]

MARINA PACINI: So then you and Joan made the decision of what exhibition it was?

[00:12:15.16]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah.

[00:12:15.42]

MARINA PACINI: And this ties back into how—to your experiences in New York.

[00:12:20.35]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah, of course. Because it was a time of—what do they say? Synchronicity. Everything really fell into place. I can't take credit for anything. It just seemed that we were at the right time at the right place. And everybody was very receptive. And everybody was very cooperative. And it was amazing. It was a spontaneity and an enthusiasm and excitement that I don't think—that has ever been equal. Now, I may be speaking from a point of age. I don't know. But I mean, I just—I don't see it today at all.

[00:13:01.44]

MARINA PACINI: To backtrack just a little bit, you mentioned that all the people involved have a background. What do you mean by that? Did they—were some of the other women involved people who had gotten college degrees in art history or—

[00:13:14.89]

AUDREY SABOL: Not that I'm aware of. I think it was really a genuine interest and a knowledge, but what I would call a street knowledge.

[00:13:25.26]

MARINA PACINI: Okay.

[00:13:25.35]

AUDREY SABOL: It was not—I'm not aware that—I'm sure we had no—I shouldn't say—there were no master's degree on that committee. And there were no, surely no doctorates, no doctors and professors. However, I don't want to put, you know, any of these ladies or myself down. I think many of these women had—were much more familiar in the more contemporary way with the subject, whatever committee they were on then, most of the academia in the city. And they had a great deal of enthusiasm. And they—as I said, their reaction was more spontaneous and, I feel, more valid, because they weren't carrying any baggage with them, really.

[00:14:14.74]

MARINA PACINI: Where did the members come from? How did you—how did all these people end up converging on the Arts Council at that time?

[00:14:22.88]

AUDREY SABOL: Because it was really the only game in town. The art museum really wasn't doing anything. The University [of Pennsylvania -Ed.] had nothing. Temple had something, but it was so far—it really was just exhibition space. So it was really—there was no place in town that would bring in the kind of movie program that they did or the poets that they did or certainly the art, the art events that—so it was really—it was great. God, it was great fun.

[00:14:55.66]

MARINA PACINI: Well, why—why at the Y? I mean, what is the—

[00:15:00.34]

AUDREY SABOL: Because I think of what we just said. I mean, what you brought out is the why. There was no really—it was all done autonomous. Is that the word I want? You know? In other words, there was nobody, there was no head of the department saying, "You can't do this, you can't do this." We had a meeting of the whole general group, as I recall. And everybody would make up a plan of what they wanted for the year. And I think that most

people felt, well, that girl—that woman knew enough about what she—and the presentation usually was very good. And nobody really said anything about, "Well, you can't do that."

[00:15:39.63]

Or there may have been suggestions. "Well, if you're going to do this, why not do that?" Or, you know—but everybody really worked together very well. The Y, that's a whole history in itself, you know, that I really—the Y was all the—all the Y's all over—you know, the Y in New York does very unusual and very interesting, exciting things, because I think their attitude is much freer.

[00:16:08.08]

MARINA PACINI: Judy Golden made some comment to me about the fact that, unlike the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association -Ed.], that the bent had always been cultural, intellectual. It was not—

[00:16:19.34]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, now we're going to go into a whole ethnic thing. Of course that's true. I mean, I think, you know, the Y was really—the YMHA [Young Men's Hebrew Association - Ed.], was—it was built to give the working people a place to go where they could expand their knowledge, learn different, get more culture. That's the whole—you know, that's really the whole Jewish thrust, I think.

[00:16:42.61]

And certainly, at that—at the time that the Y was founded, I mean, it was to give these immigrants a chance to absorb some culture, and using that as a base. It was always well funded by other Jews who became successful and felt, you know, this was—they had a very good gym, one of the best, I think, in the city. And it always had—it always had good speakers, I think. I'm not sure, because I don't know the history of it. Probably earlier, they tended to be much more always liberal, maybe even radical, but it was for the working class.

[00:17:18.65]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. But that's—so there is a history of taking—

[00:17:21.40]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah, that's right. Of really being experimental, of doing daring things, of going out, you know, and so, yes, that was really the natural place for it.

[00:17:33.49]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Who decided on—was it you and Joan on the—who decided what was—what the exhibit was going to be? Or, you know, did they rotate who was going to decide that year's exhibition?

[00:17:44.46]

AUDREY SABOL: No, Joan and I would always have hysterical coffee—coffee meetings, you know. And they were really hilarious. And it was Joan and I who made the decision usually.

[00:17:56.47]

MARINA PACINI: For the art exhibition.

[00:17:57.82]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes, right.

[00:17:58.37]

MARINA PACINI: Okay.

[00:17:59.60]

AUDREY SABOL: Now, you have to understand that the Joan has probably one of the more serious backgrounds of anybody that I'm aware of in the group of women at that time. She graduated from Yale in theater design, et cetera, et cetera. She was a recognized decorator in town. And she had also something to do with *Philadelphia Magazine*.

[00:18:22.11]

So she was really a wonderful jack-of-all-trades and was able to blend into anything, you know, and was dauntless. I mean, I think she had all the great sticktoitiveness that I don't have, or didn't certainly have at the time. I used to sort of—I mean, there would be problems, and I'd start yawning or dozing off. And Joan would just really work the whole thing through. She was really amazing.

[00:18:50.54]

MARINA PACINI: Well, let's start talking about the individual exhibitions. I guess, basically, we've already had the background of how "Art 1963: A New Vocabulary" started. I'm assuming that's where the visit to the Castelli Gallery—

[00:19:05.38]

AUDREY SABOL: That's right, yes.

[00:19:06.08]

MARINA PACINI: —ended up in that. Can you tell me some more about that exhibition?

[00:19:11.61]

AUDREY SABOL: God, Marina, I don't really—

[00:19:14.43]

MARINA PACINI: How about—

[00:19:15.06]

AUDREY SABOL: They all blend together. You'll have to give me a kind of a clue or some kind of—

[00:19:19.86]

MARINA PACINI: Well, one thing I know that happened was there was an Allan Kaprow Chicken Happening.

[00:19:25.08]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh! [Laughs.]

[00:19:25.23]

MARINA PACINI: Can you talk about that? [They laugh.]

[00:19:27.51]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. That was the time I suddenly became very conservative. I thought that was a terrible idea. I thought, first of all, that a lot of—this was what was so funny, that in with the shows and everything else, because the Y did—was a service organization, and it did offer services for these elderly Jewish people who were retired, you know—so they were always wandering in and through the exhibitions and all the other events that they were entitled to that came with their membership.

[00:19:57.22]

So I just had a terrible vision of a lot of these elderly Jewish ladies seeing all these dead chickens. They were going to really—I mean, that has—that carries a lot of weight with it, I think of, of memories. And that—I think, George—as a matter of fact, George Segal came in for that. That was the first time I met him, because he was very friendly with Allan. And he

came down for that. Also, George lived on a chicken farm. I think he supplied some of the chickens for this. That, frankly, that was something that I was so fearful of, that I don't have too much of a great recollection of that. I really—

[00:20:36.40]

MARINA PACINI: Well, was it something that he designed specifically for you? Or was this just a one in a series?

[00:20:42.26]

AUDREY SABOL: No, this was what he decided was for the Y, this chicken event. And it was—all had to do with chickens dead and alive. And it was done in the ballroom. And it was sort of something that you walked through with all these things going on. And God, it was—as I said, I think I've almost blacked—blanked that out. [Laughs.]

[00:21:03.32]

MARINA PACINI: Sam Maitin told me some story about somebody being arrested across the street and everybody leaving the Happening—

[00:21:13.58]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yes.

[00:21:13.70]

MARINA PACINI: —and getting arrested, because they protested the arrest of this person or something like that?

[00:21:18.02]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. I don't remember. I vaguely remember, but I don't—the details. Yeah.

[00:21:23.09]

MARINA PACINI: Okay.

[00:21:23.99]

AUDREY SABOL: God, yes. [Laughs.]

[00:21:28.94]

MARINA PACINI: How—when it came down to selecting the works for the exhibition, did you work with all the individual artists? Or did you work through galleries in New York?

[00:21:37.67]

AUDREY SABOL: No, at that time, most of the time, I worked with the artists, because they—most of them didn't have galleries.

[00:21:43.38]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. And you were—had the contact directly with through Billy Klüver?

[00:21:47.67]

AUDREY SABOL: That's right. Yeah.

[00:21:49.04]

MARINA PACINI: Okay.

[00:21:49.62]

AUDREY SABOL: Billy would say, "I think you should see this," or "I think you should see that." And he would call, or he would call me and tell me, if you come in, I'll take you, you

know, around. Or I'll take you over to see, as I said, Oyvind Fahlström's work or Jim—well, no, I think I went—I remember going to Jim Dine. I think there may have been somebody else with me, but I'm not sure.

[00:22:11.35]

And that was—that was really amazing, because I remember walking up the steps in this—you know, where they all lived downtown, in these kind of seedy areas which were not as threatening, nowhere near as threatening as they are today. I mean, there was no—there were no druggies around or anything else like that. It was just sort of dirty.

[00:22:32.31]

And walking up the steps and walking into this big room, and seeing all these tools on the wall, or places where the tools would have been. Now, I think I told you this before. I don't want to repeat—Well, anyhow, the hammer, the saw, and everything. And I thought, well, that's really a way to store your tools, because if you put the outline on the wall, then you know exactly where the tool should hang.

[00:23:03.49]

And it took me like a full hour to realize I was looking at a painting. I mean, this was not what he was—this was what he was doing. That was just a—everything happened like that. I mean, I was seeing things that I wasn't seeing. Or I wasn't seeing things that I was seeing. And I think that's what made—gave that art of that time that incredible kind of zip and excitement.

[00:23:29.94]

I think today, actually, when, which is very rarely, I work in a gallery, I can almost stand at the door and look around and not even come into the center of the room, because I've pretty much seen it all before. And it was—because it was the first time, it was—I have the feeling that it was better. It doesn't—that's not necessarily true. Hopefully, the second wave of artists stand on the shoulder of giants that puts them up a little higher.

[00:24:03.65]

MARINA PACINI: What were they like? Were they excited about coming down to Philadelphia and participating in this?

[00:24:09.39]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, yes, because they really had very—there was—they were coming very close on the heels of all the Abstract Expressionists, like, again, Hans Hofmann and Gottlieb and Kline and Rothko. I mean, and this was such an outrageous kind of a turnaround. So there really weren't very many galleries that I'm aware of that would even take them in the back room except Leo Castelli. And so this was a chance for them to be seen, to be—get some kind of reaction, some kind of feedback, and to get possibly, with enough publicity maybe, the critics from New York to come down into Philadelphia to see. And it worked that way.

[00:24:56.28]

MARINA PACINI: It did? New York critics did come down?

[00:24:58.03]

AUDREY SABOL: I think—I think it did work that way, yes.

[00:25:01.17]

MARINA PACINI: What was the response in Philadelphia?

[00:25:05.10]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, it wasn't exactly open arms. And you know, it was incredulous. I mean, incredulous. And but I was not aware that anybody was—I think people laughed a lot,

you know, in—not with. A more—in a derisive, derisive sort of way. I think a lot of jokes were made, but I think people really felt that there was a lot of strength and power behind this. And it was sort of a wave that was going to come, whether they liked it or not.

[00:25:51.93]

MARINA PACINI: Did the press attend and review the exhibitions?

[00:25:55.18]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah, I think—Wouldn't that have been in Joan's [papers -Ed.]?

[00:25:57.72]

MARINA PACINI: There were some clippings. The "Museum of Merchandise" [exhibition -Ed.] seemed to have really gotten a lot of coverage, but in most instances—well, not most instances, but there was—a lot of it was pre-exhibition press. It seemed like there was a lot of interest garnered before the event actually even took place.

[00:26:15.91]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yes. Well, I think she must have the *TIME* piece on it, the *TIME* magazine piece on it, you know. Because I think—and then as I said, I think—I think I remember we discussed this, that *LIFE*, somewhere in their archives has got to have a series of photographs. Yeah, I think—yes, I think—I don't have a record of it, but I recollect that there were a lot of VIPs that we had to take around that were coming in from New York to—you know, to review this.

[00:26:57.21]

MARINA PACINI: Were many works sold? I'm assuming the works were for sale in the exhibitions?

[00:27:03.69]

AUDREY SABOL: Not really, no. There were some sold, yes. There was—

[00:27:08.22]

MARINA PACINI: Was it mostly the members of the Arts Council?

[00:27:10.53]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. Of the committee, yes. And there were—I think [David Pincus -Ed.] bought a Mark Di Suvero out of one. I'm trying to think. I don't—again, I don't have the record—the records or the recollection, you know.

[00:27:27.06]

MARINA PACINI: Well, having brought that one up, you want to talk a little about "Dial Y For Sculpture?" Do you remember anything about how that all came about?

[00:27:42.40]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, I think—I honestly don't remember how, because those things were done—or those things came about by talking, you know, just sitting around and talking and laughing. I don't have a clear recollection of that.

[00:27:58.45]

MARINA PACINI: Were there any problems because you were dealing with sculpture as opposed to—

[00:28:03.42]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. Now, wait a minute. Was that the one with Richard Serra? He had a rubber room in that. We did—

[00:28:10.66]

MARINA PACINI: I honestly don't remember. Should have brought the names of all the artists.

[00:28:16.51]

AUDREY SABOL: I think—God, we did something with him. And we always had lots of problems with the housekeeping and the carpentry staff at the Y and the artist. That was a big gap that we had to bridge between these men who were basically janitors. And then when they had to set up something for Christo, I think—I'm not sure whether he was in that show or not—to do up the storefront. And then he had to wrap it.

[00:28:47.10]

I mean, I think some of the reactions from the people at that level was really amazing. And once they got the drift of what it was, then it was no problem. But it was just really getting the concept over to them, because it was really—I mean, that was a gigantic leap. But there were—you know, there were problems with that in moving and setting up that I think any gallery has. I can't—

[00:29:15.78]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. You were one of the—you were the main person involved in the—I think we're about to run out of tape here.

[END OF TRACK AAA_sabol87_6579_m]

[00:00:05.99]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah, I think Richard Serra came in probably through Mark di Suvero, because I think that Mark was Richard's mentor. And Richard came on as sort of a wild-eyed—oh God. He looks—he looked just like him, that actor. Can we stop it a minute 'til I think of it?

[00:00:29.28]

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:00:31.08]

He looked like Richard—the actor, Richard Dreyfuss. Exactly. He had that kind of frantic energy and yelling and screaming and everything. Only he wasn't funny. He was very serious. And he wanted to do this rubber room that everybody would walk into. And it would—everything in the room had to be made of rubber. And we had a problem there, about—if I recall correctly, about fire, you know, was because the building was old. There was always that problem about fire hazards. And he was so uncooperative and so demanding and so impossible and so awful that, I mean, I really felt I wish he would go in that rubber room and seal himself off. [Laughs.] It was no way he would not meet any of the problems halfway. It had to be his way or not at all.

[00:01:19.11]

It was really one of the one of—one of my less pleasant memories, is—I think I can laugh at it now, but it was just so awful. God. What a prima donna. And the interesting thing was he had a great sense of himself, because he always felt he was going to be great. I mean, he was unrecognized the time, which, of course, it did come, but oh my God. I wonder now, if he was that impossible at that stage of his life, what he was like today. I would shudder to think. [Laughs.]

[00:01:52.33]

MARINA PACINI: Well, did the room get installed?

[00:01:54.02]

AUDREY SABOL: The room got installed. And people walked through it. And the—because of

the reaction to it was that it was something out of the German death camps, and that was—yeah. And I remember there was a lot of conversation about that, you know. But it was done. It was not exactly one of the shining spots of the exhibition.

And at the same time, Nancy Graves, who I think they were either married or living together or whatever it was, came in and she did her camels. And that presented one of the biggest problems we had in the logistics of moving an object out of New York, into through the Y double doors, et cetera, et cetera, and get those animals installed. Is she listed in any of my —

[00:03:05.43]

MARINA PACINI: I don't have the—I don't think I ever even got for that exhibition a complete —

[00:03:10.92]

AUDREY SABOL: Which—that would have been—

[00:03:14.13]

MARINA PACINI: Would she have been part of—the ones that I've got the documentation on is the "New Vocabulary," the "Dial Y for Sculpture," "How the West Is Done"—

[00:03:24.31]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, now, what was in the "New Vocabulary?"

[00:03:26.64]

MARINA PACINI: That was Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, Brecht, Kaprow [inaudible], and who else was in there?

[00:03:34.18]

AUDREY SABOL: George Segal?

[00:03:35.67]

MARINA PACINI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. He was part of that one.

[00:03:37.03]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. So, well, the—yeah, because Richard Serra would have come later.

[00:03:44.68]

MARINA PACINI: The only ones I've got that I know off the top of my head for the sculpture exhibition are di Suvero, Indiana, and [Lucas -Ed.] Samaras.

[00:03:54.36]

AUDREY SABOL: Well then, I think that that's where they were. They were in that. What year was that?

[00:03:58.68]

MARINA PACINI: That was '64.

[00:04:07.73]

AUDREY SABOL: So I don't have—there was nothing in Joan's notes about that?

[00:04:11.67]

MARINA PACINI: I don't remember. It's okay.

[00:04:14.72]

AUDREY SABOL: They both came together. I know that. Graves and them, and Richard Serra. And my feeling is that they would have come with Mark di Suvero.

[00:04:26.33]

MARINA PACINI: Well, what—how did that whole thing with Mark di Suvero come about? Did you meet him in New York?

[00:04:34.22]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. It seemed to me that I—for some reason, I always knew him. I think I met him through Richard Bellamy at that time who had the Green Gallery. And I had heard about him then. And then we—I think we used—why do I think we used him twice? We used him in one—in one show. And I think the Pincuses then bought that piece. And then there was another time. But I—God, that's really all gone together.

[00:05:18.45]

MARINA PACINI: I can't think of what else he could have been in, because he wasn't in the New Vocabulary.

[00:05:22.80]

AUDREY SABOL: Mm-mm [negative].

[00:05:23.04]

MARINA PACINI: then the only other one that I—that doesn't seem like either you or Joan were involved in is the Banner art exhibition, '63.

[00:05:32.62]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah no, we were. That was—

[00:05:34.33]

MARINA PACINI: You were?

[00:05:34.74]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah.

[00:05:34.95]

MARINA PACINI: Neither one of you—

[00:05:36.21]

AUDREY SABOL: That was with Barbara Kulick. And she had Barbara and—I'm trying to think of the name of their gallery. Multiples. And she had all these different artists do these really beautiful banners. Well, now, I may not have been involved in that, but it was, I think, through me and Joan that they got to Two Bar. But that may have been done as another—another committee may have done that, maybe. Sometimes we had to split up, because if we were doing a sculpture show and there was no painting, then they would do—somebody else would take over the painting, you know.

[00:06:18.23]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Because there were no written documents in either of your papers. And then the next one, from what I could find on the list of exhibitions, was the sculpture exhibition in October of '64, "How the West has Done" in March of '66, "Museum of Merchandise," May '67, and then "Air Art" in '68 and "Sculpture to Wear" in '69.

[00:06:42.27]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Well, I left after the "Museum of Merchandise."

[00:06:46.08]

MARINA PACINI: Right.

[00:06:48.17]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, that was where Les Levine did—He foamed the place—We would have places—you know, they used a certain, brand-new technique, which I'm sure today they would not be allowed to use, because it's toxic. But they foamed. They had to bring this spray gun in, and they foamed—used this new technique and where you could blow the stuff and create the—and it would harden, and you would create the exhibition space itself. And that was—that was another problem in logistics. But as I recall, that got done. Now, when was Christo? Is he—

[00:07:27.21]

MARINA PACINI: The store? He did the storefront for the "Museum of Merchandise."

[00:07:30.70]

AUDREY SABOL: The storefront. Right. Walked through the storefront into the interior that Les Levine did, yes.

[00:07:34.44]

MARINA PACINI: But the storefront was inside the Y.

[00:07:36.69]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yes, it was inside the Y. We couldn't do anything on the—we weren't allowed. The city wouldn't allow us do anything, nor, for that matter, the Y wouldn't allow us to do anything. Yeah. We had—I think we had an automobile that was parked in front that—God, I can't—it'll come to me. Somebody that I know very well.

A hard-edge painter did the whole side of the car, which was really very nice. That, they allowed us to park on the pavement for the opening. But other than that, we—you know, you had to walk in the building and then all the way around through Christo's storefront into this stuff that was Les Levine did, which I vaguely remember. Again, that was another problem—he was another difficult—I wonder what happened to him.

[00:08:39.59]

MARINA PACINI: Was it—were you and Joan the ones who were pretty much deciding what kind of items you were looking for, or were a lot of other people helping you?

[00:08:46.41]

AUDREY SABOL: No, it was really Joan and I.

[00:08:47.63]

MARINA PACINI: Because there were a lot of different items that you had for that sale. A lot of artists that you were dealing with.

[00:08:55.39]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yeah. It was really a dry goods store. [Laughs.] No, Joan and I did that. That was—that was marvelous. It was so marvelous. Great fun, yeah.

[00:09:06.31]

MARINA PACINI: Are there any particular stories that you remember from that exhibition?

[00:09:15.05]

AUDREY SABOL: Now, I wish I'd kept a diary. I'm sure there were, but I—

[00:09:19.80]

MARINA PACINI: Let's see. The things that I can remember are the bodysuits.

[00:09:25.55]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yes. At that time, Wes Wilson, yeah, who was doing the—who was sunk into obscurity along with a lot of other people, Wes Wilson was a marvelous poster artist who did all the posters for Bill Graham. Now, what was the name of that?

[00:09:48.11]

MARINA PACINI: Fillmore.

[00:09:48.71]

AUDREY SABOL: The Fillmore, of course. And they were really an art form in themselves, that whole—that whole look, that kind of psychedelic art. It's really art nouveau kind of look. And so we contacted him to have him do—which is interesting in view of when you see what the girls are exercising in now—I mean, this is, this is pre-Jane Fonda to do tights or a—I'm trying to think of what they called them then. A bodysuit. Because for the fashion show and then—wait, now, I'm getting mixed up, because we did where—did we have a fashion show where—

[00:10:38.22]

MARINA PACINI: You had the fashion show as the opening for that exhibition.

[00:10:41.73]

AUDREY SABOL: Right, yes.

[00:10:42.82]

MARINA PACINI: And the Christo wedding dress.

[00:10:45.13]

AUDREY SABOL: The Christo wedding dress. That's right. And we had Billy. Billy, Billy, Billy, Billy—He rode the motorcycle from California. Billy—

[00:10:55.12]

MARINA PACINI: Billy Al Bengston?

[00:10:56.30]

AUDREY SABOL: Billy Al Bengston did the motorcycle jackets. Now, all these things, you have to understand, the artists would submit the sketch. And then it was up to Joan and I to find a somebody who was going to fabricate it or make it or, you know, and really, literally make it in hand.

[00:11:13.42]

MARINA PACINI: So they weren't involved in the production?

[00:11:15.38]

AUDREY SABOL: No, no, no. That was that was our project. And that was what was really the—translating the art into something to wear, and not only that, trying to get the people, the manufacturer or whoever was going to fabricate it to understand what we were doing was something—that was an experience in itself. So that we got Warners, people who made underwear and body stockings and bras and stuff, and we showed them the drawings.

[00:11:47.32]

And of course, we—although we had a very receptive lady at that point. I mean, don't forget, the Fillmore and Bill Graham was just a little bubble out in the West Coast that people in the East were hearing about, and they weren't sure exactly how to handle this. But no, she said that we could do it. So now, with Wes Wilson, what we had to do was that, because there was no way to screen it. They gave us all the body stockings that we wanted, all, you know—but they would own them at the end. That was the thing. It was a whole big number about

that. He would paint them. They were all hand-painted. So they did get them back. Now, whatever happened, you know, with that, I don't know.

[00:12:31.64]

MARINA PACINI: So you never saw them up for sale or anything?

[00:12:33.66]

AUDREY SABOL: Never. No. But they were really very spectacular. The jackets were modeled. And I think, as a matter of fact, my husband bought one. I remember that. But I don't know—I don't know what happened to the others, whether they were—I suppose they were sold. I'm just trying to think the—we had—what did we have? We had pillowcases. Yes. There was an artist called Geoff Hendricks.

[00:13:04.48]

MARINA PACINI: And he did the sheets.

[00:13:05.66]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. Which is interesting, too, because you look today, there is a sheet, there are linens, bed linens on the market today that have the clouds and the blue sky. And he also did a several shades for us, which was a funny idea. He pulled down the shade and there would be the clouds and the blue sky.

[00:13:23.06]

And so a lot of these things really—I feel very strongly were forerunners of what's happened maybe 15 years later with the jewelry and—but it was—I think that show took us—was one of the longest things—we required the most work that we had ever done, and most concentration. And maybe that was why we both decided that we felt we had made the definitive statement of our crossing over into a utilitarian area. And that was—that brought the whole house of cards down. And that was the end.

[00:14:07.08]

MARINA PACINI: Although, it seems to me that when—the billboard project was from '67, right? After that, I believe that the correspondence—that there is dates from November of '67.

[00:14:22.95]

AUDREY SABOL: Really? Because it seemed—

[00:14:24.96]

MARINA PACINI: Or am I crazy and it was '66?

[00:14:28.02]

AUDREY SABOL: Our idea was to have—to have them all do billboards on the—going across from the expressway. I don't know the name of that, that cut off, you know, where you cut, turn off the expressway and go over into Broad Street, whatever it is.

[00:14:43.71]

MARINA PACINI: Vine Street.

[00:14:44.79]

AUDREY SABOL: No, no, it's before Vine Street. And it's—because it's high up, there's no—there's nothing on the side, you know. In other words, you're above—it's around [inaudible]. [Cross talk.]

[00:14:53.73]

MARINA PACINI: Oh, Kennedy, the JFK Boulevard?

[00:14:55.83]

AUDREY SABOL: No, it's before much before that, closer up to where we are out here, you know. You can turn off like Hunting—I don't know whether it's Huntington Park or whatever it is, but you're going to cut across, come down the expressway, and you're going to cut across the river. And you're going to come into Broad Street at a high level. And when you do that, you are—the road is more or less raised, and there's nothing but low houses. Now, we could put about five or six billboards going one way, and five or six billboards going the other way, and there would be nothing really behind it that would—no tall buildings.

[00:15:30.69]

I still think it was a great idea. I mean, it would have been. And the whole exhibition would have been, and you would have seen the exhibition in a bus. Be serving cocktails. Would have been the opening night. And you would have seen all the paintings going one way and you'd turn around and see all the paintings going the other way. And that was how that—

[00:15:48.21]

MARINA PACINI: So you had a specific "exhibition" quote, unquote, for that.

[00:15:52.12]

AUDREY SABOL: Planned. Yeah. Which never—yeah. Which never came about. So then we turned around. Because we had made all these connections with billboard people, yes, it was really—we really needed a coordinator to get all these things together. And that's what took so much time and so much energy.

[00:16:05.61]

And it was really sometimes discouraging, because you would—you wouldn't—it isn't discouraging to meet up with a flat no, or somebody would say, "It sounds great, but we can't do it." But so many times, it's really outright hostility. [Laughs.] That was when it was really—that was difficult. Yeah. So that was where the Lichtenstein billboard came in. So somebody said they would do it.

[00:16:31.98]

MARINA PACINI: And the idea was to do the Lichtenstein to try to generate the interest.

[00:16:36.61]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. You had to get enough. Because there was somebody at that time, I think it was Walter Strait, who was—that was his business. And he would have cooperated with us if we had gotten clearance from the city and whoever else we had to build these and got enough credits to build the billboards, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:16:55.18]

MARINA PACINI: But what was it that derailed that project? Was it that the city refused to cooperate?

[00:16:59.32]

AUDREY SABOL: It was just too much. The logistics were too much to get it all together. It was just—

[00:17:04.00]

MARINA PACINI: Well, that's quite amazing that you—I mean, you went far enough that you got the Lichtenstein billboard painted in your backyard. Had the party.

[00:17:12.08]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Well, that's really not—getting them done was not the problem. It was getting them placed, you know. To do them, to place them all around the city at random wouldn't have made any sense, I don't think, because—so it had to be all in one place. That

basically is probably a project for the art museum maybe to do on the—there are so many more new roads now they could do them—you know, highways, freeways, or expressways they could do it on.

[00:17:40.63]

MARINA PACINI: So that you were running into things like the letter from Edmund Bacon complaining about, you know, trying to clean up the—

[00:17:50.13]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yeah. Well,

[00:17:51.85]

MARINA PACINI: Billboards was against, you know, everybody's concept of beauty.

[00:17:56.80]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Well, that's why he's where he's at today.

[00:18:02.22]

MARINA PACINI: How did you—how did Robert Venturi get involved in that? Were you friendly with him?

[00:18:05.92]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, Bob—I'm trying to think how it was. He was just starting out at the time. And I don't know where I met him. He would come to the exhibitions. And he was so taken with the—which is interesting—with the Pop Art, you know. He just thought that was so incredible. And he just sort of came along with it.

And I know that—I think I mentioned to you before that later—well, quite a time afterwards, he invited me up to Yale to hear a lecture or a presentation they did about Las Vegas that I thought—well, I mean, I just thought that was so incredible. He really understood. He really—he understood the whole—I think was the most sympathetic of all the people, certainly of all—any of the architects in the city to that whole movement. I mean, he enjoyed it. He thought it was funny. He could understand it, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:19:12.67]

MARINA PACINI: So you went to him with this idea and he just—you know, he decided he really liked it and decided that he was going to support you.

[00:19:22.00]

AUDREY SABOL: No, he came to us. I mean, he came to the—he came to the shows and just really—

[00:19:28.31]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Getting back to the Arts Council, the one exhibition we haven't talked about is the "How the West was Done." And you were the one who went out to California and selected the works.

[00:19:44.33]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Well, at that time, I was—let's see. I was very friendly with Bill Wiley, who I met—I forget how, what or where—and with Edward Shea. And also, I think that John Coplans in a way was very helpful with that, too. He was an editor with one of the big, slick art magazines. I'm trying to think. The one that—Cowles—

[00:20:22.37]

MARINA PACINI: Was it *ARTNews*? I can't remember either all of a sudden.

[00:20:25.43]

AUDREY SABOL: One is Tom Hess, and the other one was—

[00:20:28.16]

MARINA PACINI: Right.

[00:20:29.17]

AUDREY SABOL: —was really based in the West Coast. And John Coplans was one of the editors and did a lot of very good pieces on different artists out there. And so I think that he was very helpful. I think I wrote to him, and he had certain suggestions. And then I went out there once or twice and saw a lot of work. And we just put it together that way. Yeah.

[00:20:51.20]

MARINA PACINI: So did he give you the names of galleries to go see or did you—

[00:20:55.07]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:20:55.51]

MARINA PACINI: So at that time, you worked through the galleries?

[00:20:57.51]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Well, no. I knew—I had known Ed Ruscha because I had seen a book he had done and had written to him and had bought it. And so I had seen a lot of his work. So I'm just trying to think—who else was in that?

[00:21:14.87]

MARINA PACINI: Wayne Thiebaud.

[00:21:18.50]

AUDREY SABOL: No, Wayne—Wayne, I went directly to his studio. Wayne and—

[00:21:29.87]

MARINA PACINI: Paul Harris?

[00:21:30.96]

AUDREY SABOL: Paul Harris and Vija Celmins and Ed Ruscha, Bill Wiley, and Jim Melchert, and—

[00:21:47.14]

MARINA PACINI: And Arneson.

[00:21:48.25]

AUDREY SABOL: And Bob Arneson, yeah. Well, no. Bob Arneson—all those people, I had met and worked directly through them. Even Thiebaud was mentioned, I think, to me, by Barbara Kulick, and then pieces—well, he was the only one who was represented in the east by—I think it was Allan Stone.

[00:22:16.86]

So but all the rest, the selections were made at the different artists studios. And that was amazing, too, because through one, you met another. I met Peter Vargas through Jim Melchert, who was teaching at the time. And who else? And Bob Arneson, who was really an incredible personality. Funny man. So this selection was done jointly with me and the artist, because I felt a lot of times, I really—sometimes, not a lot of times, the artist knows pretty much over what he's done and what he feels is the most definitive piece of his work.

[00:23:08.23]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. One final thing on the Arts Council was that there's—in one of the letters you wrote to Phil Leider. You mentioned that the Arts Council was momentarily housed at the Y. Was there a hope that at some point it would become autonomous?

[00:23:27.27]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes, I think there was, that we were hoping that we could get our own space or get—or then again, I may have said that because a lot of times, when people felt that we were using part of a building, they—one had to fake it a little, or exaggerate sometimes in order to get cooperation.

[00:23:45.09]

MARINA PACINI: Well, I was going to ask you about that. I mean, did you ever have any problems in terms of—

[00:23:49.47]

AUDREY SABOL: We tried. We really tried, because we felt that one of the problems was that this building was being used in two ways at once, you know, in other words, as a club for these older people, and for children after school, of working people, you know, as well as the cultural center. And a lot of times, we'd run into programming problems, you know, which was sort of a—or when we did a show, it had to be done a certain way so that it could give us—give them the space to use it to play whatever game they were going to play in the room or whatever discussion they were going to have in the room, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:24:26.95]

MARINA PACINI: Did you generally get the exhibition space for—you know, was there a limited period of time you could have them for, say, two weeks? Or was it—

[00:24:34.57]

AUDREY SABOL: Usually, the big exhibitions, I think, were over a month.

[00:24:39.10]

MARINA PACINI: Okay.

[00:24:39.55]

AUDREY SABOL: Certainly a month.

[00:24:39.73]

AUDREY SABOL: That's a pretty good period of time.

[00:24:41.43]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. As I recall. Yeah. Because it was too much effort to get those things installed and taken down within the—

[00:24:47.89]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Have you got some sort of a final closing statement on the Arts Council [they laugh] before we move on?

[00:25:00.38]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, no. I think it was, as I said earlier, Marina, I think it was amazing that we—and everybody did, I mean, just look at us sometimes in aghast. I would say in awe, because we were able to do what we did. But it was really—it was timing. Absolutely. That never happened again so far. But maybe it'll come around, because life is basically a wheel. Or something else will come around. But that was—we were so lucky. We were lucky that we were under the wing, so to speak, of the Arts—of the Y. With all the problems that it had, we were lucky that we started to do these things at that time. We were lucky that everybody

was coming up at the same time. So everybody really was very cooperative.

[00:25:57.27]

MARINA PACINI: Well, I think the next thing I get to talk to you about is your involvement with the ICA. Now, did you—were you asked to be on that advisory committee because you were known through the Arts Council?

[00:26:08.20]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:26:09.28]

MARINA PACINI: And was it Ti-Grace who made the decision on who was on the—

[00:26:13.81]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. Oh, yes.

[00:26:14.86]

MARINA PACINI: So she specifically—

[00:26:16.48]

AUDREY SABOL: That's right. Yeah. I forget how I first met her. But it seemed that she was there. And she was very dynamic. She was really—Germaine Greer and Gloria Steinem and Hermione Gingold [laughs] wrapped up together. She was really staggering. I mean, she barreled through a lot of those things. I really admired her.

[00:26:51.11]

She had great poise and great presence and knew what she wanted, and of course, tended to run roughshod over a lot of—a lot of the people who, you know, in an academic situation who had seniority rights, had tenureship—all those things the people from the outside don't understand. But it was on her strength and energy, I think, that the thing got off the ground, because she got Lolly Lloyd then on the board. And I try to think who the other people were. But she really—she really, as they would say basketball-wise, she hustled. I mean, she really moved.

[00:27:34.37]

MARINA PACINI: Some of the other ones on the board are Thomas Gates, Clement Greenberg, Mrs. Albert Greenfield.

[00:27:41.63]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yeah.

[00:27:42.31]

MARINA PACINI: Thomas Hess.

[00:27:43.13]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, those—Mrs. Green—a lot of those names are social, and they were—Mrs. Greenfield was a big collector. Thomas Gates was very important to the university. He was sort of a bridge, a very good bridge, I might add. And who else was there? God.

[00:27:58.64]

MARINA PACINI: Clement Greenberg, Arthur C. Kaufmann.

[00:28:01.74]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

[00:28:04.16]

MARINA PACINI: And Lolly Lloyd; yourself. And that looks like—that's what's listed in the Clyfford Still exhibition, is the—

[00:28:13.38]

AUDREY SABOL: That's right. That was the first one. Yeah.

[00:28:16.13]

MARINA PACINI: How much was—how much did the advisory committee get involved in what was actually happening? I mean, were you—

[00:28:23.68]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, no, I think I think Ti-Grace used Clement Greenberg and Tom Hess and Harold Rosenberg, which God, you know, how can you do better? It's really a winning team. And it was through them. And she had a little input. But basically, she would listen to them and their—and go along with their suggestions. And it was interesting to me, because basically, I had really never seen a Clyfford Still until that exhibition. And I think I remember going with her to New York and meeting him, vaguely. I'm not sure. I have some recollection. But she also—

[00:29:10.65]

MARINA PACINI: Hold that. I've run out of tape, so why don't I—

[END OF TRACK AAA_sabol87_6580_m]

[00:00:04.23]

MARINA PACINI: This is Marina Pacini interviewing Audrey Sabol for the Archives of American Art on June 10, 1987, at Villanova. And this is tape number two. Okay, you were just about to talk about—

[00:00:21.10]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yes. As I said, I think she used—she listened very carefully to these three men. And she was always in contact with them. And which, my God, three people like that advise you, you've got to come up with a winning show, so to speak. But anyhow, yes, that was the first time I had ever seen—I mean, I, and I'm sure hundreds of other people, had ever seen Clyfford Still.

[00:00:57.51]

MARINA PACINI: What were the board meetings or these committee meetings like?

[00:01:01.53]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, that was what was so interesting when I listened to you name these people. They couldn't have been terribly exciting because I have no recollection really of anything. I think I was—I really was in great awe of Hess, who was very articulate, certainly more articulate, I think, than Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, who had a slight speech impediment of some kind. But—So listening to those three men, I think was really—that was very educational. The other people, I don't really—they were sort of like—except Mrs. Lloyd, who had her own—Lolly Lloyd had her own ideas about certain things. And she was very good, I think.

[00:01:48.04]

MARINA PACINI: Well, what happened? Why did—what happened with Ti-Grace?

[00:01:55.69]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, I think she probably was her own worst enemy because she became—she wouldn't play in, I suppose, like in a team play. And she antagonized a lot of the

university that basically was tolerating the situation. They wanted their own people on the board. I think Tom Gates was on their board of directors. They wanted the School of Architecture, and the School of Fine Arts wanted their representation. And they wanted their input.

[00:02:28.30]

And at the same time, it was a little dicey, because there were a couple of artists teaching at the school, whose names, probably happily, elude me. One was an Italian, Piero—I forgot what his name was—who was really—nose was out of joint, because he wasn't invited to show. Well, that was not what Ti-Grace was about. She was really about Greenberg, Rosenberg, and Hess. And she wasn't about to show any kind of local teacher, no matter how good he was, or whatever. So there was a whole undercurrent to get her the hell out. And there really was a lot of agitation, a lot of—so I think they made it as difficult as possible for her.

[00:03:20.49]

And she, as I said, herself really didn't help. She's not really—was not very diplomatic, or she wouldn't play the game. And finally, there was so much infighting, not on the board, but in the school, and against her, so many little things that were coming up. And frankly, I wasn't used to that, because coming from the Y, where everybody was enthusiastic, and it was "Marvelous, wonderful, terrific. And whatever you want to do, do it, and go ahead, and hopefully, we'll find the funds, or we'll run around and see if we can't drum up some money." This was really—it had nothing to do with art, as far as I was concerned. And it really, as I said, was no longer fun.

[00:04:05.41]

MARINA PACINI: Did the university interfere with the advisory committee or try to get involved with—

[00:04:11.23]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes, I think, they did. I think they did. It was through—as I said, through—D'Orazio was his name. That's right.

[00:04:19.82]

MARINA PACINI: What about Tom Godfrey? Was he one of the—

[00:04:22.65]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. What about Tom Godfrey? [They laugh.]

[00:04:26.27]

MARINA PACINI: Now, he was in the art department?

[00:04:27.90]

AUDREY SABOL: He was assistant to Dean Perkins, I think. I'm not sure. I'm not sure how that—that was the most complicated operation I've ever seen. Who was over who? What department? The Art—School of Architecture was over—the Fine Arts School was over the Architecture School. The Architecture School—I don't understand that at all.

[00:04:46.66]

But Tom Godfrey was sort of the liaison, in a way, between Dean Perkins and Ti-Grace. Because I think Dean Perkins didn't know how to deal with this kind of young woman. I mean, he came from—he was really a charming, lovely, elderly gentleman who came out of the Victorian Age. I'm sure he didn't think so, but I mean, compared to what Ti-Grace was about, he was really, you know, there was a big gap there.

So Tom, I think may have been the bridge. Although, not quite in the way that they would have wanted it. So I think that was his function. But nobody really in the school could handle or stand up to Ti-Grace and what she wanted. And so I—there was only one way to do it. And

that was to just get her out, and get somebody who they could really deal with in. Now, I think after she left, Sam Green—

[00:05:55.97]

MARINA PACINI: How did that work?

[00:05:58.22]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, well, Sam is lovable Sam. He was charming, marvelous, wonderful, and listened, and didn't give the—I don't know how he actually—because I think I was not that much involved in it. I don't know how he actually—well, I don't think he ran into the problems that Ti-Grace did.

[00:06:24.25]

MARINA PACINI: Do you think that was because he was a man, as opposed to—

[00:06:26.94]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, yes, I think that was—well, that was one of—that was a little easier for them to deal with, yes.

[00:06:38.01]

MARINA PACINI: Did he get given the same kind of carte blanche that she started off with in terms of the freedom to choose what he wanted to do?

[00:06:45.97]

AUDREY SABOL: I think he was a lot more diplomatic in a way. And he represented no threat, I think, to the school, because, don't forget, Ti-Grace is very bright. As Sam is bright in his ways, but not—he didn't—he really wasn't a threat, I think. That was what it was. He really wasn't a threat.

[00:07:12.69]

Now, he got the—let's see, he showed—I think he got Andy Warhol down. At that time—Sam came in at the time that the Y shows closed down. And so he could more or less take over and do those kind of fun kind of things. Sam had a lot of very heavy social connections, too, which was important, because in that way, he gets support. So maybe where Ti-Grace had the brain support, Sam had the money and social support. And sometimes one outweighs—the money and social really can get things going faster.

[00:07:57.99]

MARINA PACINI: Did you see a change in ICA with the change in administration as to what the idea behind it was, what it was as an institution?

[00:08:12.09]

AUDREY SABOL: Between the—

[00:08:13.71]

MARINA PACINI: The changeover from Ti-Grace to Sam. She seemed to have a very clear idea of what it was that the institute was to be.

[00:08:23.20]

AUDREY SABOL: Sam saw it as a—you have to understand the difference between the two personalities. One thing Ti-Grace is not is frivolous. One thing she doesn't have is a sense of humor. And she's a very serious, bright person. And Sam is on the other—is 180 degrees. I mean, as I said, I think he's bright, but he is about something entirely different. So he had—I think he had more of an influence from a lot of the galleries that were around at the time, more than she did.

[00:09:06.07]

MARINA PACINI: I almost get the sense that she took it on as like some sort of crusade, holy crusade.

[00:09:12.54]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Well, Ti-Grace is a feminist. You have to understand that. Yes, of course she did. And it was just that attitude that really antagonized, I think, or set people up in that department.

[00:09:28.74]

MARINA PACINI: I want to read a quote to you, after she left, or I guess while it was all happening. Thomas Hess wrote a letter to Dean Perkins, who got a xerox copy with the [Sabol -Ed.] papers.

And he wrote, "In letting her go, you've changed the character of the ICA into something else. It will either reflect the aims of a new director, or, what seems more likely, express the uncertainty of the university's attitude towards modern painting and sculpture. One would hope for the former, of course, but as the ICA will remain in the position of being in continuous jeopardy for members of the art school faculty operating through the dean of the graduate school on the one hand, and the president's weak faith in the whole field on the other, it seems to me that it's a slim hope indeed."

[00:10:22.13]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, that's true. But then, I don't know—do you know any other gallery or—what do you—institute that operates under the wing of a university that has that kind of—you do?

[00:10:39.94]

MARINA PACINI: No, no, I don't. I understand what you're saying.

[00:10:42.11]

AUDREY SABOL: So I mean, you know, what else is new? [Laughs.] Of course. One of the problems the university had, I don't know how she wrangled this, because that was—it was never—what they thought she was going to do and what she was going to do were two different things. They had no idea she was going to go barreling through the way she did. And it was fascinating to me to see how somebody as young as she was and inexperienced in the modus operandi of the university could really get things done.

[00:11:17.57]

I mean, she intimidated all these academics. And it made me think—because I'd never come in contact before with one at that level to realize what a bunch of sort of twerps there were running a lot of important departments. Well, then after Sam, then who came? It was a girl, I think.

[00:11:44.37]

MARINA PACINI: I don't know. At some point, I think Michael Quigley was in there before Janet Kardon.

[00:11:49.48]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Well, he was in with the—

[00:11:51.95]

MARINA PACINI: I don't know when. I don't know what the—

[00:11:53.70]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah, Michael was assistant to some—I think there was another young woman in there, and I think he was—and then Janet came in.

[00:12:01.64]

MARINA PACINI: In your papers, there's a letter to "V." I don't know who "V" is. The letter was just addressed to "V." And it says—I think you said something about "I saw your article on the Andy Warhol exhibition," that you liked it. And you said, "Did you know I resigned when they scheduled that show?"

[00:12:23.51]

AUDREY SABOL: "V?" Who would have been—

[00:12:28.62]

MARINA PACINI: Were you unhappy about the fact that they decided to have a Warhol exhibition? I mean, it seems to me the implication—

[00:12:35.39]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, at the university?

[00:12:36.67]

MARINA PACINI: Yeah, yeah.

[00:12:38.11]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, I think, yes, because I have a—I think it got to be silly at that point. I mean, I think the whole thing is sort of—that kind of show is a silly kind of thing to do. And I think also the other problems that were coming along probably added to it. I still think Andy Warhol is silly. So you know, with it all—I think the one contribution he made was that phrase where he said everybody has fifteen minutes of glory, and that's it. And he was right in that. The other things, really, were a product of that. I mean, things got carried along and along and along. I really don't like his work, [laughs] is was what that is.

[00:13:42.50]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Were you involved in any other art organizations in Philadelphia, on any other boards?

[00:13:50.44]

AUDREY SABOL: No.

[00:13:50.84]

MARINA PACINI: How come? Were you not asked? Are you not interested?

[00:13:54.03]

AUDREY SABOL: I'm just not interested. It's a lot—being on a board is really a drag. I mean, it's so much—there is so much time wasted and spent. That's not the way I like to work.

[00:14:09.03]

MARINA PACINI: How would you characterize Philadelphia as an art city?

[00:14:13.59]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, actually, I really wouldn't know. I mean, I don't—

[00:14:20.33]

MARINA PACINI: I mean, well, there's always the comparisons being made between Philadelphia and New York, you know?

[00:14:29.55]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, I think that's sort of been beaten to death. I mean, I really—my

feeling is, who cares? [Marina laughs.] If you're a collector, you'll buy. And if you're good, you'll be seen. And it's very—it's tough anyhow for an artist today to get connected with a good gallery, but it's always been that way. And I think probably one of the problems is the proximity to New York makes it difficult.

And we've really not had any—well, even if you—actually, even if the newspapers did have a good art critic, it really wouldn't matter because the people that matter are not reading him, or the so-called people that matter. But I think things really have changed a great deal in the past 15, 20 years. God, you know, there are collectors in Allentown. There are collectors all over the world. And they find out. It's not really—

[00:15:38.41]

MARINA PACINI: No. Did you personally do your buying in New York? Did you always go to New York, or were you buying strictly through the Arts Council exhibitions?

[00:15:51.61]

AUDREY SABOL: No, actually, I bought as we went along. So I was buying from the artists. Some of it was in New York. Some of it was in California.

[00:16:05.31]

MARINA PACINI: So then the fact that you went out and did organize the exhibition wasn't your only contact with California. That was something that was going on over a period of years.

[00:16:14.98]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yeah. That's right. Yeah, surely, yeah.

[00:16:22.62]

MARINA PACINI: I never finished asking you about your friendship with Mark di Suvero.

[00:16:27.75]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah.

[00:16:28.82]

MARINA PACINI: Was it—had you knew him before the—

[00:16:33.11]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes, I've known—I really—God, I really can't remember ever meeting him for the first time. It seemed like I always knew him, that I had been up to the studio a couple of times. He had come down here, and he was doing some work—I think maybe setting up some work down here. And he was here. And then I saw him a couple of times out in California. I don't—I always just knew him. Yeah.

[00:17:00.41]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. I get the sense from the letters, though, that there was a—it was a personal relationship.

[00:17:06.60]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. I really liked him. Yeah, I really did.

[00:17:08.90]

MARINA PACINI: You also supported him?

[00:17:10.68]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes, yes. Do you mean financially? Not really, no.

[00:17:17.67]

MARINA PACINI: No, just it sounded not so much like financially, but it sounded—I mean, besides emotional support.

[00:17:23.76]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. If there was something I could do—yes, I always did, because I felt that of all the people—although, it's interesting; I'm not that fond of his work. But he's a marvelous—he's very articulate, and his concept and his ideas were very exciting and very good. And I always, if there was some way I could help and to further him, yes, I would. I found that most of the people that I had met, he was the most interesting and the most dynamic.

[00:18:00.58]

MARINA PACINI: Did you develop any kind of relationship like that with anyone else?

[00:18:04.53]

AUDREY SABOL: Well, I think probably with Bill Wiley. He's a totally different kind of—sometimes you meet people, and to use that cliché, you're on the same wavelength, or they really say something that turns a lot of things the way you think around. And again, it's interesting because I think a lot of Wiley's work, I really questioned for myself, because for me, there's too much writing in it. And that doesn't—but that's interesting, because, basically, he is really—he has to do more with words, I think, than he does maybe with forms and color.

[00:18:58.87]

MARINA PACINI: That's interesting, because it sounds like with both instances, you developed close personal relationships with artists whose work you weren't that crazy about. [Laughs.]

[00:19:05.69]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah, exactly. Exactly, it is funny.

[00:19:09.64]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Well, the last thing I wanted to talk to you about is a couple—is the Beautiful Bag Company.

[00:19:15.72]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, yeah.

[00:19:18.64]

MARINA PACINI: You and Joan Kron did the Lichtenstein plates, the Indiana "Eat" button, the billboard.

[00:19:25.13]

AUDREY SABOL: We did. Yeah, we did the Marisol ring, and we did the Indiana love ring. And we were really hot. We were on a roll, as they say. But to both of us, it was so obvious. I mean, the transition from a work of art into an object is very, very easy. So the Beautiful Bag was to—came out of an experience where—as a matter of fact, Lois Kushner was involved in that, because she was trying to get some kind of way to carry paintings back and forth to a gallery for her clients, who bought the painting, and was returning it, or were leaving with the painting. And she didn't want them just to leave with the painting wrapped in brown paper under their arm. And she thought it should be in a bag. And I forget how we started—and one of those funny things where you sit around and sort of just giggle, and joke about things.

[00:20:21.23]

So that was how the Beautiful Bag Company was started. And we got the bags made. And then I spent months stenciling them, because I did all the stenciling. [Laughs.] It was very therapeutic. And then they started to sell. And then that was the most bizarre thing, because then when certain people would see them, and they'd want them, and it seemed like a certain group of people were seen with them, you know? Which was logical, because you'd see it on somebody that you knew.

So it seemed to be some sort of cachet. Maybe it was the forerunner of the Louis Vuitton bag, I don't know. [Marina laughs.] But that was—it finally got so big that it got—I said to Joan, "Let's quit, because I can't—" they were not only—we were—I had hand-stenciled them, but they were numbered, because they were going to be sold like a collector's—like a print, you see? So yeah, that was funny.

[00:21:21.68]

MARINA PACINI: When you did things like the Lichtenstein plates, and the buttons and stuff, did you guys come up with the idea that, okay, you wanted some plates and Lichtenstein seemed like the guy?

[00:21:33.45]

AUDREY SABOL: No, no, the Lichtenstein china, I saw—he did sculpture. He did a piece of sculpture that was those dishes piled up, the way they'd be at a sink. And I saw them, I think, at Castelli. And I said—when I came back, I said to Joan, "I saw something that I think is a very kind of Duchampy idea. He did a piece of sculpture that was dishes. Let's take the piece of sculpture that was dishes, and put them back into dishes again, which will make it a full circle."

[00:22:03.45]

So then we ran around with the—we had to get permission from Leo, and then from Roy, who was sort of dubious about it. And then we had to find somebody, a commercial dish maker. It's not a potter, but a dish maker, dish manufacturer, which Joan, through somebody or other found somebody—Jackson China. And we took it to them. And of course, they really didn't understand what we were doing. All they knew was they were going to make the transfers exactly the way this—Roy drew them up, and we did it. And we did, I think, an edition of 800. And they sold at—we did—well, you must have the mailing piece for that—

[00:22:48.09]

MARINA PACINI: Yes.

[00:22:48.23]

AUDREY SABOL: Which thought was—which Joan put together. And I'm trying to think who designed that. Somebody—she did that end of it. She was very good with the commercial art end of things. And we did a mailing on that, and the response, and then somebody at the *New York Times* picked it up, and ran a little whole photograph of it. And out of the *New York Times*—because the orders came to the house here, we had—then I stopped stenciling, and I began wrapping dishes and mailing them, and then had the zoning commissioner come here because you're not supposed to run a business out of a house. I don't know. Something happened about that, which was pretty funny.

[00:23:37.14]

So I know the response out of the *New York Times* article really made me realize the power of the press, so to speak. It was amazing. And I think that very successful. The Indiana Wing was, I think, very successful. That was later, about eight—yeah, about seven or eight years ago picked up by Revlon, which really killed me, because, I mean, Bob Indiana was so—bitchy is the word I can think of to describe him—about getting this love sculpture put into a ring. He had to come down here to the man who was making the original copy for us then to have cast.

[00:24:31.13]

And he was carrying on about around how the shank should go, et cetera, et cetera. He was

really making it much more difficult than was necessary. As I said, seven years ago, I walked into Wanamaker's, and God, there, Revlon is doing a purchase with purchase. They're giving you the Love ring if you buy some of their cosmetics. They're top of the line cosmetics, but still. And I was stunned, because I thought, how did Bob let this—you know, he was so uptight about this whole thing. He must have gotten a load of dough from Revlon to do that. And why weren't we consulted since we had done the ring the first time? It was very—

[00:25:13.87]

MARINA PACINI: Well, if it was your idea—

[00:25:15.43]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah. Well, there was no way—unless we—I know because I spoke to somebody about it, and they said, well, if you want to hire a lawyer and go to the court, you can do it. But you know—

[00:25:23.77]

MARINA PACINI: What's it worth?

[00:25:24.74]

AUDREY SABOL: It's not really worth it.

[00:25:26.08]

MARINA PACINI: Well, how did the deal work?

[00:25:28.27]

AUDREY SABOL: He said—

[00:25:28.62]

MARINA PACINI: Did Indiana and Liechtenstein get a cut of every sale?

[00:25:32.47]

AUDREY SABOL: Yes. The profits were divided four ways with the dishes, as I recall. And with the ring, it was—once the cost was—in other words, you take off the cost first, and with the ring, it was divided three ways. It was Joan and I and Bob. And with Marisol, it was the same way. Now, with them, we sold out the dishes, and we sold out the Love ring. I think we did not sell all the Marisol—we didn't—in other words, we would never make it until we got an order. We had to get—we'd get like three or four orders. Then the jeweler would cast them. We never made ahead. But Joan would remember better than I. I think that Marisol was not sold. We did 200 of the rings.

[00:26:32.74]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. So it was the two of you who came up with the original idea, and then you'd approach the—you'd select the artist to do the design?

[00:26:38.92]

AUDREY SABOL: Yeah, we'd go in partnership. Yeah.

[00:26:40.21]

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Did you do any other projects like this with other artists?

[00:26:51.23]

AUDREY SABOL: Not really.

[00:26:52.32]

MARINA PACINI: Okay.

[00:26:57.44]

AUDREY SABOL: No.

[00:27:01.03]

MARINA PACINI: Well, that's all the questions I have for you.

[00:27:02.90]

AUDREY SABOL: Oh, good. [Laughs.]

[00:27:03.00]

MARINA PACINI: Is there anything else you want to say?

[00:27:04.64]

AUDREY SABOL: No, I think that's about it.

[00:27:06.79]

MARINA PACINI: Okay.

[00:27:07.39]

AUDREY SABOL: That was it.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]