



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Mitchell Samuels,
1959 August 11

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Mitchell Samuels on August 11, 1959. The interview took place in New York City, and was conducted by John D. Morse for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

JOHN MORSE: This is an interview with Mr. Mitchell Samuels, president of French & Company, for the Archives of American Art. The interviewer is John D. Morse. The place is the galleries of French & Company at 978 Madison Avenue, New York City. And the date is August 11, 1959. Now while we're doing this, Mr. Samuels, just leave that right where it is, and I would ask you, for example, a question such as: when did you join French & Company?

MITCHELL SAMUELS: It was founded -- I was the founder in 1907--

JOHN MORSE: Here in New York?

MITCHELL SAMUELS: In New York. And we succeeded the firm of Seyffer & Company, who were in 1871 the continuation of the firm of Marley & Company.

JOHN MORSE: Wouldn't that make it almost the oldest gallery--?

MITCHELL SAMUELS: The oldest gallery in the United States.

JOHN MORSE: The United States, not only here?

MITCHELL SAMUELS: Yes.

JOHN MORSE: That's interersting. And you, then, were one of its founders?

MITCHELL SAMUELS: I was one of the founders.

JOHN MORSE: What had you done before, may I ask?

MITCHELL SAMUELS: I was for ten years with the firm of W. & J. Sloane as an assistant manager and purchasing agent.

JOHN MORSE: And then you joined French & Company in -- well, you founded it in 1907?

MITCHELL SAMUELS: Founded French & Company with Mr. French, who was twenty years older, and with a fine flock of gray hair. And though I really founded French & Company, I was afraid that people would not have confidence in me, so we named it French & Company --

JOHN MORSE: That was very modest of you.

MITCHELL SAMUELS: --for that reason, and that's the way it remained, and we were an instantaneous success.

END

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