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*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with André Emmerich,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with André Emmerich on January 18, 1993. The interview was conducted by Mona Hadler 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

MONA HADLER: Now, I've done a little research into your biography.

ANDRÉ EMMERICH: Yes. Right.

MS. HADLER: And I thought we'd just start with the biography.

MR. EMMERICH: Wonderful.

MS. HADLER: I have here that you were born in Frankfurt, and then you moved to Amsterdam.

MR. EMMERICH: Right.

MS. HADLER: And then you came to New York.

MR. EMMERICH: Right.

MS. HADLER: And I assume that therein lies a tale.

MR. EMMERICH: Well, my story, or the story of my family, is in some ways a typical refugee story. My father was an international lawyer, and saw very soon the danger Hitler posed. So we left Germany, and then we left Holland, too. He had a German degree. He later got a Dutch degree. Eventually, an American law degree. Wrote quite significant books in German, Dutch, and English on international law.

MS. HADLER: So he then knew also how to make his way -

MR. EMMERICH: And we arrived here in February 1940. The Germans followed us into Holland in May. We just got out in time. My mother's family is French. In this sense, my background, my family, was unusual, with a German father and a French mother and a Dutch childhood.

MS. HADLER: Yes. I noticed the different countries.

MR. EMMERICH: And three languages, for starters. English came later. My mother's family were art dealers in Paris, and I'm in fact in that sense the third generation art dealer.

MS. HADLER: You wrote something about it. A grandfather who owned a gallery -

MR. EMMERICH: Grandfather was an art dealer. An aunt was a painter married to a dealer.

MS. HADLER: And what was your grandfather's name? It was your maternal -

MR. EMMERICH: Marx, M-a-r-x.

MS. HADLER: M-a-r-x.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Louis Marx. He and his brother had a firm called Marx Frères in Paris before the first war. The two gentlemen married two sisters, and each couple had two daughters. And in those days, well-to-do ladies did not become art dealers. They became ladies, although my mother, in this country, after my sister went off to college had a little gallery for a while dealing in Old Masters.

MS. HADLER: Your mother did?

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. So the whole family was always, on my mother's side, connected with art, painting, and art dealing.

MS. HADLER: And what period did they generally collect and sell? You said Old Masters to your mother. Was it the same with your grandfather?

MR. EMMERICH: My grandfather was a dealer primarily in *objets d'art*, art objects – Renaissance, Baroque, figurines, statuary, tapestry, furniture. Much of the Morgan collection came from him; the kind of thing J.P. Morgan collected is what my grandfather sold him.

MS. HADLER: So it's very –

MR. EMMERICH: I was – my mother was still able to go to the Metropolitan Museum and the Morgan Library with me, and she'd say, "This came from your grandfather. That came from your grandfather," et cetera.

MS. HADLER: Was your escape from or your leaving Europe a frightening experience to you?

MR. EMMERICH: It was fairly dramatic. We left Holland in December '39 and sailed through the North Sea through minefields. And the first thing I spotted the morning our ship left Amsterdam harbor was a floating mine through the porthole. And we ran upstairs, my sister and I – I have a two-year-younger sister – ran on deck and saw a ship's officer and said, "But there's a mine out there." And he says, "You're kidding." We said, "No, look." And suddenly he ran upstairs to the bridge and rang a bell. We were in a convoy. It was quite dramatic.

MS. HADLER: And who was – was it basically people emigrating in the boat?

MR. EMMERICH: The boat was filled particularly with Dutch people whose boat had sunk on a previous voyage, who had been rescued.

MS. HADLER: From a mine? Had it hit a mine?

MR. EMMERICH: It hit a mine. A Dutch ship called the *Simon Bolivar*. And our ship, the *Van Rensselaer*, had picked up these people.

MS. HADLER: Was it hard to obtain a visa?

MR. EMMERICH: No.

MS. HADLER: Because your father was in international law, so –

MR. EMMERICH: No. We came in – our mother, being French, came in under the French quota. This was before the fall of Paris, so the French quota was wide open.

MS. HADLER: I see. Because that was the same year as so many of the other European émigré artists came over.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Yes.

MS. HADLER: And that was that whole Museum of Modern Art –

MR. EMMERICH: It was at the moment of –

MS. HADLER: – society to rescue them.

MR. EMMERICH: That, too. They did not rescue us. But –

MS. HADLER: You just arrived.

MR. EMMERICH: Holland was still neutral. Holland still looked safe. Only a few people believed there might be trouble, a few far-sighted ones.

MS. HADLER: So then when you arrived in America –

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: – you were able, then, you went to college in Oberlin?

MR. EMMERICH: I went to Oberlin. Through a quirk, the Dutch school system, like the French, the first 12 grades are not divided as they are here with eight years of lower school and four years of high school. There are six years of lower school and six years of high school. I was in the third year of high school, Dutch-style, which meant I was somehow placed in the third year of high school here. And even though I lost much of a year in the winter of '39 to '40, somehow I graduated from school in May – June, rather, '41, and went off to college as a 16-

year-old.

MS. HADLER: Well, was that difficult? Was it a different – a really different culture for you here?

MR. EMMERICH: What was difficult was New York City. New York City in 1940 was not a welcoming place.

MS. HADLER: Really?

MR. EMMERICH: It was an unfriendly, not welcoming place.

MS. HADLER: In what way? In terms of – you didn't go to school here?

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. I went to school.

MS. HADLER: You went to high school?

MR. EMMERICH: I went to high school here.

MS. HADLER: That's what you just said.

MR. EMMERICH: First, for a bit, in the public high school in Richmond Hill out in Queens, and then in a country day school called the Kew-Forest School in Forest Hills, which was a very nice school and the people were quite kind. But I was in the throes of awkward adolescence, thrown into a new language, a new culture. In 1940, there was a major difference between well-brought-up young Dutch children and American kids.

MS. HADLER: There probably is today, I believe.

MR. EMMERICH: I remember vividly we had the son of the American consul in Amsterdam in our class in school. And he came to class in something we'd never seen in Holland, high sneakers, boot-length sneakers, and blue jeans and sweaters. We wore coats and ties and polished leather shoes.

MS. HADLER: So it was –

MR. EMMERICH: Holland was still very much, before the war, a class society. From the age of 13 on, you were addressed in the third person as, "Would the young gentleman like an ice cream cone?"

MS. HADLER: That's not the American style.

MR. EMMERICH: We were sort of given vague indications about sex, but never, ever about money, that kids made money for things like babysitting, or that you got a quarter for running an errand. That was a surprise, a shocking thing. There were many such strange phenomena. The informality and relative brusqueness of New York life. And of course, I spoke no English when we came.

MS. HADLER: Was it exciting, though, in any way, or just –

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, I was very – I was thrilled, very excited. But New York was not a welcoming atmosphere, by and large. People didn't like refugees. Didn't like refugees at all.

MS. HADLER: That's interesting.

MR. EMMERICH: New York at that period was a fairly segregated city. The Jewish world and the Gentile world had very little overlap, in total contrast to what it was in Holland that I'd grown up with. New York Jews were anything but welcoming to refugees. By definition they didn't like them much. The Gentiles were, if anything, friendlier, but wrapped up in their own worlds. In short, it was a not very welcoming atmosphere.

On top of it came our language problems. I remember when I started going to this public high school, they were in the middle of reading *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. I didn't have enough English to read it. But I managed to borrow from a refugee family in the same apartment house we lived in a copy of the German translation of *Julius Caesar*, which I was able to read. By the time we finished reading the play, I could read it in English. I mean, at 15 you pick up languages very quickly.

MS. HADLER: And you also knew many languages, so – you knew several.

MR. EMMERICH: Well, I knew French and German and Dutch.

MS. HADLER: So you already had –

MR. EMMERICH: And Latin, which helped. So it did help. The contrast, when I went to Oberlin in the fall of '41,

was staggering. Oberlin was an extraordinarily warm, rather small Midwestern college. I had applied to the schools I'd heard about, Harvard, Yale, Princeton. Tuition was at that point for my family very high, really very expensive. And we then applied to various Midwestern colleges, and someone suggested Oberlin might be a particularly nice place to study art history, which is what I was interested in majoring in.

MS. HADLER: Oh, you were at that point?

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, yes. Always. I ended up going to Oberlin because I liked the catalogue so much. Nobody in those days ventured out to look at the place, and Oberlin was a 12-hour train ride, overnight, and then a two-hour bus ride till you got there. But the warmth with which I was greeted – instead of being a damned refugee, I was then Rara Avis, someone who could speak French. I got a scholarship to eat at French House because I could speak more French than just saying, "*Passez le sel, s'il vous plaît,*" you know. I spoke fluent French so they gave me a scholarship to French House. I got a job at the museum typing catalogue cards, which paid rather better than doing dishes or stacking books in the library, because again, I could read catalogues and books in French, German, Dutch.

MS. HADLER: That's wonderful.

MR. EMMERICH: And people valued that. It was a warm –

MS. HADLER: Americans do tend to value languages a lot.

MR. EMMERICH: – Midwestern, open-minded, supportive – I mean, while I ostensibly studied history and art history at college, I really majored in Americanization and girls.

Oh, we have plenty of time. It's only 15 minutes.

MS. HADLER: I'm just totally checking that it's moving up and down to the voice, which it is. I'll turn it up a little.

MR. EMMERICH: But the discovery of coed life in America and – I remember, for example, there was a speech professor at Oberlin –

MS. HADLER: I was going to ask you about –

MR. EMMERICH: – who approached me one day walking across the campus and said, "Tell me, would you like to do something about your accent?" I said, "I'd love to." So I worked with him in his laboratory with old-fashioned Dictaphones, those cylinders. That's all that existed. And I talked into it and heard myself and worked on all the things that made up my accent – the difficulty in saying "t" and "th" as opposed to "d," which the Dutch all tend to do. They make Ts and THs into Ds, all that kind of thing.

MS. HADLER: So you had more of a Dutch accent than a German, then?

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, yes. Well, I started learning English in Holland. I had one semester in school.

MS. HADLER: So you learned –

MR. EMMERICH: Dutch and English are not that far apart. It's quite easy when you know Dutch.

MS. HADLER: What about the art history department at Oberlin? Were there any –

MR. EMMERICH: It was brilliant at that particular moment.

MS. HADLER: Who did you study with?

MR. EMMERICH: Well, there was Clarence Ward, who was the head of the art department, an architectural historian. He gave me a lifelong passion for architectural history, which I've enjoyed all my life. One of the wonderful things he did is he had a seminar in Medieval architecture, which took place in the basement of his house with little clay building blocks. So we built a cathedral, stone by stone.

MS. HADLER: Ah, they have that now.

MR. EMMERICH: We learned how, et cetera.

MS. HADLER: Oh, that's great. They have children's blocks like that now, building sets.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Yes.

MS. HADLER: Was there any modern or -

MR. EMMERICH: No.

MS. HADLER: What did they conceive of as modern in 1940?

MR. EMMERICH: There was no - there was no one except - really, the emphasis was on Old Masters. We had Wolfgang Stechow on painting. We had a marvelous German refugee professor called Karo with a K, K-a-r-o, George Karo, who had dug up Mycenae with Evans and installed the Mycenaean exhibit at the National Gallery of Greece. And he gave a course in ancient Greece. It took a year. We never got beyond Mycenae.

MS. HADLER: That's typical of the university.

MR. EMMERICH: But he gave me a lifelong passion for archeology.

MS. HADLER: And that might have started your interest in pre-Columbian.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Certainly. It cleared the ground for that, certainly. There was a young librarian who ran the art department and art museum's library, a separate little library, called Ellen Johnson -

MS. HADLER: Oh, yes.

MR. EMMERICH: - who just died a year ago.

MS. HADLER: Did she?

MR. EMMERICH: After a long illness. She was, I think, little more than a graduate student when I was there, and she got - she stimulated a certain interest in modern art. I do remember the college bought such things as stills from Disney cartoon films, prints by American -

MS. HADLER: *Fantasia*?

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Prints by American regionalists like John Steuart Curry, Thomas Hart Benton, Luigi Lucioni, who's been totally forgotten, all those people. Jack Levine, the social protest people.

MS. HADLER: So that was their orientation in 1940?

MR. EMMERICH: Well, that was '41 to '44.

MS. HADLER: Right. It would still be -

MR. EMMERICH: I do know Oberlin de-accessioned at that point a Monet, *Waterloo Bridge* [1903], and I told Mrs. King, who was the curator of the museum for whom I worked that I was so sorry to see the painting go. It was my favorite painting. And she said to me - she liked me and looked after me a bit - "André, that's a weak picture. You have a soft eye. You have to improve it."

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.]

MR. EMMERICH: Well, now I'm on the visiting committee of the museum and so forth. Many years have passed. I went back to Oberlin a few years ago, and they had a museum seminar, and I addressed that one the time I was out there. And I told them that anecdote, and I said, "Now, what's the moral of the tale? That Mrs. King was wrong and I was right? Not at all. It was that at 19, I had the eye of my generation. Now that we run the world, what we like is very important, very powerful, and very expensive. The moral of the tale? Wait your turn. Stick to your guns."

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.] Well-done. Have your own vision, which is what you had. So then after Oberlin, you tried your hand at writing, didn't you?

MR. EMMERICH: After Oberlin - I got out at the end of the war, and the idea of becoming an art dealer in New York -

MS. HADLER: Oh, that's right. You didn't -

MR. EMMERICH: - was the furthest from my mind. Stuffy, European. I was hell-bent to Americanize, and this extraordinary burgeoning world of New York. So I did write about art for the next ten years here and there, articles and freelance one place and the other. But as a job, I tried to make a career in the field that struck me as the most exciting, which is publishing and advertising. And I had my very first job, which was market research, ringing doorbells, where I learned more sociology than in all the sociology courses put together.

Writing copy for an ad agency. And then going to work at Time-Life International, which was - those were the glory days of *Time*.

MS. HADLER: Now we just -

MR. EMMERICH: I learned an awful lot at *Time*, and I worked there for a number of years.

MS. HADLER: Your gallery was one of the first, if not the first - I don't know - to have published catalogues about -

MR. EMMERICH: Right. Well, one of the things I learned at *Time*. Anyway, I went on from *Time* to the *Herald Tribune*. And while I was at *Time*, I also became a consulting editor to two French magazines called *Connaissance des Arts* and *Réalité* that, under the aegis of the Marshall Plan, were trying to publish editions for American readers. At *Time*, they wanted to help, and they said, "Oh, Emmerich knows French. Have him do it." Just as - my first contact with the world of contemporary art in New York, they're really two. One was that I'd gotten quite friendly with Tom and Audrey Hess, really through a civic affair having to do with preservation of a park on the -

MS. HADLER: In the late '40s, is this?

MR. EMMERICH: This is the late '40s. And I remember it was Tom's birthday and we were all going off - meeting at the house over at Beekman Place and all going off to a big party in Westchester. And somebody said, "Oh, but Bill isn't with us." "Who is Bill?" "Oh, that painter." So we went in two cars and zoomed down to 14th Street, where Bill de Kooning had his studio, to pick him up and take him to the party. And there was this painter, filthy with paint and newspapers, slopping wet paint and newspapers onto a canvas. And I was totally baffled by why on a sunny, beautiful May day did he want to keep slopping away on this canvas, and this incomprehensible stuff.

And the other was again at *Time* - there was something called the Visual Arts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Delegation to UNESCO. And they wanted somebody from *Time*, and *Time* said, "Oh, well, Emmerich, he knows about art. Send him." I was by far the youngest member of the committee. The next one up in age was Bob Motherwell, who was ten years older than I was. We became friends. Jim Sweeney was on the committee, Isabel Bishop, people like that. And at Motherwell's house, I met Pollock and Still and Rothko and Stamos and Gottlieb, and got to know their work, and began to understand that. And that was very exciting.

MS. HADLER: It was right at the moment because most of their breakthrough paintings were just in the late '40s.

MR. EMMERICH: Yeah. That was the end of the '40s or the beginning of the '50s.

MS. HADLER: Yeah. Right at that moment.

MR. EMMERICH: And finally, in '53, I had been quite successful in publishing. I was making a very good living, and was offered interesting jobs and so forth. I decided, if I'm ever going to be an art dealer, it's now or never. I had a trade. I had a skill to fall back on if that adventure didn't work. So economically, I thought I could risk it, take off a couple of years.

And I went - I wasn't married, and I went off to Paris because I thought, like everybody, modern art happens in Paris. New York is a backwater. You know, my whole generation thought that.

MS. HADLER: Yes.

MR. EMMERICH: One of the interesting - we were doing a show in late May about the Americans in Paris on the GI Bill - Sam Francis, Paul Jenkins, Olitski, Noland, Al Held, Ellsworth Kelly. The list goes on.

MS. HADLER: So they went back, in other words? After the war, they went -

MR. EMMERICH: They did go back.

MS. HADLER: After the war -

MR. EMMERICH: They went to Paris because that's where modern art was -

MS. HADLER: Sure. A lot of the writers did that, too.

MR. EMMERICH: My own hunch is that the reason the abstract expressionist generation didn't do it is that with the Depression, from '32 on, there wasn't any money. Gottlieb went to Paris.

MS. HADLER: They were older, too. They were older.

MR. EMMERICH: Not then. But they went to Paris when they could. Gottlieb went as a young man and had to come back because the money ran out. Motherwell went as a student in '38.

MS. HADLER: David Smith went.

MR. EMMERICH: But from '36 on, it looked grim. '38 was Munich. That meant war was on the horizon. '39, the war came. You couldn't go back till '46. And then that generation was too old.

MS. HADLER: Yes.

MR. EMMERICH: You go to Paris when you're 22, not at 32.

MS. HADLER: Right.

MR. EMMERICH: Then you have roots, a wife, a girl. You have roots. You don't move. My generation did, and found Paris was over, just as I did.

MS. HADLER: Plus also that generation of abstract expressionists felt that Paris had come to them with a lot of the European artists appearing during the war.

MR. EMMERICH: Because of that famous photograph by [inaudible] absolutely very important. I mean, influence of someone like Andre Masson. Very important.

MS. HADLER: And Breton being here. So they felt -

MR. EMMERICH: And Breton, and that whole group. It was - there was in fact less contact -

MS. HADLER: During the '40s -

MR. EMMERICH: - than one would have assumed because the Europeans stuck very much together and the Americans stuck very much together. The Americans drank a very great deal. I mean, the Zeta Bar [phonetic] was really the clubhouse. They floated on alcohol to a degree that is not imaginable any more today. The Europeans drank less and sort of stuck with each other. There were language barriers.

MS. HADLER: I was going to say, they didn't speak English.

MR. EMMERICH: Generation barriers. Cultural frame of reference barriers. A lot of barriers. Because I am bi-coastal, if you will, in the Atlantic sense, not in the Pacific sense, I'm so much aware of it. And it was much more so in that generation than in mine. So Europe did come here, but there was - Mondrian had an important influence on people like Burgoyne Diller. But certainly Europe did come, to some considerable degree. On the other hand, the single most influential artist, Picasso, didn't come.

MS. HADLER: Yes. And Miró came just for a very brief period.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. But still, that's true. Anyway, after I got to Paris, I realized life really was here for me, no question. And I came home and began to hang out my shingle as a private dealer the beginning of '54.

MS. HADLER: And how did you start finding artists?

MR. EMMERICH: Well, I took on the young American in Paris. A friend of mine was working - I loved a man called John Levee, totally forgotten now, I'm sorry to say. L-e-v-e-e. In the mid-'50s, I sold everything he painted, to the Modern, to the Whitney, to every collector you could think of all over. And I took on two other painters I really met through Bob Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb and Ted Stamos, Theodoros Stamos. Stamos stayed with me until Rothko died, and Gottlieb left when his paintings got too big for me.

My first little gallery - well, I began as a private dealer on 77th Street, 18 East 77th Street, which is a townhouse next door to the old Sotheby, the Parke Bernet building. Same block. Leo was at 4 East 77th, Eleanor Seidenberg at 10, and I at 18. And then I moved to 17 East 64th Street in 1956 and had a public gallery. That's when Stamos and Gottlieb came. Gottlieb and I were particularly close because I loved sailing, and I used to sail and crew for him on his boat out in Brooklyn, in Gravesend Bay.

MS. HADLER: Right. The Sound, *Sounds at Night* [1948], which is Gottlieb.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. In '58, I got married, and then in '59 Helen Frankenthaler came, and in '60 Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland when the French & Company gallery closed. And then later on, Anthony Caro and Al Held



and Sam Francis and David Hockney throughout the '60s.

MS. HADLER: Now, that you – you sought them?

MR. EMMERICH: Jules Olitski came for many years.

MS. HADLER: You sought them out? This was your particular vision, the Color Field, would you say?

MR. EMMERICH: I liked Color Field painting. Bill Rubin came to me when French & Company was breaking up and urged me to take them on. And I thought it was a wonderful idea, yes. I didn't know yet that French & Company was closing. So that worked out very well.

MS. HADLER: So that's how it worked out. Were you friendly with the critics, other than Bill Rubin, like Clement Greenberg, who of course was –

MR. EMMERICH: I knew Clem through two sets of mutual friends. One were New York art dealers called Gimpel – London art dealers, rather – who used to come to New York occasionally, but they were basically London. Charles and René Gimpel – Charles and Peter Gimpel, sons of René Gimpel, a major French art dealer in the '30s.

Who were we talking about? I lost that trail.

MS. HADLER: Clement Greenberg.

MR. EMMERICH: All right. Clem? Clem I knew through his relationship with Helen Frankenthaler. Helen I knew socially before I knew her as a painter.

MS. HADLER: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MR. EMMERICH: She shared an apartment after college here in New York with – in London Terrace with a woman called Gabby Rogers. Gabby Rogers was an actress, a second cousin of mine. Later married Jerry Lieber, the songwriter. And through both of them, I met Clem Greenberg.

MS. HADLER: Do you see his writings has having been important to you? He's someone who's so well-known but also, at the moment, the center of a lot of controversy, I'd say.

MR. EMMERICH: Easily I would happily show – no, I wouldn't happily show – Clem is someone whose writing I admire a great deal. But I don't always have to agree with him about everything totally. But he certainly, I think, was the best eye of his generation. [Yawns.] Excuse me. Sorry about my yawn.

MS. HADLER: We can edit it out.

MR. EMMERICH: Yeah. We have ten more minutes on the tape, and I think we come to the end of it.

MS. HADLER: Of the interview?

MR. EMMERICH: Of the tape.

MS. HADLER: Of the tape, right, and I'll turn it over.

Because it's – I mean, it's really very remarkable to be collecting these major artists at the moment when they are really so – you know, when that's the movement that's going to take off.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: So I think it's interesting to probe that. So it's a combination of your having – it having been suggested to you by William Rubin, your liking it, your having been around?

MR. EMMERICH: Right.

MS. HADLER: Was there any particular vision that you had about it?

MR. EMMERICH: No.

MS. HADLER: No?

MR. EMMERICH: No. I went artist by artist, by my feeling for it, by the recommendations, certainly. But that was always – there was no grand master plan. Maybe there should have been, but there wasn't.

MS. HADLER: No. I wouldn't think that there should have been. It's just when one looks at the art, there's a lot of – I don't know if I would say consistency, but certainly you have shown some of the major artists of a certain vision, you know, with a certain aesthetic at a moment in the very beginning.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. And yet I took on people like David Hockney and Al Held, who were clearly not Color Field painters.

MS. HADLER: Right. Right.

MR. EMMERICH: Whose work I liked enormously.

MS. HADLER: That's right. And William Bailey. Right?

MR. EMMERICH: Most recently.

MS. HADLER: More recently. Now, how do you account for that? Is that particular artists that you like personally or –

MR. EMMERICH: I like good art. The idiom isn't so important, what idiom they chose to paint, but [inaudible], and what's available and possible. If I were to make an imaginary museum –

MS. HADLER: Yeah.

MR. EMMERICH: – I wouldn't include only the artists I represent.

MS. HADLER: How did you feel about pop art, which was of course occurring in the same time, the same decade?

MR. EMMERICH: I'm sorry to say that by and large, I didn't like it as much.

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.]

MR. EMMERICH: Nothing wrong with it. It just didn't move me as much as Color Field art.

MS. HADLER: So it was just not aesthetically – did you – were you interested though in the 10th Street galleries and the whole scene in the '50s where many of the other kinds of art were beginning to be shown? Environments? Happenings?

MR. EMMERICH: I know. I always thought that was fascinating. It didn't move me, not the way Color Field did. It just didn't move me –

MS. HADLER: So it's a –

MR. EMMERICH: – anywhere near as much. In retrospect, for example, I think that probably Roy Lichtenstein was the quintessential pop artist, in spirit, et cetera. I saw that big pop art retrospective that was in London and I think Wales. Anyway, I saw it in London. The movement is more interesting than the quality of the individual works.

MS. HADLER: That's very – there's a lot of theoretical debate that goes on around Warhol and commercialism and questions like that. He questions. They question, ironically, many things, and they force you to think about issues.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. My feeling for art has always been about the aesthetic part of it; not about its message, not about the points it makes, et cetera, but how it is made. I think at the moment, we live in a particularly difficult moment. I tend to share Hilton Kramer's views. I don't need to explain them further. He does a very good job of it.

MS. HADLER: Yes. I do indeed know what you mean.

MR. EMMERICH: I think art is illustration, and art as political dialogue and art as all that sort of thing –

MS. HADLER: Theoretical discourse.

MR. EMMERICH: – is very rarely very good art. That's my problem with it. It's easier to see that in retrospect, or at a distance, let's say. In Stalinist Russia, art is enlisted for the Stalinist cause. But I think – well, we shied away from polemical art. I've always liked art that – I like what it dealt with. I mean, the Matisse show is such a great example. He painted through the two worst wars France has gone through and through the Occupation, through disasters. There's no reflection, direct reflection, in his art. He paints what he always painted – women,

flowers, light, forms, what art and culture are about. He kept the torch burning. And I think he's the great example of the approach to art that I share, let's put it this way.

MS. HADLER: These are big debates because we can walk over to the Guggenheim, too, and see the amazing quality of the Russian avant garde as well.

MR. EMMERICH: Ah, but the Russian avant garde – well, that has to be put in another context. That's put in another context. The Hard-edge painters of the early 20th century had a belief shared by all of the Russians – the De Stijl group in Holland, the Constructivists in Zurich, the English Geometric artists, et cetera – in the perfectibility of mankind through purity of forms. If we cleared slums, if people lived in better apartments, they'd be better people. If we freed men and women from wearing corsets and stiff clothes, their spirits would be freer, et cetera. That is a noble dream, a wonderful dream. And I think the Russian pictures come out of that, until Stalin put his hard, heavy hand on it.

It was a liberation of the spirit from the choking burden of a stifling Edwardian bourgeois culture that left very little room for any – I went to see the Brooklyn Museum yesterday, and they have splendid period rooms in the 19th century. I was very impressed by that. But they convey, more than anything else, that stifling quality of the 19th century. There's no room to breathe. And these artists created that, on the broadest scale, not just politically. And there again, most of the quality isn't anywhere near as wonderful. There's Malevich. There's Mondrian.

MS. HADLER: Tatlin.

MR. EMMERICH: And their quality is perfectly clear. And then you get the second, and then you get the third rank. So as propaganda, if you will, as, in the broadest sense, a political statement, and then in terms of pure quality, you can separate that very well. In any case, I would adore a great Malevich or a Mondrian of that period.

MS. HADLER: Or that Tatlin corner relief in the show, which is awesome.

MR. EMMERICH: One of the tragedies of our time that I see, to come back to that, is after that generation went, the abstract expressionist generation had a different attitude. They didn't think they could save mankind or the body politic through art, but they did believe that making art was a high mission, a high cultural mission of immense value. I think a great many younger artists today are interested in making money, which the previous two generations had no prayer of. Didn't think about it. Weren't concerned with it. They consider making money and making statements that will somehow shock the art world into paying attention, the Jeff Koons syndrome, if you will.

MS. HADLER: There is an aesthetic of shock, the Dadaist spirit.

MR. EMMERICH: The aesthetic of shock. Exactly. And the false newness. The aesthetic of novelty and false shock.

MS. HADLER: Which is certainly not the abstract expressionist –

MR. EMMERICH: And commercialization.

MS. HADLER: Are we okay?

MR. EMMERICH: We're going to run out in just a few moments.

MS. HADLER: So shall we just turn it over?

MR. EMMERICH: That might be a good idea.

[END TAPE 1, SIDE A]

MS. HADLER: Okay. Side 2.

MR. EMMERICH: As far as the gallery is concerned, the history of the gallery – back to that –

MS. HADLER: That's what I was going to move back to, history.

MR. EMMERICH: The gallery on 64th Street soon proved too small for the ever-larger paintings that we dealt with. So in the fall or the – in '63-'64, that season, we moved to the Fuller Building into essentially our present space. And we opened with an exhibition of Morris Louis [inaudible], and then Tony Caro sculptures. And that was terrific, Tony's first big show in New York.

MS. HADLER: It must have been beautiful. Exciting.

MR. EMMERICH: And then we had a show of Olitski and Noland and Helen and so forth. And those were wonderful years in terms of the quality of pictures.

MS. HADLER: Let me ask you a little about the history of collectors in America as you see it.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: Because I think this is something – I mean, nowadays also there's a lot of art historians that really want to find out just a little bit more reception and who bought what paintings, if not necessarily names, just what type of individuals bought in the '50s and in the '60s.

MR. EMMERICH: In the '50s, all sorts of people bought, essentially eccentrics. A few doctors and lawyers. A few other people. It was a very quiet kind of art world. And people bought not in a very programmatic way, without great expectation of anything except the pleasure of owning the thing. I should mention in the '50s and '60s, we were also heavily involved with pre-Columbian art. That lasted until the early '70s and we slowly phased out because the government made the importation of these things very difficult, if not impossible. And people bought modern paintings and classical antiquities and pre-Columbian art and European paintings and American paintings in much more –

MS. HADLER: So you would say in the '50s and the '60s, it would be a kind of cross-section of educated people?

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: Like university professionals, not necessarily – more intellectuals and educated people?

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Yes.

MS. HADLER: Who were not building large collections, but who were taking a chance?

MR. EMMERICH: There were a few people who were building large collections. Joe Hirshhorn was the great example of the period. Peg Bradley in Milwaukee was another one. Someone once asked me, how do you define a collector? I've always said the way you define one is a collector is someone who keeps on buying art when the walls are full. Until then, you're doing interior decorating – on a high level, but you're doing decorating. When you keep on buying, that's when you're a collector.

In the late '50s, the Sculls appeared. They were the presages of a certain future. Newly well-off, fairly vulgar people. Now, Bob Scull had gone to art school, had an eye, had real passion. But he and Ethel discovered that collecting art can also be a shoehorn into a whole other social level. And they were the bellwethers, the Sculls, of a whole slew of collectors, the phalanx of who came behind them. They were the phalanx of people who made a lot of money and who, after they bought the third car and the fourth mink and the ski lodge and so forth, discovered that buying art opened up the upper reaches of society in their town far more effectively than anything else could.

MS. HADLER: Do you think they had a particular commitment to American over European art?

MR. EMMERICH: The Sculls, certainly. They had a commitment to art made by artists whom they could meet and enjoy and entertain and associate with and use.

MS. HADLER: I see. Now, did they buy the artists from your gallery as well?

MR. EMMERICH: They bought art from me, more in the beginning than later on. They moved strongly into pop art.

MS. HADLER: Right. That's what I always think of them as collecting.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. They moved strongly into pop art. Pop art was congenial to – I will say something political now, that – let the chips fall. The abstract expressionists always complained – we're talking about the Rothko/Gottlieb generation – about how wonderful Europe was, where the government supported the arts, where the museums were filled with people. Well, be careful of what you wish for. They got their wish. Now the government supports the arts, and we know what happens at the NEA and the ghastly stuff, the politically rationed stuff, et cetera, that gets supported. You saw the manifesto that Ronald Feldman sent around to the transition team of Clinton urging that the government persuade museums to show more art by women, minorities, gays, lesbians, blacks, et cetera, because they are minorities rather than because art might be good. Hilton Kramer wrote about it in his last column. I refused to sign the petition.

And the masses started to go into the museums. Mass taste is always vulgar, by definition, because as you know, the Latin bible is the Vulgate bible, the language of the people. *Vulgus* is people. The taste of the masses is always a pop one. Fast food is more popular than good food. When you had mass attendance and mass buying of art and mass influx into the art world, the kind of art that appeals to the masses became the most popular. My view is that it was not the best art possible, but the most popular, the most accessible art. And that was most easily understood by newcomers. And it is this that caused popularity, immense popularity, of certain kinds of art beginning in the '60s, late '60s.

MS. HADLER: Such as what? Pop art? Is that your -

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: Because other forms of art that were successful were very inaccessible in some ways.

MR. EMMERICH: The influx of people into the world of art was enormous, so that this rising tide made all boats rise, in price, in interest, et cetera. But the mass influx and the vulgar taste of the new arrivals - well, there are always new rich. One of the things people forget is that old rich don't buy art. They may have a collection. They don't buy art. Collectors don't buy art. They have a collection. The people who buy art are people you never heard of before, who are new, who are making a collection. Later on they may prove to have been farsighted collectors. At the time they're really collecting, they're not known. Farsighted collectors, they'd surely buy a little bit every year, but very little. The great buying sprees are undertaken by people who are new to the game. The Medici were great art patrons when they were *arrivistes* in Florence. After they had married off two daughters to become queens of France, they didn't do anything for art any more. They used art, like so many people before and since, for aggrandizement.

And people discovered - in this country, people discovered on a fairly broad scale that phenomenon. Also, the pleasures of art. Art is a peculiar thing, you know. When you - in most cases when you start spending what is for you serious money on it, you start to look and read and compare. And slowly you develop your eye, and step by step people who began for the crassest motives and maybe in the crassest way, like Bob Scull and many others, developed their eye, got interested, compared, and pretty soon, thank God, yes. They became very knowledgeable.

MS. HADLER: You know, I think some of the contemporary debate you maybe have more in common with than you believe because a lot of it is about the commercialization and, you know, the kind of -

MR. EMMERICH: I know. It's just that I am horrified by - we live in a very difficult -

MS. HADLER: - culture of shopping.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. We live in - the culture of shopping. We live in a very funny moment.

MS. HADLER: It is a complicated one.

MR. EMMERICH: The influx of a great deal of money into the art market for brand-new work has had wonderful results. It has allowed a great many, enormously many more artists to pursue their vision, including some very good ones. But the percentage of art that's not very wonderful that's made I suspect is always the same. Let's assume that of all art made, 10 percent is pretty nice. Well, if the number goes from 100 to 1,000, the number of good goes from 10 to 100. That's very nice. But one is always aware of the less good stuff that's around in large quantity.

MS. HADLER: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MR. EMMERICH: Happily, the less wonderful has a way of disappearing, by what magic circumstance I don't know.

MS. HADLER: Volcanoes.

MR. EMMERICH: I suspect benign neglect and self-destruction.

MS. HADLER: Right. Right. That's what happens. It's not taken care of.

MR. EMMERICH: Exactly.

MS. HADLER: In some of the early collectors -

MR. EMMERICH: Yes?

MS. HADLER: – the ones that built collections, do you have any particular memories of them? Like Joseph Hirshhorn coming to you –

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, well, Joe Hirshhorn. Clearly, I've never known a man who had more pleasure in buying than Joe. I'm not sure he loved art as much as he loved buying art. You've got Peg Bradley, who's an extraordinary collector, who lives in Milwaukee. Seymour Knox. Most of his collection went to, you know, the Albright-Knox – what's now the Albright-Knox Museum in Buffalo.

MS. HADLER: Right. Now, these people, how would they get started? Would you see your role as educating them when they'd come to you?

MR. EMMERICH: No, no. They were all started.

MS. HADLER: They were all started?

MR. EMMERICH: I never saw my role as educating, particularly. Even in pre-Columbian art, where I did more educating of people, I think, than in contemporary art – because less was known and more needed to be told, could be told – people really bought on aesthetic. I think of course dealers help collectors to understand new artists and new art. Yes, that's a very important part. But you never know whether the collector you're introducing to this painter or this group of artists will end up buying one, and you'll never see them again, or will be back and buy lots. So you keep doing that.

MS. HADLER: And you didn't –

MR. EMMERICH: You keep being – I think you keep being a missionary for the art you most like.

MS. HADLER: I see. But you didn't see yourself as discovering new talent, per se, as we discussed before?

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, I think that the artists I took on, I took on almost always at the urging of others. For example, it was Ken Noland who drew my attention to Tony Caro's work as a sculptor. It was Bill Rubin who drew my attention to Noland and Louis. Helen I had known and followed the work of since early on. Gottlieb and Stamos I met directly. But none of these were unknown when I took them on. David Hockney –

MS. HADLER: He was known?

MR. EMMERICH: No, not yet.

MS. HADLER: Not yet?

MR. EMMERICH: He was – he'd had one small show in New York. But he wasn't totally unknown in England, if you follow me.

MS. HADLER: Uh-huh [affirmative]. I see. Well, did you have the urge – I mean, you must be barraged by artists' slides and whatnot.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Yes.

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.] I'm sure.

MR. EMMERICH: It's terrible.

MS. HADLER: Yes. It must be difficult.

MR. EMMERICH: A colleague of mine was on a radio show with me once. It was Allan Stone. And the interviewer asked, "What is the hardest thing a dealer has to do?" And Allan said, "In this post-Freudian age, we all know how painful it is to be rejected. But you have to reject."

MS. HADLER: All the time. Right?

MR. EMMERICH: And I feel so terrible, when you know that artists have poured their being into these canvases or whatever they are. And then they took pictures, and then they make a nice presentation. And their heart in their throat, they sent it off to you, hoping that I would look at it. And even if I looked at it carefully – and often I do; I try to as much as possible – there is no room in the gallery. There are only so many unknown artists you can handle. Or their work is nice, but not earth-shaking. Even if it were, in slides you can't tell.

MS. HADLER: You can't tell? Did you ever, even in the early years, make studio visits?

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, yes. But mostly because anything else is unavoidable. Every artist who's come to me

came to me practically through a feeler. William Bailey and Dorothea Rockburne are two artists, very different, who came to me the last few years. They didn't call me up and say, "André, why don't you come down to my studio?" Somebody said it to somebody. And there are many others who came that way who we didn't take on.

MS. HADLER: You have shown over the years a lot of women artists. And that's -

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, yes. I've never had - my generation still had problems with women artists.

MS. HADLER: But you didn't.

MR. EMMERICH: It seems almost strange to think that - because that's gone, pretty much. In Europe, it's still a little bit left. But for years, major problems in selling it. Great prejudice against women artists.

MS. HADLER: So you found that someone would come into your studio - into your gallery and -

MR. EMMERICH: Well, I would look at the pictures. Don't forget, my mother's sister was a painter.

MS. HADLER: What was her name?

MR. EMMERICH: Joanne Verna, V-e-r-n-a. Her pictures were always around. I never saw a reason why a woman shouldn't be every bit as much of an artist as a man. It didn't - certain things didn't occur to me, partly because of the way I grew up.

MS. HADLER: In your specific family, not in Europe? Just in your specific -

MR. EMMERICH: Both. For example, when I think back to Oberlin, I think I was the only straight male in the art history department. I wasn't so aware of it at the time. I was girl-mad. And these other guys weren't so mad about girls. Their homosexuality, somehow I didn't fully fathom it. It was also hidden, of course.

MS. HADLER: Yes. I mean, that was -

MR. EMMERICH: Some even got married out of political necessity. You couldn't be a museum director without a wife. People, artists, art dealers, were suspect. He's a phony. You're a four-flusher. You're a luftmensch. You're a phony. I remember John Levee, this young painter - I met him in Paris - explained to me why he liked being Paris. He showed me his card. It said, "John Levee, *artist peintre*." And he said, "You know, I'm an *artist peintre*, like a *peintre*, which is *peintre* who paints the walls. But I'm respected as much as that, or an engineer, or a baker, or a butcher, or - it's a craft, a trade." In Hollywood, where he came from, to be an artist, you're a phony of some kind.

My sister married into a very solid Midwestern family, long settled there for many generations in Milwaukee, by this [inaudible] I imagine it's possible. When I became an art dealer, the family out there looked at that somewhat askance, it seemed.

MS. HADLER: Right. Anything in the arts - anything in the arts is very suspect.

MR. EMMERICH: In the arts. Now, my brother-in-law is a trustee of a museum, has a big hall to which he gave his name by giving them money. A major collection. Very proud of it all. Tidal change from the early '50s.

MS. HADLER: Yeah. That's true.

MR. EMMERICH: Total change. Art was for women and fairies, bluntly. In most cases, that's what it was. And four-flushers, and a few eccentric millionaires like Henry Clay Frick and Mellon, and that was Old Masters.

MS. HADLER: In a sense, you're part of that whole wave of European intellectuals and art world figures that changed America, helped to change it.

MR. EMMERICH: Well, I come from the same - I come from the same background, for what it's worth.

MS. HADLER: Of course.

MR. EMMERICH: Certain things I'll never forget. The first day I went to high school in New York, the Richmond Hill high school in Queens, they announced there would be a dance in the gym after 3:00, after the 3:00 - the last class ended at 3:00. I was a little shy. The girl at the next desk was a freckled blonde. I said to her - with suntanned skin. Let's call her Emma - "Emma, would you like to go to the dance with me?" Sure. We went down. Danced. The next day, the teacher calls me aside and says, "You know, she's a colored girl. You mustn't do that." Public high school.

MS. HADLER: Really?

MR. EMMERICH: I didn't know she was a colored girl. She didn't look colored to me. We had been to Dutch colonies on our way to New York waiting for the visa to come through, and there everybody had some sort of color. It never occurred to me. And if she were, so what? I mean - so like all these things were new.

MS. HADLER: Goodness. I can see.

MR. EMMERICH: That art was not fully masculine somehow never occurred to me because it wasn't my background. They were all, you know, men and women artists, just as much as my aunt -

MS. HADLER: And yet it was certainly, in the '50s and the '40s, a very macho, male art world in terms of the artists.

MR. EMMERICH: The artists were something else. The males were very macho.

MS. HADLER: That's true. The artists to the collectors.

MR. EMMERICH: Yeah. Collectors, Anglo-Saxon males didn't fuss with art. That changed in my time.

MS. HADLER: Let me ask you another question.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes?

MS. HADLER: What happens if an artist who shows with your gallery changes style? Has this happened, or -

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, yes. Well, I mean, it touches on a subject. An artist with my gallery whose work turns less and less good -

MS. HADLER: Or shifts style, even?

MR. EMMERICH: That hasn't happened.

MS. HADLER: Turns less and less good. Okay.

MR. EMMERICH: That's not a problem. If an - I mean, David Hockney's style has changed throughout his relationship. That's terrific. Al Held's style has changed quite a lot.

MS. HADLER: Yes.

MR. EMMERICH: Every artist I can think of has changed quite a lot. Sam Francis changed a lot.

MS. HADLER: So then let's get back to what you were saying. If you feel the artist -

MR. EMMERICH: No. That's not a problem. Sure. But let's assume an artist - this is a major problem for artists, period. You take on an artist. You love the work. It's wonderful. Is this going to be published, by the way, or is it for the archives?

MS. HADLER: It's for the archives.

MR. EMMERICH: Yeah. I mean, for example, take John Levee. His work was wonderful, we thought, everybody thought. Then it got stale. Then it got bad. What do I do? Well, I think I have an obligation to the artist to support him. Just like with wines, there are good years and less good years. You hang around. You give him another chance. But if by the second or third or fourth year it hasn't gotten any better, what I do is I let the artist know one way or the other that we're not likely to do another exhibition, and that if he or she would like to show elsewhere, we would not stand in their way.

MS. HADLER: Do the artists usually have some -

MR. EMMERICH: I would not want to try to throw an artist overboard, as it were, and say, "We can't represent you any longer." I hate doing that. But to indicate that, look, we're not likely to be able to show the work.

MS. HADLER: Uh-huh [affirmative]. So the distinction you're making between having an exhibit and representing them would - do you want to explain that a little more fully?

MR. EMMERICH: Well, if you're represented by the Emmerich Gallery, it's not as bad as saying that you've been - and don't have a show for a while - than saying you've been dumped by the Emmerich Gallery. Just as in a Reno divorce, it was the gentleman allowed his wife to divorce him even if he wanted to divorce her. I think it's



better form for the artist to leave the gallery.

MS. HADLER: So in a sense that's what happens because they of course want to find a show.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: A place to show.

MR. EMMERICH: Exactly.

MS. HADLER: I see. Let me -

MR. EMMERICH: You asked, by the way, about saying no and so forth. We talked about slides before. When I do get those slides, I feel very badly for the artist. I try to compose letters that show the most comprehensive - the most comprehension, the most understanding, warmth and regret. The letters are so successful, in a sense, that they keep coming back with slides year after year. My letters perhaps have not been firm enough sometimes.

MS. HADLER: Well, artists, I think, have to be - have to have a strong ego, and they have to keep trying. They have to believe in themselves.

MR. EMMERICH: True. But it is very difficult, of course.

MS. HADLER: No, dealers have a reputation, you know, over the centuries, of course, but so do artists -

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, yes.

MS. HADLER: - as being rather crusty and, you know -

MR. EMMERICH: Well, dealers have the bad reputation, in some ways deservedly, in some ways not. There is a painting by Titian, a portrait by Titian, of Jacopo di Palma [sic], I think is his name, a Venetian art dealer of his time, who commissioned Titian to do a portrait. It hangs in the museum in Vienna, in the art history museum, the Kunsthistorisches. And I've often shown it to classes I've talked to. And it shows this man, rich in his costume, a few gold chains, clearly very well off, standing behind a table covered with a Turkish rug, another symbol of wealth. And over here he holds in his hand like this a torso of a Roman model Venus. There she is.

MS. HADLER: It's beautiful.

MR. EMMERICH: And there he is holding this Venus, the goddess of love of the ancients, and the ancients had a heavy, heavy meaning in the Renaissance. And he's sort of holding it like this. See, it's mine, but I might let you have it. And on the table is a pile of silver coins. Judas Iscariot with the goddess of love. I mean, dealers were not even in Titian's time very popular.

MS. HADLER: And there were, of course, also the blind critic.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: You know, the glasses, in the Netherlands.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Anyway, it is -

MS. HADLER: But tell me, artists must be difficult, too.

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, terrible.

MS. HADLER: Do you have any stories or anecdotes that you'd like to put into the archives of personalities of artists?

MR. EMMERICH: I'll tell you - yes. Yes. I'll tell you a number. One is that I maintain that if you do an autopsy on any artist after their demise, you will find written above their heart the phrase, "More is never enough."

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.]

MR. EMMERICH: Artists have as a motto that famous show business line, "What have you done for me lately?" I have great sympathy for artists at the same time because when I wrote a couple of books on pre-Columbian art and therefore had a publisher, Simon & Schuster in one case, University of Washington Press in the other, and then a reprint as Hacker Art Books, my whole relationship, as far as the books are concerned, with the world went through that little umbilical cord with the publisher. This year I'm on the cover of the catalogue. Next year

it's buried in the back somewhere. Rizzoli had a window.

MS. HADLER: So you know, in a sense, these publishers are your dealers.

MR. EMMERICH: Not that I have any more – so it's exactly the same with my field, the exhibit. At the same time, I once wrote up a *bon mot* that the great thing about the Old Masters is that the artists are all dead, and the trouble with the Old Masters is that some of the artists are not dead.

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.] Did you –

MR. EMMERICH: You know the word *prima donna*. That's really what it all comes from. Where does the word come from? Italy. Every Italian town had a little opera company in the 18th and 19th century, and every opera company had lots of ingenues to sing in the chorus, to sew the costumes, sweep the stage, and paint the flats. And in that group of ingenues usually was a singer who wasn't bad. She got a part. Eventually she got to be the leading lady, the *prima donna*. And on the way from young, willing ingenue to *prima donna*, there was a personality change, so marked and so common that the term is now used in all languages for both sexes.

MS. HADLER: Right. [Laughs.] That's true.

MR. EMMERICH: Why should artists be any different?

MS. HADLER: Did you ever – do you have any stories about donating works to museums, perhaps any, you know, incidents where works were turned down that you – that later –

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, no. I never had –

MS. HADLER: Did you ever do that to make an artist more well-known? Did you try to have their works in major collections?

MR. EMMERICH: Back in the '50s and '60s, one did that. Tax laws made that possible.

MS. HADLER: Yes. Right. I should say pre-tax laws.

MR. EMMERICH: There were all kinds of – there were – well, pre the IRS catching on. I remember one instance where a painter, who I didn't even represent, who was desperate. I made a deal and a client of mine bought 20 paintings of his for a very modest price each, but total 20 paintings gave him quite a lot of money that he needed. And then the man made money by giving these 20 paintings away at their normal retail price, one by one by one. He made a lot of money, and the artist had pictures in every museum you could think of.

Now, had the artist become a very good artist, that's one thing. But he didn't. He remained an artist of the second rank, and not the very best of the second rank. I wouldn't like to mention his name even here because it's so invidious. But the museums who have got these pictures will treat these pictures more or less well depending on how well the reputation goes of the artist whose work it was. I remember when the tax window went down – in '68, was it? I think that was the last year you could –

MS. HADLER: Maybe a little later.

MR. EMMERICH: No. I'm pretty sure it was '68.

MS. HADLER: I don't know. I don't actually know.

MR. EMMERICH: Helen Frankenthaler and Motherwell were married, and their business manager/accountant made them give away a lot of art. And they gave away a very great deal of art. Now, had they not given it away, they would have had to pay more money in tax that year. But what they saved is far, far less than the value of the pictures had they held them until 1990.

MS. HADLER: Yeah. That's true. Let's see. Did you have contracts with artists over the years?

MR. EMMERICH: We've had a few written ones. Mostly –

MS. HADLER: Earlier? Not now?

MR. EMMERICH: No. A while back. Mostly when the gallery advanced stipends to artists.

MS. HADLER: And you did that? You would support them on a monthly –

MR. EMMERICH: Some artists, yes. By and large –

MS. HADLER: In the '50s or '60s?

MR. EMMERICH: In the – you know, in the late '60s/'70s. It came into vogue in the '70s and '80s.

MS. HADLER: I see.

MR. EMMERICH: I never thought contracts are worth the paper they're written on. It's difficult for a dealer to sue an artist. Bad public relations. And what you need above all is goodwill. So I think what you need is maybe a letter of understanding spelling out who does what, what the gallery gets, what the parameters of the relationship are, and to be sure to give artists proper receipts for every picture you have on consignment.

MS. HADLER: And so then in the '70s, there were instances where you'd have a monthly stipend where you'd be supporting artists?

MR. EMMERICH: Uh-huh [affirmative]. With the recession, those stipends have gone out the window.

MS. HADLER: I see. Let me ask you a little bit about the primitive art. I'm sure you've been following the new debates around primitivism, around say the show that was at the MOMA. Did you have any –

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, the one that [inaudible] –

MS. HADLER: Well, that was the highlight. But before that, William Rubin's show in primitivism?

MR. EMMERICH: Right. I saw that. Well, I thought Bill Rubin's show was fine, as far as it went. It was done 25 years too late. [Inaudible.] I think that the classic idea that primitive art, various kinds, influenced modern artists is a mistake, mistaken. It's seen – looking at it from the wrong end. Picasso and Derain got interested in African art around 1906 in Paris. The French had a colonial empire for 25 years before that. Paris curio shops had such stuff that traders and missionaries brought back, military, whatever. Why did Picasso and Derain pick up on those things that had been around? I think for the same reason that boys and girls look at each other differently at 13 than they did until then. It's an inner change. Picasso and Derain's vision suddenly paralleled that of African art, and therefore they saw African art as very beautiful, just as boys and girls again see each other. They've been around all the time. Why didn't they see each other before? It was the inner change.

MS. HADLER: So their art moved in that direction, and then they like it?

MR. EMMERICH: Exactly.

MS. HADLER: Yeah. I've had artists say comparable things, or they had literary influences.

MR. EMMERICH: Exactly. You have to be ready for it. It has to be in the air. On the contrary – I forget what the magazine is – *Horizon* is a magazine that asked me to do an article on the influence of how Rothko presumably copied Peruvian feather tapestries, et cetera. I said, "I'll write you an article, but it's the other way, is that we see Peruvian feather fabrics as beautiful, not just as ethnographic, because of Rothko." I think we are – Henry Moore and [Constantin] Brâncuși opened our eyes to a certain kind of Mexican stone sculpture that I wrote a book about, the Mezcala – I gave it a name – that until then were considered rudimentary, crude, very primitive, and of no interest. I think the Surrealists more than any others opened our eyes to what we call primitive art.

MS. HADLER: Yes, indeed.

MR. EMMERICH: It is also why collectors in the '40s/'50s/'60s bought primitive art right along with modern paintings. And this has stopped. You see it much less.

MS. HADLER: Yes. It's a different sensibility that people are buying.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. So I think one of the extraordinary phenomena in my career was this interest in all kinds of – let's call it primitive – exotic arts.

MS. HADLER: Were you interested in the anthropological attitudes or ideas? Did you know any of the anthropologists here?

MR. EMMERICH: I will give us some light. I got to know a lot of archeologists – God, I love that neatness – and anthropologists in New York and Mexico, et cetera. Would you like something?

MS. HADLER: Would you like something?

MR. EMMERICH: I need a break.

[Tape stops, restarts]

MS. HADLER: Okay. I don't remember what we - oh, primitivism.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: Just you know there's been - I'm sure you know there's been so much rethinking also of pre-Columbian art and the context now that they've cracked the code.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Exactly.

MS. HADLER: So how do you feel about that?

MR. EMMERICH: There was always - and when I dealt in it in the '50s - perfectly clear that there were certain very, to our minds, cruel aspects of pre-Columbian art. For example, the god Xipe, X-i-p-e, who represents the coming of spring and so forth, who is represented by a figure, usually the priest, wearing the skin of the flayed victim like a glove or a mask. And I found that repellent and always refused to buy Xipes.

What I think is extraordinary about pre-Columbian art is that for all its cruelty or occasional aspects of cruelty, in a culture very far removed from us, through the sheer beauty of form, formalism, of what they did with forms, we are able to have a human contact with them, those ancients, that is quite extraordinary. We share very little with them except -

[END TAPE 1, SIDE B]

MR. EMMERICH: I've written about it occasionally, how - it's always neater when you write it and edit and boil it down, while I go rambling on - how let's call it the beauty of forms, the refinement of expression, shape, color, makes us respond on an aesthetic level to all early cultures. Think of ancient Egypt and those wonderful sensuous statues and those marvelous things. They were all made for what is to our mind, after all, a really rather abhorrent, ridiculous over-concentration on an imaginary life after death. You know, we don't even want to know how ancient art has survived because it's always involved with death and no one wants to know that. The great taboo of our time is death, the way it was for our grandparents - it's the way for our grandparents it was sex.

You have no idea how often people ask me in the gallery, "How come you say that this pot is from the 5th century B.C. or 2,000 years old? It's still intact." Well, my answer - because I wanted to make a sale was - "Well, because it was buried as an offering." If I added, "It was buried as an offering in a tomb for the dead," "Thank you," and people ran away.

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.]

MR. EMMERICH: If you looked at a Roman ring, a pre-Columbian eagle, and you wanted it, fine. If you were told, "Well, you know, this was found on the finger bone of a person, a Roman buried long ago, or on the chest of some pre-Columbian Indian," no. People don't want to know.

MS. HADLER: Well, I had asked you also -

MR. EMMERICH: Another very curious thing - hold onto that for a moment - a very curious insight about collectors is that collectors think they own art. They think of it as my pre-Columbian eagle, my Rembrandt etching, my Picasso, as if they were the one and only owner, as if they practically had helped bring it into being through their ownership, rather than remembering that they may hold it for, what, 25 years, maybe 50 years, then it's owned by someone else.

MS. HADLER: Then it moves on.

MR. EMMERICH: That our ownership is only a temporary guardianship is something that penetrates the consciousness of very, very few collectors. Death is the great taboo. And that something comes from the dead, from the rites for the dead - like all of Egyptian art, all ancient Greek vases we own, all ancient jewelry -

MS. HADLER: So in essence -

MR. EMMERICH: - all portable pre-Columbian art -

MS. HADLER: - you know, one would say that it was really - even wanting to avoid the anthropological context was a positive thing or an important thing in terms of even trying to sell this art.

MR. EMMERICH: There is another curious thing that always struck me about African and South Pacific art. Most

African masks and the great, overwhelming majority of South Pacific material, was tribal art meant to scare, initiation masks, the spirits, the frightening spirits that personified the taboos. People hang them in their homes and somehow don't see the horror and the threat. Or do they find it exciting, but deny the reality of it by talking about the formalist beauty of it?

MS. HADLER: Yes. Or, in a sense, have a kind of colonialist attitude of taking charge of another culture from one's own point of view.

MR. EMMERICH: Well, yes. But I think -

MS. HADLER: That would be a contemporary critique.

MR. EMMERICH: My hunch is that it has to do with suppression, that people like horror, like terror. People like horror movies, like horror on their walls, deny it on one level that it's there, that they see it only for their formal duty, but on another level like it for the horror that's contained within it. At least that's my conclusion after many years of involvement in the field.

The people - the use people make of art is also a funny one. I was recently in the home of a collector who took me, a couple, to their bedroom, which is often embarrassing as a phenomenon because it tells you more about them than you want to know. Their bedroom, the ceiling was tiled with mirrors.

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.]

MR. EMMERICH: The walls were tiled with Picasso erotic prints, and the entrance tiled, and I mean tiled, with Helmut Newton photographs. Well, I think Picasso's prints are wonderful, including the loving ones, the ones that deal clearly with erotica, if you will. But used that way, I was uncomfortable.

MS. HADLER: Yes. I can understand. [Laughs.]

MR. EMMERICH: I mean, you know, I was uncomfortable.

MS. HADLER: Did you know Picasso? Did you meet him over the years?

MR. EMMERICH: No. The insensitivity of people to art. I remember one collector showing me his home. He was a swinging bachelor in those days - this is ten years ago - and he had a round bed on an elevated platform. And next to the bed, he had a John DeAndrea nude girl, but not one of those happily free-standing nudes, but a poor, shivering creature holding a towel in front of herself. He bought it, I'm certain, because she was "decent."

MS. HADLER: [Laughs.]

MR. EMMERICH: Now, clearly, that poor creature you would offer your coat to and say, "Honey, don't you want a covering?" Because she was so uncomfortable in her state. The opposite of a turn-on. But I suddenly realized that the collector couldn't tell the difference. He didn't have that sensitivity. He thought that was both sexy and "decent" because of the towel.

MS. HADLER: It's an old modest Venus role, in a way.

MR. EMMERICH: Well, you wrote something down because I interrupted you.

MS. HADLER: What I had asked you about the anthropologists -

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: - and whether you got to know them.

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, I got to know a few very well, like Peter Furst, for example, the great pre-Columbian anthropologist, or Michael Cole, the Yale man on the Maya, and Gillett Griffin in Princeton. I know all those people. And I value them very highly and their contribution. They're terrific.

MS. HADLER: So let's see. How did you get involved with some of the CoBra paintings that were in your -

MR. EMMERICH: The CoBra? Oh, because Alechinsky needed another gallery in New York, and because I've always liked that man's work. So there it was.

MS. HADLER: So it's the same basic kind of - well, is there anything that you want to talk about that I haven't raised?

MR. EMMERICH: Not really. I admire what you're doing. I will think of 79 things later, but right now my mind is a blank.

MS. HADLER: Well, you know, I could give you a call at some point if you wanted or -

MR. EMMERICH: Well, if I have any brainstorm, why don't you. I'll call you.

MS. HADLER: Okay.

MR. EMMERICH: I don't have any brainstorm right now.

MS. HADLER: So I've sort of pretty much come to the end of the questions that I prepared. Stop it now?

MR. EMMERICH: Please.

[Tape stops, restarts]

MS. HADLER: We'll talk now about the sculpture park upstate. You wrote an article on it, and I read it, about -

MR. EMMERICH: Back in '67?

MS. HADLER: Yes. Yes. I got hold of it.

MR. EMMERICH: Yes. Well, I of course had no intention of doing that myself. I was a city boy. It never occurred to me. In 1975, my sister and I inherited a very large villa with immense grounds from the painter aunt who I mentioned -

MS. HADLER: Oh.

MR. EMMERICH: - in Switzerland on the Lac Maggiore on the Italian border. Extraordinarily beautiful property, quite unexpected as an inheritance. We played with it for five years and then we sold it. And I thought, what should I do with my windfall, my share of this? And I thought, well, I could buy a cottage in the Hamptons and play tennis and write another book. But I'd done that. Why not the sculpture garden?

So I looked for land and found it on the New York-Connecticut line, Dutchess County. I never mention the exact address because we don't want unplanned visitors.

MS. HADLER: Right.

MR. EMMERICH: That's really why I got so used to putting it that way - with 105 acres, now grown to 155 by adding various bits. And we have 120 or -30 sculptures up there out of doors. And I've since built a big gallery barn for smaller pieces.

MS. HADLER: Do you open it to the public ever? Or is it you don't want to for the same reason?

MR. EMMERICH: I open it to the public by invitation for tours that - for groups that tour, special.

MS. HADLER: Because it would be a marvelous thing for the university, for some of that -

MR. EMMERICH: Universities have done it. Museum groups have done it. Friends of modern art of this or contributing members of that or trustees of something else. Many museums across the country have. And two or three times a year, we invite people from our own mailing list to come tour the place. It's unique. There's nothing quite like it. I mean, there's Storm King, but that's a public museum and nothing is for sale. My place, everything is really between where it was made and its permanent resting home, and -

MS. HADLER: Don't you ever want to keep some things specially?

MR. EMMERICH: Oh, yes, of course.

MS. HADLER: Other than that.

MR. EMMERICH: But that's the art dealer.

MS. HADLER: Yeah, you do. Here, you certainly -

MR. EMMERICH: Well, yes. You know, art dealers are a little bit like people who belong to lending libraries who can't afford to buy the books. But at least they can afford to live with them for a while. You can take them out of the lending library. In a way, I live in a lending library. And the challenge, of course, in the country is - as it is

in the gallery, and the great fun – is installing art, the process the French so nicely call "*mis en valeur*," to put into value, to bring out what is best and most wonderful about a given painting or a sculpture – how it will look best, how it will relate best to others.

And placing sculpture in landscape, which I thought would be very easy, is in fact very complicated. For example, in a museum or a home, you light a sculpture and then it's done. In nature, you have sunny days. You have grey days. You have the sun high in the sky in August and way low in January. You have it on one side in the morning and another side in the evening. The light's never the same. We accept the light changing, but we never think about how a sculpture would look. And it looks very different. Very different. I made all kinds of discoveries, especially how we like to think of landscapes in June, early summer – flowers, leaves, et cetera, with a sculpture planked in the middle.

MS. HADLER: David Smith, of course, also –

MR. EMMERICH: Yes.

MS. HADLER: – you know, one thinks of his book, David Smith, where he photographed all of his works on the Bolton Landing.

MR. EMMERICH: Right. But sculpture is particularly effective out of doors when nature is most inhospitable. We just lent a big Calder mobile to Bryant Park, the space behind the public library there on 42nd Street at Sixth Avenue. It's a big, bright Calder mobile, stabile mobile, 24 feet high. It is fantastic. I think it is even more fantastic now than it will be in the summer when the leaves are out and it's all green and lovely because now it's barren and grey, and nature is asleep but art still is in bloom. And it makes a tremendous impact. And that's been a whole new discovery, a whole new chapter in my life.

MS. HADLER: Yes. It's quite wonderful to see sculpture.

MR. EMMERICH: You must come see it.

MS. HADLER: I would love to.

MR. EMMERICH: We'll arrange for it.

MS. HADLER: I would love to.

[END TAPE 2, SIDE A]

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