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Oral history interview with Hildegard  
Bachert, 1993 February 25-26

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Hildegard Bachert on 1993 February 25 and 26. The interview took place at Galerie St. Etienne in New York, NY, and was conducted by Rose-Carol Washton Long for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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.

## Interview

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Um, this is an interview with Hildegard Bachert in the Galerie St. Etienne. Uh, it is February 25, 1993, and Rose-Carol Washton Long is doing the interview. Now, perhaps we can start and you could tell me something about your own experiences in Germany in studying art history before you came to this country. You were born in 1921?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That's right.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: In Mannheim.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Exactly.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And you came to this country in 1936.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Right.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Now, had you studied any—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No, of course not. I was 15 when I came, and so I was still a high school student. And, in fact, my education was cut short because, in the beginning of 1936, Jewish students were kicked out of the public schools, and all I was allowed to go to was a kind of vocational school.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Really?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: In fact, I was told that that's what I would have to do. And I had private tutoring in English and in some sort of geography and history by some private teacher. But students in Germany after the age of 14 were not compelled to go to school, except to a vocational school if they wanted to. They had to.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: However, higher education was no longer permitted for Jewish students, and in some cities like Frankfurt and Berlin, real Jewish schools for higher education were established—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Were established in the '30s.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —for the Jewish students for a short time. But in the place where I was born in Mannheim, there was later on also some—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: I see.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —instructions for students who had remained there—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —until they were deported in the early '40s.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Did, um, anyone in your family collect art?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Not at all?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No. My father—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What had your—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —was a lawyer.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Your father was a lawyer, mm-hmm [affirmative].

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And my mother was interested in art in a very mediocre, bourgeois sort of way, and the kind of pictures that were in my house were purchased by my parents before, and when they got married. They were very nice Düsseldorf school-type pictures, and—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What is that, nineteenth-century landscape?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Nineteenth-century landscapes, yes. And also, something that I still like, we had some etchings by Hans Thoma, who is perhaps familiar to you. No?

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Not really.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, he's well known. He is sort of an anachronism. He was a 19th and 20th-century artist, much like Lovis Corinth, but not like Lovis Corinth, he never developed a style beyond a very wonderful turn-of-the-century, um, style. He was—he did—he's represented in every important journal and museum.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Uh-huh. Did you—oh, did you say Hans Thoma?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Thoma.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Oh, of course.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yeah, okay.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Yes, of course I've heard of him.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. And many good, bourgeois German households had his—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Had his kind of work.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —etchings. And, indeed, I still have them now. And they were part of my growing up, and my mother showed me books on him. So there was—my background was cultural, to that extent. We had books on Dürer and Rembrandt and all the nice, good culture, just as we had books by Goethe and Schiller and the whole, you know—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Sure.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —good, um, "educated," in quotes, German household.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Before you left Germany in 1936, were you aware of the National Socialist attitude toward modern art?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Of course.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You were.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, yes, of course.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What do you remember, um—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, this is—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —reading about or hearing about?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Um, of course my focus was not art at that time.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: My focus was something unfortunately much more a matter of life and death. Since my father was a lawyer who realized that the law was being twisted to serve a government that was really fraudulent, he very early on saw the handwriting on the wall, and we realized that we had to leave in order to save our lives. And therefore art, in that sense, was something, in a way, experienced on a much deeper level than perhaps a 13, 14-year-old would normally. And the artist that was of a great influence in my life was Käthe Kollwitz, and still is. That's one of my specialties.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Before you left German, even at—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Before I left Germany.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —fourteen, you were aware of Kollwitz.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes, very much so.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How did that come about?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Um, reproductions. We had a lovely art store. It was not just an art dealer. His name was Tannenbaum, and was called the Kunsthaus. And it had not only fine art, from the French Impressionists to the German Expressionists and everything—he was a very knowledgeable person, who, by the way, immigrated via Holland to this country. However, it's also—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Excuse me; I think the tape is now—

[AUDIO BREAK.]

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Okay. This is the second tape of the interview with Hildegard Bachert, February 25th, 1993. Now, we were talking about your rep—experiences in Germany before you left as a 13, 14 year-old. And you were telling me about this art store? Or gallery?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, the Tannenbaum—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: The Tannenbaum, and that's where you had seen Kollitz? Or—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: I saw Kollitz there. I also saw Kokoschka there, for instance. I was very much aware of some of the German art. One of the artists that uh—I was very aware of was Barlach, but only from reproductions—from postcards. We bought postcards of art. That was the way we knew. And, you see, it was—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You mean 13 years old, you bought postcards?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Absolutely. Yes, absolutely. And we—Kohlberg [ph] was another one, Sintenis—all these artists I was aware of. However, this was not focused, needless to say. I also bought postcards of sculptures from the Bamberg Dom and from the Basel Minster, and who knows what all—Gothic and Romanesque art was very important to us. Some of the illuminated manuscripts of which we saw all kinds—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Why was Gothic and Romanesque art important to you at that time? Do you remember?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It simply conveyed an emotion. It was not done in any methodical way. [Phone rings.] There was a marvelous sculpture that just—that just impressed me, and that's why I bought it, simply from aesthetic appeal. [00:02:02] My consciousness of art and—in context, came only in this country. After all, there were other concerns, as I mentioned before.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: I should also say that I grew up um, without being pushed a lot at home into theater, music, that type of thing too early. My parents felt that a child really shouldn't go to the theater. And so unfortunately, for instance, the Mannheim Theater was rep—had a fantastic reputation as an opera, as a theater, as a—it was a really marvelous establishment during—before Hitler. And I was never in it. And after the war, it was bombed to pieces, so I've never seen it. I only remember it from the outside, um, which is perhaps too bad, because—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Do you remember any closings of the theater—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —or of that particular art house?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Definitely. We met—not the closing, it was the going concern. But I remember that my mother, who had a subscription to the theater and to the opera, stopped it because a sign went up outside: "Jews are not wanted here." And so she had to not—she didn't go. And also in the Kunsthalle in Mannheim, which is a very famous museum—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —the sign went up, and therefore as a child I never went in. Before 13, my parents didn't take me, and afterwards, we didn't go. So when I saw it for the first time, it was 1953 when I went back.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Amazing.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Now, how would you have been aware of any national socialist ideas against the art you liked? [Phone rings.]

HILDEGARD BACHERT: [00:04:02] Um, simply because we did know that it was taboo. And, um—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How would you have known that?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, it was—the propaganda was all over the place.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Where?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: We read the newspapers.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Oh, in the newspapers.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, yes. However, I must say other things were more important, and some things I have to tell you also blur in my memory.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Of course.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It is possible that I became aware of the real persecution of the artists only when I was in this country, and that other persecutions—namely of people, of doctors and lawyers and people who had Jewish stores, who had the—drugstore or whatever they had among my parents and my own friends, was much more on my mind.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And this was something you saw before you left—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, definitely.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —attacks on the stores, and—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, definitely. I witnessed things—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You did.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —that were really horrible.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Would you tell us some of the things you witnessed?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, um, one of the first things that I remember—and that's why—that's one thing I would like to mention—before 1933, I was a teenager, just a coming, starting teenager—12, really, because my birthday's in April. The—and I grew up with children's books and *Heidi* and that type of stuff. And when Hitler was elected very soon thereafter, I witnessed in the marketplace in Mannheim how a store, how they posted the signs: "Jews are not allowed here." And also, how they attacked the owner of a Jewish store. How the SS—or SI, as it was at that time—went in there and dragged him out, and I came home as a 13-year-old totally horrified. [00:06:10] And I always say, I grew up in one day. I cast aside my children's books and the very next book that I read was a biography of Theodor Herzl by Alex Bein. It's still a very well-known book. And it is—somehow I became aware of the position of Jews in the world, especially in Germany. I became aware of Zionism that I had never heard of before—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Your family had never spoken about Zionism?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Not really. And my father was a very good German. He had fought for four years in World War I for his fatherland—he came out as a lieutenant, and he—although he was very proud that he never killed anybody. He was the anti-aircraft [laughs] and he was very happy about that, but he was very German. [Phone rings.] He was not—and his political leanings were center to right wing if anything, but he recognized the lawlessness immediately. My father was an extremely ethical and honest and straightforward person, and even though he was a conservative in his political views, he was totally convinced immediately that the forces at work here were really Satanic.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And they practiced—did they belong to any kind of temple?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: My parents did, yes. And when I got a Jewish education—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Was it was orthodox, conservative, reform—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No, uh, reformed. [Inaudible.]

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

HILDEGARD BACHERT: [Inaudible.] No, don't have to tell them, it's okay. Um, now, I, um—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:08:00] Okay. Reform. You said it was reform.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I got a Jewish education; I learned Hebrew—to a minor extent. And we always went—you know, like most good Jews—to the temple or synagogue on the high holy days. However, when the Nazis came to power, something united the Jews more than anything else—this outward aggression and danger made people go back to synagogue in droves. And after, oh, this happened again to become much more Jewish in my orientation, and we went to synagogue every Friday night.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Isn't that interesting?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: I did. And I became much, much more into this. But on a very liberal scale—I never became an orthodox Jewish—Jew.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How did your family finally decide to leave, and how did they get out?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, that's a story all by itself that we can't go into that.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: It would be an interesting quick synopsis.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: My parents realized that we had to leave. We had—my grandmother had a brother who was living in this country, and he provided the affidavits after a long back and forth for my older sister and me. He did not provide them for my parents, because he said they're too old, they won't make a living in this country, and they'll be a burden on him. And they did not provide it. My parents didn't get here until March 1939. They lived through Crystal Night—they went through hell before they got out, and another relative who we dug up gave them the affidavits.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: So in—when you were 15—you came with your sister?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: With my sister, and we lived here—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —in New York?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: [00:10:01] In New York.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: By yourselves?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: By ourselves—not only I—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Really? How old was your sister?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: My sister was—is six-and-a-half years older, so she was—she had done her abitur; she was ready to face the world. We came together here and much against our wills, I wanted to go to Palestine. I had become a Zionist, and we had big fights at home because my parents were not Zionists. And they said, "We can't live there. It's too hot, and it's not for us." And I wanted to live on a kibbutz. And, uh, I was a big idealist. My sister wanted to stay in Germany because she really didn't understand the danger and she had a friend there that she wanted to be with, but my parents forced both of us to go, and it was a good thing they did. And within the year, we got acclimatized to this country. I have to tell you—I didn't—I practically knew no English when I came—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Even though you'd studied it.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —studied it for half a year or a year. And you know how badly one learns a language not being in the country. When I—then I had to go to high school here, and I couldn't tell in the beginning one class from another because I couldn't understand anything, but as a young person you learn the language very quickly. It was rough. It is very tough.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: So you actually started to go to high school here?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Right here.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Where did you go?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: At George Washington High School, and I graduated in 19—in January—they had two graduations—in January '39.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: I see.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And by that time, I knew English very well.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And during that time, you started to work for Nierendorf Gallery?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Not until you graduated.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No, not until I graduated. This is the story. My uncle provided for me at the rate of \$15 a week. [00:12:07] I think that's interesting. My sister started out working here to clean at Altman's, the department store, even though she had a degree—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That must have been quite a shock for her.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —and she knew English and German, stenography. Oh, we learned not to be proud. Many people were cleaning ladies and waitresses and, you know, this immigration was amazing. And the men were doing all kinds of loading jobs until we all of that—this immigration because we had such—pretty good educational background, most of us, we pulled each other—or ourselves—up by our bootstraps. My sister, after half a year, found a job as a private secretary to Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, that was the divorced wife of Erich Fromm—who ran, uh, with another woman, a sanitarium in Rockville, Maryland. And in March of 1937, she left New York to go to Rockville, and I was not yet 16—lived here by myself in a room—a furnished room with a family who provided meals, and I went to high school. And we had both been raised fairly independently—I was perfectly able to take care of myself. And have a ball even though the times were terrible. We realized here it was Depressions time. And my parents were in grave danger. But when you're young, it's amazing how you can worry and yet have a very enriching time. New York, as today, provided an enormous amount of free education. [00:14:06] I frequented the libraries and the concerts—the outdoor concerts were even then something that you could do. Carnegie Hall was 50 cents for students, and I much rather went to Carnegie Hall than to—been buying clothes. We had brought a lot from Germany, we couldn't bring money, but we could bring material things. And so, for years I wore these dowdy German clothes and looked probably like—you know, not like—the difference is much—was much more pronounced; the fashions in Europe—and you could recognize—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You could recognize a German immigrant.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —an immigrant. You could, as you can't now. Especially the older people—I guess younger people were easier—were more easily integrated. And so I also formed a circle of friends who were interested in the same things I was. And so among ourselves we frequented all the galleries here, and you—you know, there were maybe 50 galleries. Pearl's, Nierendorf, J.B. Neumann, Lillian Feld [ph]—you know, many of them are gone, but Pearl's is still here.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And then some of the Americans—I went to Stieglitz to, and I got to meet him, and I nearly bought a Georgia O'Keefe for \$100 that he tried to talk me into. And so my interests—I went to every museum exhibition to the early Van Gogh shows at the Museum of Modern Art, which wasn't yet at 53rd Street. And I simply gravitated to all—I just gobbled up the culture—and not only in art, but in music, too. [00:16:03] As I—I have a great interest in music, even though I never really properly learned to play an instrument because there wasn't the money and—nor the time. When I graduated from high school, I got a scholarship to go to Oberlin, but I had no money to support myself. And so I reluctantly declined. And I had to find work—and this is a very funny story. Many people of my situation—see, the uncle's money ceased. After high school, he said, "Now you go to work." And so many people in that situation went to households to people to clean and take care of the children. And I thought, "Well, that's what I have to do now to start with." And it's a very funny long story which I will not bore you with, but I lasted three days. [They laugh.] I didn't do a good enough job for them. It was a seven-room doctor's apartment—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: In New York City.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —with a small child. And it was too much [laughs]. I couldn't do it. Luckily for art. [They laugh.]

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Well, luckily for art [laughs].

HILDEGARD BACHERT: So then I knew someone who was a printer, and he printed the invitations for the galleries. And his name was Mr. Kohn [ph]—I remember him very well, he's long gone. And he said, "Why don't you go to these galleries," which I knew anyway, "and say you—all you—I can't really recommend you," you know, "I'm just a printer. But at least you've got the first sentence in—when you get into the door." And so I did that, and Karl Nierendorf took me—of the New York art gallery. And at the time I knew no stenography. [00:18:05] I knew barely how to type—I had taught that myself. And I just had a, you know, very unscholarly background. And he had the most fantastic collection of Klee and Kandinsky, and Franz Marc, and artists that nobody ever heard of, and nothing sold.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Nothing?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Very, very little. The Klees, maybe. But he was living from hand to mouth. He paid me nothing in the very first weeks, because he said, "You're a volunteer." And my parents had arrived by that time, and we all moved together in an apartment on Riverside Drive and 153rd Street, which cost \$75 a month. And that was very hard to manage. My sister had moved back to New York and had become a secretary for the United Refugee Service, which was—so she had a fairly well-paid job by that time. And so my mother began to be a dressmaker and interior decorator, and my father knew that he would not be able to become a lawyer again—he was in his upper 50s. And he studied to become an accountant, which he would have been very good at. But very soon he contracted a terrible eye ailment and was practically blind, which depressed him horrendously. And he helped my mother, you know, make deliveries. He was doing the lonely jobs that a German autocratic man would normally not do, but he was such a humble person and had such a good character, he did everything that he needed to do. [00:20:08] And we—we squeaked by. By and by, Nierendorf gave me three dollars a week, and you have to realize that was money in those days. And I got seven, and then 10, and 11, and I stayed there from March 1939 until November 1940. One of—I learned an awful lot, there. But Nierendorf as a person was extremely disorganized. I—who knew nothing of office procedures—kept order in his place. I started filing. I realized that, you know, order—I'm very orderly. [Laughs.] Just by nature. And I knew this had to be—something had to be done. And I consulted with my professional sister as to how to get something done. But it would happen that I made order in the evening, and then Nierendorf would have a party, and then the next morning, the place looked like the cyclone hit it the next morning. He also lived one flight up, and it was—really, it was chaos. And he was really—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Where was the gallery?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —difficult to work—at 18 East 57th Street in a brownstone which was, uh, razed to make room for the IBM building. It was a walk-up. One of the people who came to visit Nierendorf was Otto Kallir, who had arrived from Vienna in 1930—via—of course you know that—via Paris in 1939. And one of the first things he bought from Nierendorf was a little landscape by Paula Modersohn-Becker. Now, I had never heard of her before. [00:22:00] See, my background was extremely spotty. And I wanted to get away from Nierendorf, and I asked Kallir if he needed someone to help him in his new gallery, and he thought about it for a while, and in 1940—November 1940—I changed and came here and he said, "I don't know if it'll work out. We'll do it on a provisional basis." [They laugh.] And I've been here ever since. Now, we—Kallir was a totally different person, and it was like heaven. I had a desk to myself, while at Nierendorf's I had to work at a small desk opposite him all the time. It was—it was so constraining and so difficult. And at Kallir's, I had a certain sphere of activity that I was supposed to do. And I began to realize, of course, that I needed more education. And I had no money to go to Columbia or anything like that—I went to Hunter at night. And in those days it was totally free. You paid a library fee of maybe \$30 or \$25, I can't remember. And my entire education was free. At that time at Hunter, though, there was no art history department. And the best I could do was humanities. And I'm very happy about that, because I do very well reading books. I do not need a course that tells me what books to read. And so I did all my reading of—especially the art that Kallir bought. Outside of Kokolschka, I had never heard of Schiele and Klimt. Not even Klimt, I think. [00:24:02] And in fact in the beginning I didn't even like Klimt.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What kind of—when you were—what kind of course did allow you to do that kind of reading for Hunter? Do you remember?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Uh, that—well, there was no course that allowed me to read about Schiele and Klimt. The gallery was the one that gave me—I simply went and read the books. Kallir was—loved to buy books. He never borrowed books. And so I simply went to our library—you take a look at that library, and I just took the books and read them.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Could you read them and—for any of the courses that you took at Hunter?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Not really, no. What I did at Hunter was—first of all, I needed to learn better English. Written English, I needed composition, I needed really a vocabulary. And in that respect, Hunter was a fantastic



education. The literature—the American literature—the little bit that you learn in high school—was not enough. And I got a well-rounded or better-rounded, I should say, education there. The humanities part was much more astronomy, archaeology, geology, anthropology—and it was just to round out something that was very enriching. I also went because, in New York at that time, galleries closed in the summer. For six and eight weeks, the summers in New York without air conditioning were horrendous. And not only galleries, but many of the stores—the smaller stores would close. And so we had these long vacations. And one of the first vacations I took was to go to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to do a field course on American Indian archaeology.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:26:08] For whom? For Hunter?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: For myself. No, has nothing to do with Hunter.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Nothing to do with Hunter?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: In fact, that was before I went back to college. And that—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: So that was in during the war? Early '40s?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes, during the war. Yes, that was during the war.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How did you happen to pick Santa Fe and the American Indian?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, I was always interested in Aboriginal art and primitive art, and, you know, the fact that we have [Grandma] Moses is not quite a coincidence—not at all a coincidence. And I'll tell you about that. We have to really go into the gallery now. Actually, it was inspired by Dr. Kallir. He had—when he came to this country—he was interested in finding the roots of this country. He wasn't interested in the Ashcan School. First of all, these artists were taken care of by other galleries. Besides, he felt that this art was derivative of European art. It really wasn't—he felt it was passé. It was old-fashioned. And he was looking for something that made this country tick. And in 1941, he took a trip with his family to the West, and among other places, he went to Santa Fe and he was totally enthralled with the Indian art, which I had known about before, and he suggested the following year that I do that. And so I did it in depth—he did it more as a tourist and just looking around and learning about things and—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How long were you there?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: I think six weeks.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Six weeks. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And—I—it was either four or six weeks. It was an extension course of the University of New Mexico, and I took it with a foremost scholar who is very well-known in the field, Kenneth Chapman. I mean, the—it was very specialized. [00:28:00] And I learned not only about American Indians, he took us—you know, we got in on the ground floor with all these pueblos. I met Maria Martinez, the Indian potter, and we learned all about how to do pottery. All these kinds of—and really, the whole history of American Indian archaeology. But we also learned about the Spanish missionary art, and it just fascinated me. And you see, I tried to learn things that I couldn't learn in the course of my work here anyway. I saw no reason why I should take courses that I could simply pick up. It wasn't interesting and it wasn't—I didn't need an academic degree for any—to impress anybody. I simply wanted knowledge, and I must say I have remained this way. However, I did learn in college to do proper research methods. I didn't have any idea about these things before, and I learned that. And that was—that has served me my entire life, and I wish I had a little bit more—some of it got rusty over time. But I must say, I also learned, for instance, so many things that you may—I mean, to me, the college was unbelievably fruitful and enriching. Public speaking, all that kind of thing.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You had to do it at the college.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: We had to do it in college. It was excellent. And of course, the literature, and I really—I must say, I did everything religiously. I said, "If I don't do it, who is—who am I doing this for? I am doing it for myself." And I was the most surprised person when, at the end of my years, it took me much longer than four years needless to say, I ended up [laughs] graduating summa cum laude, which I had absolute—it wasn't interest—it wasn't particularly something I strove for, but I just wanted to get the maximum out of each course, and so it just happened that it worked out that way. Um—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:30:19] And all that time you were working at the gallery with Dr. Kallir.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Six days a week. No five-day week for us, then. Monday through Saturday, probably 10 to six.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Maybe you could tell us some of the things you actually did at that time in the gallery in the early '40s.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. Right. Right. Now, I was—I should—I don't know if Jane mentioned that, but Dr. Kallir was very active in political things—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: No, she didn't.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —from—he was very interested—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What sort of political things?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Austrian. He was interested at that time in establishing, which he later on was very sorry about, that Austria was an overrun country, and he wanted to also see to it that when—if and when Hitler was finished—the government in Austria would be—there should be like something like a government in exile—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —exile, yes.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And he was very active in these areas besides running an art gallery and trying to survive. He got so upset about some of the things that went on, the infighting that took place, that—and having immigrated, having gone through enormously taxing and upsetting—two immigrations, he got a heart attack in 1941, in December '41, a few days after Pearl Harbor. [00:32:06] Kallir was a—an extremely sensitive person who, a little bit like—for instance, my father, he always saw the handwriting on the wall. You know, some people went along and said, "Well, we go from one to another." He was a planner. He was a man of vision. And when he saw where we were headed, and when he saw what was happening that we—in this country which he loved intensely, was going to fight a war on two fronts or more, he—it—it really was such an upsetting thing that he got a heart attack. A very, very severe one—a coronary thrombosis. It put him out of commission for several months, and I was the only employee and had to—after having been here barely a year and very young and inexperienced—I kind of had to navigate the gallery but simply on a survival course. He did recover. He was never a completely well person, even though he reached the age of 84, thank goodness, which was wonderful. But there was always a concern—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —about his health.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —about his health.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: So in '41, how old would he have been?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He was, um, he was born in 1894. He was 47.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. When he had the first—when he had that heart attack.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That was the severe heart attack.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How did he—did he ever tell you how he got out of Austria with so many things?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, definitely. Yes. Yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Maybe you could tell us about that.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, he—in Austria, the Nazis came to power much more quickly and much more strongly. Austria had watched what was going on in Germany, and Kallir knew immediately that he had to leave. [00:34:08] And he tried to do his immigration in such a way that he was able to establish himself in another country. Kallir was really what is now called a Renaissance person. He was not only extremely interested in art and did his PhD in Vienna when he was a grown man running an art gallery and at the same time authoring the catalog resume of Schiele—Jane told you that.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Right, yes.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He also had an interest which dates much earlier in the history of aeronautics. He was very much interested in history all the time. That's why he had these visions of how things were working, and he put things together more than most people would. And—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: But he was able to manage to take most of his collection out of Austria. How did he do that?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Right. And he managed to get that aeronautics exhibition—collection—out because he

exhibited it outside of Austria, and he directed it to be sent to Switzerland, and there he had it sold. And that was the basis of his establishing himself not only in Paris for a short time and taking care of his family in Switzerland while he was in Paris—because he wasn't allowed to work in Switzerland. He didn't get the working permit. And so his family was in Switzerland—he was in Paris—and he was doing fairly well in Paris, and then he knew that he—that wasn't—it was a powder keg there, and he in—he financed his immigration to this country himself while, for instance, my family had to get—my parents had to get an affidavit, and we too, from an American citizen who was rich. [00:36:13] He furnished his own affidavit—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How did he do it?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —as a capitalist. You come in, and you came in as a capitalist, you have to prove you had this much money, and if you could prove that and bring that money to America, you were your own affiant. So the whole basis for an affidavit was that you would not become a public charge. This country, being a Depression, didn't want to support poor people.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: But how was he able to get all of his—he was able to take out much of the Schieles he collected—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Right. He—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —how did he get that out?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —the Kallirs left without anything by train, and his secretary—Vita Maria Kunstler—who had been with him for 14 years at that time, was requested by the Kallirs to immediately pack up all their belongings, get the export permit—which at that time was still possible—and in several lift vans, everything got out. To Switzerland.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: The whole gallery.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No, only the things that Dr. Kallir said she should send. And the things that—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: I see. He selected the—work.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —he selected the works, yes. And their furniture. She also only packed up their apartment, and that was practically the whole apartment—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Right. So what did he select to send out?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Um, the things that he thought he would be able to live in. The Klimts and the Schieles—not all. Some were left there. Thirteen Kokolschkas—oils. Thirteen Kokol—not counting watercolors or drawings or anything like that. [00:38:02] Then he also had some expression—for—impressionists, which he knew he would be able to sell. Some Austrian art that was very hard to sell, like Waldmüller. Um not—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —oils. These were his Waldmüller oils.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. I'm talking about major works.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Sure. Right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It's now hard to remember. Some German—he had German art, too.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Oh, what were some of the German art—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: In fact, a Kollwitz drawing—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: He had some Kollwitz.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —some Slevogt. I remember he brought. He had a wonderful Van Gogh drawing. Some things that belonged to other—another collector he got out. Cezanne—a major Cezanne and Van Goghs and Gauguins. He got them out for him, a Prague collector. So there were things—simply things that he knew he—or hoped he could make a living with. It was extremely difficult in the beginning because—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Even for—for selling some of the Van Goghs and the Cezannes?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. Because he was not known here. Some of the people that had come from Germany—even Nierendorf and J.B. Neumann—they had been here longer, they were known to some of the collectors. We had in our files letters from Dr. Kallir to the major collectors in this country. Rockefeller, the museum directors,

and he offered them these fantastic paintings. They had never heard of him. And I have a sense they all wrote him very friendly and polite letters, and I have a sense now when I read them that these people thought, "Where is this guy coming from out of left field? [00:40:09] We don't trust him." You see, but he did have some connections. For instance—what was his first name? Washburn. The director at that time of the Albright Gallery in Buffalo. He knew Kallir from Vienna. You have to realize—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —he had been there. For instance, looking for art for the Carnegie International. He was —before that, he was at Pittsburgh, and that's how he met Kallir. And those connections really helped him to establish himself. Washburn— isn't that strange? I can't remember his first name—bought *The London Bridge* by Kokoschka for the Albright-Knox—at that time it was just the Albright. Several other people that—Kallir had fantastic connections in Vienna. He was *the* leading gallery there. He knew de la faille, for instance, the catalog resume author of the Van Gogh books. He had done the first Van Gogh exhibition in Vienna since 1906 or so with de la faille. And so through these things, Kallir finally managed to establish himself. He knew some of the dealers here: Schaeffer, Curt Valentin—they knew each other from Berlin. And that's what helped him establish himself. But to get the contact with the collectors took a long time, and he had an extremely hard time—even as you asked—to sell the impressionists. [00:42:03] And in fact he was not very successful and finally had to relinquish them—though also because of his illness that the pictures were sitting there and the collector said, "Just give them back to me. I'll take care of it." And so for a while, we were really in a hard—difficult situation—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Even in the—even in the first years you did, there were some extraordinary exhibitions. I remember reading—I mean, you had a Kokoschka exhibition in January 1940?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Absolutely.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: A group exhibition: Kollwitz, Modersohn-Becker, Beckmann, Schiele. Uh, then a one-person show of Schiele, in November of 1941.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Forty-one. Yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [Inaudible] December of 1941—and none of these things sold?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: The Schieles—we have a bill of—to a—to a dealer, a friend of Dr. Kallir's—sold so many Schiele drawings, \$100. We didn't bother to itemize them. That was—you couldn't sell this stuff for a lot of money. Nobody had heard of him. Dr. Kallir refused to sell certain Schieles, because he kept saying, "I know they're more valuable than that." But he just had to sit on them. On the other hand, \$100 was a lot of money. The rent for the gallery was less than \$100 a month.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: A month. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HILDEGARD BACHERT: So you can see where you sold something for \$100, here was your rent. So it was very, very difficult.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: When did it change? I mean, did this last all through the war that they—the German and Austrian art didn't sell?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It certainly did. It lasted longer than that.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Longer than that.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Our first Schiele exhibition that was successful was in 1957.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Fifty-seven?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: [00:44:00] Yes. Before that, it was one here, one there. We sold an oil painting to somebody I remember for \$450 in 1948. We took—I think—a year and a half—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Fifty dollars?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Four hundred and fifty.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Four hundred and fifty.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And he took about a year and a half to pick up—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Oh, we've got to turn this over.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh dear, I really have to conserve some time. This was taking too long.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Well, now just—

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ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Uh, this is February 26th, 1993, Rose-Carol Washton Long in the second day of the interview with Hildegard Bachert. Galerie St. Etienne. We were discussing yesterday about your early years working with Dr. Kallir, and perhaps we could start with your telling me something about your remembering about how Dr. Kallir came to exact and be interested in Grandma Moses.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: All right. As I mentioned once before—or briefly—he was not interested in what was then the current school and the current interest in this country—namely the members of the Ashcan School. Also he was not terribly interested in people like Charles Sheeler, who was active at that time, because abstract art basically was not that interesting—even though he had done the first Kandinsky show in Vienna in the '20s. So he was looking around for something intrinsically American. Latently—he was not out there on the street looking for it. But when a man came into the gallery by the name of Louis Calder and said that he had some folk art here, and would he be interested, he said he certainly would be. And among some junk were some little pictures by this farm wife from upstate New York. And Kallir, who had an excellent eye and a liking for folk art—he had done a number of folk art exhibitions, Russian and—all of the different kinds of things—in Vienna—was completely in tune and asked to see more. [00:02:03] And so Calder showed him more, because he had quite a lot. He did believe in this artist. And he had had a terrible time finding anyone that would even give him the time of day, because this was an old woman, and he wasn't really—nobody was interested. But Kallir, when he saw more of the pictures, realized that they were uneven. There were also embroidery some on them. But he took a chance and said he'll do a show. And since this artist was totally unknown, he called the exhibition, *What a Farm Wife's Painted*, and only in the subtitle did her name, Anna Mary Robertson Moses, appear. At that time, she was just 80. It was in 1940. October. And the show was a mild success—nothing special. Kallir—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: It's—so the—some of the work sold compared to the German—to the Austrian works you had.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, we sold four pictures. It's—it wasn't a big deal. But as a result of this show or based on this show, Gimbels department store came to the gallery and said they want to do a short Thanksgiving exhibition at the auditorium. And while there was nothing for sale during this exhibition, they had Grandma Moses come down with a friend and she gave a little speech, and it really produced publicity—something Dr. Kallir was not well-versed in at all, as I mentioned at that time he'd been here for a year, his English wasn't that great. But he knew enough—he had experience as an art dealer and as a general—in life as a whole—he knew enough to do a press release when it turned out to have a lot of publicity. [00:04:04] He made a little sort of a sheet with all the reviews, and as a result—as a further result—a gallery in Washington, DC, wanted to do a show, which produced the visit of Duncan Phillips from the Phillips Gallery. That was in January of 1941. And he bought a little picture at that time. Phillips was one of the few people who recognized this artist's work. You have to realize the pictures were small at that time. And slowly, Moses—which is very unusual for a folk artist—began to develop and grow and improve. And some of her 1942, '43 pictures can hardly be recognized as the same type of work as the things that were produced in the earlier times. Moses, I should say, had wanted to paint all her life. She didn't come full-blown in 1938 when Calder discovered her. She just didn't have time to paint before. And Kallir recognized the sincerity in her work. As he continued to work with her, there was really a success—a great success—that started to get going in the mid-'40s when Hallmark produced Christmas cards—I think that was in 1947, the first ones. Kallir also—recognizing the necessity to document this woman's life—wrote a book that's called, *Grandma Moses: American Primitive*, in 1946, which had a new—another edition in 1947 with Doubleday—got front page *New York Times* book review, and that's what really got her going. [00:06:17] Then in 1950, Kallir sends a traveling exhibition to Europe, which was sponsored by the Smithsonian—at that time, the US Information Service. Moses—at that time, already—was beginning not to be accepted by the American art establishment. This was Abstract Expressionist territory and time. And someone like Moses, who was being hailed as the great American artist in Europe, was not well-received. However, the Europeans didn't have this inferiority complex. They could accept American abstract art and this folk artist, too.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: At the same time.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: They didn't have to say, "This is all there is to American art, and all the rest is not acceptable." And so people like Jean Cassou, and really important European art historians, began to—

[Audio Break.]

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —right, okay.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: In connection with—we were talking about grandmother—reception to Grandma

Moses. You were telling me how they were receiving in Europe and it made—two questions come to my mind. One of them was: Did Grandma—the selling of Grandma Moses really help to support the works that you had here from Austria and Germany, because I think you had told me most of those hadn't sold in the '40s?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Absolutely. We often said, "Grandma supports Schiele." [Laughs.]

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:08:02] Really.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And things like that. Absolutely. Later on, it wasn't necessary, but in those days—and we not only sold the pictures—which sold especially from today's point of view at very modest prices—but Kallir had the vision very early on to have her works registered with the copyright office in Washington. He realized that the pictures were reproducible, on Christmas cards, reproductions, and other commercial uses. And he, in fact, of course, saw a lot of infringement things. Other people saw that too. And they began to use possibly a picture that they had bought and just put it on something that they thought was interesting—would yield them some income—and skipping the royalties to the artist. And Dr. Kallir fought long and hard for the artist's rights, and this gallery is—today—not very special. Many artists do this—especially illustrators, but also fine artists. At that time, it was unheard of, and many people resented—including the Moses family.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Really?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: They did not understand that he was acting in their interest, and—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: So did she get some percentage of the reproductions?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Indeed, she did. He made a contract with her very soon after the first show whereby she sold every picture to us, with the exception of things she wanted to give to her family or friends—I mean, there were ways of that. And we committed ourselves to give her a very, very generous royalty on every piece of income without charging her for our expenses. [00:10:07] And there are—every contract needs a lawyer to look it over. Many, many things—there's an awful lot of overheard. The photography—it is—and she got a certain percentage of the cuts.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —of, for example, the reproductions at Hallmark?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Exactly.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: She would get some percentage.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That's right.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Do you remember what that percentage was?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: This is, uh, I would think a confidential matter.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Okay. That's fine.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It was a lot. It was more than normal. [Laughs.] And the income from that was much, much more than from the picture. And Grandma couldn't understand this. Dr. Kallir sent her a check for \$10,000, which she had probably never seen before. And she said, "What's that for? I already got paid for the pictures. You don't owe me anything."

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And that was—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And so he had to explain to her—and he requested that the family take a lawyer so that he would handle her finances. And he—Dr. Kallir worked with the lawyer, who was a lovely country lawyer in Salem, New York. And it was—it was actually in Hoosick Falls, and then it was changed to Salem. Another one. And it worked out very, very well. I should say that Grandma Moses was a very humble person to whose credit—everlasting credit—it is that the success did not go to her head. She enjoyed it, but she did not because of that become a prima donna in any sense of the word. She also did not try to keep up the same thing just because it was successful. [00:12:04] Yes, indeed, she even obliged people by repeating a subject because they pushed her to do that, but she found ways in which to change it by the season, the size, the approach—things always varied, and in the process, she grew. She was so humble—for instance, Dr. Kallir sometimes made suggestions as to subject matter, and then what would happen was, he wouldn't get two or three—one picture, he would get two or three. And say, "I don't know which one. Choose the one you like." And he was extremely happy with this kind of person. He himself was a very natural person who was not terribly given to social niceties; he was not a man given to small talk. And the straight and proper way was his way of dealing, and so he was very happy with Grandma. She, however, was not too understanding of a man of such strong autocratic tendencies. She wanted to be the grandma, and for instance, she was extremely generous. Once in a while, she'd send a picture and say,

"I think you'll like that." She gave me pictures. If you—people also took advantage of that kind of thing and asked her, and she always gave—because that was her—in her nature. That someone should give her money or do things that she didn't ask for was not fully understood by her until quite late in her life when she became less strong—a little—not ill, but weak with age. [00:14:09] But then she really interested her taking care of in the way she did—he did, and understood, too, that he had been her friend all these many years—23 years or so. About.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Quite an extraordinary story.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Twenty-one. Twenty-one. Yes, indeed.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You had mentioned that when we were talking that in Vienna, Dr. Kallir had organized or had exhibited Russian folk art, and I have seen in some of the old catalogs a picture of these Russian—how did you—did he ever tell you how that came about?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: I have a vague memory. He was the president of an artists' organization called the Hagenbund and organized many big shows that were too big for his gallery there. For instance, still today, the largest Schiele show ever. Also a Corinth show—extremely large—and it was after he died in a commemorative exhibition. Many other—and in the course of his work at the Hagenbund, he received an official request to do a show in Russian folk art. And he organized it—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: This was from the Russian government. Is that right?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes, it was underwritten by the Russian government and sponsored by them. And I have a piece of fabric that was in that exhibition and that he got there, and so it must have been a marvelous exhibition also of handiwork, not just of art. And it—it was very—I could probably pull the information. It isn't foremost in my mind—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's all right. Did he just by any chance ever discuss any art historians of that period—the German-Austrian art historians—who wrote about accepting folk art. [00:16:11] I mean, both Riegl—Worringer spoke about art—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, sure.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —outside of the Greek-Renaissance tradition. Do you remember something?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, I don't think he referred to them, especially when he spoke—when he spoke with me about the folk art, because indeed he was one of those people who also—as Worringer was the artist starting with Kandinsky or, and all the others—were interested in folk art, that was his focus also. And he simply was part of that scene and part of this period, and therefore—with Kandinsky and all the others interested in folk art, that was part of his heritage. And so the art historical perspective, he probably didn't have—especially in the '20s when he was so active in Vienna—but I'm sure he knew Worringer. In fact, we have a—in our library, something written by him about Kollwitz, and I have no idea how he got it. It probably came from Austria or I don't know—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Something that Kallir wrote?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No, Worringer.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That Worringer wrote.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yeah. Wrote about Kollwitz.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Really?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And so I'm sure he was aware of all of these things. I should also add that he had—and we still have it—an extensive collection of—behind glass—Hinterglasmalerei—you know, the peasant art—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Yes, indeed.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —of the 18th and 19th century that was in Bavaria and especially in Austria. His is Austrian.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: His is Austrian?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And he just collected it.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And he would have collected that before he came here.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And you still have that?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: We still have them. Some are in his house—his family's house in Southampton, and we indeed did a show here once. [00:18:08] And also Jane and I—in the folk-art tradition exhibition, which was the third memorial show for Dr. Kallir—we included some of that art that—and he has many others. When he immigrated to Paris or started his gallery in Paris after his immigration, he found a lot of French folk art. And we have those, and he bought a little Rousseau at that time, and a Séraphine [Louis], and discovered for himself an artist by the name of [Alphonse] Legros. He's not unknown at all, and we still have one or two of his things—a wonderful self-portrait. So he was always interested, and when he came here, he not only—he began to look for Grandma Moses's roots. And he said, "Where's this coming from?" He knew—he was an art historian after all, too, and he knew that nothing happens just like that. So he got into Currier and Ives, which of course Grandma's background—the calendars that was in every magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post* was on—was in her house—I saw it there many times. And he looked for that, and in the course of all that, he became interested—of course in the folk art, and in the American Indian folk art, and in 19th century folk art. And he bought a marvelous Hicks in the '40s at Nobler's [ph]. He bought the only Pickett that is outside of a museum, which will go into our next exhibition. We don't—and many, many other folk art that—works of folk art that are not signed or that are not that famous. [00:20:06] He bought John Kane; he was very interested in Pippin. I remember there was a Pippin show and he was quite ill already and he went to look at it. So it was part of his life. And people came to him and said, "How can you like this stuff and like Schiele at the same time? You're just doing this for the money." And this couldn't have been more wrong. He never did anything just for money. He turned down many lucrative things because they didn't appeal to him. He did it because he liked it. Of course, he had to make a living. He was not independently rich at all. And in fact he was so devoted to the gallery—to the things he was doing—he never stashed away the money. He was always going back to the gallery. So he was comfortable but never rich.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Right. When did you notice the public reaction change to both the Schieles and the Klimts?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Well, as I mentioned before, the time was 1957. That sticks in my mind.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That sticks in—not until then?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Not until '57 did we have a successful Schiele exhibition. We had—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's a long time.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —after the 1941 show, we had a major Schiele show in 1948 because he got some of his things back from Paris. He'd left Paris thinking he'd come back, and then the war broke out and an enormous number of Schieles and Klimts—also watercolors and drawings—were left there and luckily survived intact and came here. It was like Christmas when that parade arrived in 1946 or so. [00:22:00] And then we did this Schiele show also with other things that had come over by that time, and it was not a success at all. Nobody cared. The reviews were this small, and you have to realize—in those days—there was not a show that this gallery made that was not reviewed by the *New York Times*, by the *Herald-Tribune*, by the *World Telegram*, the *New York Post*, *Cue* magazine—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: This was in the '40s or the '50s, this was—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Forties—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —and '50s.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —and '50s.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And what kind of reception did the—did the *Times* like the exhibitions, or—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: They said it's interesting. They misunderstood. I remember Schiele was called a decorative artist—that was the sort of the slant, "The Austrians are decorative." It was—however, the publicity was amazing, and I mean you realize how many magazines and papers wrote about art. Quite different from today.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And you mean—it still didn't bring in the public.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It brought in the public but it didn't bring any sales.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: It didn't bring any sales. Hmm.



HILDEGARD BACHERT: That was the problem.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What about the German artists that you had, like Kollwitz?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That was a different story.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Oh, could you tell us about that?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Kollwitz is separate from the expressionists in many ways. [Phone rings.] She wasn't really—only in some aspects was she an expressionist, or some of her works. But basically, she was not. She was an artist—and still is—who transcends all boundaries. Who speaks to the Japanese as to the Chinese as to the—probably the only people that are as not as touched by Kollwitz as the rest of the world are the French. There is not to the present day, a great following for Kollwitz in France.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:24:01] But here in New York in the '40s?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: But here in New York—even in the '20s there was a Kollwitz show here that was fairly successful. When I came to this country, there was a Kollwitz show very soon after I arrived at the Westermont [ph] Bookstore. There were—she became well-known in the early '40s; there were traveling exhibitions organized by well-known art people, art historians—the critic of the *New York Times* was instrumental in curating one of those shows. And even the prices were not high, of course, especially by today's standards there's no counting top up. But there was always a following. Young people. Older people. There was—it was an artist with a message. However, the art was always understood, too. It is wrong to think that she was only recognized because of the message. People did appreciate her etching technique, her good craftsmanship. There was just an acceptance.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And even though she was a German artist, you didn't find there was a prejudice against her.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: She was the only one.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: The only one.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: She was clearly recognized as being against this regime. You can't tell from a Kirchner that he was against the regime. Yes, George Grosz, you could tell. And he had a measure of success here.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: He did. And he was of course here in the '40s.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He did—and he was accepted as an American artist. In fact, he was often classified as American because he became an American citizen.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Do they have some—I know they have Groszs now. Did they have Groszs in the '40s and '50s?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: The gallery?

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: The gallery.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No. [00:26:00] Kallir didn't like Grosz.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Ah. Why was that?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He didn't like Grosz or Dix. They were not elegant. Kallir had an Austrian taste to some extent, and you know, I also—although I'm German, I have a problem with some of this lack of elegance and also this total lack of—of sensitivity to propriety. There is something that's really vulgar, let's call it that, and I find that I have a problem even today with some of the Groszs and Dixs. And this vulgar, klutzy [laughs] kind of German art did not appeal to Kallir. He loved Nolde. He did very much like Kollwitz, although I think I pushed for that.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Now why did you push for Kollwitz?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Because I grew up with her.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You did grow up with her.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: This was my—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Would he have known? Did he have Kollwitz in Vienna?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, absolutely.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Oh, he did. Uh-huh [affirmative].

HILDEGARD BACHERT: In fact, he had corresponded with her, and in the '20s sold a wonderful self-portrait by her to the Albertina. So yes, she was well-known to him, and he liked her, but I think I gave that extra impetus.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's very nice. And did you find that there was a difference? I mean, you said that there was always a public response to Kollwitz, but did it grow in the '50s, or—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: When was the most intense public reception of her work? Do you remember? Was it in the '50s? The '60s? Or does it—would you say it just steadily—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It just steadily grew. There was—of course, again, Kollwitz was another artist that was not generally accepted, but a little bit later, as you know, in the '60s and '70s—even in the '50s. [00:28:00] It wasn't really—not so much the '60s—and art with a message—the illustrative art—and need I tell you—was not accepted. And she was sort of put in the backrooms. Most museums had something because people donated—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: This was in the '60s, you said?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: I think so. Yes. People donated things to museums, and they did buy—and many curators recognized her artistic importance. But this message thing is really something that's grown—that's come back only in the late '80s. Before that Kollwitz was—um, I would say just a little bit looked down upon. She was not major. She was not—as Moses, totally—sometimes ignored, as Moses was. But she wasn't particularly important to the establishment. But again, the people didn't care. And we had extremely successful Kollwitz exhibitions in the '60s. It depends also of course on the availability of material. We were able to purchase a wonderful Kollwitz collection in the mid-'50s. And that helped to put her on the map. This provided the museums all over the country with proofs and unique impression and drawings—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Was this a collection in Germany that you really—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —were formed in Germany, and the person who owned it got tired of it, it depressed him too much. That's what I hear all the time about Kollwitz, you know. Most of the people don't want her work. Has nothing to do with artistic or aesthetic judgment.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Interesting. That's right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Now, of course, her stature has grown, and as you know the National Gallery did a Kollwitz show.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:30:02] That's right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: They never did that before. They did—yes, small, in-house shows. But not—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That was a major show.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —in the way, with a big catalog—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You had an essay in that, had—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. With a big catalog and a really major, major recognition. That's very important for an artist's reputation.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Yes. I'd say absolutely.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Of course, the other artists grew too.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Yes, I was going to ask you about Beckmann. You had some Beckmanns?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Very few.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Very few.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Kallir knew Beckmann personally—you have to—you realize that he knew most of these people personally.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's right. And Beckmann was in this country.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He was—yeah, but he knew him from Vienna.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: He knew him from Vienna.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Kallir knew him when he was in Vienna in the '20s, and in fact he published a book that Beckmann illustrated by the name of *Ebbi*—and it had etchings by Beckmann in it, and we own the play.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: So you've always had a little Beckmann here, or—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, yes. Yes. And in fact, Kallir came over with a beautiful Beckmann still-life, which he then sold.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: In the '40s?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: In the '30s, when he came over here.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Right when he came.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He had a Beckmann, you asked me what he brought, I didn't remember, but that was one of them.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's right. No, that's very fascinating, but you—so he brought a Beckmann.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: An oil.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And Beckmann having been here was better known, and so he was able to sell that. You see—also the Kokoschka sold—slowly, but they did sell. And they provided with—us with the wherewithal to keep the gallery running. It—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Sure. What about the Corinths? You brought some Corinths.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yeah. He brought a few Corinths and of course the entire estate of Corinth was brought over here. Were you aware of that?

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: No. When did that happen?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Corinth's wife, Charlotte Berend-Corinth, was Jewish. [00:32:01] And she had to leave Berlin. Her son, Tomas, had been here—yes.

[Audio Break.]

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: I wanted to ask you about the Modersohn-Becker exhibition that you had here. You had it in the '50s? And you had—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: We had one in the '50s, in 1958, I believe.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Now, Modersohn-Becker was an artist—of course, Kallir knew all these artists, German and Austrian, and she was an artist he always liked a lot. As I mentioned before, he bought a Modersohn-Becker from Nierendorf in 1939 or '40, and I had not been familiar with her—but not particularly. He knew her oeuvre fairly well, had been in—he had been in Berlin many times while he was living in Europe. And so when a family that owned about 13 or 14 Modersohn-Beckers suggested that he do a show—or he saw the works. They had other German expressionists. A family who had emigrate from Hamburg—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Was this in—a German family? Or immigrant—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —to New York. A lot of these artists became known because the refugees brought the art. And that's how many, many—including Schiele and Klimt, um, got their foothold in the world reputation. And if their art did not leave the native country, it usually didn't get anywhere. So Modersohn-Becker, he—he had looked for works by her. And then this family's collection, which made up the core, made up a fairly decent exhibition. We had no money at that time to borrow things from Europe, and whatever was here was what made the show.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:34:02] And what was the public reception to that in '58?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It was, as I recall, fairly good. However, she was really unknown at that time. Nobody had practically ever heard of her. And the problem was—and still is—one show does not an artist's reputation make. It's just impossible. And since there was no other art coming through too much, we occasionally showed her work again, but we did not really succeed in any measure until the '80s when we did two Modersohn-Becker shows: one with loans from the Bremen Kunsthalle and particularly from Bremen, but we had help from other places—Munich, and so on. And that was totally spectacular. It was really marvelous. And then we organized a traveling exhibition with the help of one Bremen collector and several American collectors and some of our things—um, with Kollwitz. We didn't have enough Modersohn-Becker. And so we paired them, and selected the Kollwitzs in such a way that they would work with Modersohn-Becker. And it was a beautiful exhibition which traveled to five or six venues in this country. And then we had the show here and got additional material from Bremen, and that was really marvelous. It coincided with the translation—with the publication of the translation of Modersohn-Becker's diaries and letters. There are strangely enough two translations—one of the early version which had been out for decades, and one of the revised version which, of course, benefited from the revisions and is the more valid one at this point.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:36:14] Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did Dr. Kallir ever talk about the fact that these were women artists? It's often unusual for a gallery to give such support to women artists. Did he—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: You know, this is—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —was he conscious of that?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Not really. He must have been—Kallir, as I mentioned before, had extraordinary sensitivity, and I think that might have been a reason that drew him to women's art. But if a woman's art was not really good, he didn't—he didn't do it just because it was a woman. He had no principles in that respect. And I have to say, we don't either, really. Even though this gallery's run by women, we are not necessarily focused to women's art even though we are now going to do a show. But we are not going to include women just because they are women. There are a lot out there that are not going to be included.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Sure. We—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It was a focus, though, and it was interesting that some of these people just didn't get anywhere because they were women. And that's bothersome.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Now, I remember what we were talking about before the phone rang, and that was Corinth's wife.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: She was—you were telling me how, because she was Jewish, she had to leave—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —she had to leave. Her son Tomas had just had emigrated earlier—before Hitler—and not for any political reasons and had himself—was well-established here. So he naturally had his mother come over. [00:38:00] And she brought—she came early enough to bring all—the total estate over here. And that was, um, a collection of Corinths that is hard to believe. It was so fantastic. And so we did—we knew her—Kallir knew her from his Corinth shows in Vienna, and with her cooperation, we did an unbelievably marvelous exhibition of oils—the most famous Valchuseine [inaudible] pieces, self-portraits, everything—and it was not successful at all.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Now when was that? I've forgotten the date of that. In the—sometime in the '40s.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It feels like '43, maybe, but I have to check. And to follow the show, we did a graphics—Corinth graphics exhibition. That wasn't successful either. And this was material—and not like Modersohn-Becker where we had to scrounge around to find enough to hang on the walls. This was plenty of first-rate material, and it—you know, Curt Valentin gave the Museum of Modern Art a self-portrait which is now their private joy, and many other museums received gifts. However, unfortunately, Mrs. Corinth, I have to say, was not terribly understanding of something that Dr. Kallir suggested to her—namely, to give pictures to the major museums so that Corinth would get going and would be seen. She said, "If they don't want to buy, then they don't value it." Tomas, her son, had the same attitude, and I'm afraid part of the reason why Corinth's not sufficiently known in this country is that the Corinth family sold the major works back to Germany, and that is the opposite of our point of view. [00:40:12] Kallir said they threw the things out, let them find them where they will. And he said, "I'm not going to send Schiele and Klimt back to Austria. I'm going to plant the seed here, and I will get through with it." And it took 20 years—30 years—to really do it. As I said before, 1957 was the first Schiele exhibition. There we really sold and made money at the rate of about \$250 for a watercolor. [They laugh.] And sometimes

around \$100 to \$200 for a drawing. But it was money. And we sold a lot. And there was a lot, which was amazing, but it was—we had plenty.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: But he was always aware, here, from the time he first came here, of the importance of having museums own some of these Austrian—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Absolutely.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —and German works.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And when he was able, he gave them—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How did he know that? [Laughs.]

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Because he had—he was steeped in this tradition. He had seen the Schiele and Klimt—they were recognized artists over there, and he had very objective judgment—or as objective as a person can get. And he simply knew that they were good artists. He was not given to explanations. He would tell people, "If you can't see that this is a good picture, I can't help you." That was his—he was—[Laughs.]

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:42:00] So—

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ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Hildegard Bachert, and this is February 26th, 1993, and this is the second tape. We were talking about some of the exhibitions that were having some success in the '50s, and I think you mentioned the Klimt exhibition?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Which was the first Klimt show in this country in 1959, and that was a big success. People by that time had heard of him, and we had not dared to do a Klimt show earlier; first of all, it was hard to find enough oils—it's still hard to find enough oils, and drawings alone do not really convey the importance of Klimt. And in some ways, the time we felt—you could feel the pulse—the time was beginning to be right. The prejudice to German and Austrian art was beginning to fade away, and people were really interested in things other than French art. Kallir had, at that time already, given outright a painting—the *Pear Tree*—to the Busch-Reisinger—at that time, the Fogg Museum, which is now the Busch-Reisinger—and following that show, Klimt paintings made their way into the museums. The Museum of Modern Art bought *The Park*. The, uh—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Oh, they bought it.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: I always thought that was something donated, actually.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No, it was—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —purchased.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —it was purchased for a very low price, but it was purchased. The Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh thereafter bought a picture called *The Orchard*. Earlier, by the way, the Minneapolis Art Institute had bought, from Kallir, the *Portrait of Paris von Gütersloh*, which is a major, major—of course—work, and I believe that was the first Schiele that entered a major American museum. [00:02:13] And that was before the big success—that was in the early '50s. And Kallir always made these things available for either partial gifts or at very low prices or outright, and this is a policy that he pursued all his life. He gave most of the *Baby* by Klimt to the National Gallery, and that was his last gift. And he did it—he knew that he was doing it—he gave it as a gift to the nation of the United States, which really saved his life and the lives of many. And he did that very, very consciously.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: It's interesting that the Schiele had an earlier success than Klimt.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. Interesting. Yes. He was seen—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Why do you think that is?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: It's very hard to say. Uh, Klimt has—Klimt is more subtle. Klimt is difficult, and it took, I think, the '60s generation to understand Klimt. It was a—the decorativeness was not particularly appreciated. There was—it just—it's very hard to analyze this in minutes. I should also say that Kallir was always interested in artists and in people that were working in his day, and we had many shows by contemporary artists, who—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Yeah, I did notice that in 1940—'40, I think you had the only show of American abstract artists.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That's right. Someone suggested that we have that, and it was not particularly close to Dr. Kallir's heart. [00:04:00] But we had the first exhibition of an abstract sculptor—Seymour Lipton. And we had Will Barnet and several other people that were lesser—less known. Some were not successful, and some were.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Right. Did he ever say anything about abstract art? Do you remember him discussing abstract art?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Oh, yes. And he always said, "What's so new about this abstract art of the '50s?" That's why he wasn't interested in it. We went next door to the Peggy Guggenheim place and saw these works that did not—you know—that they did not appeal to him, and the whole ambiance of music with the art—that was too artificial for Kallir. But yes, a good Kandinsky, any time. It was—he said, "We've been through this. This is not, this—um, this New York School," he said, "They've not—they were asleep when abstract art began in Europe." And indeed they were. He was way ahead. And so he was not really interested in this development, and he found it superficial; he often found it not honest. He said, "Many of these artists don't know—are not honest and good artists, and therefore they are abstract artists."

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What would he have meant by "honest?" Would he have meant that they couldn't—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: They were not good artists.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —he didn't—they couldn't paint figures, or—I see.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That's right. And therefore they slid into abstract art. And I do believe that there are some that really did that, although—for instance, he did not like Rothko. [00:06:02] We had—he went to see the Rothko show, which was in the '50s, I think, at the Museum of Modern Art, and that was—somehow, it just didn't appeal to him. Also what didn't appeal to him was the aura of comparing him with, I don't know, Rembrandt or whatever. That he could not—this intellectualizing did not appeal to him. I personally am extremely fond of Rothko—but again, also more on an aesthetic basis rather than a very long, reasoned-out thing. I just wanted to round this up and say that we did have unsuccessful shows, also. And he sometimes made a mistake in judging an artist who he thought—who he thought might develop. For instance, in 1958, two young expressionists walked in here, and he gave them a show, and all our expressionist people who liked the Noldes and the Kirchners, they bought Pacek and Maizels—that—that's—those were their names. And they never got anywhere. They stayed—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Were they American artists?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —they were American.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Americans. Uh-huh [affirmative].

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And one of them is still living; the other died not too long ago.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: I see. I do remember reading you had a Heckel—Erich Heckel—exhibition in the '50s—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That's right.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —but I only saw one.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That's right.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Why was that?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: This show was sent to us by Heckel. He put it together, and we were very interested in it, and it was—it was moderately successful. But we realized that they were all late Heckels; it wasn't really that good a show. We had a Masereel exhibition, which we liked very much, which he liked—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:08:01] And how did the public respond to Masereel?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Fairly good. But of course it needs to be corroborated, and somehow it was hard to get more Masereels, and so that didn't—sometimes it's very difficult to keep the works before the public with new works all the time. It's difficult now, too.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Now, I wondered if you could just tell me a little bit about your own personal memories of Dr. Kallir. When you first started working with him, what—what did you see?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Okay. Well, the memories are many, many—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: I'm sure there are many.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —as you can imagine.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Maybe we can do it a little bit by decades.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Right.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Early memories.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Okay. When I first came—as I already mentioned—the freedom I had here and the generosity and the, um—the, uh, honesty in which the business was conducted was something that appealed to me enormously, because Nierendorf was not what I consider completely above board—and he was sometimes—he was not a crook or anything like that, but he was a bit devious. And Kallir was just the opposite. He was—he had problems with people because he always told them what he thought, and I personally get along best with people who do that. And he—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Is that what you meant by—you had said one point—you used the term autocratic. And I don't think—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: That's different.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Okay.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Autocratic also means that he wanted to know everything; he wanted to be the boss. He was the boss, and no two ways about it. And you know, I don't know if you are familiar with German men who are used to being the head of the family, and what they said had to be done. [00:10:01] And it was the law. Now Kallir was that way—however, he was different from any others of that generation in that I, and I think one could always tell him, "You know, I disagree with you. I don't think you did this right. I think you said the wrong thing here." And he would say, "Hm." He would listen. He was very humble in that respect. He did want to know what was going on; he did not allow me to make independent decisions of any importance. If I did, I got it. And he was not easy to work with. He had his ways of doing things and I—as the secretary, really, or assistant or whatever—in the end, I was really a collaborator. I mean, we were just almost equal in the end. But in the beginning, I had an awful lot to learn. And he said what he wanted to be done, but if I didn't understand something or if I had a problem with the way he was looking at it, he listened. And not only that, he asked. He said, "What do you think? How do you like this?" You see, he wanted to have the last word, but he—we worked together in the literal and true sense of the word. And that even meant when he dictated letters—his English was never flawless, completely flawless, so he expected me to correct it, but I also sometimes said, "I don't think that's very tactful. Would you consider it this way?" And so we would work out a letter or something. [00:12:01] But if I said too much, then he got impatient and he said, "You shut up and let me finish it and forget it." [They laugh.] You know what I mean? He was—he was that way. He was a very formal person. It took him from 1940 to 1947 to call me by my first name. And that only happened because we hired another assistant, and she said—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: In 1947?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: In 1947. We were beginning to need another person, and he—this person was fairly informal, and she said, "What's the matter with you people?" [They laugh.] And she wouldn't dare call Kallir by his first name, but she said, "I'm—you call me by my first name." And he said, "Well, all right. Then I'll—is it okay with you?" And then I said, "Of course." But he was extremely polite and extremely formal in those things, and—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Now what did you call him at that time when he started—he started to call you "Hildegard."

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Right. I continued to the end of his days to call him "Dr. Kallir." I never called him by his first name. He never asked—introduced either of us—the familiar *du* in German. He did speak German with me most of the time.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Really.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He felt much more comfortable—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And he never used *du*.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Never.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Isn't that—that's interesting.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Nor did his wife, even though with his daughter I became close friends and we are *du*-ing with each other always. And he—she and I are close friends, and it's natural. And with his son, I always speak English, so—and we call each other by our first names. And there's no occasion to speak German with him, so I don't know what we would do. We are almost the same age. But also Mrs. Kallir called me by my first name, but never *du*. [00:14:00] And that was—that was a little arm's-length thing which I think worked out very, very well. He was interested in my personal life. He wanted to know whether I had enough money, what my parents and my sister and my family—he took an enormous interest. When I was sick, he called every day to find out. He needed to know. He wanted to know. He was unbelievably generous. Never in my entire life did I ask for a raise.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: He would give—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —he would give it before I ever thought that he should, and it was always bigger than I expected. He gave bonuses when we did well of the magnitude that I never expected. He was concerned—now that was not just me. He was a father figure, and maybe that autocratic isn't quite right; he was a patriarch. That's what I should call him. He was constantly concerned with his family. He worried a lot, he was a big worrier about the health and well-being of everybody. He had few friends but very, very good ones, and the few that he had he called every day, and they had long conversations in the evenings and telling each other what happened, and he was—he was a friend. He was my friend, too. And he was a friend to all the people that he cared for in every respect and supported them. He was—for instance, Louis Calder who brought him Grandma Moses. He was a lunatic, this man. And as he got older, he lost his job. He sold his—he never wanted to sell his Moses collection, this Calder. [00:16:02] He only consigned a few, and then Kallir got the rest from Grandma. And there came a time when Calder needed the money, and also had no descendants, and so he sold the collection to Dr. Kallir. He paid it to him in installments, and when the installments were paid up, he just continued the payments until the man died. So this—that's how he treated Grandma—as a patriarch, as a father, as somebody to take care of people. And you see, I never thought that I would stay here all these many years. You know, many people are career concentrated and oriented, but the gallery grew with him and with me and we made it what it is and what it turned out to be, and so it just grew—and of course, my knowledge grew with it.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: When you had been speaking earlier, you said that you had known the other emigre gallery dealers like J.B. Neumann. How did he compare with say, J.B. Neumann or, um, who else was it? Tannhauser—was he—he was here during the war?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. I didn't know him that well, but J.B. Neumann, I knew very well because he was a close friend of Karl Nierendorf. See, every one of these people had a personality of his own. Very strong personality. J.B. was a wonderful person—completely un—um, impractical. He was always broke because he didn't know how to handle money. Kallir had his feet on the ground. He did not do things that were unreasonable. He spent his money on the Moses pictures and sometimes his family said, "What are you doing that for?" Or he spent his money on aeronautical, um, manuscripts and other mementos. [00:18:06] But he knew—he understood even the value of these things. J.B. Neumann was a spendthrift, but he had a wonderful feeling for art. He was a totally different person. They got along very well; in fact, both Nierendorf and Neumann bought, early on, a Grandma Moses each. And there is your answer to your—these were avant-garde people of the old stock, and folk art to them was a natural thing. It's something that went with the abstract art. Neumann was one of the pioneers, and so was Nierendorf, of abstract art. And so this was just—a Moses, that was great. They were fascinated. Now, I also knew Curt Valentin very well. Totally different person.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Now, how was he different than Kallir?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He was extremely unapproachable. I never knew anything personal about him. He was—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How was his gallery?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —a businessman from the word go. It was business and nothing else, and he was a good businessman; he was reliable—most of the time. And the relationship was good, and it was just—as I say, he was totally different from Kallir. However, I had no occasion to meet him personally, and if people talk about Kallir who never got to know him well, they would also say he was unapproachable. He was not one given to telling his personal stories to every Tom, Dick, and Harry, but he was more talkative—that I will say. Kallir had, for instance, a trait that was not well-known to people who didn't know he had a fantastic sense of humor. [00:20:09] We died laughing here sometimes with parodies, and he had this subtle humor—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How did he display this sense of humor? What would—



HILDEGARD BACHERT: —he kidded—he loved to kid people, but not in the coarse, German way. It was a very specifically Austrian or even—I'm thinking it was closer to the French sense of humor. And he—he loved to do these subtle ditties, he loved to twist language around to say something that really wasn't that at all, and that type of thing. And Mrs. Kallir, too—the whole family. Even Jane—also Jane, I should say. Even, but also—all of them have a great sense of humor.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: And they like to pun. Would that—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Absolutely. He loved puns and limericks. And there—there is something in German that is called a schöttle vain [ph], which is something a little bit close—a little bit like a limerick, and he, in fact, published—he was a publisher, too. Did you know that?

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Yes, I did.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. You realize that. And even in this country, he published some schöttle vain [ph]—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: I didn't know that.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —by a German-Austrian person. He was also—and the whole Kallir family—very, very well-educated. He had a thorough grounding in literature. His French was nearly flawless.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did he speak any Russian? Do you know—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —no.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He did speak—he learned a little Czech, because he was in the war—the first World War—and his regiment, the people in his troupe were Czech, many of them. [00:22:01] So—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: So in Vienna—perhaps when he was in Vienna—he also sold to Czech collectors?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. Indeed, he did. But most of these people spoke German. The elite in Czechoslovakia was German-speaking in those days.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What about in Budapest? Did he—do you know, was he ever—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Not much.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —not much.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He didn't have much contact with Hungarian people. Um, I should—so his literary knowledge was amazing, and he was interested in literature; in fact, he published here in this country, three small volumes of early Rilke in German. He and his wife—this is a personal thing—met through Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Really? How was that?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He was a—they both knew him.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Oh.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Hofmannsthal was a close friend of Mrs. Kallir's family, and Dr. Kallir knew him also through mutual friends, and that's where they met. He—he was friends with Schnitzler and Richard Beer-Hofmann. Are you familiar with him?

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: With Schnitzler, not—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —not Beer-Hofmann. He was not as well-known. Uh, he was a very close friend and also related to Rudolf Bing from the—long before, of course, he was the, um, at the opera.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Was he aware of any people like Freud? Did he ever comment on Freud?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Of course, yes, and his own doctor was Freud's doctor.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Is that right?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes. His own doctor here had emigrated from England, and he was the same doctor—

yes, indeed. And he knew all these people—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: What did he think of psychoanalysis and—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —he was terribly interested in it.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: He was.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: And he in fact has, um, some books—some early editions, but that's the kind of thing that interested him. He loved beautiful books. He himself published most wonderful editions of Kubin, and, um, I don't—I'd love to show you some of those things that he published—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:24:07] I'd love to see them.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —and he had them bound in leather, and—just beautiful.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: So was his interest in Freud just as an interest in another cultural manifestation in Vienna? Or did he actually—did he take seriously the whole psychoanalysis that Freud emphasized?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: I think—I really can't quite answer that. I think that Freudian theories have so much—and that's in his lifetime, too—become part of our lives—a Freudian slip, that type of thing, is part of our culture. He did not make a special study in psychology of Freud. That, I don't think.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: But just to be interested in the '40s or '50s would be very different than many Americans, or—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Perhaps. But you see, I think America caught up quickly. It—you're right. In the '40s and '50s here, it was perhaps unusual to be interested, but I think for Kallir this was old hat. He knew it. He knew the people. He knew Anna Freud personally, I believe. He knew the people that surrounded Freud. This was part of his baggage, also, to say—so to speak. Just as the—the acquaintance with Hofmannsthal was many things. You know, he knew Max Reinhardt extremely well, there's a long correspondence with him. He was going to help him establish a theater in Vienna. I mean, Kallir is part of history of that period, and so the correspondence that he had with Karl Kraus—he knew them all.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:26:05] And when he came to this country, now, what happened with Karl Kraus? I've forgotten when he died.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Kraus, um, yeah—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Did he—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He did not survive.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: He didn't survive the war. That's right.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He didn't survive the war. But some people who emigrated here—Tomas Mann—he knew him—we have correspondence with him. Um, some of the—you know, I hate to drop these names, but they were normal. He was very well-acquainted with the deposed emperor of Austria—or empress. The Empress Zita. And today, the Crown Prince Rudolf and all these people—you know, and all these people. Not Rudolf. What's his name? Otto.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Otto.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Rudolf. He was terribly interested in monarchy. His thing—history of the monarchy—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: But politically you said—you said he was, um—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He kind of—this is something that we shouldn't get into. Many Austrians, even if they were somehow liberal in other ways favored the monarchy. For instance, Joseph Roth—I'm not sure if that's a name that's familiar to you. He wrote—one of his most famous things is *Die Kapuzinergruft*. Some of his things have now been translated. He was a monarchist, and Kallir was—he said the monarchy worked best. Austrians don't really know how to govern themselves, you know, in a really truly democratic way. There's much too much graft and stuff, and so it's—this is a specialty onto its own, and therefore—he knew the, um, the royal house, the imperial house—it was very interesting to meet all these people. [00:28:03] I met them all, too, of course. And we—we organized—in the early '40s, evenings in which people came to view Austrian films and things like that. Tosca—music was another thing that Kallir loved—and he took Toscanini on tape before anybody did it—he was very interested in technical things. He was a—he had the first tape recorder that I ever heard about. We had the

first answering machine before anybody else had them. He was a radio ham. He had Austria One. He—and I don't know if you realize, you have to send a card every time you make contact with another—this was totally out of your field, I'm sure—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: That's okay.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —but we have a collection of postcards from people that confirmed having talked with him from all corners of the world, literally. We have, um, he—he was a—he knew the Morse code. He was terribly interested in space—in flying, as I mentioned. He was interested in everything that spelled progress or human endeavor and accomplishments. And I in a way, even though he worried so much, he was an optimist. And he was an idealist. And a planner.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: How did—how did he deal with, I think, this great democracy [laughs] in the United States? All the problems? Did he ever talk about the—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: He loved this country, and he felt, I think, perhaps too much so, confident in the government. You see, he'd seen so much unraveling of government and money. He lost so much money so often that was—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: [00:30:09] He felt confident in Roosevelt?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —in Roosevelt, absolutely. And Truman. He admired him. And you know, Grandma Moses got invited—she got the National Press Club award in '49. She got invited by Truman. And Kallir and Truman hit it off beautifully. See, we know—I never met Truman, but we know from the record that Truman was a straight-speaking person. And that's the kind of people that Kallir got on with best—the kind of people that told him like it is. And no, um, particular flourishes around it. And that's what he liked. And that's what got him into a lot of trouble with the Austrians. I don't know if you know the Austrian temperament: it's kiss your hand and be very nice and "Yes, sir," and "Yes,"—[inaudible]—and, "Yes, Herr Doktor." And Kallir hated that. He was not really—he could do it if he had to, but he mistrusted it, and rightfully so.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Sounds like a very complex, but interesting person.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Absolutely. And highly intelligent, of course.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You know, I feel like I've taken up so much of your time, but I know we could go on for even longer. But I do hate to take up—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: No, and of course, I hate to take up your time, too. You know, uh—

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —so much of your time, and—and so perhaps for today, we—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: —yeah.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Is there any—is there just anything else that you would like to add about, uh, your—just for rounding out? I mean, your increasing duties in the galleries?

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes, perhaps I should say something about that, sure. He trusted me more and more as time went on. [00:32:00] And for instance, when he had to ask Grandma Moses to write her autobiography, I went up there and took her words down in shorthand, which I had learned in the meantime. I collaborated on all the books that he wrote—every single one of them. We edited the Moses autobiography together. Um, I helped with the Schiele catalog resume of 1966, the catalog resume of the graphic works of 1970, the Moses book of 1973, the Gestel catalog resume of 1974. My character is perhaps a little bit to be a collaborator. I helped Jane on all her books. I'm the proofreader in the family.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: She's spoken so highly of your help.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Proofreading I learned from Kallir. He taught me how to look at every comma and everything, and I'm a detail person anyway. And so, the books that Kallir wrote, he always wrote a tribute to me in some respect. He dedicated the Moses book to me. But I'm not an author myself. And somehow, one of my life's philosophy is to have—to do something that benefits go beyond my own. I'm not a career person. I don't feel that it's necessary to forward your own character, as long as, I mean, as you are—as credit is given where it is due. It's not that I want to erase myself from the surface of the Earth, but I feel that I want to contribute as much as I can. And that's why I stayed with Kallir. I felt fulfilled. [00:34:00] I felt that my potential was tapped—that I was able to give, and—of whatever I could contribute, and that it was appreciated, and then it was used. And that's what I wanted to do. I didn't—I mean, a 9-to-5 job never appealed to me. I put in enormous amounts of hours—here, now, even more, because I have the responsibility of the gallery. I never worked harder than—when I was older. Kallir felt that we should have more free time, and he was the boss; he could say, "Take off."

But now I'm the boss, and I never take off. [Laughs.]

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: You must have been very happy when you and Jane became the co-directors.

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Yes, indeed. It was wonderful to see someone who was so devoted to the spirit of the gallery. She had been long enough here under and with Dr. Kallir to understand what makes this gallery run and what made it special. She'd been somewhere else where she didn't like it, and she often came up with comparisons that had us laughing very hard. And it's very important to both of us that the gallery functions and it is—we put that above our own, um, idiosyncrasies and own, um, temperaments—to where we're very different in many ways. I had to learn to work with her which is totally different from Kallir. She likes to work on her own. Kallir wanted to consult all the time. So I have to change. But it's—I still—I see the straight line. I see that—I see that the gallery is going forward and has grown enormously. [00:36:05] Jane has many good ideas, and so did her grandfather. He was a man of ideas and constantly innovative.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: Well, you both have really have worked in the '80s now to revitalize the gallery —

HILDEGARD BACHERT: Definitely.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —and I think that you've definitely made it really very creative in these recent years. Well, thank you very much for—

HILDEGARD BACHERT: You're very welcome.

ROSE-CAROL WASHTON LONG: —all this time, and—

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