Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with Ivan C. Karp, 1963 October 18

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Ivan C. Karp on October 18, 1963. The interview took place in New York, New York, and was conducted by Richard Brown Baker for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

Interview

RICHARD BROWN BAKER: To the Archives of American Art's transcriber: there will occur on this tape the major part of an interview conducted by Richard Brown Baker with Ivan Karp, K-A-R-P, on October 18, 1963 on the subject of the Hansa Gallery. I requested permission to interview Mr. Karp, who was very busy at the time. He invited me to come to the Leo Castelli Gallery one morning when he said there would be almost nobody there; it would be very simple to conduct the business at hand. However, there were an immense number of interruptions. The interview didn't seem, to me, to work as easily as it should have, under those circumstances.

However, what's happened since is that this tape was picked up by me inadvertently, and used, thinking it was blank, to transcribe some records of *Berlitz Simplified Italian*, so it may follow directly after this, some non-transcribable dialogue in Italian, which will suddenly be followed by the - fortunately, there wasn't too much lost.

[BREAK IN TAPE.]

Just have the kindness to skip the Italian, and I think the interview can be recorded more or less where it begins. I just will never be able to recover the first few questions and answers.

[BREAK IN TAPE. APPROXIMATELY ONE MINUTE OF DIALOGUE IN ITALIAN. BREAK IN TAPE.]

RICHARD BROWN BAKER: - a little bit into your own personal life. Could you tell me what your personal art training was, and your education in general?

IVAN KARP: My background in looking at things goes back to my youth, when I used to visit regularly the Brooklyn Museum.

MR. BAKER: You were brought up in Brooklyn?

MR. KARP: I was brought up in Brooklyn, and we used to go every Sunday to hear the concerts at the Brooklyn Museum. And, naturally, in passing through the various galleries, one was compelled, more or less, to focus on objects of art. And my fascination with them grew very rapidly. And I remember as a boy of about 11 or 12 years old, that my room at home was full of reproductions of American painters at the time - Thomas Hart Benton and his school.

MR. BAKER: So, you liked Thomas Hart Benton then. Do you now?

MR. KARP: I still look back on him with a certain fond memory, let's say. His work doesn't seem to be of such great import at this particular time, but the artists of that time, you know, have a certain

nostalgic character, and a certain amount of social content which is always worth, you know, meditating upon, you know.

MR. BAKER: What I was curious about was the fact that you started out as a writer and a critic, and you continue to write. But you did eventually take up, for the present, a career of *selling* art. What -

MR. KARP: Well, that's a harsh term, "selling art," because I always think of my activity in the arts as one of an adventurer, really, also. And my enjoyment in being in the art gallery activity was to see new work, to experience it very deeply and to seek it out. That is, the galleries with whom I've been associated, the Hansa Gallery included, were concerned with locating remarkable new talent. And the pleasure was, of course, to see new artists coming in with their work and to - visiting various studios, and seeing the emerging talent of the time.

MR. BAKER: Tell me how it was done at the Hansa, that search for new talent. How much agreement was found among the members concerning new artists?

MR. KARP: Well, we had, at the Hansa Gallery, since it was a co-operative, not very much in the way of financial rewards for the artists, and so we didn't attract a very large number of submittals, and we had to go seek them out. That is, the artists, of course, were obliged to support their own shows, as well as pay in a monthly dues. And this caused, of course, a bit of a burden on an emerging painter, traditionally poor.

But, occasionally, we would get artists coming in with their work and we would have meetings, if the work looked particularly interesting to Mr. [Richard] Bellamy and myself. The entire membership would have to agree that the artist was worthy of our very noble group. And there was much turbulence and turmoil about that, as you can imagine, you know.

MR. BAKER: You mean an unanimous vote of the membership?

MR. KARP: I don't know. We had a constitution which indicated what type of vote was required for new membership, and I believe it was pretty close to unanimous or it was two-thirds of the membership had to agree that an artist was a major virtue.

MR. BAKER: Ivan, do you remember any particular artists whom you advocated being taken into the gallery at the time you were there?

MR. KARP: Well, we showed works of Al[fred] Leslie, and we wanted him to be affiliated, but he was very independent at that time, so he had no gallery. He showed occasionally with the gallery.

MR. BAKER: In group shows?

MR. KARP: In group shows.

MR. BAKER: You didn't give him a one-man show?

MR. KARP: No, we never gave him a one-man show.

There was Robert Richenburg, who we had great discussion about, whose work we showed in a one-man show at the gallery. We showed a large number of paintings of Walasse Ting at the time. He's now exhibiting here in New York and other galleries out in Europe. And, I don't remember, there were other artists included in group shows who have since gone on to greater fame.

MR. BAKER: Well, these three you mentioned would have been ones whom you would have been personally glad to welcome on the roster of the Hansa Gallery, I take it?

MR. KARP: There was some disagreement and discussion about the actual formal affiliation of those artists. I think that the gallery would have agreed very much to having Leslie as a participant.

MR. BAKER: Did it come to a vote or - ?

MR. KARP: It never came to that. Leslie himself never agreed completely to become a full-time member. He was hovering about it for a period of time, you know. There was usually a lot of disgruntlement, disagreement, turbulence and fanfare about our taking on new artists. We were *constantly* in search for them.

MR. BAKER: Well, I have the impression from talking to other people that one reason the gallery had more or less folded up - aside from the obvious economic weakness of it - was an inability of the membership to agree on new artists. So, since you bring up this fact that one of the interesting parts of it was the search for new artists, I'd like to explore this more in detail.

MR. KARP: Well, as I say, the gallery could not offer a very remarkable financial support for any artists. And so we had a very small portion of the best talent applying to us. However, there was - I might say, one of the critical pitfalls of that gallery's structure was its extreme democracy. There was no chief administrator. It was - everything was put to a vote, and there were very strong personal opinions. And that made it both remarkable and, at the same time, a little bit destructive of our cause, is that nobody could decide on policy.

MR. BAKER: Well, I was trying to find out if you had any remembrance of any particular issues over any particular artists. For instance, as I said, any that *you* advocated. But you don't recall any -

MR. KARP: I remember we showed also the works of [Edward] Avedisian, now affiliated with the Elkon Gallery in New York. And I remember that in finally selecting his work, there was quite a heated discussion and much disgruntlement on the part of certain members about actually exhibiting his work. It was rather remarkable and flamboyant abstract painting, but -

MR. BAKER: Well, his work at that time was rather similar to the drip painting of Pollock.

MR. KARP: Yes, it connected to the tradition of abstract painting that we were very familiar with.

MR. BAKER: I think possibly Edward Avedisian was the last painter that was taken into the Hansa group.

MR. KARP: That's right. He was the hallmark of our -

MR. BAKER: What you still don't seem to be able to remember is any specific discussion involving any individual painter who was accepted or rejected.

MR. KARP: I remember during that - my last turbulent season there, one of the two seasons that I was with the gallery, that we did go from studio to studio. And I can't remember any distinct experience with an artist in which the artist was either rejected because of disagreement - but I remember there were a number of occasions of going around to studios when we came into very, very vivid - or livid - argumentation.

MR. BAKER: What studios, for instance, do you remember?

MR. KARP: I don't remember the artists' names -

MR. BAKER: No, because you've been to so many since then -

MR. KARP: But I remember that we did identify a number of artists who have since come to a rather general attention, you know. And they were still possibly in a formative stage. And it's also possible that their work did not warrant exhibition at that time, you know. But the fact is the matter with [Richard] Stankiewicz and the few people that did go around from studio to studio, that we did identify a number of very interesting talents, you know.

MR. BAKER: Yes, I think the gallery was very much of that character at the time. Now, this gallery was, I would think, one of the least commercial-minded galleries that's ever functioned in New York. Would you agree to that?

MR. KARP: [Laughs] It was probably the most idealistic group enterprise, I think, that I've ever witnessed, you know. The expressions of emotions and feelings about art, about art dealership, about gallery activity, were of the most beautiful and poetic nature. And I was frequently brought to the point of tears by some of the eloquence in our discussions of our policy, and our formulation of our constitution, in discussion of artists' work, and the projection of exhibitions, you know. There was very deep belief in the artists for each other, and for our progress, you know. And the gallery had a kind of fortress beauty about it, of very high ideals.

MR. BAKER: Since you've subsequently had all these years of experience in much more - I hesitate to use the word "commercial" galleries, but much more prosperous-going businesses that are *not* committee-run, would you have any general remarks to make about the inherent weakness or strength of this kind of gallery that the Hansa was?

MR. KARP: Well, there's a defect, I suppose, basically engraved in the idea of artists running their own gallery and selling their own work. The idea of the pictures being projected in exhibition and offered to the public for sale, and at the same time, the management - both financial and otherwise - of the gallery by those artists who are offering the work for sale put the artists at cross-purposes. In other words, he could not, with any clarity and distinctness, simply make his art and put it on a wall somewhere and leave the scene, which would leave him immune.

[PHONE RINGS. BREAK IN TAPE.]

MR. BAKER: - leave immune, you said?

MR. KARP: It, in a sense, was an interference with the actual production of work and the commitment of the artist to his own labors. The idea of having to put his works up for sale, to occasionally appear at the gallery, to conduct business of various kinds, I think was, in a sense, a detriment to the proper functioning of the gallery.

MR. BAKER: Well, during the two years you were there, the artists themselves didn't too much of the time have to man the desk as a sales personnel, did they?

MR. KARP: Well, I might say that they would appear more frequently than they might under very, very officious auspices. The thing was such an intimate kind of activity. It was such an enclosed social network that the artist exhibiting would be as much a participant as the director, so-called.

MR. BAKER: Well, now, I've been told - and I think it's true - that since the participating artists were part owners, that the frequency of their visits to the gallery much exceeded that which normally

occurs between artist and dealer.

MR. KARP: That's right. They were overseers, in a sense. They wanted to know about the progress of their particular works and about the progress in the gallery in general. And it was a very unsteady progress, let's say, on a financial basis. It almost didn't exist.

MR. BAKER: Tell me something about sales during the period you were there. Do you recall any - you, yourself, were instrumental in selling me our very fine, but not very expensive, sculpture by Richard Stankiewicz. So I know that at least *one* sale took place. [Laughs.]

MR. KARP: Well, during my first season, the financial situation was particularly bleak and we used to have crash meetings every week or so to raise the dues in order to meet our expenses.

We had a number of visitors coming in, and there were periods of very lyric silence, you know, where nothing happened at all. There were two or three official personalities and the arts critics and so forth who gave us some attention. And there were a number of collectors who gave us a certain amount of at least spiritual support, like yourself.

However, during the first season, I remember we sold very few works. Some of the paintings of Jane Wilson, fine romantic landscape and figure paintings, had a certain amount of success. Until the works of Stankiewicz and [Jan] Müller and some of the others became more clearly identified as singular and remarkable, there was no financial succes at the gallery.

Müller and Stankiewicz carried off probably the greatest general number of sales. And the second season, we were quite active in selling Müller 's paintings. I remember at a certain point we were selling one little painting at least every day, for a period of time. But his prices were remarkably low, and he was a terribly generous personality.

[BREAK IN TAPE.]

MR. BAKER: I think you sold those very small paintings for was it $50 or $100?

MR. KARP: [Laughs] It was in the area of between something like $35 to $100 for the small oils on board, you know? And if Müller felt that somebody very much loved the painting, and didn't think they could pay a certain amount, he would adjust the price to facilitate them.

MR. BAKER: Aha. I think I paid him directly $100 for a not very large one in the summer of - 1958? '57, '57.

MR. KARP: At a certain point, it seemed that everything that he was bringing into the gallery was receiving attention and being sold and we tried to establish a new price policy, which was contrary to our whole nature, I think. And we actually wrote out a schedule of prices for Müller's works and we tried to abide by them. The schedule broke down occasionally, as I say, with people who pleaded that they couldn't afford to pay the price [inaudible].

MR. BAKER: Well, I think one of the paintings that was subject to price controversy was his large painting - it must have been there at the time you were there - which was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art.

MR. KARP: Oh, there was an interminable discussion and diplomatic discussion about the price of that work and putting it over there.

MR. BAKER: That painting is called what?

MR. KARP: Was one of the *Faust* paintings, I believe. *Faust I* [1956].

MR. BAKER: Was it? Anyway, it's large, quite large -

MR. KARP: It's a very large painting, yes.

MR. BAKER: Afterwards it suffered some damage in the museum fire, I think.

MR. KARP: That's right, yeah.

MR. BAKER: But this was Jan's first prospect, I believe, of going into a museum, wasn't it?

MR. KARP: Yes. It was a very grand event for us. And I think the price of the picture was something a little over $1,000, which was a big event at the gallery. And the discussion around it, of course, was interminable.

MR. BAKER: Well, why was it so? I mean, was the museum so very nasty about the price -

MR. KARP: Oh, they weren't, I wouldn't say "nasty." They were cautious, as they usually are, about paying a big price for a new artist's work. At that time, Müller 's work was considered new.

MR. BAKER: Yes, it was, but this was not really an enormous price, considering the size of the painting. As I recall being told - perhaps I'm mistaken - he suffered a certain, considerable amount of tension over this question, which couldn't have been very good for a man in his health.

MR. KARP: Well, I could, never tried to fathom museum policy in regards to that particular sale, but they always have negotiated the price of a picture. I think it's probably consistent with their policy to try to achieve the lowest price possible, you know, in their own interests.

There was a rather lengthy discussion about the final sale price of that picture, when it would be taken - it was kept at the museum for a period of time before a decision was made. And of course it was a day of great elation when they finally announced that they were owning the work.

MR. BAKER: I wonder if there had been any previous gallery sales to the Museum of Modern Art. Do you recall any others at that time?

MR. KARP: I think that was the first sale to the Museum itself. There were some subsequently, but I believe that was the first -

MR. BAKER: Well, there were sales to Alfred Barr, Jr. of Stankiewicz. Whether -

MR. KARP: I think they proceeded after -

MR. BAKER: They may have come after.

MR. KARP: Yes.

MR. BAKER: In any event, the Hansa Gallery was not frequently kneeling with museums, as this present gallery you're associated with.

MR. KARP: No, it rarely saw personnel from museums. Occasionally, some remarkable adventurous

personality from the Middle West might come and visit us because he heard some little interesting information. But we would see just the Whitney Museum personnel occasionally, in the selection of annual shows, and the Modern Museum people would turn up occasionally, also.

They came to see Müller as a result of one of their trustees buying a small work. This was Liz Parkinson [ph], I remember the day. In fact, she bought two of them, you know.

MR. BAKER: She was the one, then, that led them to come to see? I was wondering how you got them in, because it's not always easy to get their time and attention in a small gallery.

MR. KARP: I would say that there was enough idealistic concern at the Museum among its personnel at that time to want to seek out things of interest, you know. And I always believed, and I still do, that there is no gallery that can sell works of art that are not of the highest quality -

[BREAK IN TAPE.]

MR. BAKER: Did most of your artists usually get included in Whitney Annuals at that time?

MR. KARP: We were always surprised by the number that were. And frequently it would be Jane Wilson and Stankiewicz and Müller as regular entries. And then I believe one or two others also got on the roster.

It was a very great event for us, of course, to be included in those shows, and we made a great to-do about it, you know. I believe that Stankiewicz's large sculpture, *Kabuki* [*Kabuki Dancer*, 1956], was bought from actually one of those exhibits, you know.

MR. BAKER: That was in the Annual, you mean, selected in the Annual and purchased by the [Whitney] museum.

MR. KARP: Purchased by the museum, yes.

MR. BAKER: I wonder if you would care to evaluate, retrospectively, some of the artists of the gallery roster. Who would you think of as most important?

MR. KARP: Well, I wouldn't like to single out one most important artist. The artist who survives in the -

MR. BAKER: Well, one or two -

MR. KARP: - mind of the public most distinctly are Richard Stankiewicz, as we know, gets sort of an international reputation, is presently exhibiting at the Walker Arts Center with Robert Indiana. Jan Müller's fame is generally established. He was at the Venice Biennale in a very large display of his work. He's presently being shown as a master American painter with, of course, references to European styles.

George Segal, who at that time was painting very robust, romantic nude figures, has since emerged as a very important sculptor. And he's presently being shown in Paris and internationally. His work is very frequently purchased for major collections.

The artist who we used to focus on with particular interest and remarkable historic importance was young Jean Follett, whose art of collage, assemblage, and construction was very adventurous for the time. And she's a kind of a pioneer, I think, in that spirit of working. And she never received much

attention at all, unfortunately. Her art was considered very difficult, and we used to propose it every so often to important personalities in the arts, and she was more or less put aside.

It was only very recently that the Modern museum actually purchased a work. And her works, many of them, were recently burned in a studio downtown, unfortunately, and we cannot provide the evidence of her remarkable inventiveness over the years. She was involved in very elaborate construction and collage making in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

MR. BAKER: Jean Follett was one of the early founding members.

MR. KARP: Yes.

MR. BAKER: But I have the impression that sometimes she was rather quixotic in her pricing. Some of her pieces -

MR. KARP: [Laughs]

MR. BAKER: - were placed at prices that would prevent all but the very rich *and* imaginative collector from purchasing them.

MR. KARP: Well, there was a kind of despair in her concept of pricing, based on the fact that if nobody liked them, you might as well price them out of the market, in her own mind. In our mind, of course, they were priceless works of art, though if we were more realistic - We attempted at times to break down the price structure. If somebody rejected what we gave, then she'd suddenly go about and say, "Well, it's worth 10 times that amount, really, and I'm not going to sell it for less." But if a concrete offer was made - and they were very infrequent, I might say - she would usually yield.

MR. BAKER: Do you recall people who purchased her work at the time?

MR. KARP: I remember perhaps maybe one or two collectors who actually picked up objects of hers, and they were rather small, you know.

MR. BAKER: Who were they?

MR. KARP: There was a gentleman coming into the gallery regularly, now on the board of the Jewish Museum whose name I forget for the moment - who bought Jan Müller 's work by the dozens. He owns over 45, 50 pieces. And he bought -

MR. BAKER: This was Horace Richter?

MR. KARP: Horace Richter, I believe, bought a Jean Follett.

MR. BAKER: Well, I think he was one of the most loyal purchasers of gallery artists, was he not?

MR. KARP: Well, we saw him regularly, and he was a very entertaining personality. And he was particularly focused on Jan Müller's work. And, for a time, I think he was buying Müller's work when nobody else was. That is, the earlier paintings of Jan. And now, of course, he's very proud to own them, and he has a really remarkable group of them. I wish they could all be seen. They've not yet been put up for display, as far as I know.

MR. BAKER: Well, he bought works by other artists in the gallery, as well, I think.

MR. KARP: Well, he sort of made it a kind of program to want to own one work of each of the artists

in the gallery. And it was proceeding from month to month, and he would actually pick something up. He bought one of George Segal's, I know, eventually. I don't think that Stankiewicz quite suited his temperament. He liked imagery, figuration, and emotional content in painting. And Müller exemplified that for him, you know.

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MR. KARP: He never bought any of the really *bold* works of the other artists, but he certainly showed interest and he was encouraging.

MR. BAKER: He was not, in any sense, a financial backer -

MR. KARP: No, by no means. There were no financial backers. It was always from moment to moment a terrible strain, you know.

MR. BAKER: You had regular monthly dues?

MR. KARP: Well, the dues always seemed to increase because of crises that occurred, you know. The -

MR. BAKER: Were you a dues-paying member or were you an employee?

MR. KARP: No, I was an employee, essentially, at the -

MR. BAKER: So you didn't have to pay dues?

MR. KARP: Didn't pay the dues. There was a -

MR. BAKER: Did you have a vote in the -

[PHONE RINGS. BREAK IN TAPE.]

MR. KARP: Yes. When I appeared, up to that point, no vote had been given to the director. But when I came to the gallery, it was also agreed that the directors, since they were so deeply involved with matters in every way, that we were also participants in selections of works and general voting on the various topics.

The stipend we received was essentially just an expense payment, and we were supposed to receive a percentage of sales. In the first year, of course, that made it very difficult for me, and I had other jobs. And I think Mr. [Richard] Bellamy did also attempt to work outside the gallery in order to make a living.

Now, the second year, the number of sales of Müller's and Stankiewicz's and Miss Wilson's work was much improved, and the situation improved for us, also.

MR. BAKER: While I think of it, just a technical question. How did you divide the time? Sometimes you and Dick Bellamy were both in the gallery together? Or did you, in general, one of you take afternoon and the other the morning?

MR. KARP: Well, we had a three-day-a-week arrangement. I would do three days and he would do three days. And then, occasionally, we would come in for crash meetings together, and we'd sit there and meditate on our fate, essentially.

But we had a very happy concord and similarity of views about the situation, and we did the best we could, let's say. It was very difficult. We had no advertising monies. Each artist would have to pay for his own advertising, and so we could not make a big fanfare out of our activity, you know. We did the best we can with the few friends we had, and I think we put on a series of really exquisite exhibitions.

MR. BAKER: Would you say there was any great disparity in the amount that different artists expended on their announcements and their advertising?

MR. KARP: It wasn't a great disparity. Some artists were better able to pay for a better brochure and for a couple of more advertisements. But it was really nothing remarkable in the difference.

MR. BAKER: But I think none of the artists were what you might call well-to-do.

MR. KARP: No -

MR. BAKER: - some were, perhaps, bordering on real poverty. Others were - nevertheless, there was nobody - so I gather, but maybe I'm wrong. Jane Wilson might have had better results.

MR. KARP: Well, that's because Jane Wilson and one of the other artists had a certain amount of, like, comfort, because their husbands were employed in formal labors, and so there was no dreadful strain. But the general condition at the gallery was a financial stress for all of the members. And, as you say, in many instances it bordered on poverty, you know. It made, certainly, for great drama, in retrospect, you know. But it certainly was a great turmoil at the time.

MR. BAKER: What shows come to your mind on this instant as being outstandingly distinguished ones?

MR. KARP: Well, I remember an artist now who's not easily identified, is Myron Stout, who had a black-and-white, geometric, or free-form type exhibition. And it was one of the most beautiful shows of its type that I could ever remember, even in my memory of present-day exhibitions. He's an artist who produces very slowly, and very few works, and I think he's a pioneer in working with free-form and geometric ideas. And he's presently at work on something like a dozen paintings for the last five years.

MR. BAKER: I think there were only eight. However - [laughs]

MR. KARP: Eight paintings, yes, I think you're -

MR. BAKER: Well, did Myron have more than one show?

MR. KARP: We had two shows of Stout, I believe two years in a row. One was a drawings show, or works under glass, that was.

MR. BAKER: I thought I recollected one show combining the black-and-white non-objective oils with drawings of very delicate representational nature, of subjects like trees -

MR. KARP: Oh, that's true. Your memory is better than my mind. He did a series of nature and landscape drawings, very lyrical, sort of very Baroque drawings. And in contrast to his abstractions, it was a particularly interesting exhibit.

He showed, I think the next season, in conjunction with somebody else, Lilly Brody, a lyric

abstractionist of remarkable virtuoso character.

Stout's work was exhibited all the time at the gallery in the back room, and we were always consistently overwhelmed by the power of his vision and of course always distressed that nobody noticed it. You were one of the few people yourself to notice it, and there were two or three other collectors at the time.

MR. BAKER: Well, I will say that, actually, while he was being shown at the gallery, I was not as responsive to his ability as I subsequently became. I never bought one *from* the gallery. Although I have since acquired the *prospect* of one of his oils [they laugh] and the actuality of two of his drawings. But I know I didn't buy from the gallery a Myron Stout, and I'm not sure you've sold very many. They weren't expensive. The - do you recall anybody -

MR. KARP: I remember Mr. Charles Carpenter [ph], I believe, bought -

MR. BAKER: Oh, yes. He is - well, now, Charles Carpenter was a collector who bought, I think, probably several Stankiewicz at the gallery -

MR. KARP: That's right, he did. And some after Stankiewicz was no longer with the gallery. He continued interest in Richard's art.

MR. BAKER: Well, considering how small a clientele the gallery had, I'd sort of like to go over some of its patrons, in a sense.

I think we've already spoken of Horace Richter, but I should think he stood first as a purchaser. I don't know whether he bought everything through the gallery, or in many cases bought them in the artists' studios, because he knew - he was personally acquainted with all of your members, I take it.

MR. KARP: Yes. Well, he used to frequently appear there. And it was, of course, always a moment of some interest, because, like, we hoped that he'd carry something off. He had known Müller personally over a period of time and did frequently buy from his studio.

Insofar as the number of purchases, I suppose there were really a handful. I remember the so-called desk of invoices, the little drawer of invoices, and it was very thin. It was very sad and pale. And there were frequently no repeats. A person would buy one painting and we never saw him again, you know. One thing, out of curiosity, perhaps, for him, you know.

MR. BAKER: Don't you think the gallery suffered a certain disadvantage by its location in a somewhat isolated spot, on Central Park South?

MR. KARP: Of course we liked to think at that time that that location was an advantage, in its distinctness, that people who were interested really, deeply, in the fine arts would come seek us out.

But there's no question that there was a disadvantage. I think that if we, at that time, had located on 57th Street, our attendance would have been greater, perhaps. Maybe the fame of the artists might have increased.

This, apparently - though I hate to think so - does play a significant factor. I know some galleries now, just off the so-called track of the galleries, which do suffer as a result of that. A number of adventures were attempted, even downtown, below 14th Street, gallery enterprises - not so much the Tenth Street, but even remote from that. And they suffered badly from it.

However, there was one particular adventure of a co-operative nature called the Delancey Street Museum, which was *so* far removed that it got a lot of attention, because it was kind of an adventurous trek to go visit that museum. It was on Delancey Street, down near Essex, in a very busy region full of all kinds of activity remote from the arts. And they had a number of very successful exhibits there. The organization -

MR. BAKER: I remember the name. But, unfortunately, I don't think *I* ever went, which is an indication of my own laziness.

I merely brought that up because I know that, in doing a tour of galleries, occasionally - at the time I was a fond admirer, shall we say, of the Hansa Gallery - I would frequently not have time left over to go, really, to another area of the city and visit it.

[PHONE RINGS. BREAK IN TAPE.]

MR. BAKER: Did the gallery have any particular critical supporters among New York critics? Of course, I mean, the gallery artists - in the sense that anybody then writing regularly for the newspapers or magazines were real enthusiasts for particular gallery artists.

MR. KARP: Oh, the *Times* reviewer, I think at that time, Dore Ashton would make frequent appearances, and I think Stuart Preston also came in occasionally. The *Times* did cover our gallery, almost regularly, as far as it goes. And, of course, the major publications, *Artnews* and *Arts Magazine*, also gave us proper, I think, recognition.

MR. BAKER: Stankiewicz had quite a bit of publicity, I think.

MR. KARP: He did, even at the time he was at the Hansa Gallery, I believe there was an article written on his work specifically in one of the magazines.

MR. BAKER: In *Time* magazine -

MR. KARP: Yeah, *Time* magazine.

MR. BAKER: - had an article written by Cranston Jones -

MR. KARP: Yes, and also - that's right.

MR. BAKER: - it was cut down in size. And I recall personally that he - you and the gallery people - you and Bellamy and he were disappointed in the failure of the editor ranking higher than the writer to permit photographs in color, which I believe had originally been proposed.

MR. KARP: I remember the little disturbance and turmoil about that. But we also had - of course, Müller was also put in *Time* magazine.

MR. BAKER: During his lifetime?

MR. KARP: During his lifetime, during the second season for me there. And though they were very important events, insofar as the recognition of the artist was concerned, they didn't result in any significant change in the artist's situation. You know, it doesn't seem that the major publications like *Time*, *Life*, or other publications of that type result in what you would call actual increase in visiting to the gallery.

The people who already come to the gallery read the art publications, and if the artist is celebrated by an informed personality in the official art world, *then* you might get an increase of attention. But the *Time* magazine piece was like a prestige thing, and that's all.

MR. BAKER: I think it's correct to say that during most of the years - and certainly the two years you were at the Hansa Gallery - big money had not yet been applied in New York very much to this post-war generation of painting, compared to what has since occurred in the last five years.

MR. KARP: Well, certainly there was nothing like as dramatic as it was subsequently, though I believe that people like [Franz] Kline, [Willem] De Kooning and [Jackson] Pollock were already achieving sizable amounts for their art.

MR. BAKER: Yes, compared to the prices that were - but on the whole I think, say, in 195- well, you were there in '58?

MR. KARP: '58. Oh, it's true -

MR. BAKER: Purchasing was beginning pretty much to increase then and prices to go up quite a bit by that time.

MR. KARP: Yes. A very high price for a work of art was $1,200. I remember that almost nothing was priced above $1,200. And that was considered, like, the absolute peak you would ask for a big painting, you know.

MR. BAKER: Well, today, wouldn't you say, in 1963, that $1,200 almost seems inexpensive for a sizable contemporary American painting?

MR. KARP: [Laughs] That's true. Though I think that -

MR. BAKER: And not necessarily by a big name, but almost even by a small name.

MR. KARP: An unknown painter showing, I think, in a reputable gallery for the first time might propose a work of about six-by-six feet at something near that price, you know. It would be almost a beginning price, as you say.

MR. BAKER: Do you think, as the gallery business has expanded, premises have increased, that operational costs are in some way relevant to this general price increase?

MR. KARP: I know that, insofar as what I know of the gallery business, that the prices of paintings have nothing to do with the expense of running the gallery. There seems to be an indicated price for works of art when they're first shown. And if they gain a lot of attention, they seem to go up, depending upon supply and demand.

[PHONE RINGS. BREAK IN TAPE.]

MR. BAKER: I gather from this that basic rent and other factors like that you don't think have any relation to the price of art?

MR. KARP: What I could say about that is, again, the price of the paintings does not have any bearing on the expense in maintaining an operation.

But I could say that the percentages of artists' work has increased, if possible, over the last couple

of years. That the artist cannot survive on a two-thirds/one-third basis. That is, the artist receiving two-thirds of the share of the picture, and the gallery one-third. No major operation can survive on that. Only if, in the event the gallery is able to buy the artist's work outright, or provide him with a monthly amount, wherein work is given on a 50/50 basis, can the gallery possibly survive.

And an operation of this type couldn't maintain itself unless several artists were achieving several thousand dollars apiece for works of art, and unless we attempted to sell so-called classics, of modern French and modern American classics, which bolster our situation.

MR. BAKER: You're referring, by "we" and "this" to -

MR. KARP: This is the [Leo] Castelli Gallery, Castelli Gallery.

MR. BAKER: The Castelli Gallery. That's what I thought.

MR. KARP: The Hansa Gallery could never have become a prosperous operation unless six or seven of its artists were hitting several thousand dollars for paintings. Then, of course, the directors would receive a percentage, you know. The gallery itself took a small percentage of sales, you know.

MR. BAKER: Yes. Well, I was thinking partly of asking a question about the operational costs of the Hansa Gallery. I think the rent was relatively low. Wouldn't you say the rent for Hansa Gallery was probably very much less than today's rent for at least 10 or 12 of the New York galleries in 1963, or perhaps -

MR. KARP: Oh, I suppose - it was a big burden for us, I remember, but I suppose thinking about it now, it was a remarkably low rent. I think it was -

MR. BAKER: Because there are many, since 1960, larger premises, by far, than were prevalent in New York galleries before 1960.

MR. KARP: Well, I remember the rent was something like $125, $150 a month, and it was steady. And it would seem like what you would high rent, or we considered that we were in a very high-rent district - that is, Central Park South, you know - and so that was a basic expense that had to be met by dues. And then there was the weekly stipend for the two directors, which was very small, but still, again, a burden for the members. And whatever little expenses that went into the actual operation. The actual monthly expense was really minuscule. It was tiny, compared to a professional operation. But it was always a trial. It was -

MR. BAKER: Yes, that I realize. What I was thinking of in terms of the situation, the two periods - if artists today were selling at the price that Jan Müller was selling at, selling things for $100 and things like that, a gallery a third and artists two-thirds, would be inadequate either for the galleries to keep going very long or for the artists to live well. So prices more or less had to go up.

MR. KARP: Well, the prices have gone up. The general structure of expense and costs have risen as inflation has taken hold, as it does, you know, of course, in the art world. The basic price of paintings is much higher.

MR. BAKER: Well, what was supporting Jan Müller at this time, other than the sale of paintings?

MR. KARP: Oh, there was nothing else. I think that his wife worked as a teacher, you know.

MR. BAKER: This was the only source of income Jan himself -

MR. KARP: That's right. But at a certain point - as I say, my second year there - sales were very rapid. And things got better for him, and he was, you might say, at a certain point rather comfortable.

MR. BAKER: But Richard Stankiewicz during this period was supporting himself through doing professional drawings for -

MR. KARP: He was a draftsman.

MR. BAKER: Draftsman -

MR. KARP: As was Jean Follett, a draftsman.

MR. BAKER: So they and Jane Wilson, I think, aside from being married, was also a professional model?

MR. KARP: She was a fashion model, yes. All the artists were there and engaged in other activities to make a living. I know none of them were actually free of that.

MR. BAKER: And you, yourself, during this time had some -

MR. KARP: I had two other jobs that I was working at -

MR. BAKER: What were they?

MR. KARP: I was working in the law courts in the morning, as an attorney's assistant. And I was -

MR. BAKER: Are you a lawyer? I mean, were you trained -

MR. KARP: No, I wasn't a lawyer, I was just working as a representative of lawyers in court, to present their apologies for non-appearance; it's a legal usage which has become very prevalent in the New York courts, for a very complicated reason.

I also worked selling advertising space for a small Brooklyn newspaper. So I had these three jobs going at one time -

MR. BAKER: You gave up, though, your writing for the *Village Voice* when you went to the gallery, or did you -

MR. KARP: I wrote an occasional piece of movie criticism. I even wrote once a dance criticism. And I wrote -

MR. BAKER: You gave up criticizing art.

MR. KARP: Well, yes, I did. It would seem, like, at cross-purposes.

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MR. KARP: I, again, have taken it up, for that matter. I feel objective and immune enough, somehow, to be able to bring a very clear opinion on certain things that I see.

MR. BAKER: Was this the first job that you had that involved sales? Or had you had all sorts of -

MR. KARP: Oh, no. I have a pretty elaborate background in selling things, you know. But selling pictures is not like anything else, because you cannot, by salesmanship, sell a work of art that somebody doesn't want particularly. There has to be a clear disposition in the mind of the viewer. And the only thing I think that the gallery person can do is, in a sense, give confidence, or amplify the interest of the viewer. That can be a very subtle thing. If the so-called collector has confidence in the gallery personnel, he may consult him in the sorting out of things. But unless he actually has a disposition to a work, I don't think it can be sold.

MR. BAKER: Would you think that some of the artists associated with the Hansa Gallery are, in a way, forerunners of the Pop - or allied portion of the Pop art movement. That is to say, I'm thinking of Allan Kaprow and his Happenings, which I think are - I don't know that he gave a Happening in the Hansa Gallery, but he gave a show of rather unusual character -

MR. KARP: He gave two exhibits of so-called "environments" at the Hansa Gallery, after he had exhibited paintings and pastels, which are rather expert, I must say. His pastels are particularly good. And then he put on two construction shows - that is, environments, in the sense, I guess, they do precede the Happenings development, you know.

MR. BAKER: Well, one of these shows, I remember, had all sorts of things hanging down from the ceiling and it was accompanied by music.

MR. KARP: He occupied the whole room with images of regalia -

MR. BAKER: [Inaudible]

MR. KARP: Yes, that was my second year. And there were sound effects, and objects in motion, and lights blinking. And it was a very entertaining event for us, and we had quite an attendance for that. He was considered a very adventurous and pioneering personality, Kaprow, and is an interesting art history philosopher. And he had very definite views on what art should be *doing*.

And though he very much appreciated and enjoyed and admired the works of the other artists in the gallery, he began to feel immune from their activity, removed from it, and was concerned more with what he called Happenings and Environments.

MR. BAKER: I don't know that he started using the word "Happenings" at that time.

MR. KARP: Oh, I don't think that he applied that term until a number of these events had taken place, actually. I think Jim Dine and [Claes] Oldenburg had put on a series of performances and -

MR. BAKER: Yes, but he and - of course, I remember a show with George Segal, whom you already referred to, which at that time was - his painting, at that time, seemed to me rather like a painting of a former member of the gallery, Felix Pasilis, who no longer was with the gallery when you were there. But certainly Segal hadn't emerged into his present style to any great extent, although there were sculptures a few times there.

MR. KARP: Yes, there - What happened, we were one day summoned to visit his farm. He was a chicken farmer at that time, making a living with the production of eggs. And he painted as much as he could. And they were romantic figures, and they weren't remarkably distinctive, they were quite expert. He showed us a plaster sculpture in his barn, and we were very impressed by it. It was very stark and powerful -

MR. BAKER: "We" being who?

MR. KARP: I remember Stankiewicz, myself, Dick Bellamy, and perhaps one other person went out there to look at it. And we were very entertained and very amused, and we thought that perhaps this might bring him into a new realm, you know. We finally did show one of those plaster sculptures. They're not as they are now. They were less - they were more abstract, more general, and less specifically portraiture, as they are now.

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MR. KARP: But they were strong already at that point, and one of them was very impressive in the gallery space.

MR. BAKER: I was wondering whether members of the gallery were so idealistic that they raised no protest over giving gallery space to Allan Kaprow's show, which obviously wouldn't be in any way bringing in income to the gallery. I don't see how it could have been sold. I mean, it could have been sold, theoretically, in its entirety -

MR. KARP: Well, I think it was -

MR. BAKER: - but the chance was very slight, I should think.

MR. KARP: I can't think or remember of anybody challenging the idea of an artist exhibiting just what he wanted to show. And if Kaprow thought this is what he had to show, and there was no income possible, he was paying for his exhibit, and we had to do the best we could. And nobody challenged that. It probably - it may have entered my mind once or twice that no income resulted from it. But we always had other works of art for sale during that time.

The gallery believed in its members, you know, though we did have, at one time, a certain amount of turmoil in an attempt to weed out those we thought were less -

MR. BAKER: Yes, I was just remembering. I'd heard that there was such a meeting in which certain people were even voted out. I think Richard Bellamy told me *he* was voted out. Is that correct, in your recollection?

MR. KARP: [Laughs] There was a - the great final drama, I guess, of my tenure there was in the latter part of my second year, in which we decided that two or three of the artists didn't qualify - this was a discussion among a few of us, you know - that their professional level was not up to par. And we decided that the constitution might be amended so that the members could vote out a member. I don't - I believe it was a two-thirds vote we decided on after a *tremendous* number of discussions, you know. And, actually, I think two members were let go - or one, you know.

MR. BAKER: Do you remember who it was?

MR. KARP: I really have forgotten the name of the artist who was passed up -

MR. BAKER: Was it possible that Jane Wilson resigned, or left?

MR. KARP: I think that's the case. No, no, no, she did not. No, she did not leave. I think that she may have resigned the season - the gallery continued one season beyond my tenure.

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MR. KARP: And I believe, at that time, there was even a vote on the management. That was Mr.

Bellamy himself. And I think that he *was* voted out. And I think that Ms. Wilson did resign over all of the distress that was caused by this kind of thing.

It would seem like a breaking up of the old edifice, you know, this kind of voting against each other. And I remember a tremendous amount of personal anguish that I experienced about this particular matter. But I also felt that the gallery had to improve its situation, and I did participate in agreeing with the turnover of members. I believe that Mr. Bellamy was officially voted out, but they could not find somebody sufficient to take his place, and he was retained throughout the remainder of that last -

MR. BAKER: This was after you had already left, I think.

MR. KARP: I'd left. I think that *I* was voted out, to tell you the truth. I received - I was in Europe at the time, and I received a melancholy letter, a very beautiful one, I remember -

MR. BAKER: Written by -

MR. KARP: Mr. Bellamy -

MR. BAKER: Written by Richard Bellamy.

MR. KARP: - who said that - told me that the gallery didn't think that it could support two directors. And that was his way of telling me that they had voted me out, as far as I know. I don't know if it was a unanimous thing, and I hate to speculate that it was.

But I think there developed a lot of strife - a lot of personal strife did generate as a result of this kind of voting against the artists kind of thing.

MR. BAKER: Who were the sort of leading protagonists and meetings of the gallery? Do you remember? You were present at most of these meetings -

MR. KARP: Well, the president was Richard Stankiewicz and he was supposed to be the voice of sanity and calmness. And he was, more or less that, I guess. Everybody had something to say, really. I, myself, am an outspoken person, and I always had a major contribution. Mr. Bellamy would make long-winded and lyrical and beautiful speeches. I remember Miles Force [ph] used to interject very energetic, emotional appeals for unity. And Fay Lansner - articulate views representing a certain point of view. It was all remarkable, I might say.

MR. BAKER: Well, what about Jan Müller?

MR. KARP: Jan Müller, also. Yes, impassioned philosophical speeches, which were always very impressive. I might say we used to convince each other of opposite viewpoints every few minutes. And I think that the aftermath of the meetings, of course, were much more gratifying than the actual turmoil itself, you know, because we didn't like the arguing, and we didn't like the strife. And yet, everybody had a very strong opinion and had to be heard.

MR. BAKER: Did these meetings take place in the gallery or after business hours?

MR. KARP: They would take place, usually, when a mailing was done. Everybody would turn up to address, by hand, the mailing of a particular exhibitor, you know. And in the meeting, financial discussion - usually a disastrous one - and then a discussion of policy. We had a formal constitution, and we abided by a certain sequence of events in our discussions. There was a discussion of one

topic, and then the next topic, in proper sequence.

MR. BAKER: Was Richard Stankiewicz presiding?

MR. KARP: He was presiding, because he had been voted president for that term.

MR. BAKER: Yes. I think he was, during most of the time, wasn't he?

MR. KARP: I believe - the two times that I was there, I know where we decided on a president, that he was the guiding force there.

MR. BAKER: I have an impression that Jan Müller 's point of view was frequently inconsistent, that he changed his grounds of thinking rather unexpectedly. Is that true?

MR. KARP: Well, Müller was a very emotional man, and might assimilate different points of view over the course of a short period of time. And it's true that at times, like, he would present one viewpoint with tremendous eloquence and power, and then perhaps come along and might reverse it, you know.

But we could count on him on a certain viewpoint. I mean, I always - it was established in my mind that he *did* have a point of view and it was pretty consistent, you know. And it was a very idealistic point of view, I must say.

MR. BAKER: Well, I think his painting shows, you might say, a point of view. But I have had an impression, talking to some other people, that there was a rather extraordinary variability in the expression of ideas on his part.

MR. KARP: Well, he was a philosophical man. And he did try out a number of things. And his essential view - essential concept of society was a basically anarchistic one. And, for him, the most important thing is that the individual would be served best, and that the cause of art would flourish, you know. So, you could say that's his basic view. The differences of his opinion were mostly technical ones. They did shift, from time to time. But his basic character was intact, and his basic concept of human existence was more or less the same.

MR. BAKER: He was a philosophic or politically activist anarchist? If there is such a thing as a politically activist anarchist in the United States.

MR. KARP: Well, I remember the one anecdote that he told all of us assembled, one of the funniest things that I'd ever heard - which, in a sense, reveals the anarchist point of view - is that he told me that one night he had gone to an anarchist meeting, and was both disappointed and enchanted that nobody turned up, you know. [They laugh.]

So, you know, the fact he had objectivity about his political views - he did not believe very rigidly in government interference, I could say, and he had a very liberal, or you might even say libertine, view of human affairs. You know, he believed in a generous attitude towards human conduct.

MR. BAKER: To what extent was Jan concerned with, you might say, politics, current events, the -

MR. KARP: I think he was cognizant of all developments. He referred to them all the time. I think he was very much -

MR. BAKER: Well, most artists, I think, as far as I know - you would know better - are not greatly

involved in active political affairs.

MR. KARP: I remember Richard Stankiewicz was *very* much up on these matters. We used to have very long and elaborate discussions about American political events, even down to the city level, as you might say. And he was very much awake and I was - I remember being surprised that he was so awake to this kind of thing. It was an enchantment for me, really, you know. Because most of the artists were not concerned in this kind of thing.

MR. BAKER: Well, would you have said there was any particular political shading to this group, as a whole? I'm not trying to find out if they're Communists or something [laughs] but I mean, they weren't Republicans and Democrats, Socialists -

MR. KARP: Well, let's say a liberal, a liberal - a strong liberal with radical tinges and occasional generous Socialist viewpoint. I would say that was Jan Müller 's general outlook, was the humanist socialist tradition of Germany, from which his family came, you know. And though he proclaimed anarchy, I think, put to the test, he would be more generous, you know, about arrangements for things, you know.

Stankiewicz, myself, and a number of others had a very liberal view of certain matters and we had certain radical beliefs, also, which proceeded from our poverty.

MR. BAKER: Yes. Well, you - I don't think, though, that in any sense you were - or was any individual really involved in causes or -

MR. KARP: In political action?

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MR. KARP: No. I, myself, ran for obscure office on a liberal party ticket in Brooklyn at that time.

MR. BAKER: Oh, you did?

MR. KARP: Yes.

MR. BAKER: What was the office you -

MR. KARP: I ran for a -

MR. BAKER: You were defeated? [Laughs]

MR. KARP: Yes, I was defeated overwhelmingly by the aligned Democratic and Republican forces, you see. I was active in the [Adlai] Stevenson campaign. I spoke from sound trucks and so forth. A number of the other members, I believe, also did participate in that campaign.

Otherwise, nobody was what you would call an active political personality. Many of us were concerned.

MR. BAKER: My recollection is that almost the whole of the art world of New York was pro-Stevenson at that time, so this was not an exceptional position.

MR. KARP: There was an "Artists for Stevenson" group, and works from our gallery, I know, were submitted to that cause, you know.

MR. BAKER: To be sold, you mean, to raise money for the -

MR. KARP: To be sold to raise money for his campaign, yes.

MR. BAKER: But, on the whole, most of these people were not, more than the average person, really involved in political action.

MR. KARP: Not so much the members of the Hansa Gallery, but I remember meeting artists at that time in that environment who either had a really active background, who were very much presently concerned. Very few were actually so much involved that they were members of political parties or were active candidates, you know. But everybody did, at times, participate in protesting activity, whether it be with pictures or with mailings or with a march somewhere, you know.

But, as a general rule, the politics and general arts views of the personalities involved in Hansa Gallery were idealistic, liberal, generous, and tinged with a strong radical views, which were never put into real practice, I guess.

MR. BAKER: To change the subject completely, would you say that the mailing list that the Hansa Gallery had was in any way - I mean, from the experience you subsequently had with Martha Jackson and Leo Castelli, would you say it was a realistic, comprehensive and well-maintained mailing list?

MR. KARP: [Laughs] Well, it was a list that had been probably taken from another active gallery, basically. And we used to add names. It wasn't the greatest list in America. It was pretty good on the official level. That is, art critics, museum directors, and so forth, I remember the list was very good.

As far as collectors were concerned, those who came into the gallery were certainly noticed and inscribed. And there was a list left over from the previous gallery activity, which we used. And that was something -

MR. BAKER: What do you mean, the -

MR. KARP: It was probably given from another gallery, I believe. I think Mr. Bellamy could clarify the actual source -

MR. BAKER: Well, I've been told, I think by Richard Stankiewicz, that in the beginning, there was a guest - I mean, when the gallery existed downtown, they started building up a list -

MR. KARP: From a guest book.

MR. BAKER: I was just thinking of what you would - I mean, whether you now think of it as having been rather skimpy and naive, or -

MR. KARP: No, it wasn't that. No -

MR. BAKER: - was it reasonably good?

MR. KARP: - it was a reasonably good list. Though I would say that a large portion of it was visiting artists, you know, received our mailings. I think the artists were more interested in winning the approval of other artists than anything else, but I'm very sure they very much enjoyed -

MR. BAKER: Well, I'm still interested in the subject of why, considering that this gallery did have such a group of really, I think, quite important contemporary artists, why it had fewer sales then it needed and why it had such skimpy attendance. We've covered some of these things, but I was just trying to-

MR. KARP: Well, I might say we considered the group of artists remarkably good, because they were, in a sense, adventurous artists. They were somewhat ahead of their time. Stankiewicz's work, when it was first seen, was considered a pile of rusty metal. And the general interest in his art really didn't generate until a year after he left the gallery, you know. The works of Stout were pure and esoteric, and there's not a large audience for that kind of painting even right now. Follet's work was of unseemly materials, collage objects, you know, and it was strange and remote from the general interest of the audience.

We had two romantic painters who did fairly well. Segal's pastels sold some and Jane Wilson's classic romantic landscape paintings had some success there. Those artists who worked within a feasible tradition had a fair success. Those who worked in an adventurous and pioneering way, in a sense, had to serve as pioneers.

MR. BAKER: Well, am I right in thinking that possibly at the time you were with the gallery, and during much of the gallery's career, the artists composing it were a bit apart from the Abstract Expressionist vein, which was sort of overwhelming New York at the time? You did have some, I mean, abstract painters, certainly. But -

MR. KARP: Miles Force was the only person who worked, actually, within the Abstract Expressionist tradition when I first came there, and then subsequently became a figurative painter of expressionist temperament, you know. But it's true, when you identify artist by artist, almost none were distinctly associated with the Abstract Expressionist movement, you know, except to a certain extent I think Avedisian's art related, as you say, to Pollock.

MR. BAKER: But he came in as a very young man -

MR. KARP: Very late.

MR. BAKER: - at the very end of the gallery and would perhaps figure not too importantly in shaping the character of the gallery -

MR. KARP: No, the gallery essentially was a figurative group, emblematic and object-making.

MR. BAKER: But this was before we began to read so much about "return to the figure" in various art periodicals, and see shows put on that were attempting to exploit the idea of a return to the figure. Wasn't it -

MR. KARP: Oh, yes. I remember being very amused once at one of our exhibits. In looking at it, I decided that, of course, we were functioning completely out of the mainstream - that with the object makers and the figure painters, that we were actually a very distinct entity, you know, and I was rather startled to notice it. Suddenly, you know?

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MR. KARP: That these painters - that none of them were in the popular tradition.

MR. BAKER: Well, for instance, your nearest neighbor, a gallery to which people coming to the

Hansa would be likely, possibly, if they were making a tour, also go to -

MR. KARP: I think it would be -

MR. BAKER: - the Stable Gallery, and the Stable Gallery was certainly very much involved in those years in presenting abstract talents.

MR. KARP: It was very generous, the way you put it just now, that those coming to the Hansa would go to the Stable. I think it was the other way around [laughs], that a good piece of our audience resulted from people visiting the Stable Gallery who were *willing* to make the turn around the corner, you know. And they were a very active and busy gallery at the time, showing works of the general agreement, you know -

MR. BAKER: Yes, there was certainly a - I might say - an avant-garde character, certainly, to their operations. But more in keeping with the general trend of that particular time, up to 1960, say.

MR. KARP: Yes, I think the Hansa Gallery, in that regard, could be considered an eccentric and off-beat proposition, really, if you identify artist to artist, you know. But the professional level was the thing that always startled me in our exhibits, you know. These artists were some of the best of their time, you know, and it was a very despairing thing that our audience was small, that sales were small, that we didn't get much press attention.

And I like to think now that it was largely because, like, it was a bad location, and that there was no publicity at all given to the gallery, except by word of mouth. It's only now also, years afterwards, that I find people remembering our activity very fondly and with very deep feeling. People know I was associated, and they remember the artists affiliated with the gallery, and that's always a very gratifying thing.

MR. BAKER: You mean these are museum people, critical writers, or artists or -

MR. KARP: Not that many actual writers make reference to the gallery, but people that I converse with in the arts always remember that activity -

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MR. KARP: - as being spirited and adventurous, you know, and always refer to it as being remarkable. One of our best supporters was Meyer Shapiro.

MR. BAKER: Yes, a professor from Columbia.

MR. KARP: A great art historian and critic from Columbia. And he would come in to almost all of our exhibits, and he was a *great* admirer of Müller 's work and spoke at his funeral. And he was one of our spiritual guides and supporters. And he enjoyed and appreciated many of the artists we showed there. And whenever he made an appearance, we always felt tremendously comforted that our ideals were intact.

MR. BAKER: I'm afraid the death of Jan Müller coming at the moment when his fame was expanding and his sales increasing must be considered an economic blow to the gallery and so - you may not want to even think of it in these non-idealistic terms -

MR. KARP: Well, it was -

MR. BAKER: - but as a practical matter -

MR. KARP: It was a pretty devastating event at the gallery for the people there, because he was a very much loved personality. And he was so distinctive and so grand a character, you know, that everybody felt his loss very deeply, you know. Of course, it was a severe blow because the works then, of course, were legally encompassed by an estate, and they could not be sold to the gallery, you know? But I don't think that accounted for its actual decline, the -

MR. BAKER: No, that may not have been. But had he continued to live and be associated with it, it would have led to a somewhat increased profits -

MR. KARP: I think it might have flourished on that level. It's true, that the sale of his works did make the gallery suffice and function during the second year that I was there.

MR. BAKER: I don't think Richard Stankiewicz was selling as much, was he, at that time?

MR. KARP: No, he achieved an acclaim on the official artistic level - that is, in magazines and publications. But it was still difficult to sell his work. There were two or three collectors buying one or two pieces. And that's what it amounted to, really. His works were difficult. He still doesn't have, I don't think, that big of an audience. His work is still aggressive and bold, and I think that's what makes it good, you know. His art is always adventurous and always inventive, you know. That kind of art does not have a very broad appeal.

MR. BAKER: Well, the kind of club spirit of the gallery, as a social environment, you want to say a few words about -

MR. KARP: Yes. I think that with all our disagreements over policy and the future of the gallery, that there was a basic rapport among the members that was unspoken, which had a very profound effect on me. There was a kind of basic philosophical unity of view about man's relation to his art and to the world, you know.

MR. BAKER: Well, how would you define that?

MR. KARP: I mean, in the type of crisis about personality, a kind of very generous and kindly attitude would be present, that if somebody were injured or were in disfavor or whose feelings were hurt, there would be an outpouring of sympathy and good feelings, you know, automatic -

MR. BAKER: Can you give a specific illustration of that?

MR. KARP: No, I wouldn't like to so much, but I remember there had been crises over -

MR. BAKER: Well, this is for the Archives [inaudible] [Laughs.]

MR. KARP: Yes, for the Archives [laughs]. I remember the time of the discussion of the removal of certain members of the gallery is the remarkable concern over the feelings of those who would be excluded.

MR. BAKER: Yes.

MR. KARP: I mean, it was a tearful kind of thing, you know. And there was such soul-searching going on, and how would this artist feel if the others were going to reject him, and how could you go through something like that? I remember that, in a sense, when it came to a crisis of that type, our

basic ideals were the same. And, for me, that was a very rewarding kind of experience to be in, this intensive, close-knit, emotional rapport, and what happened on a basic level, you know. Insofar as, like, surface character is concerned, there were many disagreements, you know, about daily life. But basically, as a philosophy of life, I think we were very much in harmony, you know.

And I think that the breaking up of the gallery resulted, I think, in some of the artists gaining a certain amount of fame and wanting to expand their future, more than the, like, disaffection of one member for the other. The members still recall each other, I think, with a lot of affection, and they remember also the incidents that contributed to the gallery functioning, you know.

MR. BAKER: I remember now I saw some notices of "New Sculpture Group" having several shows at the Hansa. What was that group?

MR. KARP: That's right. This was a group formulated by a number of sculptors to show the best sculpture being done in the metropolitan area. And the gallery did facilitate an exhibit of that type. And that group, I think, consistently exhibited for four or five years afterwards. I think it's still in existence.

MR. BAKER: I don't know. I'd forgotten.

MR. KARP: They showed at the Riverside Museum twice, I believe.

MR. BAKER: I see. But did they originate in connection with the Hansa? I know the group of members was about 20, 25 -

MR. KARP: I believe we were the first people to agree to show various tendencies in contemporary sculpture, and the group was very gratified that we offered them the space, small that it was, you know, to show various tendencies in modern sculpture. And that was a very beautiful show, and we got a bigger audience for that than we'd gotten from any other exhibits.

MR. BAKER: You did not have a very large amount of exhibition space, it was frequently cramped for a thing like a sculpture show - a Stankiewicz show, for instance.

MR. KARP: Yes, we had to do a lot of what you might call ballet work, in trying to position things so that they looked distinctly well. There was no storage space there, the technical facilities were at a minimum. We had one depleted typewriter, and one outrageous file cabinet, and no rack space, as I say. There were very few places to show other artists' work -

[PHONE RINGS. BREAK IN TAPE.]

MR. KARP: - the Archives, as you say. As I referred to the fact of the gallery breaking up, I think that it - I could again affirm the fact that I think some of the artists were --

[END OF DISC ONE. DISC TWO IS ENTIRELY ITALIAN DIALOGUE.]

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