



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with John Weber, 2006
March 21-April 4

Funding for this interview was provided by the Widgeon Point Charitable Foundation. Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with John Weber on March 21 and April 4, 2006. The interview took place at Weber's home in Chatham, New York, and was conducted by James McElhinney for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for this interview was provided by a grant from the Widgeon Point Charitable Foundation.

John Weber and James McElhinney have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney interviewing John Weber at his home in Chatham, New York, on March 21, at 20 past three o'clock in the afternoon.

When and where were you born?

JOHN WEBER: It is also the first day of spring.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's the first day of spring. It's the solstice.

MR. WEBER: I was born in 1932 in Los Angeles, California.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Any particular neighborhood?

MR. WEBER: It was in the hospital in Los Angeles. My father was a doctor, and I believe that he was on the staff there. I think the hospital is still there. It might have merged with another one, but I don't remember its name; it's been too long.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Do you recall the neighborhood where you lived?

MR. WEBER: Well, I didn't live in L.A. I just happened to be born there and I-well, at a certain point my mother and father got divorced, and I think I was fairly young, about five or so, and I was put into a Catholic military school in Anaheim run by German Catholic nuns, and that was sort of just prior to the war beginning. Let's see, '32-yeah, probably sometime in the '30s, and I stayed there for a number of years, kind of-never got out actually, vacations, nothing, and we were sort of-I was dumped in that place, and my sister, who was older, was put in her place. And then at a certain point my father remarried and realized that he had children, so I got out of there and went to live with him in Fresno, where he was practicing medicine.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Do you recall the name of the military school?

MR. WEBER: Yes, it was called St. Catherine's Military School, in Anaheim, California, prior to Disneyland being developed.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see, or the John Wayne International Airport.

MR. WEBER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Could you describe your childhood in any more detail? Were either of your parents interested in art?

MR. WEBER: No. There was no interest in art. Eventually my father, during the war, he was too old to be in the Second World War. He missed the First World War, but he wanted to do something for the war effort, so there was this organization called the Blue Cross, and it provided medical-it provided doctors and nurses and a kind of hospital situation in each of the defense plants that were on the West Coast, building whatever they built: guns, ships, airplanes, so on and so forth. And he became the head of that, the administrator of that. So he was sort of out of medicine totally.

And we were at one point living in Long Beach, very close to the ocean, and I remember the gun emplacements there. And there was one instance where the oil fields were shelled from a Japanese submarine. I think that is the only time anything like that happened during the whole war in all of the continental United States.

Then we moved to Beverly Hills, and he would commute back and forth from Long Beach to Beverly Hills. And my sister was living there also. He was remarried to a woman from Madera. And I was there for maybe two or

three years, and then he died at the age of 52, and I was brought to Long Island to be raised by my father's youngest sister, whose name is Placide, in Roslyn, Long Island.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Roslyn, Long Island.

MR. WEBER: And never went back-well, I went back to visit my mother on a few occasions, but then later on in life, when I was running the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles, I had the opportunity to see a lot of her, because she was living in Pasadena.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you spell Dwan?

MR. WEBER: D-W-A-N. Virginia Dwan, fabulous person, fabulous gallery, from Minnesota, mining and manufacturing family. But we'll get into that later on.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Do you recall any early encounters with art exhibitions or shows at museums or galleries?

MR. WEBER: Well, we were still in Beverly Hills, and I remember that my stepmother and my father went to an auction and to get something, furniture or what have you-there was no art around in the house. I mean, the whole place was devoid of art, and my stepmother wanted him-nudged him-something was up being bid on, but she nudged him to say, oh, you know, look at that pretty lamp that is coming up next, and so he put up his hand and won and got the bid on this other thing, which was a bust, bronze bust, Victorian, of a head, and that was the only art object that we had, and that was sort of by default.

So I wasn't really that influenced when I was growing up with my father in California in art at all, never went to museums. It was just not a-you know, it was out of my circle.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did you become interested in art?

MR. WEBER: It's a long story. Do you want to skip to that?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, that is, I guess why we are having the conversation-what, apart from your stint at the military academy, was your education like?

MR. WEBER: Well, that was in grade school. When I came to live on Long Island, I went to-first to-well, I started out, I believe, in the sixth grade with my aunt, who was teaching in the same school system in Roslyn Heights. And I went to the Roslyn high school, Harbor Hill High School, which was next to the Mackey estate [of Clarence H. Mackey, called Harbor Hill, in the village of East Hills, Roslyn, NY, no longer extant], huge estate-there were all of those big estates on Long Island of the multimillionaires out there, and the population was, at the time, was very small, before Levittown and all of that-all of those developments.

And after the 10th grade, apparently I wasn't doing so well in school, I got the impression-because then she decided to send me to a military school. So I was back into military schools, Admiral Farragut Academy in St. Petersburg, Florida, for the last two years of high school, from which I graduated in '51, and then I went to the-for some absolutely unknown dumb reason-I was very independent, on my own. I could decide at that point what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go to school, and I decided that I wanted to go to the Citadel, the military college in South Carolina. Why? Because I liked the way the uniforms looked, and they were heavily-they were recruiting the Admiral Farragut Academy. So I went to the Citadel for a year, which was a horror story, and real hazing-we would be beat physically, a lot, by the upperclassmen for a whole year. It was really the pits. But I wasn't-I stuck it out; I wasn't about to quit.

Prior to that, the day I was 17 and still in Admiral Farragut Academy, the day I turned 17, I joined the naval reserves, for the purpose-I had a very hot girlfriend who had an Olds 88 Convertible, blond, and I wanted to get out one more night a week in order to see her. In order to do that, I joined the reserves. So I got out on Thursdays to go to reserve meetings, and we would meet afterwards.

Okay, to jump back to the Citadel, there I am just finishing my plebe year, getting all ready to, you know, do what had been done to me to the next grade coming in, in terms of hazing and what have you. Their idea was, in order to give punishment, you have to take it first-you know, that attitude. And my unit with the naval reserve was activated to-you know, we were put on duty, in the Korean War.

So I jumped out of the Citadel, which I was not unhappy about, because I didn't like it at all, but I didn't want to quit, then I went into the navy for almost three years, not-no heavy duty. You know, I never-I got into naval aviation and I was stationed at various airfields as a radioman. So it wasn't heavy duty. It was nice and I got the GI Bill afterwards. We flew all over the place and I enjoyed it very, very much. It was a real positive experience for me. And I had-by that point I left home. I never-everything else I did on my own. I went to college afterwards with the GI Bill, started working in the art field, et cetera, and, you know, it was just independent.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Where did you go to college after the service?

MR. WEBER: I went, after the service, to Antioch College.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Antioch.

MR. WEBER: I did that intentionally, too, because I had had so much military, after that point, that I picked the most liberal college in America, which at that point was Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio—a terrific school, and they had this work-study program, which was quite interesting. One, you could actually work half of each year that one was interested in, that one was studying, and to get work experience to find out if you would really like it or not, which was a unique thing. A lot of people change majors because of that. But we worked all over the country. We had jobs in Europe. It was really a great program and a wonderful school. And I got out of there because of the one year at the Citadel. It was a five-year program and I got out of there in four years.

And met my first wife—met and married my first wife, who was a classmate of mine. And I graduated in 1958, at which point I had two choices, because one of the work-study jobs that I had was with a small company in Dallas, Texas, called TI, Texas Instrument, and they wanted me to come down there to be the director of the personnel department, which is—now they call it human resources.

It was a nice, small organization in the company, and I liked it a lot, but then I also had an offer to work in the Dayton Art Institute on the curatorial staff with this really terrific guy, Thomas C. Colt, who was the director of the place—had been at Virginia [founder of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in 1935] and prior to that Portland [Portland Museum of Art], and put together the Riesmueller Collection of Northwest Indian art, Eskimo, et cetera—Northwest coast Indian art—huge collection—great guy, and I chose to work at the Dayton Art Institute.

And subsequently Texas Instruments invented the transistors. Can you imagine? [Laughs.] Wow. And I would have been in place as a director, prior to this invention. But it is sort of a funny aside. You know, I'm sure that I would have been—my interest in art was pretty deep, and I would have not had a gallery, but I would have been one hell of a great collector.

MR. MCELHINNEY: When did you first realize that you had a strong interest in art?

MR. WEBER: At Antioch. I took whatever—I took some studio courses; I worked in a lost-wax foundry. That was off in the town. There were only two doing lost-wax casting in America at that point, and that was one of the foundries. The other one was on Long Island. And I took whatever art history was available to me—I had sort of a split major between business and art history, which was kind of odd considering what I eventually ended up doing, which I had no idea that I was going to do at that point, but it was kind of the marriage of two things, which I used from both, you know.

And so I worked for Tom Colt at the museum for a couple of years, and it was a very wonderful place. The staff wasn't very big. When I went there, it was Tom Colt and myself, and that was it, as the curatorial people. So I was doing shows, and we had the first members' rental gallery in the country, where we would go to New York—we would go to galleries like Bertha Schaeffer and Betty Parsons, and we would get works on loans that they would give us and we wanted to have people represent them in depth.

So we would select about maybe eight or 10 people, and we would get five or six works by each and keep them for a year, and the members would come in and check them out and take them home and hanging them on their walls. Could you imagine people doing that nowadays? No way. I mean, the insurance! But it was great and I did a lot of shows. You know, I had [Roy] Lichtenstein then before—I had a lot of early people, and they kind of went through the mill there, at the rental gallery. And I also gave lectures on whatever shows we were showing.

And then we did finally get a curator out of the Institute of Fine Arts [New York University] who came there, a very scholarly chap, with thousands of books, and he was—he didn't know that much about art in a museum. He had only been studying for all of these years, and been in the Second World War and the Korean War, I think, so it was sort of weird that there he was.

And then, after that time, I wanted to get on with my life and—I'm just rambling at this point.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, that is fine. I mean, I think it's important for you to feel free to speak about your life, because I don't know in advance what a researcher might find to be an interesting clue.

I do have a question: How do you spell Tom Colt?

MR. WEBER: C-O-L-T. Thomas C. Colt, Junior, as in the gun; no relation.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Were there any other individuals who were influential to you in these early years, who were mentors or inspirational characters who helped shape your interest in art?

MR. WEBER: I cannot think of any at Antioch College. I mean, I had some very good professors, but there wasn't anybody that I could pin a gold star on as having really influenced me. I think Colt was really the first one, and he is the one that pushed me out of the museum, saying, you know, John, you have got to get out of here; go to New York. You know, you are not-you can certainly be the director of this museum, but do you want to wait around for 15 or 18 years until I retire in order to be the director of the Art Institute? He said, I think you have better things in your future than that. Bye! [They laugh.]

So I went off to New York and I went to the Institute of Fine Arts for a bit. And I was married, had a little kid, my daughter, Kristen, who is now 47 or 48, and I did the Institute of Fine Arts, but I didn't take that many courses.

I remember one course I took on Provencal painting, and Jacques Besan was teaching. He would come over from the Louvre, in Paris, obviously, for a couple of years to teach there.

I was before Kirk Varnedoe. Dear Kirk was a friend of mine, who actually lived very close to here, before he died, obviously-a great guy who was the director of painting and sculpture at the Modern [Museum of Modern Art, New York]-great guy-and his wife, who was good sculptor, Elyn Zimmerman. And I'm digressing. I don't know why I'm talking about Kirk. Oh, yeah, he went there. He was teaching there. I think he was a director of the Institute of Fine Art, at a certain point, before he joined the Modern. That was the connection.

But I was-I needed to work. And so I got a job, at first, part-time, at Martha Jackson Gallery. And Martha Jackson Gallery was-Martha was a Kellogg from Buffalo, very wealthy woman-Kellogg Chemical Company, and she was very committed-crazy woman-but very committed to art. And she had a townhouse building on-at 32 East 69th Street, between Madison and Park, and it was this wonderful gallery. And I started out sort of part-time there, and then I stopped going to the Institute and worked full-time there.

And within, say, a half a year or so, she made me director of the gallery. And it was a big gallery there, about maybe 12 people working there. It was on five floors. She lived on the top two and the rest were galleries, base showroom, et cetera, et cetera. I did some nice shows when I was there. A show called "Environments, Situations, Spaces" [May-June 1961] was one which-I know you have seen the photograph of [Allan] Kaprow with all of the tires in the yard, but you wouldn't necessarily pinpoint it to that exhibition, but that was "Environments, Situations, Spaces." It was Kaprow's contribution to that show [Yard, 1961].

George Brecht was in the show with a piece called *Three-Chair Event*. Bob Watts was in the show. A lot of people from the Fluxus group, and at Rutgers. It was a nice show. Claes Oldenburg, the first time he was in the show-and it was the first time Claes had ever shown uptown. He had been showing downtown in the middle of a tiny gallery down there and the name of which I forget. And it was a nice show. I really enjoyed doing that, and it was very popular. And we also did an exhibition called "New Forms, New Media," where we encouraged people to do very unconventional forms of media, and [John] Chamberlain was in that show [others in this show included Louise Nevelson, Jim Dine, Red Grooms, Kaprow; June 6-24, 1960]. We became buddies, drinking buddies, at the Cedar Bar.

I was living in Cooper Square, 35 Cooper Square, very dangerously close to the Cedar Bar, which was on University Place and Eighth. The old Cedar Bar.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The old Cedar Bar.

MR. WEBER: And I would go there quite often. I learned a lot there. You know, all of the artists were there. You know, they were all available; people who I subsequently showed at the Dwan Gallery, like Franz Kline, drinking buddies. De Kooning went there. I was a little late for Pollock. He was dead, I think, in '53, but everybody else-everybody hung out there, and good buddies.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What year did you become the director of the Jackson gallery?

MR. WEBER: That would have been when I first-probably 1958, I think. Let me see-no, '60, I'm sorry. Yes, it was '60, 1960.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So when did you-how long did you work for her, and when did you open your own gallery?

MR. WEBER: Well, I worked for Martha for a couple of years, and I had wanted to-I organized an exhibition with Jim Dine, which did very well. Martha was-she was showing people like Fautrier, you know, some French artist.

MR. MCELHINNEY: F-A-U-T-

MR. WEBER: Jean Fautrier. I don't know how to spell it, but it's in all of the books; he's pretty famous. Jean Fautrier-somewhat decorative, and I wanted to get a little bit more-some younger people into the gallery. She had some good people. Like John Hultberg was there, you know, when the Carnegie International grand prize the

year before-John Hultberg. Norman Bloom was in the show-I mean, in the gallery. Michael Goldberg-two second generation Abstract Expressionist people who had studios on 10th Street.

It was a good stable, but I wanted to get younger people in there. So Dine went very well. We sold all of the work, but then I wanted to-I met Warhol, and I had gotten a lot of his pieces, which I was selling out of my office at Martha Jackson. I was sort of his first dealer, actually, although he wasn't officially with the gallery and we didn't do his show, but I sold a lot of work, and I really loved his work. And I was selling the Marilyn Monroe paintings for \$35. Can you imagine paintings like that-24 by 18, whatever-200 cans of hand-painted Campbell's soup, \$800, canvas about five by seven feet long-to John Powers actually, the collector from Aspen, Colorado, bought it very happily.

And I would be invited to go away for the weekend, say, to the Hamptons or something, and I would bring along one of these Andy Warhol paintings and give it to them as a painting, saying, don't sell this work, just hang onto it for a while; I think this guy is going to really go somewhere. And in a few cases they heeded me. And I remember I gave one, which is a triptych S&H Green Stamp, to a woman whom I was dating in California, the Dwan Gallery, and I did the same thing with her. I said, don't sell it; you know, hang onto it; it's going to be valuable. And it sold at auction-Christie's or Sotheby's, maybe, seven years ago for, like \$358,000-you know, crazy.

What hurt me was she didn't call me up and thank me for it, which was weird. I guess maybe she thought I would hit her up for some money, which I would not have done at all. But anyway, I hung out with Warhol, and that was always amusing. And Martha didn't want to go in that direction of younger people. I left the gallery and I went to work with Virginia Dwan in California in 1962.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you left the East Coast.

MR. WEBER: I left the East Coast totally. I was having trouble with my first marriage. There was an issue of an unfaithful wife-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

MR. WEBER: -and my best friend, and that kind of blew me away. And so I just left, and I went to live in California, worked for Virginia Dwan for many years, and she was amazing. She had a real love of art. She had the interest, the commitment, and the finances to run a great gallery, which she did. She was very much into the nouveau realists, because she had a house in èze village [France] for years, an old Saracen-designed house. Well, it had Saracen ruins, and whatever. A big place-Chateau Barlow [after American composer Samuel Latham Barlow, who lived in èze]. And F. Scott Fitzgerald had gotten there earlier on, and, you know, it was a real place.

So she was in Nice. She was involved in the art world and she met people like Jean Tinguely, Martial Raysse, Arman, all of the nouveau realists, who she signed up for exclusive contracts with all of America. So we were handling all of those people when they came to California. It was really nice.

Also Yves Klein, was a dear chap, loved him. He was a big buddy. He did a show in New York and stayed at the Chelsea Hotel and we hung out together a lot. He used to like to go up to Harlem and dance, and we hung out together a lot to Small's Place and a very nice guy; super man, super guy. When he died, we thought it was a joke. We got this telegram and it wasn't a joke.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What was the address of the Dwan Gallery?

MR. WEBER: It was on Lindbrook Avenue in Westwood Village, at the base of UCLA.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, I know that place.

MR. WEBER: West of the traditional gallery street, which was La Cienega.

MR. MCELHINNEY: La Cienega.

MR. WEBER: Because Virginia was living in Malibu and it was convenient for her, and she had this wonderful space that an architect who was a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, named Morris Verger, designed, right next to Flax, if you know that area. It was a building right next to the big art store, Flax, Harvey Flax out there, and beautiful, beautiful space, great space-wonderful gallery to work in. And she was terrific. I really loved Virginia, still do. She had such good taste, and she was really so sympathetic to the artist and very generous with her money. You know, she paid for the construction of *Spiral Jetty* [1970], and Michael Heizer. We were showing the earthworks, all of the earthwork people-[Robert] Smithson, Heizer, [Walter] DeMaria, et cetera.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Is she alive still?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How old is she at this point?

MR. WEBER: Well, I don't know if that should be made-she is a somewhat-a little bit older than I am. And she has a very nice place in the Dakota [New York luxury apartment building], which she bought when she first came to New York. I was there alone in the gallery for a few years, because she was having a bad divorce situation. She moved to New York, and I was sort of there alone, which made me not so happy, but I did get a chance to do a lot of great shows, and she opened-eventually she opened a gallery in New York, on 57th Street, 29 West 57th.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was also called the Virginia Dwan Gallery?

MR. WEBER: It was called the Dwan Gallery. No, the gallery was never called Virginia Dwan; it was always called the Dwan Gallery.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The Dwan Gallery. And was the L.A. location-was Lindbrook.

MR. WEBER: Lindbrook Avenue.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And did you come east when she came east? Is that how you-

MR. WEBER: No, no, no. She came east, and then eventually-it was a really nice gallery, but she was having trouble finding a good director for it. And so it was decided that we would close the gallery in L.A. so that I could eventually-so I could go east and be the director there, which we did in 1968, and I was with her until the gallery closed-her gallery closed totally in 19-summer of '71. And in the fall of '71, in September, I opened my own gallery in SoHo, in the so-called SoHo Art Building at 420 West Broadway.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay.

MR. WEBER: The first art building. And the first show was Sol LeWitt, large outdoor pieces of Sol's. If you have been to Storm King [Art Center, Mountainville, NY], there is a five-unit piece that was bought from me out of that show that is still there. But she was the one who first showed Sol. I mean, she had-we had Sol, we had [Dan] Flavin, we had Carl Andre, we had Smithson. She wasn't so much into painters. As a matter of fact, I had sort of stashed Bob Ryman. Well, eventually we did a show of Ryman, but it was big insistence. I kind of-and then somebody else I put into another gallery in kind of a holding pattern. I think it was Robert Mangold, who went to Kornblee Gallery for a while, because I like painting a lot. She was more identifying with three-dimensional things. And so when I opened my gallery, I had not only sculptors but painters.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Who else was in the building in those days?

MR. WEBER: At that point?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MR. WEBER: Well, at the beginning it was five stories. On the top was Andre Emmerich, originally, and then there was myself on the fourth floor, then there was Ileana Sonnabend, then there was Leo Castelli on the second floor. And on the ground floor was originally Hague Art Services. And they did shipping, and they did crating, and they were kind of art handlers. And then they eventually got into the art world. They were buying SoHo. Mary Boone rented a small space, her first space from them, on the ground floor at 420, which was really just a tiny office space-there was some artwork. After she stopped being the secretary of Klaus Kertess from the Bykert Gallery, which was her first art job, and eventually she ended up in the building across the street, which was larger, which was also owned by Hague.

And so that-and eventually Andre Emmerich-he only was there for about a year, because his artists didn't really believe that SoHo was going to make it. And so Charlie Cowles bought the space from Andre Emmerich, and he was then on the top floor. And I didn't-I was renting my space, because I had spent all of my money renovating it, and so I couldn't really buy it, and it was a nice space. It was big. And it was quite big. It went through from West Broadway to Thompson, I would say probably about 5,000 square feet-had the whole floor.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So who did you get to design this space?

MR. WEBER: Me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, you did it yourself.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You know, I mean, it's a natural question, because a lot of time you get some architect coming in-

MR. WEBER: No, the building was not-I think there was an architect for the lobby and the elevator and all, but I don't know that anybody had architects, that I am aware of.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I remember that building well. There was a gallery for a while on the ground floor named Marilyn Pearl. Was she was there?

MR. WEBER: No, that was a different building. I think that was over in Greene Street, wasn't it, Marilyn Pearl?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, she was on West Broadway for a while.

MR. WEBER: Oh, yeah? But not at 420.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There was a ground floor space, but you're saying that was originally Mary Boone space.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, she had a very small spot. And then when the guys at Hague started becoming involved in the art world, one of them, Wouter Germans, opened a gallery on the ground floor.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay.

MR. WEBER: It was Wouter Germans and Frits de Boures [Knegt]-were the two owners of Hague, both guys from Holland originally.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But Charles Cowles was-he ended up on the top floor in Emmerich's old space.

So how long were you there?

MR. WEBER: I was there for 10 years.

MR. MCELHINNEY: From 1972 to-

MR. WEBER: Say, 1971 to '81.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And then after that?

MR. WEBER: Well, I got in an argument with Frits because-Frits de Boures [Knegt]-one day because my daughter had come in and she had brought her bicycle up in the elevator, and he took the bicycle and threw it out onto the middle of the street, and I went bananas, and so I really got pissed off with him. And so we were, like, nose to nose, and he's tapping me on the chest saying, just wait until you see your lease, man. And I thought, uh-oh. But, you know, he threw my daughter's bike out onto the street. What was I going to do?

MR. MCELHINNEY: What can you do?

MR. WEBER: Fucker. Oops. I didn't say that. [They laugh.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you spell his last name? It's okay, it is in the argot by now after, I think, [Martin] Scorsese, that that worked probably.

MR. WEBER: Frits de Boures [Knegt]. de Boures, something like that. Frits de Boures. I'm not so sure. It should be around somewhere, available. [Frits de Knegt.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: What were your ideas at the time about what a gallery should be in terms of space? I know that a lot of galleries moved into SoHo, and all of a sudden the paradigm kind of changed, from these smaller uptown spaces or townhouses, you know, to these enormous white cubes.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, usually rectangles.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, long, skinny ones.

MR. WEBER: Well, yeah. Some, yeah, the old tradition of 80 feet long and 25 wide. My gallery wasn't that sort of format. It was, maybe, 45 feet wide. It was big.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was very big.

MR. WEBER: I always had disliked those small and narrow ones. What was the question? I'm sorry.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, the question was what, at the time, was your, kind of, dream space? You had been working for Virginia Dwan, and now you are opening up your own space. And there was a movement to SoHo. I mean, people, apart from, I guess, Sonnabend.

MR. WEBER: There were a few galleries there at first. I think Paula Cooper was there. The Park Place Gallery was there. But Virginia Dwan was one of the two owners of Park Place, and we were showing some of the people on the West Coast, like Mark di Suvero, and that is why I want to get the current *Artforum*, because there is an article that Mark wrote about the Peace Tower, that we did a very early protest against the war in Vietnam, in 1966, and the Rand Corporation, picketing Rand and we had this Peace Tower that we rented this lot on Sunset Boulevard where La Cienega ran into it.

And we had these big huge three billboards. And we, the committee, had sent notifications, invitations, to artists in three languages all over the world to take part in this demonstration-you know, to take part in the protest-by giving us these small paintings that were on plywood with acrylic paint of a certain format, like a foot and a half square, something like that. We got hundreds of them.

So we had the towers, we had all of those hundreds of paintings. And there were some big deals. Like, Lichtenstein did a mushroom cloud for us and Warhol-like everybody was in that: all of the people from Park Place, all of the artists that I knew in California, in L.A., that I also knew in New York-foreign artists. It was amazing.

And Ken Kesey came up with his merry gestures [Merry Pranksters], one time, to dance around with his bells on and do the acid thing. I kicked him off the lot, the property, because I was very serious about that, and I didn't want this jerk doing his number there with the bells on his toes, et cetera, so they were out.

We used to have fights there because the Marines would come from their training camps down the coast a bit, and they would be on the Sunset Strip, and all of a sudden, they would see this huge protest against the war. So anybody who was there would be-they would try and beat them up-you know, stab people there, et cetera. It was something.

And *Artforum* has an article about it now. And I remember going to Phil Leider when *Artforum* was housed in L.A., saying, we have done this, and I would like to have some publicity about it, and he told me art and politics don't mix. We didn't get any mention, nothing. Isn't that weird? And they were there in Los Angeles. So now they publish it, you know, what, 40 years later?

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you think the move to SoHo by so many dealers changed the way that art was seen? Do you think that the change in, you know, the gallery footprint / paradigm changed-well, obviously it changed in terms of the size of the artwork-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, the scale. Like, whatever space you give an artist, they are going to fill it up, and so all of the spaces were hugely bigger than anything uptown, with the exception of museums, and so the art was-you know, reacted accordingly with big, important pieces-big pieces-a lot of installations. I did a show there called "Di Europa," where at one point, one of the artists, Gilberto Zorio, chopped into the wall of my space with an ax, in the shape of "odio," right through the plasterboard and everything. *Odio* means hate in Italian. He would put it on his head with a stencil, along with a branding thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And his name again was?

MR. WEBER: Gilberto-G-I-L-B-E-R-T-O, Zorio-Z-O-R-I-O, very famous. I showed all of the Arte Povera people there, Mario Merz and [Giovanni] Anselmo, [Alighiero] Boetti. I had a lot-that was another thing about the gallery that we didn't get into, but I wanted to have more than just an American format, so I showed-I think I was probably the first gallery to really make a commitment to European art as well as American art, you know, and so consequently I had just tons of Europeans-I had Art and Language [English group of conceptual artists founded in 1968 by Terry Atkinson, Michael Baldwin, David Bainbridge, and Harold Hurrell]. They were doing things with me. I had Richard Long and Hamish Fulton. They were doing things with me. I had Victor Burgin, who was working with all English-you know, people, and then I had Daniel Buren from France. I had German Zian [sp], Franz Erhard Walther, the German. And I also had all of these Italian Arte Povera people, which was great, whom I met when I was married to Annina Nosei. You know, she had a house in Rome and in Macedonia. So I went there a lot, and I really got in with the Italian artists-also those-like, Pino Pascali from Rome, the Roman artist, who has a show at Gagosian Uptown now, which I have to see. He died, tragically, early on, poor one.

So I was in and out of Europe all of the time. You know, it got to be-particularly, at a certain point I opened gallery in Madrid, and I was spending four weeks there, four weeks in New York, four weeks there. It got a little bit crazy.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, after having all of this experience, I mean, working at the Dwan Gallery, having your

own space, being on both coasts, you must have had a heck of a client list. I mean, how did they-

MR. WEBER: Well, for instance, it's interesting you mention that, because I knew everybody in the art world in New York-I mean, in America, because the art world was so much smaller. It was possible to know every collector, every museum person, major museum person, not-so-major museum person, in the whole country, because it was so small. I was once-I did a trip-I always love the idea, the Connecticut peddler in King Arthur's Court, and there was an exhibition that came up, Edward Kienholz at the Dwan Gallery, and Edward and I didn't really get along that well, and so-I mean, he was a good artist and all, but our personalities were, you know, bumping heads with each other.

And so I decided that during his exhibition, he would be happier if I wasn't around, and I would be happy not being there. And so I got this pickup truck with a bed that you put into it, you know, and I made racks in there, and I loaded it up with artwork, and I drove all over the country.

In theory it was only supposed to be a month, but it turned out to be, like, seven weeks or so, and I went everywhere-every city in America I went to, and I was visiting people like Joe Pulitzer and Emmy [Pulitzer], in St. Louis. I was going up to Chicago and seeing [Mort] Newman, Muriel [Kallis Steinberg] Newman, all of those collectors, and Jim Speyer, at the museum, selling, selling, selling, and Minneapolis at the Walker-all over. And then eventually New York, and then I came back down to southern land. Sven Lukin, this guy who we showed at Martha Jackson, the shaped canvas.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sven Lukin?

MR. WEBER: Sven, S-V-E-N L-U-K-I-N, Sven Lukin, who showed with Pace [Gallery, New York] for years; he was one of the people I was showing at Martha Jackson, and then we had a big show in California. We were buddies. So when I was in New York, I convinced him to drive back with me to-for the southern part of the trip, because I did the, kind of, northern part of the trip, and he came along on the southern part of the trip.

So we stopped in Washington; we stopped in Atlanta; we stopped in New Orleans. And it got-we got pretty jokey about it, and we would trade places depending upon-because nobody really knew me that much down there. And so in one town I would be Sven Lukin and he would be John Weber. And the next time I would be John Weber and he would be Sven Lukin, and we, like, alternated, and we had a great time.

[Audio break, tape change.]

We had a really big dinner and a lot of drinks and all of that. We decided that we would see Virginia to her door, i.e., Malibu Colony. [Laughs.] And so we got on the plane and we saw Virginia to her door. And I realized the next morning, my God, I left that fucking truck filled with thousands of dollars worth of art at the Dallas airport. It was locked, but it's like, John, hello. So I had to go back. Sven, he said, no, you can do it yourself. So I flew back by myself and did the rest of the trip by myself. That was a funny trip.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What year again was that?

MR. WEBER: God, when was it? Probably I would say around maybe '66, something like that. And I became the Connecticut peddler in King Arthur's Court, so to speak. And I saw all of these, like, big-deal collectors like John Murchison, you know, Mr. Big of Dallas, who built all of the buildings, money, and what have you, and very eccentric. He had a-he had designed his house so that he could shoot-he had a rifle range right down the middle of the hall of the house, with the wings going off of it. So he'd be down there with a rifle-crazy. But it was fun; it was all so much fun. I was really engaged in it. And I really believed in it, too. I felt that-you know, that is why I didn't get a job at TI; I had felt that art needed my help.

Something told me that I could do a good job and it needed it, because it wasn't being done. There weren't enough people, and it wasn't being supported. There weren't enough people who realized that art was really important, and it was a human activity that was as old as it gets. They did it when they were living in caves and just having fire, and it was a continuous thing, and now nobody gave a shit about it. So that is what propelled me to become a dealer, actually.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you were involved with the Fluxus people and a lot of the Arte Povera people, the early, so-called, conceptual artists. How do you feel about the current crop of people who are sort of building on that tradition? Are they as rigorous-

MR. WEBER: Well, I always felt the people who-by definition, they really can't be, because I always found-I think people would agree with me-that the innovators of a particular movement are the ones who are really important. And the other people may come along later and refine it, and they could make it look a little bit better, a little bit more palatable, but let's see-the people who begin it were really important-the Sol LeWitts, not some conceptual person who just got out of graduate school, like, three years ago or something, or like the Franz Kline, not

somebody who decides they are going to paint abstract expressionism two years ago. The innovators are always, I think, the important people of any movement. And there is always a kind of trickle-down thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, do you see there is a kind of a connection between dealers, collectors, and artists, that in a way you are all practitioners of a creative activity that sort of helps shapes the other's self-image or opportunities or even-you know, the idea of the acquisition of artists as an expressive act, or the act of opening a gallery and showing certain things as being a kind of art form?

MR. WEBER: Well, that is a form for art, but I don't know if that is an art form. I don't really understand the question.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I guess artists have points of view, dealers have points of views, collectors have points of view. How did you think-when you opened your gallery, how did you envision that dynamic?

MR. WEBER: Well, my thought was towards the artist in particular. I wanted to give them a nice space within which to work, and I also gave them stipends. If it were a sculptor, I ended up eventually paying for all of the fabrication. And a lot of people didn't do that. And in terms of today, I don't really know. I have been out of the art world now for a bit, although I do go down to the city and see certain shows. Some I miss, unfortunately. I haven't been to the Whitney Biennial yet [Whitney Biennial 2006, "Day for Night"], which I want to-I am going down tomorrow to see it, actually.

I don't know. I think this is a healthy time because nothing is happening. And I always had that theory. When there is nothing going on, it means that the pots are boiling somewhere and something is going to happen. That has always been my experience. So this quietude now where everything looks like shit, and everything is the same, and everything is inspired by everything else, in reality there is some people somewhere who are doing really dynamite work that is going to emerge. It's always that way.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I guess my question came out of your statement that you wanted to do something for art. That implied to me that you saw yourself as a person who had a mission, the same way an artist has a mission, the same way a collector has-

MR. WEBER: Well, I think our roles and our missions are very different, but I am definitely on a mission. And the artists have a mission, and hopefully the collectors have a mission. They have to be pushed a little bit. God, I just-I don't know-some of them you really have to twist their arms. You know, I sold this-to a collection in Chicago-this seven-foot Ryman painting on canvas. You know, a big-deal painting for, like, \$35,000, and I had to bust my ass in order to do it, because to them at first it looked like this blank canvas. They think, what are you doing here, John? What are you trying to move onto me?

The same people I have-when I showed Boetti, I had a lot of Maps of the World, the embroidery things from Afghanistan, you know, and they were, kind of, a real high point in his career, and I love them, a lot. And I had a lot of them. You know, I was selling them-they got up to a price, which was pretty high for me-like 25, \$35,000. You know what they are now selling for? Well, the least important ones are a half a million dollars, and they go up to \$800,000 for one work.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Geez.

MR. WEBER: Who would have known? I wouldn't have known. It's really weird.

Do I have any Boetti maps? No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What was the inaugural exhibition at your gallery?

MR. WEBER: It was Sol LeWitt.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sol LeWitt.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, the structures of Sol LeWitt.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what was the reaction?

MR. WEBER: And at the gallery at that time, I think Andre Emmerich showed-I don't know-somebody. I think it was that sculptor that was from London and everybody was-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Caro.

MR. WEBER: Anthony Caro, I think. Yeah, I never liked his work that well.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sir Anthony Caro now, I have heard.

MR. WEBER: Okay.

And Leo had a video show of Peter Campus, which was quite courageous. I had the show of Sol LeWitt, and Ileana Sonnabend had Gilbert and George, doing, singing-and "Underneath the Arches" [written by Reg Connelly and Bud Flanagan] piece [*The Singing Sculpture*, 1970] on the card table with their faces all gold-amazing. You know, I mean, each one-and that was in 1971. It was great. Does that still happen? I don't know. But it was nice to be part of it. It is nice to still be part of it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Could you represent-you named a few artists, but what was the reaction to your stable after you launched the gallery? You were reasonably successful.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, well, I sold a lot of work. The artists were happy. We were networking with Europe. There were a lot of younger galleries like myself, and we got to a point where we were all sharing the same people-galleries in Italy, galleries in Germany, galleries in Holland, the Wide-White Space Gallery in Antwerp, Konrad Fischer in Dusseldorf, Nicholas Logsdail in London [Lisson Gallery], [Galleria] Toselli in Milano. God, what is his name; it starts with an S-Sperone, Gian Enzo Sperone in Turin, and then later on in Rome. And let me see, we had somebody in Belgium. Andy de Dekar was in Belgium, and all of these people were young. They were all my age.

And they all liked-we all showed kind of the same people, so that the artist would go-Carl Andre would go to Europe, and we would go from Germany to France to England, and it was really kind of wonderful because we had support and I was going to Europe a lot. I could have-and this was even before I had a gallery in Spain. I was in and out of there like a bouncing ball, because there was always an opening, and I had to go out to-and I was selling internationally. You know, I had collectors all over; it wasn't just in America. I had people in Paris and everywhere, in Brussels, in Germany, and Berlin. I remember flying into Berlin when it was restricted, you know, to go see Reinhardt Onnasch, who was a collector friend of mine before he then turned into a dealer.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Onnasch? How do you spell Onnasch?

MR. WEBER: O-N-N-A-S-C-H-Reinhardt: R-E-I-N-H-A-R-D-T, O-N-N-A-S-C-H. Onnasch. And in Switzerland there was a couple of people that I was working with also, whose names I forget at this point. But also the museums were very generous to us. The Kunsthalle in Bern was doing shows of my people. A lot of the museums were showing the work, not only buying the work but also exhibiting the work in Brussels and Bern, in Lucerne, in Milano, in Rome, et cetera.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So the support of the museums probably helped with sales. Was that more important, do you think, than the critical response, or do you think writers, the art writers, had an impact on sales? Or do you think the curators, the museums, were more influential?

MR. WEBER: Well, I think the basic unit is the dealer, and they make the audience from all of these pools of people, and then they make-usually they make arrangements to have the people written about by the critics. It is, sort of-they are the hub, I think, of the circle, in terms of the structure of the whole thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So do you think in your gallery in the 1970s that you were bringing a lot of your former clients to this new work, or do you think you were also creating a lot of new collectors?

MR. WEBER: Both.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Is there a slice-of-the-pie comparison, 20-30, 50-50?

MR. WEBER: Not really, no. It came from, you know, I helped get a lot of collectors started, and I was dealing with collectors who had been collecting for years before me, like Morton Newman in Chicago, whom I mentioned. And, you know, collectors in California, all over.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Did you ever get younger collectors together with older collectors who could act as mentors or help them-or-

MR. WEBER: Not really. I mean, if they did, they would do it on their own. You know, there was the-people walk around at night on a gallery night, which I think was Tuesday in L.A., and they would all meet each other, particularly in L.A. where there wasn't that many to begin with. Everybody knew each other. And the same structure exists in New York, I think. You know, people meet each other, they go to the same restaurants, et cetera, like that restaurant on 10th Avenue? What is it called? I go there a lot. Twenty-fourth Street and 10th [Bottino's].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh.

MR. WEBER: Fanelli's? No, not Fanelli's.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That is on Prince Street.

MR. WEBER: That is down in the Village. There is a new guy at the pub who actually was the bartender at Fanelli's for years.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Really?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, named John Richard-James Richard Nelson.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So that is on the corner of Prince Street, right?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, Fanelli's. And I think Paula had her first gallery above and one building to the west of Fanelli's. Her first space was up there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Paula Cooper.

MR. WEBER: Yeah. Because she and Ivan Karp were the first people down there. They preceded me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But you didn't become involved in the real estate-

MR. WEBER: No, I didn't have that much money, you know, and whenever I had money, it would always go to all of the artists, or to the gallery operation, and it was very expensive. We got to the point where we had a lot of staff, and I was figuring out that every time-the first of each month when I opened the door to the gallery, I think, well, there goes another \$65,000, which means I have to sell about \$150,000 to break even-big pressure.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So how many people did you have working for you when you opened the doors?

MR. WEBER: For my space I had a secretary, who was Angela Westwater, from Westwater, Fischer, Sperone Gallery, and I had a registrar, and I had myself. I think that was it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So did you do any in-house services like reproduction, photography, packing, shipping, and handling? All of that was handled by contractors outside of the gallery or-

MR. WEBER: Yeah. Well, if you sell something to a New Yorker, in general the gallery pays to get the work to their house. If you sell to somebody outside of New York, they pay, which means they pay if it has to be crated; it's their expense; the shipping is their expense, et cetera. That is traditional.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But, you know, the gallery did not have a panel van or station wagon schlepping artwork around the island?

MR. WEBER: No, no, no. I remember, what's his name? It was a big deal, now on 20th Street. The big art shipper, trucker-what is his name; he is huge.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Olendorph, no.

MR. WEBER: No. And a very nice guy. He has many, many, many, many, many trucks.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I don't know his name offhand.

MR. WEBER: Well, he was our deliverer. He started out with a pickup truck with a canvas top on it, and now he has owned several buildings in Chelsea and has, like, 10 huge trucks that deliver art all over the place. God, what is his name?

MR. MCELHINNEY: And his office is where?

MR. WEBER: On 20th Street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Twentieth Street.

MR. WEBER: On the north side of the street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I know Fine Art Express, but they are in Queens or something.

MR. WEBER: No, they are a warehouse; they do everything there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, I will have to look him up. Twentieth Street.

MR. WEBER: Nice guy.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And is the name of the business his name?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, I'm blanking on what it is. He has a brother who is a sculptor who does-realistic sculptor-and he did the piece about Senator Javits that is outside of the Javits [Convention] Center. His brother-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Miller? [Crozier]

MR. WEBER: No. It will come to me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, that can be for the next interview, who was the shipper.

How do you think the art market has changed in your lifetime, over the course of your career?

MR. WEBER: It has gotten bigger.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, yeah, but I mean, apart from the scale and the prices and the number of dealers, do you see a large change in, let's say, how the dealer sees their job relatively to the artists or the collectors, or do you think-

MR. WEBER: I think there may be a lot less dedicated dealers around than there were then, just because the demographics are such, there are many more of them, so therefore they are going to be-you know, they may-the motives for doing that are probably different, and the art isn't very exciting out there now, as I mentioned before, and that is actually-in the long run, that will prove to be very healthy. But the support structure-there is, like, almost too many galleries, and it doesn't take anything to open a gallery now. All you need is money, and you open the doors. Hey, I have got a gallery.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But clearly, I don't think those people who have, you know, the money, and have a desire, lacking the experience, the connections, the ability to talk to people in the museums or the critics, as you described earlier, they are not going to be as successful or effective in that role.

MR. WEBER: One would think so. Yeah, true, you're right.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So it's-I guess it's an interesting question, because I hear a lot of artists saying that they feel like the galleries are moving more towards representing the collectors instead of the artists, or some of the galleries are.

MR. WEBER: That is curious.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I thought so. I'm just curious how you-I mean, as you have watched the art world hypertroph into the market it is now-and I guess I should say-I shouldn't be actually, you know, the one here talking, but I remember one of my former teachers from Yale, William Bailey, who, you know, is a still life-shows at Cunningham Gallery-expressed horror, I think, in the '80s, when we were at a CAA [College Art Association] at the Hilton over on Avenue of the Americas, when somebody referred to what was going on in New York in 1986 as an art market. He said, what a horrible idea that it has turned into just a marketplace. But has it? Has it, in your estimation? Has it sort of become more about, you know, the bucks instead of the spirit?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, it probably, it probably has. Yeah, it's more of a market than it used to be, that is for sure. It is more of a market. And that, again, there is just so many more of everything and more artists. You know, it's okay-in my generation, if a child wanted to be an artist, in all likelihood the parents would break their hands. You know, you, an artist? No way. Do you want to starve to death? You will never get married. You will never have children. We won't have any grandchildren. Snap goes the arm. [They laugh.] And now it is cool to be an artist-you know, that kind of-what-is-his-name syndrome-a guy who does the toys now who did the gold. He was painting the statutes gold and things like that-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, Koons.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, Jeff Koons-esque things. Not that he is bad, but he is very different.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, that has just gotten bigger. I think that the whole thing is better. You know, it's probably healthy thing. If the support structure is bigger, that means more-potentially more good things for the art world will happen, more support, more interest, more commitment, more museums. I mean, now every little town in the world seems to-or at least in America-has a museum. When I first came in, you could name all of the museums of art in all of America on three hands, let's say, literally, and now everybody has a museum. Every

little town has a museum, which I guess is okay. You know, you put it in front of the people's face more.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So do you see that as the democratization of art, or do you see it as being equivalent to opening up another McDonald's?

MR. WEBER: No, I don't see it as either. If anything, it would be the democratization of art, which is probably a good thing. It could be confusing to the viewers because there is a lot out there to see and a lot of it is not very good, and who is there to tell them that it isn't very good? But then, you know, it's gotten-you have all of these advisors going around, and there are a lot of people who are-kind of network between the gallery and the dealer, the artist agents, so-called, and da da da da, that certain things have changed, that, like, being one of them.

I remember when Hans Haacke-why am I thinking of that? But I'm thinking about how museums can be very repressive, and Hans Haacke was asked to do a show at the Guggenheim many years ago. He was one of my artists, by the way, Hans. I showed a lot of political art always, the influence of Antioch during the [Joseph] McCarthy era.

I neglected to mention the fact that when I was at Antioch coincided exactly with McCarthy in the House Un-American Activities Committee [House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-75]. So I was in a place to be radically politically polarized, and I was.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you were outraged-

MR. WEBER: And I still am.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You were outraged by that.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, and anyway-yeah, they wouldn't do the show of Hans's, the slum landlord show [featuring *Shalopsky, et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971, 1971*] because some of the people were involved with the Guggenheim. They were money people. They weren't necessarily on the board of directors, but they were there around-they were the patrons, to a certain extent, so they canceled the show.

Tom Messer said to me, again, art and politics. You know, there is no combination there. We are not interested in showing politics; we are interested in showing art. Okay. What can you say? But you shouldn't have canceled his fucking show. Hello? And he believed it. Of course, maybe 15 years later, he was doing a huge show of Joseph Beuys, okay, took him a while to come around.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But at that point in time, that would have been-well, 1970-the Haacke show, I remember, was-you know, the canceled Haacke show, I think I was in school at that time.

MR. WEBER: It was in the '70s I believe.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Seventy-six, '75.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, something like that. I was showing them then. He was a great guy, wow. Good artist. Boy, he certainly started a lot. Little did anybody know, huh?

MR. MCELHINNEY: But by 1990s, certainly Joseph Beuys was sort of a mentor to a generation of artists, like people like Anselm Kiefer and so forth.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, well, the whole Dusseldorf Academy [of Fine Arts] and what that represented in Europe, and, like, anybody who wanted to be an artist went there. They had to go there from everywhere, Ireland, England, Belgium-everybody was going to the Academy to do some-to be with Beuys-and a very powerful, nice guy. I liked him. Well, I didn't really know him that much. We knew each other, but it was always very formal. I was Herr Weber, and he was Herr Professor Beuys for, like, 15 years.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what kind of agreements did you have with artists? You spoke about having stipends. Were they annual, monthly?

MR. WEBER: They were monthly stipends with a lot of the people. They were advances on sales, actually.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like, a number, how about-you know, how much-

MR. WEBER: Like, maybe three, \$5,000 per-it was fairly heavy duty, and you know, it came out of the sales. It gave them a steady income, which made them a little-they didn't have to depend only upon sales. They knew this money was coming in every month. It made their life easier, I think.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So it was still a kind of, technically, consignment agreement, but they were being paid in advance of the sales.

MR. WEBER: Yeah. I didn't-and they were advance on sales. I should have been buying more of the work rather than just advances on sales, but I didn't. They were always treated as advances.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I understand that for a long time in Europe, I think now a lot of the galleries in Europe have moved to the consignment model that we have here, but recall-

MR. WEBER: Didn't they always?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I recall hearing that, in some cases, the dealers in Europe-maybe this was an earlier model, prewar or during the 1950s-but that they would often just buy the artist's work outright and then have the exhibition, or own a certain amount of the artwork outright. I'm just curious if that was anything you had ever heard of.

MR. WEBER: That would have been pretty unusual, I would think.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay. So that is a myth.

MR. WEBER: Unless it was, like, a huge gallery, like Marlborough or something; they might have done that-or Iris Clert in Paris, maybe.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what was your normal commission?

MR. WEBER: From the artist?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. WEBER: Fifty percent. Normal.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And did you-in your accounting, did you include-did you share any expenses with the artist, like-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, when-as I mentioned, when the sculptors-I was paying for the fabrication cost, which would come off the top of the sale and go back to me, and then we would make the split.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see. So-well, you were a real capitalist then. You were not just-a lot of the galleries now don't spend a dime on any of the production costs or the expenses an artist would incur.

MR. WEBER: Well, the thing I was looking at-if I didn't, some other gallery would, and there were galleries that pretty much specialized in-they didn't start any artists; you know, they just waited around until an artist got to his middle career, and then offered him, like, \$10,000 a month to be with them, and that was kind of outrageous. I mean, that happened to me only once and I was very pissed off, and it was with Leo, of all people, who was my buddy. You know, we used to go to the Caribbean together and all.

Somehow or other, when Judd was with Leo, Judd was talking to Flavin, and the fact that if he went with Leo, he would never need another dealer in his life. And so Don kind of thought, well, that is interesting.

And so it came about that we, at first, shared Flavin for about two years, three years, and then he went totally to Leo, and that is the only artist that that happened with. And Don, as much as I loved him, he was wrong, because Dan had other dealers. Leo wasn't the last one. Leo was an interesting man. I liked him a lot.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So were your artists frequently also your friends? Did you interact with them socially?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, my friends are pretty much totally have been and are from the art world.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So, but the artists you handled were among those friends.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So that was no problem mingling-

MR. WEBER: We were all comfortable with each other.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Social and professional activities.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You know, we were talking earlier about how the art world has changed. Have you seen a change over time, not just in the gallery world, but let's say in, you know, the nature of collectors. I know that in the late '80s, that Robert Hughes spent a lot of time, sort of, calling attention to flaws in the idea that art was an investment, that you could approach it the same way you would approach stocks or gold or sow bellies, or, you know, other things like that. Was it your experience that there was a change or that there is a change in the way that the collector saw themselves 40 years ago or earlier and now, or at the time you closed the gallery?

MR. WEBER: I don't know if I really saw a change. It's an interesting question. I think that maybe, if anything, the collectors realized that they are in a pretty powerful position nowadays, more so than earlier on; we might have [had] to really urge them to do things. Now they seem to be-in many cases they are ahead of the dealers. A lot of collectors, as you know, are opening their own museums and-like in Miami and what have you, or people like Panza, whom I worked very closely with, [Count] Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, for years, who has one of the great collections of the world, actually.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think the dog wants to become the engineer.

MR. WEBER: I am going to take a little break. What time do you-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, let's take a break. We could stop now-

MR. WEBER: It's a quarter of five. Well, I can go on. I would just like to have a cigarette, so I was going to go outside and have a smoke.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I would just ask you maybe one question, which would be do you think there is a correlation between the rise in the power of the collector today and, you know, the power of the critic?

MR. WEBER: There probably is, but it doesn't jump into mind.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It is not apparent to you.

MR. WEBER: No, not so much.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's something that really was of concern to you or-

MR. WEBER: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But as a dealer did you see-

MR. WEBER: I left the critics alone. I got burned by-what is her name-not Tiffany Bell-the woman who writes for the [*New York Times*]

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Grace] Glueck?

MR. WEBER: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Roberta] Smith?

MR. WEBER: Yes. Yeah, I used to be very friendly with Roberta, and then I got the impression that she wasn't there really to chat, talk to me; she was there to do her job of, like, reviewing and all, and so I kind of-I stepped way back from the critics, although I knew some. I didn't really-sometimes I was interested in their ideas, but I didn't really hang out with them too much. You know, they just weren't part of the circle of people. I had other people I would call when I wanted to get some publicity or tried to get them to do something, articles of publicity.

You mentioned Howard Hughes and all. What is his name? The critic guy.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Robert Hughes. He is Australian.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, he wrote that book about Australia. He was living on Prince Street, real close to West Broadway. And I never really saw him very much in my gallery, which was kind of astonishing to me. He was writing-he was doing the criticism for *Time* magazine for a long time after Rosalind Constable stopped, who was a friend of mine. And I could never get him into the gallery. It was, like, amazing. You know, I asked him a few times, and then I just gave up. So I have always had rather ambivalent feelings about him, although I liked what

he did, and I liked what he wrote about Australia.

And I did a lot of work in Australia. That will probably come up later, but I showed all of the Aboriginal artists. I was the first person ever to show them outside of Australia.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Really?

MR. WEBER: I even brought a couple of them to New York for the opening of the show, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What year was that?

MR. WEBER: I spent a lot of time down there. I have a catalogue. It would have been in the '90s, mid-'90s probably, and I got connections for them for other places, both museums. And I sold the piece to the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art], but I insisted that it not go into the folk art section, that it had to be-if they were going to buy, it had to enter as a contemporary painting in the contemporary painting department, not as folk art.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That is great.

MR. WEBER: It was painting. I did the same thing to Brooklyn [Museum of Art]. I love that work; it's just astonishing. It was such a privilege to rub elbows with those guys.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Were you involved at all with that show at the [Musee National d'Art Moderne Centre] Pompidou in 1989 called "Le Magaciens de la Terre" [1989]?

MR. WEBER: De la Terre.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MR. WEBER: I saw it, but I wasn't involved in it. There was a lot of African art there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, there were some Australian or-

MR. WEBER: I don't remember the Australian.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The New Zealanders or-

MR. WEBER: I don't remember the Australian.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Native American.

MR. WEBER: It was a weird show. I'm not so sure I liked it so well, although I liked the African things that were there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There was a Haitian installation, as well, I remember.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, yeah, I forgot who did that. Pontus Hulten, was he still the director there? Maybe.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It just came to mind when you were speaking of-

[Audio break.]

-Aboriginal.

MR. WEBER: I was at the opening of that, and then I was at the 25th anniversary.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Wow.

MR. WEBER: I knew Pontus. I was astonished that the French would hire him, because he was-he had been the director of the Moderne Museet in Stockholm. That France would go outside of their country to get a director for their brand-new, wonderful museum in Paris-they did, though, and he was great, Pontus, wonderful guy.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, if you would like, we could stop now.

MR. WEBER: Okay.

[Audio break.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking to John Weber at his home in Chatham, New York, on April

the fourth, at around noon, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

I think the last time we were talking about was how has the market for American art changed in your lifetime within the U.S., regionally and internationally-and you more or less illuminated the fact that the scene was always international, and you were speaking about exchanging artists around the globe with other dealers and-do you want to elaborate on that a little more?

MR. WEBER: Well, maybe. I don't know what more I can say except the difference. There was a difference, and the difference was that in the size of the whole situation, the art world in all of its manifest arms, was a lot smaller than it is now. You know, and there were galleries who were dealing internationally with artists, not so many, but then there weren't so many galleries that were dealing in contemporary art, say, in the '60s, early '70s. It was sort of very unusual. And, you know, whatever, whatever that implies. I think it's just more of the same thing, but bigger, at this point.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, do you think that same ratio exists between serious high-end dealers and middle-range local dealers? I mean, you know, you get-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, probably yeah. I would think the same thing. I don't know. It is difficult dealing in ratios because the art world was so small then, but, I mean, proportionally.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The reason I ask is that there was awhile back in the '80s when the galleries were springing up on the Lower East Side like mushrooms, and-

MR. WEBER: Briefly. Was that in the '80s, or the '70s?

MR. MCELHINNEY: That was, I think, mostly in the '80s.

MR. WEBER: Really? I thought it was more in the '70s, but-you may be right-late '70s. Well, that was a strange phenomenon, because in general the art world kind of-if there is one thing, it serves a real estate interest. And whenever, like, the artists first, and the galleries afterwards, went into an area-like, SoHo would be a typical example-it would then turn into some sort of real estate goldmine for everybody.

But in the case of the Lower East Side, where there were some storefront galleries, it really didn't last; they couldn't make an impact in that area because of the fact that it was still a very poor, working-class neighborhood. And number one, there was some resistance to the people going down there. You would see on Avenue D, or what have you, a limousine occasionally, and that was sort of funny. But they essentially died or moved, like International Monument, you know, the group around Peter Halley and, God, what was some of the other people-Meyer Vaisman, the guy who did the kind of toy like objects. I forget his name.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Tom] Otterness.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, well, Otterness was somebody else. He wasn't with International. I think Jeff Koons might have been. They all-the stay on the Lower East Side was very, very short, just because of the fact that there was a lot of-there was resistance to having these galleries in there running the spaces that should be candy stores and all of that, so that the neighborhood didn't like it, whereas the neighborhoods where they had developed before, they weren't so much living neighborhoods, although SoHo turned out to be-Chelsea now, there is obviously just warehouses. There is just no place for people to live, for the most part. But the Lower East Side just kind of came and went very quickly.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you feel about the evolution over in Chelsea, over near the river. That whole complex that-

MR. WEBER: Well, I think it was good. You know, SoHo was being taken over by the fashion industry. I think that my ex-wife, Anina Nosei, was the first person ever to leave SoHo. She had this nice place on Prince Street, 100 [Prince] Street, and Prada wanted to rent it for some unbelievable amount of money at the time. It seemed like it was a lot, like \$8,000 a month or so, and she had a 10-year lease, and she took that lease to the bank and got advances on it, and then bought this big space in Chelsea on 22nd Street. She was one of the first people over there, actually.

And I thought it was a healthy thing, because as I said, SoHo was changing so radically that it used to be just art, and then there was a point just before I started leaving where people would come down, crowd on the streets on Saturday, and none of them even knew that that had been or was still an art area.

[Audio break, tape change.]

It was all just people going down there to buy their clothes from Armani or what have you. It was only the very lower part of SoHo which did survive and still does with people like-Jeffrey Deitch, is it?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. WEBER: Yeah, he's still down there, right?

MR. MCELHINNEY: And Karp.

MR. WEBER: No-is Karp still down there?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think so.

MR. WEBER: I didn't realize he was. I know that-it's Jeffrey Deitch, right, who has the place on Broome Street and then the big lumber store?

MR. MCELHINNEY: But OK Harris is in the same place, I think.

MR. WEBER: I don't know if that's correct, because Deitch had his own small space and then the big warehouse on Grand. I think OK Harris was on West Broadway, lower down. Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Still there.

MR. WEBER: They were one of the early, early, early people in SoHo-he and Paula Cooper.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, we've got a list of questions here. Are there any past members of your staff who influenced you or the gallery?

MR. WEBER: No. No. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: But last week you shared that certain careers started in your-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, well, that's different. I influenced them. They didn't influence me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see. Well-

MR. WEBER: Big difference.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's clear enough. But your hirelings were never, sort of, influential, or came in to work with some amazing idea that you would use, or an artist, or anybody like that?

MR. WEBER: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You were in the driver's seat the whole time.

MR. WEBER: Yes. None of them I ever hired as director, and-well, it was funny because, you know, I was married to Joyce Nereaux for a long time. She was sort of *the* director. And so the people that were working there were either selling stuff or secretaries or a registrar, et cetera, but they weren't people that would-that I made a partnership with, because they were controlling X amount of really interesting artists. They weren't. I never did that. I always picked my own artists.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Let me just ask another aspect of the question we were addressing.

MR. WEBER: And also, interestingly enough, if I can interrupt you-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sure, go ahead.

MR. WEBER: In almost all cases I started them out from, like, an artist-you know, their first shows. I wasn't like some dealers who would take people from other galleries who were in their mid-career and da da da dum. I always started the people out from the very beginning. I remember selling Ryman's major works for under \$100-major, major works for under three or \$400.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you were a launching point for a lot of careers?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Both artists and dealers?

MR. WEBER: Yes. I never thought of it in those terms, but that's correct.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What artists remain in your mind as being, you know, outstanding relationships

professionally?

MR. WEBER: In terms of relationships or in terms of-

MR. MCELHINNEY: I mean in terms of you as a dealer. I mean, you know, husbanding a career and then how the career evolves. And is there any artist who you feel like, wow, I'm really happy I was part of that process?

MR. WEBER: I think for the most part I was happy with pretty much all of them. Some were a pain in the ass as people, and I had to go through that, you know, sort of. If they were-if I didn't necessarily like them as people, they could still be good artists.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sure.

MR. WEBER: There was a period of time where I was thinking, well, they're good artists; they also have to be good people, but experience did not hold me out on that one.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, just-

MR. WEBER: And also I had friends who were, like, very close friends who were artists and I wasn't really that familiar with their work, and I always would think, geez, you know, this is really a very nice person. I really hope I like the artwork because if I-the artwork that they're doing-because if I don't, that's going to put a real stress on the situation, which it did in some cases when I didn't like the work that they did.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, well, you don't have to like the work to like them, I guess.

MR. WEBER: Well, I kind of-at a certain period of time they kind of went together and I did, actually.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, who, in particular-could you unfold a couple of case histories here for us, artists-you know, artists who were just a dream to work with or others, you know, who were a pain in the butt to work with?

MR. WEBER: Well, the pain in the butt, that would not be very good to talk about that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, this is just-this is the Archives, you know.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, I know, but the pain in the butt might read the Archives, too, and not like what I would have to say.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, then let's be positive.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, who were your outstanding, like, dream artists?

MR. WEBER: The amalgamate of the work and the personality?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, the person, the work, the whole package.

MR. WEBER: Well, I always thought that Smithsonian was a super guy-you know, unbelievable, although I didn't start him out. He started out with the Dwan Gallery, but I kind of helped him along there, and then when the Dwan closed, I helped him on my own. And he was a very nice person. He was sort of a friend. We'd hang out together and go to movies-science fiction movies in Times Square-many, many, many science fiction movies in Times Square. That was sort of something we always did. And we drank a lot at Max's Kansas City and duh duh duh dum. It was a whole kind of ambiance there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So-

MR. WEBER: Dorothea Rockburne was another one-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. WEBER: -that used to be hanging out at Max's and was a pretty good artist that I was involved in for some period of time. There were personal problems there, but-I did show a lot of women, which was sort of-I think I touched on that at the last interview-which was kind of untypical at the time. Women artists didn't have it so easy for some reason, less so-less so in terms of difficulty in the post-abstract expressionist time, but the Abstract Expressionist women, they had to compete with men who didn't really like them or like the fact that they were women, and that was really difficult for those people to deal with things.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Who do you mean, like Hartigan?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, Grace Hartigan to a certain extent.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Frankenthaler?

MR. WEBER: Well, I never had too much knowledge of Frankenthaler-Helen-but she would be part of it, too. Louise Nevelson, Eva Hesse, et cetera.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Did you know Tom Doyle?

MR. WEBER: Oh, yeah, I showed Tom-the sculptor, yeah. When I say I, I the Dwan Gallery showed Tom Doyle, the sculptor. I always liked Eva better.

MR. MCELHINNEY: He's a good guy, though. Do you like Tom?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, he was a very straight-arrow guy. I liked him, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: He's just across the line down in Litchfield.

MR. WEBER: I didn't know that. Really, in Connecticut?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, in Roxbury, Connecticut, yeah.

MR. WEBER: He's teaching down there or what?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, he's just living down there and working down there. A good friend of mine, now deceased, was his father-in-law.

MR. WEBER: Oh, father-in-law.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MR. WEBER: But he was-that wasn't-what's her name? He was married to-I'm blanking on her name now-Eva Hesse.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, he was. Yeah, that's why I asked you about Tom.

MR. WEBER: So the father-in-law-it's Eva's father that you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, wife number two, which is Jane Miller.

MR. WEBER: Oh, I didn't know that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, the daughter of Arthur Miller.

MR. WEBER: I didn't know her.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. She's a-

MR. WEBER: Oh, I think I did meet her.

MR. MCELHINNEY: She's a textile artist, I think.

MR. WEBER: When Arthur Miller was working, he was living in the Chelsea Hotel, right?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, yeah, but-I mean, he spent-when I knew him, he was mostly, yeah, out in the country-a house out in the country. He had an apartment in town on 68th Street.

MR. WEBER: He didn't-but he had lived in the Chelsea [Hotel]?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, back in the '60s.

MR. WEBER: That's when I used to-I used to go there a lot-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, he had the house in Connecticut since the '50s and another one since the '40s. So, anyway, small world.

Are there any artists who you could recall who had notable studio arrangements or an unusual working practice? Because I think-I mean, a part of the goals of the Archives here is also to find some insight into the creative practice of artists through the knowledge of that that you would have as a dealer, like-

MR. WEBER: Studio?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, like Smithson; how did he work? Or Rockburne or -

MR. WEBER: Well, Robert has this office, and it was sort of the precursor of-what is that big building where all the artists are living in New York City?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Westbeth [Artists' Community, Greenwich Village, New York]?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, Westbeth. It was a precursor to Westbeth, which was on Greenwich Street, and it was a four-story building with maybe-four-story loft building with, like, two lofts on each floor. And it was owned by-it was like a governmental thing, like Westbeth was. And Smithson and his wife, Nancy Holt, had one of the floors there, and he did his work there, although a lot of the work was out-Smithson, like most of the minimal artists, the actual work was prefabricated by other people. So Smithson with his Sites / Non-sites, the actual non-site, the containers and all, he didn't make those. You know, the ziggurat forms and what have you, they were fabricated. So he didn't really have a working studio with all of the tools and what have you that you would associate with a sculptor who's making stuff.

I remember that he was wild about mirrors, and he had in this one room, sort of a dining room/living room area, he had-the whole ceiling was one giant mirror. And he had a mirror table to eat on, so you got that kind of reflection back and forth. And, of course, his work involved-the actual artwork involved mirrors a lot, particularly the early ones. You know, they were mostly about mirrors, the kind you looked into, and it was a hexagonal form and things lined totally with mirrors.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Someone else made a piece like that. Was it-[Lucas] Samaras had this thing that you walk through. It was called *Mirrors* [*Mirrored Room*, 1966].

MR. WEBER: Oh, really? I never knew that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Now that you're describing it, I was having a vague kind of memory of it.

MR. WEBER: We showed him a bit in California-Lucas. He was sort of instrumental in my box show also. He was a strange guy. He was a performance artist also. He was in some of the early happenings with Oldenburg-of which I was also involved in-in the pre-'60s? Yeah, I guess it was.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. Kaprow and-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, Kaprow, Whitman, all those early people that the term "happening" was invented to apply to their work-another way of saying performance. The old *Store* days of Oldenburg and all-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I guess a lot of people are curious how that kind of art gets sold or how it gets-

MR. WEBER: Well, they were objects, so it wasn't hard to sell them, you know. I did that show, "Environments, Situations, Spaces" at Martha Jackson in-when was it, 1960, '61. I had a whole wall of Oldenburg, that the pieces were for sale, the plaster pieces with the red stockings and things like that, and they were sold individually. That was the first time he'd ever shown anything uptown, because he did have the Third Street space.

And then we did a show, and I was fully associated with the Dwan Gallery-we did a show of his where we just brought him out to California and he spent like a year there making objects. He liked California so well that he stayed there longer. He'd use the studio to ship the stuff back to New York. He really loved California and L.A. Yeah, he-yes, he and Patti.

We used to sell his stuff, the big ones like the giant hamburger and things like that. They used to sleep in the giant hamburger; it was their bed in New York. And I had that in a show of his, and the price of it at the time was \$1,100 for this big piece that was-you know, it was just a bed-sized hamburger. Amazing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MR. WEBER: Prices were very different. His drawings were \$25 each-original drawings.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That was his first wife, right?

MR. WEBER: Patti, yeah-yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Patti. Then he married Hannah Wilke. Was that-

MR. WEBER: Yes, I believe so, yeah, Hannah-dear Hannah. That's a little box of Hannah's up there. See the little

circular thing?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, I see it, yeah, yeah. Apparently-

MR. WEBER: That dates from that time.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I didn't see that [Chelsea] Pier show this year, the Armory show, but apparently there was a large, huge-there were a number of people who were showing this large exhibition of her work-all periods from the, sort of-

MR. WEBER: Oh nice, I didn't know that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -nudes with the chewing gum to the cancer, you know.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, the chewing gum things are kind of weird, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Did you ever handle her?

MR. WEBER: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay.

MR. WEBER: She was around, but I just never-you can't handle them all.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I guess so.

Well, I guess the next question that's germane to this and is also on the list is, what are the qualities that attract you to an artist at first, and do you go by what you like or do you try to anticipate what the public or your clients might like?

MR. WEBER: Do I identify with something I like in their work?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I guess the question-

MR. WEBER: Do I go by what I like?

MR. MCELHINNEY: If I were to paraphrase-

MR. WEBER: "Do I go by what I like" means that I am more or less making aesthetics, so that's not particularly correct; it's what I would identify with.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. WEBER: And, yeah, I mean, I chose the artists for what they were doing, and originality was the big thing for me. And if it was really original-generally it was shocking to me, and I at first rejected stuff because of that, but then I started looking at it, saying, that was a really powerful reaction; what made you react that way, good or bad? So it made me think about the work I was seeing a lot. But essentially it was-it wouldn't be what I would like, because if it was a product of the creative act, it would be-they create things that are unknown, are new, so I wouldn't know them until I actually experienced them. Do you know what I mean? Do you know the difference there?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I guess the question is-

MR. WEBER: I mean, do you follow that?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I understand what you're saying, but I guess what the question is trying to ascertain is whether or not you were using some kind of way of anticipating public reaction or client reaction.

MR. WEBER: No, no, no, not at all.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay.

MR. WEBER: It's up to the dealer to determine-to be able to convey what he or she perceives in the work is important to an audience, you know, to convey it and explain what it is and why it is, and why it's so different than anything else. You know, I always was very open to originality; I was never open to refinement. And a lot of the artwork that was done then, and a lot of the artwork now, it's taking some existing vernacular that's already out there and refining it a bit-you know, making it easier to understand, more palatable, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera-and that sort of work, I could identify very quickly, and I always turned away from it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Who-

MR. WEBER: It dilutes the experience. I mean, to really experience something totally creative and new is an amazing thing, you know. It's, like, really amazing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Who said-I don't know, this is an aphorism you hear a lot-that originality is what we already know in a way we've never considered before. In other words, that is, you're finding something new-

MR. WEBER: Well, there is a continuity in everything-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, right.

MR. WEBER: -which is what that implies, that there is some sort of continuity that continues through a whole stream of work, which I can-yeah, I can identify with that also, but it-as long as it doesn't border in the area of refining something that's already out there-you know, it's got to be really more different than that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's interesting, although this is-

MR. WEBER: Well, did I mention that to you, that the first Flavin that I saw, I almost-if he was around, I probably would have taken him on and beaten the shit out of him, or tried to.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, tell me. You didn't-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, it was a show at Green Gallery, and he was in the show with his piece that was sitting on the floor. And it was a, I think, a three-color piece made up obviously of fluorescent lights. I saw that piece and I was shocked into anger. I was thinking, you know-I always thought I was very open to new art experiences, but I'm thinking, oh, this is really the pits. You know, it's gone too far. Now you take something that belongs on the ceiling and you put it on the floor and call it art. That sucks.

So I went stomping out of the gallery, really angry, and I examined-I was smart enough to examine that reaction. I said, John, you know that-you really reacted to that work-you know, because you can react positively and negatively, and I reacted very negatively. And I got to thinking, why did that thing set me off like that? What was it about it? And so that was my first thought. My second thought was, maybe you should get to know this guy Flavin and talk to him a bit, because there may be ideas there that you're not picking up on that he might be able to help you with, which I did, and I got to really love the work and eventually ended up showing it. But my first reaction was, oh, come on, man. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's interesting-you know, in the whole course of this conversation you haven't really raised any issues of style. It doesn't seem like style is-style is something that I think-that I observe is very important to some dealers, that they might represent a particular philosophy or style of artwork, or genre-you know, they show crafts objects, or glass, or realist paintings, or abstract paintings, or they don't show any paintings at all. But it's interesting that you never really talked about style or the kind of object that you used to show. You identify qualities and sort of aesthetic notions-instead of speaking about the product it was like-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, well, it's not that I was avoiding that; it's that, you know, in general-well, I was sort of all over the board, but I eventually specialized pretty much in minimal art-American minimal art-and European work, be it earthwork type of things envisioned by Hamish Fulton or early Victor Burgin or Richard Long.

Then I got into this whole Italian thing, with the Arte Povera people, you know, which had incredible variety between each of the artists, much more so than the minimal artists, who sometimes it would be hard to tell the difference between a Judd and a Morris, and da da da da dum. With the Arte Povera, the work was signature work by each of the artists, who were involved in a very different type of work. A lot of art movements are just about where people live at a particular period of time; they don't necessarily key into each other stylistically speaking. Although the whole idea of Arte Povera-which most people don't understand. It really refers to the media the artist used in order to make their work. It was a very ordinary media-you know, "poor art"- "poor" meaning unconventional material.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, nonprecious. I mean, even-

MR. WEBER: Nontraditional yeah. Nobody is sitting around carving Jean Arp cubes out of marble sort of thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right, right-so using things like wood and stone and dirt.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MR. WEBER: Uncommon-yeah, uncommon things. Yeah, I remember the show that Walter DeMaria did for Heiner Friedrich in his gallery on Maximilianstrasse number 15, which was-he filled the whole gallery with-what was it, 50 centimeters of dirt? [The "Land Art" show, or the first *Earth Room*, Munich, 1963. DeMaria then made *New York Earth Room* in Friedrich's SoHo gallery in 1977.] There were three rooms all connected and he had them-all this dirt was put in there, the 50 centimeters of-there was a hallway that passed along the end of each of the rooms, so he put a glass thing there and you could, like, look in and see just the dirt from one room to the next to the next. It was a beautiful show, really great, really terrific exhibition. Heiner was a very good dealer before he got involved in Dia. He was one of my disciples actually, come to think of it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did you meet him?

MR. WEBER: At a Documenta, I think, in '68. He was there, and I was showing-quite a few of my artists were being featured in this particular Documenta, so he kind of followed me all around, and we got a little friendly. And I was with Anina then. And he came down to Italy and was with us for some days. I believe he was with his family; I'm not too sure. I kind of liked him, so I thought, well, you know, if this guy really likes the work, why not give him a chance enjoying it in Munich, before he moved to Cologne.

MR. MCELHINNEY: One of the questions that they're interested in having you address is, what is the difference, in your opinion, between someone who's, let's say, a university-trained or art school-trained artist, somebody, let's say, who did the B.F.A./M.F.A. route versus an autodidact, or self-taught person, or maybe a person who came to art through engineering or philosophy? Have you had any experience with any artist with those-

MR. WEBER: Well, a lot of the artists that I knew were involved in philosophy and aesthetics, but I don't think I knew any, like, crossover people like that, that I can recall. I knew a lot of the artists taught, you know, most not necessarily because they liked to but because they had to because of reasons of money, SVA [School of Visual Arts] and things like that, you know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's a day job.

MR. WEBER: Yeah. It puts bread on the table, potboiler type of thing. Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's why a lot of artists teach. I think it's a fairly time-honored habit.

So you don't really feel as if you had enough experience with self-taught or untrained -

MR. WEBER: I never met any self-taught, untrained artists. Did you? I mean, are they out there?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I think-yeah, I think there are some people, like, I don't know, what's his name?

MR. WEBER: Give me a name.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, Adolf Wölfli or-

MR. WEBER: Who?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, exactly.

MR. WEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you know, this whole genre of outsider art, which is big in Chicago-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, but that-I don't prescribe to that, you know, that whole naïve-that I would call naïve art, which I think is a valid form, but-there are people like this, you know, this sort of Grandma Moses number. There's actually a museum in Bennington devoted to her.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Howard Finster is another one.

MR. WEBER: It certainly has a place, but I just never identified with it that much. I'm not too much into figurative art, and usually the naïve is figurative-well, it's what it implies; it's naïve. Yeah, I don't know how much one wants to get into that, but the intent of the work is different from making art-fine art, what have you-I think.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So it's not in the discourse that interests you.

MR. WEBER: No. The prototype art is these, like, grandmothers living in the country somewhere on top of a mountain making painted quilts or something, I don't know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, or Howard-

MR. WEBER: It isn't mainline stuff.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or Howard Finster, who is-

MR. WEBER: I don't know of him.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -who is a Baptist preacher, or something, living in Georgia doing these paintings, or the guy that built Watts Towers-

MR. WEBER: Oh, Simon Rodia.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, or-

MR. WEBER: I liked the Watts Towers for what they were. I went there a lot, having lived in L.A. for years, you know. I liked the Watts Towers. People always wanted to visit them when they came out to California. Yeah, there was somebody in France who did a similar thing-Gillette [Jean Prosper Gilis] is the name. I forget what he did, but some sort of strange house also.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There's a place in [Lucas] Kansas, too. It's called the Garden of Eden. Some guy [S. P. Dinsmoor] kept adding to it and building and building. So, I don't know if this establishment up the road here falls under that heading-kind of-those huge heads. [Laughs.]

MR. WEBER: Those heads on the Taconic?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. WEBER: Horrific.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, they don't look like the work of a person that went to art school.

MR. WEBER: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Anyways. So, were any of your artists close or dear friends?

MR. WEBER: Oh, a lot of them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: A lot of them.

MR. WEBER: Yeah. I've always hung out with people in the art world-only people in the art world-and a lot of them are very dear friends. Like Smithson was a really close friend, Heizer. Heizer still is. And Sol LeWitt and Fred Sandback, all close friends-Judd. Flavin was a little tough-very selfish man-so we were congenial, but we weren't friends. I don't know if even "congenial" is the right term. I respected his work; I just didn't know where he was coming from. He was very materialistic. He was this poor Irish guy who grew up in Brooklyn with zero money, and I always think that he was driven not only to be an artist but also driven very strongly to be a wealthy artist, you know, which is strange. You don't run into that that often. I didn't.

But, yeah, I had a lot of friends who were-also the Europeans, like Pino Pascali was a very close friend who died many years ago. Mario Merz, who also died, was a very close friend. Boetti, who also died, was a very, very, very close friend. Whenever he came over, he'd stay with me, and his whole family would stay with me-the kids and da da da dum. They even came up here with their Afghan servant that had been with him ever since he worked in Afghanistan, in Kabul. That's where all his tapestries were done. They were always done there. He employed this whole little village to weave them, and this servant guy was somebody that he got from the village, who was just always there to help with the children, to help his wife, Annemarie, da da da dum. And I have portraits of all of them together, including the servant, around, photographs and stuff like that.

Yeah, so I was friendly with the artists. I mean, I was always friendly with, as I mentioned, broadly-even up here now, you know, I only hang out with art world people, with some exceptions, but for the most part here, mostly just art world people.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You said one of your wives, Anina Nosei, was a dealer. I mean, of course, everybody knows this-

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -but were any of your other-I don't know how many spouses you've had, or relationships-were any of your others involved in the business, too, either as artists or dealers?

MR. WEBER: Well, Joyce Nereaux and I were married for 16 years, and she was a partner in the gallery-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, okay.

MR. WEBER: -although she didn't have a lot of input in terms of decision making. She was good at selling things. She was articulate. She could get people excited and involved in it. My first wife was an artist, but she never made it. She was a sculptress. Second one, no-well, actually she had been married previously to a curator-contemporary art curator in Minneapolis, so I guess that's an art contact. And then there was Anina. Yeah, they were all pretty much involved in the art world.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you spell Nereaux? Is that her name?

MR. WEBER: Joyce Nereaux? It's N-E-R-E-A-U-X-Nereaux.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Nereaux. Oh.

MR. WEBER: To rhyme with Thoreau. That's how I had to originally remember Nereaux. What kind of name is-well, it rhymes with Thoreau, so Thoreau, Thoreau.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, we have another questions here off the list which is, do you think of yourself as part of a community or as a businessperson on your own?

MR. WEBER: That's a silly question. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well-

MR. WEBER: Both, simultaneously.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Describe your relationship with other dealers or collectors. I guess, what information-

MR. WEBER: That's so general.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -is being sought here is, as a part of a community, as a businessperson, how'd you interact with other clients and dealers, because a lot of the questions previously have to do with artists.

MR. WEBER: Well, it was part of-that was my job, to be sure that I reacted very well with the clients, to support the people who provided the support structure for the art world, be it museum people who organized shows or who bought work for the museum, or collectors who bought work for themselves, you know. I mean, that's who I worked with. These are the people who I encouraged; these are the people that I worked very hard at getting them to understand what the artwork was all about and how important it was. And a lot of them bought work from me on total speculative reasons, because I insisted that they do that. Collectors in Chicago, who, after twisting their arm forever, I got them to buy a seven-foot-square Robert Ryman painting on canvas. And they paid all of 25 or \$30,000 for it, and they were screaming, letting me know how they thought this was ridiculous for years, until it started-and they had a very big collection-until this particular work started to be a real key piece in the collection, and they finally changed.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

MR. WEBER: And now it's worth well over a million dollars-well over a million dollars. There wasn't a lot of-people wouldn't-did they-some, but not so many, would come in and really understand things and say, wow, you know, I've been wanting/following Flavin's work for years and I've been really wanting a great piece and I finally found it with you; thanks a lot, John. That didn't happen so often. It was always I would have to convince the people, through the work of the artist, that it was really important work.

And fortunately, I had a good eye, so I always managed to pick people that were pretty good early on. You know, I picked them early on. I didn't have some dogs there that, like, you know, maybe were a flash in the pan and I rode the crest for like a half a year and then the prices fell off. All of my people-all our prices have always been substantiated at auction. You know, the auction prices are these-some of the things are, like, amazing, even to me, you know, what they fetch internationally.

And there was always international support, because I was in and out of Europe. I was there a lot, so I had contacts with all the European people, like Panza-Giuseppe Panza di Biumo. Probably, I would say, at least a third of the collection, maybe half of the collection, came through me, and that's a huge collection. Huge. I was selling, like, fencelike pieces of Flavin that were 60 feet long. What can a normal collector do with something like that? But he actually had a good space for all that stuff in this village outside of Milano-Varassi.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Over the course of your career, did you see the relationship between artists and dealers, or

dealers and collectors, or dealers and dealers changing?

MR. WEBER: There wasn't any one relationship. There were always different relationships. A lot of dealers just-you know, they might have represented certain artists. They might have just got works and resold them. They might have had some sort of aesthetic theory which drove what they collected or what they presented to people; they may not have. I mean, the variation is very, very big.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Let's say, for instance, with curators-as the museums, after World War II, started more and more functioning as educational venues, or having these shows that were big teaching shows, or the Philippe de Montebello, you know, text on the wall, or the [S.] Dillon Ripley idea of the Smithsonian as being this huge easy-to-access, very instructive experience, you know, of-well, as the vision-or as the mission of museums in America changed, did you see any evidence of the mission of curators changing in how they dealt with you, or what the priorities were that they expressed to you?

MR. WEBER: Difficult to answer.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Maybe that didn't have any impact on you.

MR. WEBER: Well, I knew all of these people very well, and generally they liked the work that I showed, and so they showed it. The whole project show ideas at the Modern, where they had the little project rooms, the early ones were all by my people-Daniel Buren, et cetera, Sol LeWitt. There was curator there, a woman, Jenny Licht-Jennifer Licht-L-I-C-H-T-who was an early curator at the Modern. She eventually went to England for some-to study at the-what was it?-one of the big places there where she was doing postgraduate work in London, and she just stayed there. She married somebody English.

But, you know, I knew all of the curators from all of the museums. I knew all of the directors and the curators, because there weren't so many, and they would all come to the gallery, as would all of the people who came from Europe. That was one of the stops on the "underground railroad," so to speak, was the gallery, I guess only because I was there, so visible, and I did show a lot of European art, and I started a lot of Belgian collections and Italian collections. With the German people, German dealers like Konrad Fischer, they were showing my people very early on.

The first show of Konrad-that Konrad did in his little covered-over alley was a show of Carl Andre. There was an alleyway that people walk through, and he got permission from the city to put a roof on the alley and glass doors on either end, and that became his first gallery. It was kind of unusual-next to a strip joint and not too far away from the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf.

Yeah-I don't know. I think it was that I was always there, and maybe there weren't so many younger, enthusiastic, handsome dealers around that were smart going into Europe and being involved in that work, so I was treated very well there always by the artists, collectors, and so on and so forth-the museum people. It was an open door.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How about collectors? Are you seeing a change in the sort of spirit or attitude of collectors? I remember hearing, for instance, a story about Hirshhorn just walking into a gallery and saying, I'll take everything except that one.

MR. WEBER: They used to do that with artist's studios. I knew Joe. I've heard of him, and I've seen him, walk into an artist's studio and say, what do you want for all of it? And the artist would go, what? I love your work; I want to buy everything in the studio; what do you want for it? And inevitably the artist would come up with some figure that averaged out the work to be \$100 a piece. [Laughs.] But they were just blown away by this concept-I don't know, what?-\$50,000 or something like that. Joe was a real character.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I heard that-

MR. WEBER: I was with him one time and he played the lottery. I mean, this guy was a multimillionaire; all of the uranium of Canada was under his control and he was immensely wealthy, and I was with him in his office one time and he broke out-he was looking at the paper and he said, oh, and he took out a lottery ticket-I won! I won! He really got it off on the fact that he won \$50. And I'm thinking, this guy plays the lottery? I'd never played the lottery in my life, you know. I thought that was so funny. Good old Joe.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I heard at the opening of the museum he walked around at one point introducing himself to people with another name-

MR. WEBER: Oh really?

MR. MCELHINNEY: -saying, how do you like this dump? You know, he had this sort of pulling people's legs. Well,

that was a story told to me by the daughter of the then-head of the Smithsonian [S. Dillon Ripley was Secretary of the Smithsonian when the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden opened in 1974], who was at the opening.

MR. WEBER: What was the name of the first director [Abram Lerner]? I knew him. I was at the first opening.

MR. MCELHINNEY: At the Hirshhorn?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, the Hirshhorn.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The first director of the Hirshhorn?

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I don't remember; I don't know.

MR. WEBER: I think it was a guy from Buffalo, from the Albright-Knox. There was, at the Smithsonian-there was a tunnel that went underneath the road that went all the way around the-what was that big grassy area called?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, the Mall?

MR. WEBER: That went around the Mall, and on the other side of the road they had the Sculpture Garden, with the *Burghers of Calais* right there, and other stuff. They had a tunnel that went under the road to access this thing on the other side of the road-which the road wasn't a big deal, but, you know-I mean, it wasn't a four-lane highway, but, you know, it was road. So there was this tunnel, and I had the idea, and Dan agreed with me, that it would be nice if they put a Flavin in there-you know, a long Flavin-because there was no lighting. They were dealing with how in the hell are we going to light this? And I said, do it with a work of art. It would be wonderful. So Flavin designed this piece where, when you're looking at-through this tunnel from the museum end; he had designed this piece that went on the ceiling so that it reversed the form to perspective. Instead of going like this towards the end, it went like this towards the end.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, I see.

MR. WEBER: It presented this, like, really unusual kind of contradiction. And I think it was pink and it sort of flushed out the *Burghers of Calais*, because that was right at the entranceway, and it made them pink and cute. But the people wouldn't do it, you know. They didn't accept the project. And I was devastated. It was-you know, I'm talking about \$25,000, you know, something very inexpensive like that. Can you imagine if they had that piece? Can you imagine-I mean, it was a great fucking piece, and it was just a great idea. And so they probably spent double just to put regular lighting in there. Crazy.

[Audio break, tape change.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, yes, it's the-who was the guy-Senator [William] Proxmire who had the Golden Fleece Award about the army spending a grand on a hammer like that, so-

MR. WEBER: Oh, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Seems like it would be a bargain in light of that. Anyway, but have you any other Hirshhorn anecdotes?

MR. WEBER: God, what was the name of the first director? There were a lot of exhibitions down there when it first got off the ground that we were involved in, group shows that had this person, that person in it. So I was going back and forth from New York to Washington a lot, but I don't remember any other stories of Joe.

Very friendly guy, I remember that. He was not snobbish at all. You know, he was just a regular fellow. I was always extremely at ease with him. I liked him a lot. He was really something else, old Joe.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I worked with his stepson, John Cunningham, who was a Skidmore College sculptor, up at Yale. I don't know if you knew him.

MR. WEBER: The name rings a bell.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was his last wife, I guess, the son of Hirshhorn's last wife [Olga Zatorsky Hirshhorn, his fourth and last wife].

MR. WEBER: Is Skidmore in Saratoga?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, yeah it is.

MR. WEBER: I think that's where the guy is-is that where the Tang Gallery is? They call the museum the Tang?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MR. WEBER: You know what the name of the new director is?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, I don't.

MR. WEBER: Try John Weber.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It is John Weber?

MR. WEBER: It is John Weber, and we know of each other. He came from the West Coast, and there was always that thing where you had a few e-mails back and forth. I haven't been there since he took over, but there is a show opening on the seventh, which is in a couple of days. I might go over there and check it out.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What is it? Do you know what the show is?

MR. WEBER: No, I think it's some sort of group show. One could find out.

MR. MCELHINNEY: In your career-what would you say are the most powerful influences in your career-people, art, movements, technological developments?

MR. WEBER: That's awfully broad.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I guess you could just-I mean, you've addressed a lot of these things already. Okay who are or who were the most important writers on American art in your experience who you had interactions with or who your artists cared about?

MR. WEBER: I always liked Irving Sandler. Did you know Irving?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Met him once.

MR. WEBER: Very smart. Very wonderful art historian, writer, and very, very friendly. I'm sure there were others.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How about critics? You said Robert Pincus Witten?

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: He was a guy you knew?

MR. WEBER: Well, I knew Pincus Witten, you know, and didn't generally agree with him on his aesthetics. He seemed a little bit out to lunch to me, but I always kind of-that whole *Artforum* official critical stuff, I didn't really subscribe to particularly. People who write criticism generally attempt to mold the artwork to their own particular theory, which I think is sort of bass-ackwards [*sic*], you know what I mean? But for the most part, they all do that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, how do you feel about people like Arthur Danto or [Donald] Kuspit or-

MR. WEBER: Danto, I don't. Kuspit, bleh, you know. He was not so informed. I think he was very anti-whatever I showed, Donald Kuspit. It was always too much for him. There was a lot of-most of the critics-there weren't so many critics that really liked minimal and earthworks and all of that. They were, like, few and far-between, which was okay to me, understandable.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Were any of the journals or any of, you know, the periodicals like *October* or-

MR. WEBER: I liked *October*. That was what's her name, right?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Rosalind Krauss?

MR. WEBER: Yeah. She was sort of-I didn't necessarily agree with her, but it was a big effort to publish that thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How about, you know, the popular art journals? People like, oh, Tom Hess or even Fairfield Porter?

MR. WEBER: Well, I knew Tom when he was editor of *ARTnews*. He was a really nice guy. I liked him a lot, brilliant. Probably one of the few that I really respected, so that sort of tells my generation, doesn't it?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I guess others up here is almost an Avery Hudson; Ashbery?

MR. WEBER: John, yeah. I always thought of him more as a poet, you know? But I guess he did criticism, too, right? He was okay. He's an okay person. I never got really close to him, but John Ashbery was okay.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, he wrote for *Newsweek*, I guess, and-did we speak a little about Robert Hughes last week? You were saying he was-

MR. WEBER: I think Hughes uses his criticism to further his own particular interests. I don't know if that's too controversial to say, but it's something I always felt. He wasn't interested in the cutting edge stuff at all.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Hilton Kramer.

MR. WEBER: Ugh, a joke. He was John Canady's-when I first started, John Canady was the honcho at the *Times*. He was very conservative, and Kramer sort of followed in his footsteps. And he was also very Greenbergian, I think Kramer was, correct?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I wouldn't quarrel with that point of view, yeah.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, that particular movement I really didn't get on with at all.

MR. MCELHINNEY: "Cultureberg," as they call it?

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How about Russell, John Russell, or any of those people at the *Times*? Anybody at the *Times* that you-

MR. WEBER: Russell was a familiar name. I think I liked him.

MR. MCELHINNEY: John Russell.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And any of the current ones like [Michael] Kimmelman or [Michael] Brenson, [Grace] Glueck?

MR. WEBER: Well, Grace has been around forever. She's sort of a phenomenon. Kimmelman I know of, but I really don't know him that well. The current people I don't really know that well, actually.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How important do you think a good review was to sales, to actually being able to get an artist's work out there and find collectors to buy it? I know that, for example, the gentleman we talked about earlier, Tom Doyle's late father-in-law, had all sorts of troubles with the press, and there was a direct corollary, at times, between a review and how long a show on Broadway would run. You know, the accountants could close it if the ticket sales were down a little bit and the review was bad. But was there a corollary to that in the art world or in your experience? Did a glowing review-

MR. WEBER: Well, a good review by somebody serious brought in the people, and that was positive, because it gave an opportunity for more people to see the exhibition than would have without a review. So if we ever got well, we got reviewed quite often by the *Times*, and whenever we did, I knew that there would be a whole load of people coming in to see the work.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But how often did that translate into income for the gallery?

MR. WEBER: Well, without the people there, there would be no income, right?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, but I mean, how often did a review knock a collector, pondering a person, off the fence into a sale?

MR. WEBER: That's hard to say. It brought the people in, and once the people were in there, and I had them, you know, and if they had any curiosity about the work, I would be there. That's one thing I always did. If anybody ever asked any question of my backup group, the secretaries or what have you, the person at the front desk, even to the extent of "may I see the price list?" I would know about it and I would go out and chat with the people, after a certain point. I wasn't somebody that, like, as soon as someone came into the gallery, to go and tackle them and all of that. But if there was an interest, I would talk to them about the work. And in many cases, it ended up as a sale or it ended up as a relationship, which then eventually ended up bringing revenue into the gallery, because the collectors-there were some collectors that I was very friendly with. Like the Tremaines were very close friends. I loved them and they were very supportive of the gallery.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, who were some of your primary collectors? Which collections were you actively involved with helping to build?

MR. WEBER: Well, there weren't so many that I wasn't actively involved in helping to build, but the Tremaine collection, they had an incredible collection. They had been collecting since probably the '30s. And they started out collecting Cubist, original-and Emily and Burton Tremaine-T-R-E-M-A-I-N-E, Tremaine. They were from Hartford and they very much endowed the Wadsworth Athenaeum with a lot of money. And I think a lot of their collection eventually went there.

There were a lot of people-there was a woman, whose name I forget now-I think there was a Carol Steinberg, who had a very big collection in Boston. Most of the people I did work with-you know, most of the collectors, the people in Chicago, the three or four or five major collectors there I worked with, California obviously-like the Weisman collection-W-E-I-S-M-A-N-Marcia [Simon] Weisman, Beverly Hills; Victor Ganz; the-what were their names, the people who owned so much real estate in California who started-one of the brothers-there were two brothers that started a huge collection out there, whose name escapes me at this point-and the Europeans. I mentioned Panza. There were a lot of people all over that I worked with that pretty much trusted me. If I recommended something, they'd move on it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Were there any institutions for which you worked as a consultant or as a buyer-

MR. WEBER: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -or anything like that?

MR. WEBER: No. I mean, they all came to my gallery. [Phone rings.]

Anyway. Yeah, when the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago first started, which was-the Art Institute of Chicago had a board, but there were no Jews on the board, and there were a lot of Jews who collected art in Chicago, and so they decided to start their own museum, which was the Institute of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, with a little office building; the first one was this space in an office building. And I worked with them very closely.

The first show was the show of pink and gold of Dan Flavin [*Alternating pink and gold*, 1967]. It filled the whole museum, one piece. And they did a big show of Alice Ayccock; they did a show of Sol LeWitt, and other people.

Yeah, the institutions, there weren't so many at that point, so I sold to all of them-you know, Kansas City, L.A., Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, so on and so forth-Oberlin.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oberlin in Ohio?

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you think these art fairs and the Internet have changed the gallery business? You know, like the Basel Kunstmesse or the Armory Show here at the piers, or the Navy Pier show in Chicago?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, I used to do a lot of them. Chicago, that was funny, was way out on the end of the pier, with a couple of submarines parked on the way out. It was nice. Nice space. They were fun to do. You got to meet the people. In Chicago all of the collectors who generally their collection was not open to the public, during the art fair, they'd open their stuff up to the public. And, you know, they really made an effort, because they knew that the people who were involved in the fair had really spent a lot of time and effort on it, and so they did dinners and open house and what have you to support the fairs, which was nice. In Basel they didn't do that so much. It was more cut and dried, but a lot of stuff could be sold there.

But I didn't really like the idea of art fairs in general, because I felt that it was pretty much just duplicating the efforts of the galleries, and that if they served a purpose, it would be for the smaller galleries that were, say, in Arnhem or what have you, in sort of out-of-the-way places, could come together and meet some of their colleagues and everybody could see everybody else's artists and so on and so forth. That was a positive function. It was one of the few of an art fair, because it was commodity driven, and, you know, art is a commodity, but I don't like to-I never liked to emphasize that particular aspect of it, particularly.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, I understand. You'd say that while art might generate a return in the long run, that that wouldn't be the reason why.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, true. Yeah, exactly. No, I'm glad you said that. When I had a sense that people were buying something, not because they really liked it, because it was a chic thing to do, or it would be, quote, unquote, a good investment, I would discourage them from doing that. I actually said to a lot of people, just go out and buy gold; it's more sure than gambling on art. Your chances of hitting a great artist that you buy for \$300 and you're

going to sell it for half a million, it's like a chance-one in a million chances that you're going to do that, so, you know, if you're into money, go invest in the money market. If you're into art, invest in the art market for the fact that you appreciate and you think it's a substantial contribution to society, and has been for thousands of years.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So did you see the collectors like Hirshhorn or-who would be another one? I guess nowadays the British-Saatchi is the big-

MR. WEBER: Well, I had a lot to do with Saatchi, actually-sold him a lot of stuff. He's been around for a long time, Charles Saatchi.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MR. WEBER: Charles and his brother.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But these guys were like potlatch chieftains; they could come with sacks of gold-

MR. WEBER: [Laughs] Love it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -taking the art away. But-

MR. WEBER: And resell it eventually, which I really was disappointed about. There were collectors who used art as a, kind of, tax situation and an evasion of tax situation; the whole donation of work, you could take it off your income tax in a period of time. I don't think they're still doing that, are they?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, like if you were to buy art as-

MR. WEBER: If you bought art and you own it for a few years and you gave it to an institution, you could deduct the value-the value at that time of the artwork-off of your income tax. I don't think people still do that. I don't even know if people even remember that that was a possibility some time ago, which was a great encouragement for people buying art. You know, why not have an object instead of giving it all to the government?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, now that they're going to outsource the IRS to India, things should get very confusing.

MR. WEBER: Where are you? Well, I'm in Calcutta. You even get information there. You know, you call up 411 and you get Calcutta to give you Mr. Jones's number down the road.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You get called in for an audit in Delhi.

MR. WEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Let's see what the next question is. Well, I think we're in the flow here a little bit more.

MR. WEBER: Weren't we always?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I guess we were. I'm just trying to make sure I'm hitting all these questions because we get so many-

MR. WEBER: Did you play this back to somebody and they said, that's all fine and good but you're not asking the questions?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, no, no, I'm just-this is-

MR. WEBER: Oh, okay, because you didn't do this so much in the first round.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'm just trying to make sure I'm hitting all the bases here.

You know, we talked a little earlier about critics. Did you have any with whom you were close-you know, with whom you felt a strong rapport or conversation?

MR. WEBER: Well, I mean, Sandler I mentioned.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Irving Sandler, yeah.

MR. WEBER: I think there were others, but they don't come to mind.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did you find yourself working with museums? You said that most of the curators would come to you?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, they would come in.

MR. MCELHINNEY: At the gallery?

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How often would you encounter them-

MR. WEBER: And I would go out there for openings. You know, if there was somebody in a show, I'd always go for the opening, particularly if it was a one-person show or an important group show.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Would they come to see you, too, at these art fairs that you-

MR. WEBER: The artists?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, the curators.

MR. WEBER: Oh, yeah, the curators would, and sometimes the artists would and I'd shoo them away. I'd say, this is not a place for artists.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

MR. WEBER: We don't have the time for you and it's, like, a waste of your time, and if you really see how the art world handles your work in the art fairs, you're going to throw up. I remember Richard Serra came to an early art fair in Basel, and he was so angry I thought he was going to step out of the art world, because there isn't a lot of sensitivity at the art fairs.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No.

MR. WEBER: It's mostly-it's buying by your ear rather than your heart and your mind-"what's hot" syndrome.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So how would you like your gallery and your career to be understood by future generations of scholars and dealers and artists?

MR. WEBER: Well, put it in the context of when it was and what was going down and what was being promoted, what was not being promoted, because I was always pushing stuff in people's face that they not always wanted to see or hear about. But my belief in their work-and the quality of the work itself-was such that they had to eventually get it, which they did for the most part.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what would you say-what would you write as your epitaph, as it were?

MR. WEBER: Oh, come on.

[They laugh.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, what would you put under the monument to yourself that they're going to erect somewhere someday?

MR. WEBER: Well, I doubt if they will do that, and, you know, I don't know; I was just somebody who-I was in the art world. I was one of the people dedicated, committed in the art world over that period of time.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Let me ask you this: Having left the art world today, who do you feel like you want to walk in the gallery and shake their hand and say, keep it up, son-or lady or whoever-keep it up; that's the idea, and who would you like to go in and dope slap?

MR. WEBER: Well, I don't know that many people in the gallery field nowadays. Well, I do, but, you know, not living in New York, I don't have the kind of daily intimate contact that I used to have, but there are some galleries that stand out, like Esso Gallery, I think, does a good job. Esso-E-S-S-O-Esso Gallery.

MR. MCELHINNEY: E-S-S-O like the oil company.

MR. WEBER: They're out on 22nd Street [531 West 26th Street]. They used to be in the Lower East Side on Renwick or somewhere for years [original location was 191 Chrystie Street, New York]. Yeah, it's a cutting-edge, avant-garde gallery and they take some risk, and the principals are very nice. This Italian guy, Filippo Fossati and his wife, Jennifer Bacon, are very good people. They run a very tight ship.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Picasso said he would rather be remembered as a great lover than as a great artist. How would you like to be remembered?

MR. WEBER: Well, Picasso certainly lived up to that end, so to speak-no pun intended-right?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. WEBER: I don't know. It's a very difficult question. Obviously, I would like for the respect that has been engendered to me over the years to maintain itself in some form or another, but I don't really know what that means. You know, did I mention the French government gave me a number?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, you didn't.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, they made me a chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, which means a knight of the order of arts and letters, and-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Je comprend.

MR. WEBER: I think in terms of the last century, 20th-century dealers, contemporary, I think that the only other person they ever did that to, for an American, was Castelli, so that puts me in good company.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I would dare say.

MR. WEBER: Good old Leo-my old buddy, Leo. Yeah, so I have this little ribbon and nobody ever knows what it means, and sometimes when I wear a suit, I put it on my lapel. It's this little green slash on the side. And I actually have a beautiful medal that I've only worn once, when they presented it to me at the French Embassy facilities on Fifth Avenue. The minister of culture came over and gave me three kisses, or two, and I had to give a talk, which was sort of interesting for everybody. I talked about the per capita support that the French government gave its art world, or artists, as in relation to the American, and it was something like 23€ as opposed to \$8.50. Like, whatever. You know, the French was so much per capita more it was astonishing, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you feel about that today? There doesn't seem to be a whole lot of movement on the part of the government to reinstate an NEA-like agency that would individually support artists. It now seems to be all going to institutions.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, that's a pity because the old NEA grants were very important to people. When they got them, it was like paradise revisited.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I know; I had one.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, they were great.

MR. MCELHINNEY: A big one-yeah, it was great. But, yeah, you look at-I mean, I know-

MR. WEBER: They never give them to dealers, which is a pity. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, maybe if the political landscape changes and the powers that be decide that the NEA needs to be revitalized, maybe they'll introduce a category to help dealers.

You know, a lot of artists-you hear a lot of artists saying, wow, you know, what the British do for their artists; Ireland, you pay no tax on your income from art, et cetera, which is another kind of-

MR. WEBER: I don't know what the British do in particular. What do they do?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, they have a kind of-there are a number of awards, and of course, there is the dole, as it were, which is-I mean, there's a kind of art dole.

MR. WEBER: Oh, really, like there used to be in the Netherlands.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I believe so. I'm not too sure of the details, but I know-

MR. WEBER: Well, there's the one Turner Prize that everybody goes wild over every year in England-who's going to get the Turner? Who gives a shit? It's just this one little award. We have so many other things like that, better than that, in America, or we used to.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. WEBER: But the Turner is like-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, the Turner-

MR. WEBER: It's crazy.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I saw that exhibition this year. It was-

MR. WEBER: The candidates?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. It rounds up a lot of excitement, but that's a town which is really changing too. I mean, there's a lot of Camden Town, Whitehall, East End of London is all hot now, so-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, like New York City; it always keeps jumping around. What's the name of the guy who came from Spain-Vicente Todoli, who is now the director of the Tate Modern in London?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, yeah.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, he was a friend of mine. He was a young curator in Valencia when I had the gallery in Spain, and we became very close friends. He was this wild young guy, really great, driving a motorcycle-huge motorbike-living a very fast life, and then he went up to Gulbenkian Foundation up in Porto, in the northern part of Spain [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal]. And then he jumped from there over to the Tate Modern. It was great. Very nice guy-really super modern. I like him a lot. I'm very happy to see where he is. And that new museum, there is something pretty interesting also, the old power works-power works, do you say? Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think it's a spring bank power plant or something that they turned into-yeah.

MR. WEBER: I saw the first show there, which was not too interesting-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Amazing space.

MR. WEBER: -some woman whose work-I forget who it was, but it was not so nice. I forget her name.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you feel about the new MoMA?

MR. WEBER: You know, I have a confession to make. I haven't seen it yet.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, okay.

MR. WEBER: Isn't that weird? I mean, I have gone down to the city, but I'm usually there for such a short period of time, that once I go to exhibitions and what have you, that I want to see, I-I haven't seen the Whitney either. I have to see that because of this whole reconstruction of the Peace Tower, which I was involved in in L.A. in 1966-which I have an issue with *Artforum* on because they give me virtually no credit whatsoever for that endeavor in the issue of-the big issue of *Artforum* now. It pisses me off. But anyway-

MR. MCELHINNEY: What do you think about-

MR. WEBER: I didn't even know that they were rebanking it-I mean, redoing that show. I mean, I was the one who had the idea. Mark [di Suvero] was showing with the Dwan Gallery. That's why he was there. And I was the one who found the site, you know, and rented it for three months on La Cienega and Sunset Boulevard, and Mark did the tower, and then we solicited paintings from all these people. There were like 400 paintings hanging on billboards in the background, you know, and they gave them all to us and we raffled them off, anonymously wrapped up, because some things like Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg, that you can see in the reproduction of the *Artforum*, if you look really closely, which one it is on which billboard-top lower left, upper left. We wrapped them all up so that people-you know, they didn't know what they got, and we sold them for like, I don't know, \$50 anonymously.

And at the time, the article in there that Peter Plagens wrote-I wished they'd talked to me-they forgot a really key issue of it, because Denise Rene, who has the gallery in Paris, was kind of involved in-she was very liberal and I knew her very well-her and her boyfriend Hans-Hans, Hans, Hans-he has a gallery in Germany, Hans whatever-and she knew of the tower. She came out for the opening. She said to me that there was a government that would be very interested in buying the whole thing, the tower and all of the paintings, but that the government insisted that it remain anonymous, and that nobody would know its name until after the fact, which government it was.

And so I went before the committee and pitched this to them, and they decided-they got very paranoid. They thought, you know, this could be America and they just want to take this stuff and destroy it because it's nonsense, or, you know, we don't want people making antiwar demonstrations and so we'll just wipe it out, or what have you. We didn't know. And so we turned her down. And then subsequently, like a year later, she said that it was Castro and Cuba.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What year was this again?

MR. WEBER: Sixty-six.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sixty-six.

MR. WEBER: And if we had known that, we would have, like, given it to them-

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

MR. WEBER: -not sold it to them, you know? But we didn't know and the committee didn't know-Irene Pedla [ph] and et cetera, and so we just said no, because we can't sell it blind like that; we have to know where it's going to go and what's going to happen to it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Do you miss being in the city?

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I mean, you're up here in this bucolic splendor.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, I miss being in the city, but I would miss being up here, too. I've been coming up here since 1971 or '72, so I know the town very well, and it's-you know, it's, like, really home to me, and I know a lot of people here. A lot of people don't even know that I'm-which I'm not-that I'm a so-called New Yorker, one of the shitty people, as they call them, because I've just been around for so long. They think I'm a local.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, those darn woodchucks.

MR. WEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: So, yeah, a lot of people don't realize that over here you've got Kelly-you know, Ellsworth Kelly over here at Spencertown.

MR. WEBER: Well, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And Rickey used to live up here.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, I knew George. I knew him very well. He was a friend. I knew him when I was at Dayton at the museum and he was teaching at the University of Kentucky in Louisville in the early '60s-very early '60s. So when I came here, we used to hang out together a lot.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But you didn't exhibit his work.

MR. WEBER: No. He was with Staempfli for pretty much his whole career. I like the work. I thought it was nice. You know, well, I thought it was more than nice; I thought it was really important, actually-kinetic work.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Have you seen this Art Oma [sp]? I mean, obviously you've seen Art Oma.

MR. WEBER: I'm on the board. I have been for years.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You're on the board? Okay.

MR. WEBER: That's a good thing. No, there are wonderful things happening here. I'm doing a show-I don't know if you know about it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, tell us.

MR. WEBER: It's a show called "Manhattan Transfer." And when I thought up-when I, quote, unquote, thought up the idea, or the title, "Manhattan Transfer," I did not know that there was this group some 10 or so years ago-I think a rock and roll group or something-that was called-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, it was an a cappella-yeah, it was an a cappella singing group.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, they called themselves Manhattan Transfer. I didn't know about that. But anyway, I organized this show two years ago, and it was in a little gallery here, and the idea of it was that people had come to this area for various reasons-i.e., to better their life by-you know, wealthy artists making big studios, a la Kelly and da da da dum, or Rickey. And a lot of people-the majority of the people who came up were people who suffered from, say, having a commercial lease and having the landlord to triple the rent and not being able to do anything about it and not finding a space that they can afford in New York.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. WEBER: And a lot of them came to Hudson and the ensuing area, as you know, like Coxsackie and Hudson, et cetera. And so I'm redoing the show, which is going to open on the 20th of April this month at the ZONE: Chelsea Center for the Arts in the Starrett-Lehigh Building-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, okay.

MR. WEBER: -on the third floor of that building on 26th Street-you know, the huge warehouse building? And that's a number; I've been working my ass off on that for several months.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's on the 20th?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, the 20th of this month. Soon. Yeah, and it has some nice people in it. The younger people are nice, like Max Goldfarb, Chris Hahn, Rainer Judd-Don's daughter Rainer. There may 17 younger artists and then some that are well-known who-Michel Auder, who is giving me a hard time now, who lives over in Hudson. Do you know him, the filmmaker?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I have not met him, no.

MR. WEBER: He did *Chelsea Girls* years ago.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah, yeah. Okay, that was-Warhol was involved in some way, right?

MR. WEBER: Yeah, it was Warhol and the Chelsea Girls, but Michel Auder did the film.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, he actually did the film.

MR. WEBER: Or video-it was a video, actually. Yeah. And I look forward to that because it was up here; it was sort of like-when it was here, it served as a gathering place for people who may not have all known each other, and it was kind of like, look at all these people that have come to the Columbia County area; isn't that nice? But having it down in the city, it provides a different-it answers a different need.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. WEBER: It shows people that it's okay not to live in New York, you know, that this group of people are quite healthy and supportive and what have you up in this area, because the structure is here, the inexpensive real estate. A lot of the people moved up and bought houses on Warren Street, you know, like six, seven, eight years ago, like Max Goldfarb being one of them. And they-everybody seems to be fine, and it's not a sacrifice at all. New York is two hours away on the train, da da da da dum. And so in the city it will be kind of-what did I call it? It's kind of the crossroads of the Underground Railroad meets the Yellow Brick Road kind of, a bit-I think of it as. And there is going to be a symposium, actually, a panel discussion-me talking-

MR. MCELHINNEY: That evening?

MR. WEBER: I think it's a couple of weeks after the opening.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Great.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I'd like to-I think I'm going to be coming back from Wyoming on the 20th, so I don't know if I'm going to be-

MR. WEBER: What's in Wyoming?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, it's a long-planned trip to have a look at some landscapes out there, some things that are going on, and also going to Cody and looking at the Buffalo Bill Historical-I do artwork that has to do with history, so-

MR. WEBER: Oh, yeah?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, history and landscape, so-

MR. WEBER: That's where the massacre was there. I've been to that site.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Little Bighorn.

MR. WEBER: Little Bighorn, yeah, the two columns with the names of the people on them-very sad-chillingly sad.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, you mean-oh, you mean-

MR. WEBER: Wounded Knee, is it?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Wounded Knee. That's South Dakota.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, that's a little east of where I'll be. But, yeah, no, that's very, very chilling and-yeah, the Custer site is not so-it's just an army blunder, but-

MR. WEBER: Yeah, and that's in Wyoming, right?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Montana. But it's all such big country out there it's hard get-

MR. WEBER: I like that area. I go up there fairly often because I have a nephew, who's actually my only relative on my side of the family, who lives in Kalispell, which is in-it's very close to the Glacier National Park, right up in the northwestern part of Montana. And so I go there like two or three times a year. It's a nice area. I like it a lot.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's very beautiful.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, it's really great-really great. Nice town, Kalispell. And with Canada right there and Lake Louise and Banff and all of that just across the border. Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you've going to keep working-even though you don't have a gallery, you're going to curate shows, you're going to be involved-

MR. WEBER: Well, and I do private dealing. You know, I sell stuff and lecture and do shows and stuff, whatever.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Great.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So it's not so much a retirement as a change of venue.

MR. WEBER: No, I don't think of it as retirement.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, good.

MR. WEBER: No, not at all. I'm too young to retire. I'm only 73.

[They laugh.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, many more years ahead of you, I hope.

MR. WEBER: Thank you.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think we're probably coming to the end of the conversation for the Archives, so I don't know if there's anything you'd like to add that-

MR. WEBER: If you have any more questions-I meant to ask you if you wanted a coffee and it totally skipped my mind. Would you like for me to make you a nice little espresso?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'd love an espresso-

MR. WEBER: Okay, good.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -once we turn the machine off. But this has been a really enlightening conversation for me because, among other things, I was not as aware of how the New York art world-which I think in myth and legend, the tales of the Cedar Bar, the old Cedar Bar, and the brawling-

MR. WEBER: Dillons-Cedar Bar, Dillons.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -hard-drinking, you know, naughty Abstract Expressionists and-that it sort of had this "Gotham-o-centric" attitude to it, but our conversation a couple of weeks ago really illuminated the fact that the New York art world was always international, I guess.

MR. WEBER: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And I guess that must have dated back to the-

MR. WEBER: A lot of people leaving before the [second world war]-

MR. MCELHINNEY: Scared the bejeezus out of everybody and they all just came to New York, or a lot of them did.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, a lot, like Arshile Gorky, one to think of. I never met him. He was-died before I came on the scene. It must have been the early '50s.

MR. MCELHINNEY: He died in the late '40s.

MR. WEBER: Late '40s.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But he was young.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, he hung himself, didn't he?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, he, like a lot of artists, moved up to Sherman, Connecticut, Washington, Litchfield, New Milford area, yes.

MR. WEBER: Really? I didn't know that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes, he lived in Sherman, actually. A small-world story: the ex-wife of the guy who did those huge heads that were over at Omai [ph] lives in his old house-lives in the house.

MR. WEBER: The huge heads of at Omai are not the same guy as the huge heads here.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, no, no, no.

MR. WEBER: They bear a certain similarity to each other.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, just in scale.

MR. WEBER: Yeah. And he lives in whose house?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, his ex-wife lives in Gorky's house-

MR. WEBER: Oh, interesting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: -in Sherman. And actually she's a dancer-Luann Clark [sp]. She uses the studio he used in order to do her work, although it now has a new floor.

MR. WEBER: Cool.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, cool. Peter Bloom was over there, I guess, Paul Katnes [sp], a realist artist.

MR. WEBER: Yeah, he was interesting.

[Audio break, tape change.]

It could have been Gottlieb, somebody like that. And none of the other ones were, so that when he got his check, he was feeding a lot of people, or at least buying them drinks.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think it was Guston.

MR. WEBER: Was it Guston? It could have been Phillip. It was one of those guys. We used to show him before he became figurative again. That was a funny mood, a funny change of-it really surprised us, meaning the Dwan Gallery. He went from doing these really Abstract Expressionist stuff to back into figurative work.

MR. MCELHINNEY: He did these hilarious paintings of [Richard] Nixon and [Henry] Kissinger and Bebe Rebozo-

MR. WEBER: A little bit like Peter Saul, you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: A little bit, a little bit. Well, I don't have any other questions. I don't know if you have anything you want to add.

MR. WEBER: No, I hope that this program goes well for the Smithsonian and that this is just the beginning and

that the material will be made available to people.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You'd have to check with Liza Kirwin about the details of access, but I know that they've got plans to make these oral histories available for scholars, and indeed, anybody who is interested.

MR. WEBER: And when do they make the Hirshhorn available to me?

MR. MCELHINNEY: The Hirshhorn? Well-

MR. WEBER: The museum, of course. I'll do that fucking Flavin one way or another. [They laugh.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's something you can call up Liza and find out what she thinks.

MR. WEBER: I don't even know that anybody there would remember that story, you know? I mean, it was right at the initial days after it had opened, and the first director-God, I can't understand why I don't remember his name. He was just-it was, like, too avant-garde for him to really understand that. You know, it's like he didn't believe, I guess, that art could also serve a functional purpose. I don't know. It was very weird. Big disappointment-I mean, it was such a perfect space to do that in.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'm sure that the price has gone up, though.

MR. WEBER: Oh, it wouldn't be possible. Well, I think he did very elaborate drawings, so maybe it would be possible to redo it, but I don't know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How about doing a show about the failed commission in the museum to get them to finally buy the commission? [Laughs.]

MR. WEBER: Well, I don't even know-his son is around. Flavin's son, what is his name? I forget. Steven Flavin.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I think it's appropriate if we end on a story about Washington, which we've done. Thank you for your time.

MR. WEBER: My pleasure, my friend.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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Last updated...February 20, 2007