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Oral history interview with Stephen Hahn,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Stephen Hahn on 2008 March 14. The interview took place at Hahn's home in Montecito, CA, and was conducted by Susan Morgan for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

SUSAN MORGAN: [In progress]—American Art Smithsonian Institution. Disc number one. We start with a very general question here. When and where were you born?

[Interview begins at 00:00:18]

SUSAN MORGAN: This is Susan Morgan interviewing Stephen Hahn in Stephen Hahn's home in Montecito, California. March the—are we the 13th, 2008, for the Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, disc number one.

SUSAN MORGAN: We start with a very general question here. When and where were you born?

STEPHEN HAHN: I was born in Hungary. I moved to Paris when I was 12. My father was an art dealer—was an Old Masters dealer. And I started in Paris as a runner. I went from one gallery to another to see what they needed. And then I picked up some pictures and offered them.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so when were you born?

STEPHEN HAHN: In '21.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so your father had been an art dealer?

STEPHEN HAHN: In Old Masters. And I grew up with pictures all my life.

SUSAN MORGAN: And were both your parents involved with the art?

STEPHEN HAHN: No. My father was.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so did you take over his gallery, or did you begin your own?

STEPHEN HAHN: No. He didn't have a gallery. I was a runner going from one gallery to another to find out what they needed. And then I made a living like that. And then I married an American girl in Paris. And then we moved to New York.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so who were the art dealers that—if this was in the 1930s in—

STEPHEN HAHN: It was in the '40s.

SUSAN MORGAN: 1940s?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so when did you move to—you moved to New York in—

STEPHEN HAHN: In '50, end of '52, November '52. And I was a private dealer at that time.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so do you—and so when you arrived in New York were you living then on the Upper East Side? Did you always—

STEPHEN HAHN: I lived in—actually on Staten Island. And I traveled on a boat to New York every day. And it was interesting.

SUSAN MORGAN: And Staten Island must have been like the country?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, exactly.

SUSAN MORGAN: I have a friend who grew up there who is a painter in Manhattan. And she said that the people she grew up with never left Staten Island—[Laughs].

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really, yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: That it was just its own little world.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, that's true.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so was your wife an artist?

STEPHEN HAHN: No, no, she wasn't.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what was her name?

STEPHEN HAHN: Her name was Nancy. And we met in Paris. And I married her there.

SUSAN MORGAN: And did you go to university or—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes. I went to the École du Louvre. I studied art.

SUSAN MORGAN: It's interesting because I'm looking at their questions. And one of the questions is: your most rewarding educational experience. But I would imagine your most rewarding educational experience was being very young and being a runner.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: For the galleries. Who were the galleries at that time?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, there were a number of galleries in Paris. There was a Galerie Pétridès. There was a Galerie Armand and then there was a Bernheim-Jeune and Durand-Ruel's still existed. B

SUSAN MORGAN: And so were you actually—you had a very hands-on experience, then, with the work? A very—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, yes. I mean, I have most in the 19th-century field.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so what artists were they interested in?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, the Monets, *Cézannes*, and Lautrecs and things like that.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so when you moved to New York was your plan then to have a gallery—or to continue?

STEPHEN HAHN: No, I didn't have a gallery. I was a private dealer. And I was the first runner. They never knew that profession. So I brought my experience to New York. And I went also gallery to gallery and find out what they needed. And I produced the pictures either privately or through galleries.

SUSAN MORGAN: It's interesting because that's—when I was asked to come to speak to you, I asked a friend of mine, Michael Fitzgerald, who's an art historian. And he had worked at Christie's. And he and Michael Finley were saying that there are very few art dealers doing what you did. Nobody is doing that now.

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, now they are doing it. There are a lot of runners now.

SUSAN MORGAN: At finding things?

STEPHEN HAHN: Finding things, yes. And from collectors, from dealers and so on.

SUSAN MORGAN: And really creating collections? Working—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, yes. I was one of the advisors of Norton Simon. And—

SUSAN MORGAN: I read something. I was reading something about Norton Simon. And there was a great quote in it by John Walsh from, you know, the Getty. John Walsh who—and he was asked about—he was then at the Getty when said this about the—and I guess he was director emeritus or something. Whatever his—I'm not sure of his title.

But he said that the difference was that Getty was a bargain hunter. And his collection looks like the collection of a bargain hunter.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: And that sometimes he would buy something really good. But that Norton Simon wasn't—you know, Norton Simon's collection was not a bargain hunter's collection.

STEPHEN HAHN: No, no, no, no. He was collecting big pieces. And many times I bid for him in sales.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so what was that relationship like? Because you're also sort of a mentor in that—I mean, did he know what he was interested in?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, he knew. He knew. He was mostly interested in Old Masters, actually. But he was—his collection was focused on 19th-century paintings: Monets and *Cézannes and so forth*.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so did he come to you? How did you initially?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, he came to my gallery—at the gallery on Madison Avenue. And he came in and he said, you know, you are not very well-known. But I want you to bid for me, see, because nobody knows you. So it was an interesting thing.

SUSAN MORGAN: When was that, that he was?

STEPHEN HAHN: In the '60s, early '60s.

SUSAN MORGAN: And a lot of the shows that you did in the early '60s were kind of landmark shows. I mean, you —

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, I had a Courbet show, a Corot show, and sometimes a Monet show. But it was tough to find the pictures. But the Courbets are easy because they are a lot of those around.

SUSAN MORGAN: And there's such a range of them.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, true.

SUSAN MORGAN: I haven't seen the—you know, currently there's a Courbet show at the Metropolitan.

STEPHEN HAHN: I know. I know.

SUSAN MORGAN: And it has the photograph of *The Origin of the World*.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: And it's a three-dimensional photograph that you view like a peep show.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: I had no idea.

STEPHEN HAHN: I did not know—[Laughs]—know either.

SUSAN MORGAN: But I remember there was the Courbet show that was at the Brooklyn Museum, probably, more than 20 years ago. And the range of the work—

STEPHEN HAHN: Enormous. He was a brilliant artist—a great artist. I always loved Courbet.

SUSAN MORGAN: You know, when I came to see this show at the Met, now—

STEPHEN HAHN: Did you see it? No?

SUSAN MORGAN: No. But I think I'm going next month to New York. So with Courbet—as a dealer—I mean did you actually buy things? And you had as a secondary market and then you would—

STEPHEN HAHN: I bought things, yeah. At that time I could afford to buy pictures.

SUSAN MORGAN: Well, the shift—it's interesting to go back and read what were, kind of, the record-breaking numbers, you know, at each stage. You know, in each decade.

STEPHEN HAHN: I worked with Eugene Thaw a lot. Eugene Thaw—who has his own gallery—and we worked together a lot. We bought pictures together, Courbets and Corots and Delacroixs.

SUSAN MORGAN: And then did you have a group of collectors that you worked—you know, like Norton Simon and?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so what were some of the collections that you worked on?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, I worked with Dr. Sackler, who was really a collector of Chinese art. But he had, also, a modern collection.

SUSAN MORGAN: And isn't a lot of that collection in Washington?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, he had a museum there. He has a museum—Dr. Sackler. He was an interesting man—very different.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so what did you—work with him—what was he interested in?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, he was interested in all sorts of things: Brooks, Picassos, Monets, Rebot [ph]. And he has two brothers who also bought pictures.

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: In your collecting, did you travel a lot to find all of these works?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: And how at that time did you track down works? How did—

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, I had a private collection. I had five *Cézannes*, I had six *Picassos*, six *Matisses* and—

SUSAN MORGAN: Had you arrived in New York with all of this work or did you? [They laugh.] Or this began to accumulate over a period of time? There's a Matisse—the beautiful, *The Yellow Curtain*.

STEPHEN HAHN: I own that. *The Yellow Curtain*, I own. And I sold it to the Museum of Modern Art.

SUSAN MORGAN: I thought that was—I seem to remember seeing your name attached to that. That's a beautiful painting. I mean, it's—

STEPHEN HAHN: It's one of the rare, early works.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so how did you find that?

STEPHEN HAHN: I bought that in Belgium from a man called Mabile.

SUSAN MORGAN: Mabile?

STEPHEN HAHN: Mabile. M-A-B-I-L-L-E. Mabile. And he had various offers on the picture. But he liked me. And we got a long very well. And I bought a picture from him.

SUSAN MORGAN: And was that—I can imagine that, that's—a lot of the negotiation is based on that like or trust of how things get placed?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes. Trusting a person—an older person. I was over 80 when I bought the picture from him.

SUSAN MORGAN: And why do you think he sold it to you?

STEPHEN HAHN: I don't know. [They laugh.] I don't know. We sympathized.

SUSAN MORGAN: And that's really what it is, isn't it? When it comes to that?

STEPHEN HAHN: Beyeler made an offer on the picture.

SUSAN MORGAN: Who did?

STEPHEN HAHN: Beyeler. The foundation Beyeler in Basel. And he didn't want to sell it to them.

SUSAN MORGAN: I gave Tom, my husband, once a copy of Edith Wharton's *Custom of the Country*. And I said to him: It's surprising how much it resembles, kind of, the New York art world of the 1980s because I don't know if you remember it. But it's a woman who marries—tries to marry up in society and refuses somebody who then

becomes very wealthy.

And when he becomes very wealthy he wants the things that are not for sale. You know, the kind of—you know, the painting or the tapestry. That, that's what—and I said: It's such a familiar story, isn't it? So did you encounter that of people wanting something that?

STEPHEN HAHN: Sometimes, yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what sort of things—what would be an example of that?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, sometimes I had a picture and I didn't want to sell it. And Dr. Sackler insisted that I should sell it to him. I had a great Matisse painting—Picasso painting, actually. And we finally—[inaudible].

SUSAN MORGAN: When did you open the gallery?

STEPHEN HAHN: In 1960. I had the first gallery on 58th and Madison—on the second floor. And then I changed three years later. I changed it on—the dresser—there. [Laughs.] The three guys.

SUSAN MORGAN: The three guys. It's right by the Whitney? Three guys—[Laughs]—hang on a second. And were there any—were there other galleries there at that time?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: What were the other?

STEPHEN HAHN: There was a Niveau Gallery, which was next door.

SUSAN MORGAN: What gallery is it?

STEPHEN HAHN: Niveau. Niveau. N-I-V-E-A-U. Niveau Gallery. And I worked there for a while—for six months. I was a partner there.

SUSAN MORGAN: And then you moved next door?

STEPHEN HAHN: And then I opened a gallery next door.

SUSAN MORGAN: And were there other galleries?

STEPHEN HAHN: There were a number of galleries. There was Acquavella Gallery on 79th Street. There was—
[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: Acquavella is still—it's the next generation—Acquavella.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: He's still really—yes, he's done incredibly well, hasn't he?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, very well.

SUSAN MORGAN: One of their questions was: How did you choose that particular space? Well, you had worked next door. [Laughs.]

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, there was a gallery there before. And I bought the gallery from this man.

SUSAN MORGAN: And did you buy the collection? Did he have stock or just the space?

STEPHEN HAHN: No, just the space.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what was the space like?

STEPHEN HAHN: It was pretty large. And it had a basement. So it was fun. I liked it. I liked the gallery.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what year did the Whitney—the Whitney didn't go up across the street until the '70s, did it?

STEPHEN HAHN: I'm not sure.

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: To picture that block from that period.

STEPHEN HAHN: I lived on 79th Street. So I was just a few minutes away.

SUSAN MORGAN: Well, that's perfect isn't it? [Laughs.] And was anyone involved with you in designing the space at the gallery? Or did you do that?

STEPHEN HAHN: No.

SUSAN MORGAN: And did you have a night—did you do much in changing it since it had already been a gallery?

STEPHEN HAHN: Not really. I didn't have to do much.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what was the first exhibition that you had there?

STEPHEN HAHN: I think Toulouse. It was an exhibition for Toulouse with Degas and Picasso, Matisse.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what was the early exhibition like? How would you describe it? Did you have a mix of paintings, sculptures, prints?

STEPHEN HAHN: I had pictures.

SUSAN MORGAN: And did anyone—these are the questions—did anyone work for you?

STEPHEN HAHN: I had a secretary, a beautiful woman.

SUSAN MORGAN: Good idea. [Laughs.]

STEPHEN HAHN: Good idea. She was very efficient.

SUSAN MORGAN: And was it just the one?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: And did anybody who worked for you go on to have a gallery or—

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, after Edna, this lady—she left me. And then there was Paul Herring. Herring was one who worked for Jim Solle [ph] and Jim worked for Gene and Paul worked for me.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what's the? How do you spell his name?

STEPHEN HAHN: Herring.

SUSAN MORGAN: Oh, Herring.

STEPHEN HAHN: H-E-R-R-I-N-G.

SUSAN MORGAN: Herring.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what—did you work at all with living artists, or you?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, I worked with—I had Appel as a friend. Yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: I just saw Appel.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yeah.

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: Were there any other—that was the one that I—when I was sort of looking through, that was the one name I came up with.

STEPHEN HAHN: Appel?

SUSAN MORGAN: Yeah, I was trying to—

STEPHEN HAHN: I had an exhibition of Appel.

SUSAN MORGAN: I saw a catalogue. There's a catalogue for that.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: From '61, I think.

STEPHEN HAHN: In the '60s, early '60s. Yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what do you think was—what do you consider your most successful show?

STEPHEN HAHN: That's too hard to say. Maybe the Courbet show was—very successful. We sold everything.

SUSAN MORGAN: I think there's a catalogue for that. Isn't that from that?

STEPHEN HAHN: There was a catalogue, yes. But I don't remember it.

SUSAN MORGAN: I'll have to look at that. But I did find it listed. It's interesting. This is, I think, more if you were working with living artists, because the question is: What were the reactions of your clients to various artists that you represented? But I think since you were working with—

STEPHEN HAHN: I didn't represent anybody.

SUSAN MORGAN: —since you were working with artists who really have an understood history.

STEPHEN HAHN: Right.

SUSAN MORGAN: And I don't think you—

STEPHEN HAHN: I didn't represent anybody.

SUSAN MORGAN: —confront those sorts of—

STEPHEN HAHN: Maybe the CoBrA group.

SUSAN MORGAN: With Appel.

STEPHEN HAHN: With Appel and Jorn and Pedersen and people like that.

SUSAN MORGAN: That people had a negative reaction to—the public had?

STEPHEN HAHN: They didn't like it too much.

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: This was also at the period, I think someone said to me that your gallery was really a counterpoint to—in the '60s to, you know, all the pop art and things that were being—

STEPHEN HAHN: I wasn't touching that. I didn't like that.

SUSAN MORGAN: I think this is the biggest question probably is: How is the art market? How is the market for American art? Well, you didn't really have that much American art—changed in your lifetime within the United States?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, then, that's a good question.

SUSAN MORGAN: I think that's a really good question. [Laughs.] Well, one thing that I think—I was interested in is that you've been involved with the various art dealers' associations.

STEPHEN HAHN: I was the president of it for a while in the early '80s.

SUSAN MORGAN: And were you involved with that? That was founded in the '60s.

STEPHEN HAHN: In the '60s, yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: And clearly that's undergone huge changes because just in numbers alone.

STEPHEN HAHN: That's true.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so when you first became involved with it, was it in the 1960s?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yeah, I was one of the first—

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: What did you feel was the value and purpose of having an association?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, it had—

[Audio break.]

STEPHEN HAHN:—department. So we appraised it, a lot of the pictures. And also there was—in Washington there was an art—

[Audio break.]

STEPHEN HAHN: —twice, actually, in the '70s and '80s. We appraised pictures. And it was an interesting job.

SUSAN MORGAN: Do you think that created a greater atmosphere of accountability or standard of understanding?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, it helped a lot because there was a lot of—people bought pictures in Paris, you know, Montmartre. And then they gave it to an institution for thousands of dollars. And we got—

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: I had worked for George Plimpton in New York, you know, who was the editor of *Paris Review*. And he was someone who didn't know anything about visual art at all.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: But he had a Bernard Buffet painting—

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: —that he had bought, you know, in Paris in—

STEPHEN HAHN: Respected, very respected, you know.

SUSAN MORGAN: And, you know, as a favor. I mean, I think from a friend who needed some money. And so he had this painting. And it really was—to him it was—you know, he would sort of look at it and say: Well, what was it worth? And then he would find out, you know, and then—[laughs]. It was kind of like a card game to him. It didn't really—

STEPHEN HAHN: That rarely works.

SUSAN MORGAN: One of the *Les Oiseaux*.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yeah. Not so good.

SUSAN MORGAN: Not so good. [Laughs.] But, I mean, he was someone who didn't have any interest in the visual arts. But it was very typical of, you know—

STEPHEN HAHN: He was an interesting man.

SUSAN MORGAN: George?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: I've just been working on a book about him.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: He had—

[Audio Break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: So then you were the president of the art dealers and the—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, in the early '80s.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what were your responsibilities and—

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, I was president. And we made decisions about the policies of the art dealers' association.

SUSAN MORGAN: And how large of an association was it at that time?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, we had 150 people in the association. We had—

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: What's the criteria to be a member? What do you—

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, you had to have interesting exhibitions. And you had to be an art dealer for five years. And—

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: —a reputation?

STEPHEN HAHN: Reputation is when you have a good show and people visit your gallery and then talk about it.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so you have critical reception. And you have—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: Committed collectors as well.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: —their questions are about American artists. But since you didn't really work with any American artists—and I think the big question, too, is how has the gallery scene changed?

STEPHEN HAHN: It hasn't changed.

SUSAN MORGAN: You don't think it's changed?

STEPHEN HAHN: I don't think so.

SUSAN MORGAN: Essentially.

STEPHEN HAHN: Essentially it didn't change. I had the same artists all through the years. And it was very successful.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what do you think of how—I don't know how many galleries there are in New York. It's something like 700.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really? [Laughs.] I didn't know.

SUSAN MORGAN: Somebody told me that. I don't know if it's really 700. 300? I mean, it's something—it's in the hundreds.

STEPHEN HAHN: The hundreds.

SUSAN MORGAN: I don't think it's really 700.

STEPHEN HAHN: Sophie, Sophie, a dachshund. Hello there. Hey.

SUSAN MORGAN: Oh. You are so—yes, you are beautiful.

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: What was your relationship to the writers—people who wrote about art and to? I'm sorry.

STEPHEN HAHN: I had very little relationship. Sometimes I've been interviewed by the art critics. And—

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: And what about in relationship to your gallery and to the work? I mean I don't know—a person that comes to my mind is John Rewald or—did he have any?

STEPHEN HAHN: I had a relationship with him. I didn't like him so much. He was a very conceited—[They laugh]—you know.

SUSAN MORGAN: He was a professor of my husband's.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really? Oh, really? At the university?

SUSAN MORGAN: At City University and—so that's it. And the question was—oh, it's about criticism. I think you fall outside this category because the work you were selling was so established that—

STEPHEN HAHN: It wasn't exactly. It was a relationship with Greenberg. We had a same girlfriend.

SUSAN MORGAN: Which girlfriend was that?

STEPHEN HAHN: It was Marta Bayer [ph], who was head of a modern art department at Christie's.

SUSAN MORGAN: I'll have to look at that Clement Greenberg biography.

STEPHEN HAHN: I'm sure he talked about Marta.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so did you have—what was his relationship to the gallery, though, to—

STEPHEN HAHN: Marta?

SUSAN MORGAN: No, to your—well—[inaudible, laughs]. Did you have the same girlfriend at the same time?

STEPHEN HAHN: No, but I—she worked there for a while. And then she left and she went to Christie's.

SUSAN MORGAN: And then what did she do? She stayed at Christie's?

STEPHEN HAHN: She stayed at Christie's, yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: Do you think the internet has affected the way—well, you don't deal with the internet. There's a very interesting story today about, you know, this prostitute ring that Eliot Spitzer, the governor of New York. It also, in addition to being a prostitute ring, has an art auction website.

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: And—

STEPHEN HAHN: She was the director of the—[Audio break.].

SUSAN MORGAN: I just read this on one of the online art magazines, *Artnet*, and at first, I thought it was a joke. So I'm not sure if it was a joke, but that part of the—they had contacted some of the galleries because it's set up as a website that has advertisements for Sotheby's on it. And you know, to have clients have this entity, whatever it is, bid for them.

STEPHEN HAHN: No kidding.

SUSAN MORGAN: And I thought—

STEPHEN HAHN: That's amazing.

SUSAN MORGAN: [Laughs.] What do you think are the most important works that you've—well, you've not commissioned, but that you've dealt with in—

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, I had Rodins. I had Van Goghs. I had Gauguins. So I sold pictures from Paris.

SUSAN MORGAN: And had you known them in Paris when you were starting out?

Eugene Thaw—by Pierre Matisse's Gallery? Was he related to that?

STEPHEN HAHN: He worked with Pierre Matisse a lot, yes. And I was a close friend of his. We bought things together a lot, quite a bit.

SUSAN MORGAN: With Eugene Thaw?

STEPHEN HAHN: With Eugene Thaw, yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: It was interesting, with the Art Dealers Association, you began to do the Armory—have shows at the Armory.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: And how were those?

STEPHEN HAHN: That was fairly interesting. I had a terrific collection, an early Dubuffet collection, which I gave to the National Gallery.

SUSAN MORGAN: In Washington, yeah.

STEPHEN HAHN: In Washington, yeah.

SUSAN MORGAN: And it's quite—there are what, 22 or 20—?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yeah, 36.

SUSAN MORGAN: 36. Fantastic.

STEPHEN HAHN: I know, but including sculptures and drawings and watercolors.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so when the Armory shows—the art—was it called the Art Show?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: How did that first start? That was done as a benefit—

STEPHEN HAHN: It was a benefit for the—for the—

SUSAN MORGAN: I think it's Henry Street—Henry Street Settlement?

STEPHEN HAHN: Exactly.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so it was really done as—you know, because now, there are these art fairs that are more—

STEPHEN HAHN: In Chicago and Miami, Basel, Holland.

SUSAN MORGAN: Which is a completely different thing. I mean, it's a—it's a trade show.

STEPHEN HAHN: That's true.

SUSAN MORGAN: Is that what it—I mean, how would you—

STEPHEN HAHN: It was a trade show.

SUSAN MORGAN: Because the—I remember the Art Show. I mean it was, because it was a benefit. You operated it as a benefit and it was more of a kind of small presentation of art galleries, wasn't it? It wasn't—it doesn't seem—I'm trying to connect it to, you know, these Art Basel and Basel Miami and—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, yes. Basel was a new show.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so were you involved in the early—in doing any of those—

STEPHEN HAHN: I never did that.

SUSAN MORGAN: Any of them? I haven't been to them. [Laughs.] Let me turn this—

[END OF TRACK AAA_hahn08_4227.]

SUSAN MORGAN: And I just saw that Larry Gagosian has hired John Richardson.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, I read that, too.

SUSAN MORGAN: So I imagine it's to get closer to some Picassos that would not be available to Larry Gagosian. And so I think that's an interesting—

STEPHEN HAHN: He's a very interesting man.

SUSAN MORGAN: Larry Gagosian?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes. He's a manipulator.

SUSAN MORGAN: Because he's really created this—

STEPHEN HAHN: He has many galleries.

SUSAN MORGAN: It was interesting. Someone recently said to me, "Oh, you know someone who is the director"—they said, "Oh, do you know," and they named someone who's the director of a Gagosian. And I said, "Which Gagosian?" I mean, there are so many galleries. And he has one in Rome now.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yeah, I know that.

SUSAN MORGAN: To get closer to Cy Twombly. I think that was part of the plan.

STEPHEN HAHN: [Inaudible.]

SUSAN MORGAN: So have you followed his career at all, or just in reading—

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, he came to see me sometimes. He wanted to work with me but I never trusted him.

SUSAN MORGAN: He's at 1100 Madison. That's one of his galleries now. He's at 1100 Madison Avenue.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, it's 960.

SUSAN MORGAN: It's 960? Is that it? I know it's right—

STEPHEN HAHN: No, 980. In the old Sotheby building.

SUSAN MORGAN: Right. And so he approached you?

STEPHEN HAHN: He approached me several times to work with him, but I never was comfortable with him.

SUSAN MORGAN: Just because he's so manipulative?

STEPHEN HAHN: He's very manipulative, yeah, and I have never trusted him.

SUSAN MORGAN: Really? Because he's built this enormous—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yeah, in London, he had two galleries there. And in New York, he has two or three galleries downtown.

SUSAN MORGAN: Which are the scale of—I don't even know what they're the scale of. The one downtown is enormous, the Chelsea. In New York, that kind of architectural—the interior shift of galleries from when you were on Madison Avenue, and the contemporary gallery that I always think of up there was when Bykert was there or when there was the Castelli uptown, but they were all domestic interiors.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: And I remember when Paula Cooper opened in Chelsea, Michael Hurson, who is an artist who showed there, said to me—he said, "The space looks like the Temple of Dendur." [Laughs.] You know, or the space around—I guess not the actual Temple of Dendur, but the hall at the Metropolitan. I thought that was a great line.

So when did you close your gallery?

STEPHEN HAHN: In '76, the end of '76. And then I became a private dealer. I rented a showroom at the Sotheby building after that because we had two little girls in my apartment. We had a duplex apartment on 79th Street.

SUSAN MORGAN: Oh, the pictures that were—

STEPHEN HAHN: My private collection.

SUSAN MORGAN: And so were they all sold or they all—

STEPHEN HAHN: They were all sold.

SUSAN MORGAN: And is that when you sold the Matisse to the Modern or—

STEPHEN HAHN: I sold that a little bit later. But it's there now.

SUSAN MORGAN: And where did the rest of them go?

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: So do you still—are you still working with collectors or do you—

STEPHEN HAHN: No.

SUSAN MORGAN: No?

STEPHEN HAHN: I retired totally.

SUSAN MORGAN: Totally?

STEPHEN HAHN: Totally.

SUSAN MORGAN: So what was the other organization that—there was another art dealers association that you were involved with. Was there an international one?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, there was CINOA. And I was on the board there.

SUSAN MORGAN: That's what I—and what was the focus of that?

STEPHEN HAHN: It's international, international art dealing.

SUSAN MORGAN: And did it work in much the same way as the American?

STEPHEN HAHN: Well, more international.

SUSAN MORGAN: But with appraising and—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: And did they establish sort of rules of practice of how—or is it just—

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: And then you managed to make it through this lawsuit with the Picasso. That was kind of an ongoing saga. Were you involved with—

STEPHEN HAHN: What was that?

SUSAN MORGAN: Having sold a Picasso that—to a Chicago—to Marilyn Alsdorf and—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes, yes. Yes, it was an early Picasso. [Inaudible.] And it petered out.

SUSAN MORGAN: Did you know Picasso?

STEPHEN HAHN: I knew Picasso. I met Picasso once in the late '40s. It was in Paris.

SUSAN MORGAN: And didn't you have—you had a de Stael—Nicolas de Stael show, didn't you?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: Because there was one not so long ago. I think Mitchell-Innes did one more recently and I read a review that referred to the show that you—to your show—

STEPHEN HAHN: Oh, really?

SUSAN MORGAN: And did you know him?

STEPHEN HAHN: I knew him.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what was he like?

STEPHEN HAHN: He was a very confused man.

SUSAN MORGAN: He committed suicide quite young. He was 40 or so, 41.

STEPHEN HAHN: Early 40s.

SUSAN MORGAN: And I don't know if there are other questions that I need to ask you in their official—in my official capacity. I think this is good.

[Audio break.]

SUSAN MORGAN: Have you been to the Norton Simon since the redesign of Frank Gehry?

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes. Yes, I was.

SUSAN MORGAN: Much better.

STEPHEN HAHN: Really.

SUSAN MORGAN: Isn't it?

STEPHEN HAHN: Really beautiful.

SUSAN MORGAN: He really managed to transform those galleries.

STEPHEN HAHN: Absolutely. It's a beautiful gallery. And you know, it's interesting that he has the first set of Degas sculptures which were done by—

[Audio break.]

STEPHEN HAHN: [In progress]—the set of it, and it's a little bit larger than the usual. And all the others are fakes. [They laugh.] It's true. All the other sculptures are wrong. I mean, wrong—not wrong but they are not authentic.

SUSAN MORGAN: That's so interesting.

STEPHEN HAHN: This one is the real, the real. And they're a little bit larger than the others.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what things did you—did you find those? Were those something you found for Norton Simon, or is that—

STEPHEN HAHN: No, no. He found it himself.

SUSAN MORGAN: Oh, interesting.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yeah. He went to the caster and they had a whole set of sculptures—the original ones—and he bought them.

SUSAN MORGAN: It must just look really good there. I mean, it's really—I was so happy when it reopened after—

STEPHEN HAHN: It looks wonderful. Just wonderful.

SUSAN MORGAN: Are there other collectors that you worked with closely to that?

STEPHEN HAHN: I worked with Dr. Sackler. And a man called Hofrichter was his printer. He had a printing business.

SUSAN MORGAN: The people who were putting together collections, were they thinking, ultimately, about having them go into public institutions, or were really for themselves?

STEPHEN HAHN: Not really. Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: Because you know, in Los Angeles right now, there's the Lazarof. The L.A. County Museum just received that gift.

STEPHEN HAHN: It's a big gift. Huge.

SUSAN MORGAN: Do you know them?

STEPHEN HAHN: I didn't know them.

SUSAN MORGAN: But it seems—I haven't been to see it yet, but it seems to me very much a collection that has

a point of view that's not based on a kind of—

STEPHEN HAHN: Accumulation.

SUSAN MORGAN: Accumulation. I always think of it is as a kind of hyper-retail thing that's taken over. You know, that's probably harsh-sounding, but, you know, of having—you know, I've been to contemporary art collections where they didn't get a very good something, but they needed to have—you know, as a kind of—they needed that label, brand. Whereas this collection seems to have a real point of view and it's not the usual.

STEPHEN HAHN: And who is receiving it in Los Angeles?

SUSAN MORGAN: The Los Angeles County Museum. And because they have a new director, I think they're really —

STEPHEN HAHN: Who is the director?

SUSAN MORGAN: Michael Govan, who was at DIA in New York.

STEPHEN HAHN: [Inaudible.]

SUSAN MORGAN: No, at DIA, D-I-A, the foundation. And he's implemented a number of things that I think are really interesting. And one that I just read about was that they're borrowing work from the Fowler Museum at UCLA, which has, you know, great African Luba statues and things, to install them with modernist art, which really invigorates both collections.

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes. They also had a collector called Winston, who was a donor of the university there.

SUSAN MORGAN: At UCLA?

STEPHEN HAHN: Mm-hmm.

SUSAN MORGAN: And what was that collection that was—

STEPHEN HAHN: He had Picassos and Matisse and Mirós, which he bought from Pierre Matisse. But he bought those things from me, too, like a—Roos. He was an interesting man; a very nice man.

SUSAN MORGAN: And did you know Teeny Duchamp?

STEPHEN HAHN: I met her once, yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: In one of the Calvin Tomkins Duchamp articles that eventually became his book about Duchamp, he described where they lived in New York and how the doorbell said Matisse-Duchamp-Ernst.

STEPHEN HAHN: And what?

SUSAN MORGAN: Ernst because Max Ernst had been also living—

STEPHEN HAHN: Yes.

SUSAN MORGAN: I guess Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning had been also living in that building, but you know, just kind of taped by the doorbell.

STEPHEN HAHN: Interesting.

SUSAN MORGAN: I think that, that was—so I think this is probably what they need to know.

[Interview ends at 00:14:21, the rest of the track is unrelated conversation.]

[END OF TRACK AAA_hahn08_4228.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]