



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

**Oral history interview with Charles Anthony  
Byron-Patrikiades, 2010 February 15-25**

**Funding for this interview was provided by the Art Dealers Association of America. 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.**

**Contact Information**

Reference Department  
Archives of American Art  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560  
[www.aaa.si.edu/askus](http://www.aaa.si.edu/askus)

# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Charles Anthony Byron-Patrikiades on February 15 and 25, 2010. The interview took place in New York, NY, and was conducted by James McElhinney for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview was funded by the Art Dealers Association of America.

The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

JAMES McELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Charles Byron on Monday, the 15th of February 2010. Good afternoon.

CHARLES BYRON: Good afternoon.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's curious today that we're observing the Presidents Day holiday unusually early this year.

MR. BYRON: Yes, it is.

MR. McELHINNEY: Must be to coincide with Valentine's Day. Everybody gets a longer weekend. When was the first time you became aware of art in your life?

MR. BYRON: Oh, I guess as a child when I was about 12, 11. I was at school. I was at school in Switzerland. And my school had an art class, and I went to that.

MR. McELHINNEY: Do you recall the school's name?

MR. BYRON: Yes. It's a Swiss school called Ecole Nouvelle de la Suisse Romande. It's quite well known in Lausanne.

MR. McELHINNEY: And prior to going there, where had you been living? Where did you grow up?

MR. BYRON: Well, I grew up first in the States and then in France.

MR. McELHINNEY: Where were you born?

MR. BYRON: I was born in Turkey because my father, who was a diplomat and assigned in Turkey at the time. And my family were Greeks from Turkey.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. I see. So was he working for the United States at that time?

MR. BYRON: No, at that time he was working for Greece.

MR. McELHINNEY: For Greece. I see.

MR. BYRON: And he came here I think '21 or '23 on an assignment, and he stayed.

MR. McELHINNEY: He stayed. Left the Greek Foreign Service and—

MR. BYRON: And didn't go into the American Foreign Service. Then he became a businessman in New York.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. I see. And was he and your mother, were they interested in the arts? Were they active in the arts?

MR. BYRON: Yes. My mother especially. Well, he was interested in them. She was more active.

MR. McELHINNEY: She was a collector?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: What was her emphasis as a collector?

MR. BYRON: Mostly architecture.

MR. McELHINNEY: She collected architecture?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Whole buildings?

MR. BYRON: That's right.

MR. McELHINNEY: Interesting. Here in New York?

MR. BYRON: Here in New York.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. And what kinds of things was she interested in collecting?

MR. BYRON: Mostly modern architects.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. I see. Mies [van der Rohe], Walter Gropius?

MR. BYRON: That's right.

MR. McELHINNEY: This kind of people.

MR. BYRON: These people.

MR. McELHINNEY: So did you have a chance to meet any of them as a child?

MR. BYRON: Yes. I did.

MR. McELHINNEY: Any stand out in your mind?

MR. BYRON: Not really. But I met most of them.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. And what kind of art was she collecting apart from architecture? Was she interested in paintings?

MR. BYRON: She didn't collect so much.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: But she had a great interest in it.

MR. McELHINNEY: In architecture.

MR. BYRON: She could have told you all about it now.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh. Well, if she'd like to join us it'd be fine. Conversation is really meant to illuminate your life in art, and I'm trying to craft a preamble to that here in terms of your working life. So after you got through with the Ecole Nouvelle.

MR. BYRON: I went to law school in France—in Paris.

MR. McELHINNEY: To be a lawyer.

MR. BYRON: You know when you do European law, it's not always to be a lawyer.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. I know what you mean because I do have a few acquaintances in the arts who studied law and are now independent curators.

MR. BYRON: Yes. I studied law and political science.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. BYRON: At something called Ecole de Droit and Ecole des Science Politiques.

MR. McELHINNEY: And where was that, in Paris?

MR. BYRON: In Paris. And from there I came to—I was here in the summer of '39 where my father used to work—I mean worked. And I went to Harvard [University, Cambridge, MA] then as a graduate student for three years until I was drafted in '42.

MR. McELHINNEY: In '42.

MR. BYRON: So from '39 to '42 I was in Cambridge. 'Forty-two I was drafted. Then I went to a—where was I? I forget. Alabama; I think I was there. And went to— That school was called—To become, you know, you graduated as a second lieutenant.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, Officers Candidate School.

MR. BYRON: Officers Candidate, yes. And I was then sent to England and spent the rest of the war in England.

MR. McELHINNEY: So were you doing mainly staff work or adjutant general work?

MR. BYRON: Well, I was doing staff work mostly. I was with a unit organizing the escape of airmen who had been shot down.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see, to get them out of Europe, out of continental Europe.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: So you were working with the French Resistance and other organizations, the Dutch Resistance.

MR. BYRON: And it was an Anglo-American organization.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, there was a lot of competition. Historically they talk about the competition between the British and the Americans.

MR. BYRON: Not really. We were all together.

MR. McELHINNEY: In the field, I mean, you know, the politics of high command, I guess. [General Bernard] Montgomery versus [General Omar] Bradley or whatever.

MR. BYRON: As it is, we were very much together.

MR. McELHINNEY: And did you do most of that work in England? Were you ever sent to the field?

MR. BYRON: Yes. Mostly in England and once in a while in France because of my French language.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right, experience with the language. During this time, when you're going to law school, when you're going to Harvard, were you beginning to develop an interest in art?

MR. BYRON: Yes, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And how did that occur? What was the trigger? Was there a spark of any kind that sort of ignited your interest in art?

MR. BYRON: No, but my interest was in Surrealism first.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. BYRON: Literary. And then it became art—

MR. McELHINNEY: More generally? Did you meet any of the crew when they were over here in Litchfield County? Andre Breton, Yves Tanguy, that whole crowd?

MR. BYRON: I met them in France.

MR. McELHINNEY: In France.

MR. BYRON: Tanguy, Breton. Breton came here. Well, they both came here for a while. And then I worked for—my interest in Surrealism literature. By accident I came to work for a gallery, which was doing Surrealism in New York. And then I obviously took over that gallery eventually.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. So at what point in time was this? Was this still while you were—

MR. BYRON: No, that was after the war.

MR. McELHINNEY: After the war. So as a student, had you begun to collect any works of art? Or were you just barely—

MR. BYRON: Not really.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did you study it at all in school in an academic way?

MR. BYRON: Yes, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: History of art?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: At Harvard?

MR. BYRON: At Harvard.

MR. McELHINNEY: With whom?

MR. BYRON: At Harvard with—Crane Brinton was one of them, a historian specializing in the French Revolution.

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

MR. BYRON: There was another one called Decknatore [ph]. I forget.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, we can look them up. Were any of your teachers at Harvard or any of the professors with whom you studied anything influential in the formation of your appetite for art?

MR. BYRON: Yes. Definitely.

MR. McELHINNEY: Anyone in particular?

MR. BYRON: I'm trying to think. There was—I forget. Crane Brinton was one of my professors then. But, you know, while I was at Harvard I took a teaching fellowship.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. BYRON: The last year. I mean the last year before being drafted. I lived in a place called the Winthrop House. In those days it was—now they don't have any graduate students anymore there.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, you mean in the building.

MR. BYRON: In Winthrop House, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Winthrop House.

MR. BYRON: The house system has changed quite a bit since the war.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So what was Cambridge like then? I guess you had the [Harvard Art Museums] Fogg Museum.

MR. BYRON: That was great.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes. [Harvard Art Museums] Busch-Reisinger. I guess they hadn't yet built the Carpenter Center [for the Visual Arts, Harvard]. That was much later. Did you take any studio classes at all?

MR. BYRON: What are studio classes?

MR. McELHINNEY: Study to draw let's say.

MR. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did you ever have any instruction in drawing?

MR. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what drew you to Surrealism?

MR. BYRON: That's a good question. I don't know. I was interested—I got interested first of all in surrealist literature in my French studies. Then here I had a friend who was a—who opened a gallery. And he was a Cuban architect.

MR. McELHINNEY: His name?

MR. BYRON: Emilio del Junco.

MR. McELHINNEY: Emilio del Junco.

MR. BYRON: And his brother-in-law and his sister were all friends of mine. Which the Cuban's call Abreu, A-B-R-E-U. And the Abreus left Cuba and went to Canada. And Jean-Claude, who was my closest friend at the time, lived at Harvard as well. I mean was at Harvard as well at the time. And later on went back to Cuba. And from there I think to France. His mother was French.

MR. McELHINNEY: And so he was involved with Emilio del Junco in some way?

MR. BYRON: It was his brother-in-law.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, his brother-in-law. Okay. So Emilio del Junco had come from Cuba and opened a gallery here in New York?

MR. BYRON: Yes. With somebody else whose name I forget.

MR. McELHINNEY: Do you recall the name of the gallery? [name?]

MR. BYRON: Well, the name of the man.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, that we can also research.

MR. BYRON: Maybe my wife has it. And they didn't get along. They didn't get along. His partner was a charming old Italian art dealer, who I guess Emilio must have given him some money for it. They opened a gallery together. I'm trying to think of the name of the gallery. I tell you I'm completely gaga.

MR. McELHINNEY: Do you think your wife would remember?

MR. BYRON: Yes, she might. Where is she, though?

MR. McELHINNEY: I don't know. But do you think it would be easier to do this if we were to ask her to join us?

MR. BYRON: It's a good idea.

MR. McELHINNEY: Why don't we pause now and resume in a moment.

[END DISC 1, TRACK 1.]

MRS. BYRON: --galleries every day. That's something else. Because I like them.

MR. BYRON: No, but you maybe answer the question as my wife.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, of course.

MR. McELHINNEY: But is, you know, the name the same as his?

MRS. BYRON: No, the thing is I'm in publishing. I was everywhere. It's Elizabeth Sverbeyeff Byron. And that is my name professionally.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay. Good. We're going to resume the conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Byron. Elizabeth.

MRS. BYRON: Now, if you want me to write it down, it's actually in the magazine there. I'm still on *Decor* magazine.

MR. McELHINNEY: So we're talking about Emilio del Junco.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And his Italian partner whose name we're going to have to look up. And you said that at some point there was a falling out between them.

MR. BYRON: That was from the very beginning.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, from the very beginning. And so the Italian partner left, and you came in as the new partner.

MR. BYRON: That's right. As the new partner.

MR. McELHINNEY: Were you at this point sort of at the end of entertaining the possibility of going into the art world?

MR. BYRON: I was already in the art.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, you were. Okay. So after the war, during which you served on the Allied staff in intelligence and airmen retrieval from Occupied Europe, came back to the United States? Or did you stay in Occupied Europe?

MR. BYRON: That's right. I came back.

MRS. BYRON: But you went to Paris, to Paris before. Well, you stayed in Paris.

MR. BYRON: Yes. Well, until the end of my stay in the Army.

MR. McELHINNEY: Which was?



MR. BYRON: 'Forty-seven.

MR. McELHINNEY: 'Forty-seven, okay.

MR. BYRON: I stayed a long time.

MR. McELHINNEY: So you were in post-conflict for a couple of years.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And was it during that time that you became involved with the art world?

MR. BYRON: Before. But at that time I became the partner of a gallery. So it was—

MR. McELHINNEY: What was the name of that gallery?

MR. BYRON: It was called Byron.

MRS. McELHINNEY: No, no, no, Charles. I don't understand what you're saying. You didn't do it after the war. I mean you started after. This Byron Gallery you became after that Italian.

MR. BYRON: What was it called then?

MRS. BYRON: That was not called at all because you created it. It was called Byron Gallery.

MR. BYRON: Yes?

MRS. BYRON: Of course it was no other person there. You created that with Monique.

MR. BYRON: Well, when Emilio went back to Cuba—

MRS. BYRON: Yes. Or whatever. Then I don't know what happened in between then. But I know—when did you open the gallery with Monique [last name?]?

MR. BYRON: 'Sixty-one.

MRS. BYRON: But in between you didn't do anything.

MR. BYRON: No, I worked with Emilio.

MRS. BYRON: Okay. Then from Emilio you went to—

MR. BYRON: To Monique.

MRS. BYRON: To Monique. But I mean actually Monique kind of —.

MR. BYRON: She financed the gallery.

MRS. BYRON: She financed the gallery. It was Byron Gallery, and that was still at the same place on —

MR. BYRON: The same place, yes.

MRS. BYRON: It's what, 1018 Madison?

MR. BYRON: Ten-eighteen. No, it was still on Fifty-seventh Street.

MRS. BYRON: No.

MR. BYRON: No?

MRS. BYRON: No. Mm-mmm. No, the Byron Gallery opened at —

MR. BYRON: Ten-eighteen?

MRS. BYRON: Yes, 1018.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who were you exhibiting? I mean who was Emilio del Junco exhibiting?

MR. BYRON: Mostly—

MRS. BYRON: I know there's one thing that—there's a Cuban that Bessie has. Bessie has one painting.

MR. BYRON: Oh, you mean we have one here.

MRS. BYRON: No. Bessie has one painting that she bought, she bought at that gallery at that time. But we'll have to ask Bessie because I don't know the name. I can probably just write it down.

MR. McELHINNEY: We have Laura taking notes.

MR. BYRON: Bessie [Elizabeth] de Cuevas her name is.

MRS. BYRON: Bessie

MR. McELHINNEY: Bessie de Cuevas.

MS. BYRON: She's a sculptor. And I remember she bought the painting at the gallery.

MR. BYRON: She's a Rockefeller. She's a—

MS. BYRON: A painting at Emilio. That we can find out. I know very well how it looks, too. She has it.

MR. McELHINNEY: So he was exhibiting mostly Cuban artists? Or was it an international stable?

MR. BYRON: No. First of all, he wasn't exhibiting too many people. And they were mostly Canadian because he lived in Canada.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. BYRON: And he had two or three Canadians.

MRS. BYRON: That was probably Canadian, that man.

MR. BYRON: Yes?

MRS. BYRON: Yes. That's right. He was a Canadian painter.

MR. McELHINNEY: So you went to Canada from Cuba with the Abreus?

MR. BYRON: I didn't go.

MRS. BYRON: No, no.

MR. McELHINNEY: Emilio.

MR. BYRON: Emilio, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, he couldn't go back to Cuba.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MRS. BYRON: Because of the revolution there.

MR. McELHINNEY: Because of the change of power.

MRS. BYRON: Right.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MRS. BYRON: And you went to Canada afterwards.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, trying to fill in a couple of the gaps here from the time that you mustered out of the army in 1947 until the—

MRS. BYRON: You didn't do anything for one year or something, no?

MR. BYRON: Maybe not. No, I think I did, though.

MRS. BYRON: No. Just a minute. When did you work for [Louis de] Rochemont?

MR. BYRON: 'Forty-eight and '49, yes.

MRS. BYRON: You see. And you did some films, and that's when—

MR. McELHINNEY: And the name of the gallery?

MRS. Woolworth. No, there was no gallery, no. He was in the big company which is the Rochemont which did films.

MR. BYRON: Louis de Rochemont.

MRS. BYRON: Louis de Rochemont did the what is it? *The March of Tim* [1935-51]e.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MRS. BYRON: They did that with the king. And then you worked with him for several years.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: You did the first—the first cinerama [*Cinerama Holiday*, 1955]with him.

MR. BYRON: Yes, that's right.

MRS. BYRON: You did the cinerama with him. You were in the movie business. Before he got into the art, he was in the movie business.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what films were you involved with making?

MRS. BYRON: The *Cinerama* and then *The Crooked Shadow* was it?

MR. BYRON: It's not called *The Crooked Shadow*, though.

MRS. BYRON: Well, it was something. Then at that time you went with the Pamela Woolworth. Pamela Woolworth went to the—created the gallery which was—

MR. BYRON: She had a gallery. She had a gallery. She had a motion picture company.

MRS. BYRON: Right. And she asked you to—

MR. BYRON: And she asked me to run it.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, right. And it was Dragon Production.

MR. BYRON: That's right.

MR. McELHINNEY: It was called what?

MRS. BYRON: Dragon Production.

MR. McELHINNEY: Dragon Production.

MRS. BYRON: And you did the—what is it the thing, well, the *Cinerama* you did it for de Rochemont. Louis de Rochemont. But then you did several films with David Niven.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: And that was the time, you know, you did with Pamela, Pamela Woolworth.

MR. BYRON: Right.

MR. McELHINNEY: Can you recall any of the titles of those films?

MRS. BYRON: I don't know. That was something about *Crooked Shadow*—what was it?

MR. BYRON: *Chase a Crooked Shadow* [1958].

MRS. BYRON: *Chase a Crooked Shadow*.

MR. McELHINNEY: *Chase a Crooked Shadow*.

MRS. BYRON: But there were other ones.

MR. BYRON: *Silken Affair* [1956].

MRS. BYRON: *Silken Affair*— *Silken Affair* was the one with David Niven.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Yes.

MR. BYRON: That's right. You remember. I don't.

MRS. BYRON: I remember *Silken Affair*. And then I don't know which one.

MR. BYRON: But at that time I was also doing art.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MRS. BYRON: But you didn't have the gallery yet.

MR. BYRON: I didn't have a gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: Just dealing privately?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Or just collecting?

MR. BYRON: With Emilio del Junco who had a gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. So you were not showing up every day to work. You were—

MR. BYRON: That's right, yes.

MRS. BYRON: But you were going to Pamela all the time. Where was she?

MR. BYRON: Five-fifty Madison Avenue.

MRS. BYRON: Hmm. But you always wanted to go into the art business. And I don't know it came that you wanted to get a gallery, but you didn't have the money. And then Monique Uzzieli.

MR. BYRON: Because he decided to—Emilio del Junco went back to—

MRS. BYRON: Canada.

MR. BYRON: To Canada. And he decided to close.

MRS. BYRON: That's right.

MR. BYRON: And I thought, well, I will be out of a gallery. And Monique Uzzieli said, "If you want to open your own gallery, I will finance you." And that's what she did.

MRS. BYRON: And that's when you went to this one on Madison Avenue.

MR. BYRON: That's right.

MR. McELHINNEY: What was the last name again of Monique?

MR. BYRON: Uzzgieli. U-Z-Z-I-E-L-I

MR. McELHINNEY: Uzzieli.

MR. BYRON: It's a well-known Italian name.

MRS. BYRON: Double Z?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: I think so.

MR. McELHINNEY: Uzzieli.

MRS. BYRON: Uzzieli—Georges Uzzieli was a financier. And Monique—see, she's French.

MR. BYRON: She's still alive actually.

MRS. BYRON: She's I don't know—

MR. BYRON: Doing better than I.

MR. McELHINNEY: And what year would this have been? Late fifties?

MR. BYRON: Late fifties—'60.

MR. McELHINNEY: Nineteen sixty.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, that's right because you had that famous, you know, the blackout. You had the opening in the blackout.

MR. BYRON: Yes, that's right. There was a big blackout in New York. Do you remember?

MR. McELHINNEY: I do actually. It was famous because of a lot of romances that got started in elevators.

MR. BYRON: That's right. [Laughs.]

MRS. BYRON: And also some people that fell.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, dear. Well, that wasn't very romantic.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, that was bad. We knew someone that fell on his head.

MR. BYRON: That's when the gallery really—we had our first show in 1960.

MR. McELHINNEY: And what was your first opening? What were you exhibiting? What was on the wall?

MRS. BYRON: Was it the mixture of the—the Rock [sp?] show was when?

MR. BYRON: That was in '61.

MRS. BYRON: You did several shows that were—you know who can help us.

MR. BYRON: Who?

MRS. BYRON: Naomi.

MR. BYRON: Naomi, yes. That's right. She was my secretary then.

MRS. BYRON: Naomi was your secretary at that time? Antonakos

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Antonakos.

MR. McELHINNEY: Antanakos was her last name?

MRS. BYRON: Yes. She was the wife of Steve [Stephen] Antanakos who's opening on Wednesday at Chelsea's [inaudible]; he's a painter. She would probably remember certain things.

MR. BYRON: She probably will remember everything.

MRS. BYRON: Rock's [name?] show we can naturally ask her because we're going to see her on Wednesday.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, it's one of the questions that the Archives likes to have, sort of milestone question: What was on the wall when you opened your first exhibition at the gallery?

MRS. BYRON: I have no idea.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who were you carrying? What kind of artists were you representing at that time when you began?

MRS. BYRON: Brian O'Doherty was then or not?

MR. BYRON: Well, he was one of them.

MRS. BYRON: But that wasn't [inaudible].

MR. BYRON: Mostly Surrealism.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mostly Surrealism.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, that's right. Then when did you do your [René] Magritte show? When did the [Ahmet] Ertegun's buy the——?

MR. BYRON: 'Sixty-two or '63, I guess.

MRS. BYRON: Uh-huh. They bought the, with the house, what's it called, the famous one.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, with the streetlight and the—[title, date of painting]

MRS. BYRON: Yes, right.

MR. McELHINNEY: And the noonday sky and landscape at night, yes.

MRS. BYRON: Yes. Right. And the house.

MR. McELHINNEY: [René] Magritte.

MR. BYRON: He did that in '64, much later.

MRS. BYRON: You already knew Magritte, and you had Max Ernst already—or not?

MR. BYRON: I had Magritte mostly.

MRS. BYRON: Mostly.

MR. BYRON: Max Ernst afterwards.

MR. McELHINNEY: So were you showing others like Paul Delvaux or—

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, we did show Paul Delvaux.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yves Tanguy.

MR. BYRON: Yes, Yves Tanguy. Man Ray.

MR. McELHINNEY: Man Ray.

MR. BYRON: Practically all of them actually.

MR. McELHINNEY: So were the shows mostly one-person shows or were there a lot of group shows?

MR. BYRON: No, they were one-person shows at the time.

MR. McELHINNEY: And how long a duration were the shows normally?

MR. BYRON: Oh, about a month.

MR. McELHINNEY: About a month. So, normal schedule. The first few years you were open, was there any memorable event? It's a time that is very interesting because in, you know, the New York scene that was sort of the end of the Abstract Expressionist period. And you had people like Jasper Johns and [Robert] Rauschenberg and the rise of Pop.

MR. BYRON: Yes, but surrealists did quite well then.

MR. McELHINNEY: But you were exhibiting a style that had been on the cutting edge decades earlier. But these artists were still alive.

MR. BYRON: Yes. And these artists were still doing well.

MR. McELHINNEY: Still doing well.

MR. BYRON: And as a matter of fact, were doing very well after the sixties. Magritte, which used to sell for \$10-, \$15,000 came up to a hundred thousand.

MR. McELHINNEY: So in the 1960's you were showing mostly work by surrealists.

MR. BYRON: Surrealists.



MR. McELHINNEY: Any American artists at all?

MR. BYRON: Well, yes, one you mentioned—what's his name? Doherty?

MRS. BYRON: Yes, Doherty. Oh, I know, of course, Costantine Nivola.

MR. BYRON: Nivola, that's right.

MRS. BYRON: Costantine Nivola, Constantine Nivola. We had different shows, of course.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Because when I was on strike over at the *New York Times*, I came to work for you for a few— And you had that exhibition with with beds.

MR. BYRON: Beds. Yes.

McELHINNEY: So at that time, when you opened the gallery, the first few years of the gallery, the first five to ten years of the gallery, what kind of an operation was it? We're interested to understand how, you know, how the business actually ran.

MR. BYRON: I was representing European Surrealism.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: Which was very strong on the literary side then. And it became quite strong on the— on the side of drawings and sculpture.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So there was an emphasis on the graphic work and three-dimensional—

MR. BYRON: The surrealist artists. A lot of those artists lived in the States.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, I understand that a number of them during the war came to the U.S.

MR. BYRON: Right. That's right.

MR. McELHINNEY: And a lot of them ended up in the hills of Connecticut, up in Litchfield County around Sherwin.

MR. BYRON: That's right. And some of them went back.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes. Some went back. Others stayed like Naum Gabo or Yves Tanguy stayed, right?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Bill Copley?

MR. BYRON: Well, Bill Copley was an American artist, really.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, but you represented ——

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Yes.

MR. BYRON: What's his name?

MRS. BYRON: Allan Stone? No.

MR. BYRON: Sylvia Zancar [sp].

MRS. BYRON: Oh, you mean—yes.

MR. BYRON: What was his name?

MRS. BYRON: Well, he was representing Max Ernst.

MR. BYRON: Yes. There was a, which was specializing in Surrealism as well. And well known because he was there for a long time. What was the name of—

MRS. BYRON: I'll remember. Fifty-fifth Street. [Alexander] Iolas.

MR. BYRON: Iolas.

MR. McELHINNEY: How do you spell that?

MR. BYRON: I-O-L-A-S

MR. McELHINNEY: Iolas.

MRS. BYRON: He was very known.

MR. BYRON: Very well known, and he had Surrealism from the very beginning.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, there were a lot of people here like Pavel Tchelitchew and then the American—

MR. BYRON: Artists. But the gallery there was only one, and that was Iolas.

MRS. BYRON: Iolas was the one that was really —

MR. BYRON: The Iolas Gallery was a surrealist gallery in New York. And he was a dancer who became an art dealer.

MR. McELHINNEY: Another interesting story, yes.

MR. BYRON: A very good gallery. And his niece today has inherited most of his things.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is she still in the business?

MR. BYRON: Yes. No, she's never been in the business.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. BYRON: She's been— Who?

MRS. BYRON: Sylvia.

MR. BYRON: Sylvia.

MRS. BYRON: She's a great collector. She has the most marvelous collection of surrealist art. One of the best, I think.

MR. BYRON: We gave her everything.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, he gave her everything.

MR. McELHINNEY: And her name's also lolas?

MR. BYRON: Sylvia de Cuevas.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, de Cuevas of whom you earlier spoke.

MRS. BYRON: No, Sylvia de Cuevas. Bessie de Cuevos is her, I mean— Sylvia de Cuevas was married to Johnny de Cuevas who's the brother of Bessie de Cuevas.

MR. McELHINNEY: I get it.

MRS. BYRON: And they were married for five years, and then they divorced. But her name, she still is on the Sylvia de Cuevas. She still has the same name.

MR. BYRON: And she has a big collection.

MRS. BYRON: Yes.

MR. BYRON: Everything that her uncle left her.

MR. McELHINNEY: So if one were to come to the gallery during its early years, what kind of operation would we see. Would we see a registrar, a preparator, a receptionist, a salesperson? Or was it just yourself and—

MR. BYRON: There was a receptionist.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: There were two girls at one point. And we were selling surrealism.

MRS. BYRON: And the gallery, as it was actually, not so big. Now you have—who's there now is [Mitchell-Innes &] Nash.

MR. McELHINNEY: In the space?

MRS. BYRON: Yes.

MR. BYRON: In the space.

MRS. BYRON: And who was there also was the person who —

MR. McELHINNEY: So it was a relatively small operation.

MR. BYRON: It was a small operation.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. And you had an office and the gallery was —.

MR. BYRON: And the gallery was large enough to have a show every month.

MRS. BYRON: And then the back was the office and also storage and everything.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: I mean you know, just two rooms.

MR. McELHINNEY: So how large was your inventory at any given time?

MR. BYRON: Well, first of all, I didn't own everything.

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean even works on consignment, the works on hand at the gallery.

MR. BYRON: There must have been about 25 to 30 pieces.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. I see. So the exhibitions would arrive, and then you would install them and light them.

MR. BYRON: Install them, that's right.

MR. McELHINNEY: Have a reception and sell them and maybe keep a few. And the rest would go back.

MR. BYRON: That's right.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay.

MR. BYRON: And they were mostly paintings.

MRS. BYRON: Paintings and sculptures.

MR. BYRON: And sculpture.

MRS. BYRON: Oh, yes, the Max Ernst that was stolen.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Stolen?

MR. BYRON: Yes, we had this Max Ernst that was stolen.

MR. McELHINNEY: How did that happen?

MR. BYRON: That's a good thing—it was an opening of a Max Ernst show. We had a guard. It was a nice day.

MRS. BYRON: I'm not sure if it was a nice day because I think—

MR. McELHINNEY: A good day for thieves.

MR. BYRON: Somebody stole it, and we never noticed it.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, dear. And what year was that?

MR. BYRON: 'Sixty-four?

MRS. BYRON: I have absolutely no idea. That was a completely different—you know I wasn't part of it —

MR. BYRON: 'Sixty-four?

MRS. BYRON: 'Sixty-four, yes. You had an opening.

MR. BYRON: Anyway, ten years later or 15 years later—

MRS. BYRON: More. Just about a year, now, no?

MR. BYRON: They called me up to say that they found it.

MR. McELHINNEY: Where did they find it?

MRS. BYRON: In Italy.

MR. BYRON: In Italy. At an opening—not a show. I think it was.

MRS. BYRON: No. They called you to let you know that. And then you were trying to get it and it was very difficult. But finally you got— It's through the—what was it, those people who try to find the paintings and all that? What is it?

MR. BYRON: I think it was the Archives of American Art.

MRS. BYRON: No, I don't think so, no.

MR. BYRON: No?

MRS. BYRON: No, no, no. It was the people that find the art that is stolen.

MR. BYRON: Yes, I mean that.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, and they called you.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is that the only piece that you lost that way?

MR. BYRON: Yes. But it was amazing because, it was unbelievable that it could be stolen.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, I think it was someone that had a raincoat, and they just kind of—it was not very big, you know. But still.

MR. BYRON: But still.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, just the one.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did anyone ever identify the thief?

MR. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: There was that famous story in the 1980's about the doctor from Philadelphia who was robbing everybody.

MR. BYRON: Oh, yes. Well, that's something.

MR. McELHINNEY: Dr. Waxman [name?], was it? I can't remember his name. I wouldn't swear to it, but I think it was some doctor who had an apartment on Rittenhouse Square [Philadelphia, PA], very reputable person, whose sport was art thieving.

MRS. BYRON: You gave also exhibitions to the, you know, what that's called, pre-Columbian art.

MR. BYRON: Oh, yes, that was it.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, when did you get involved with that? You know you were exhibiting French, mostly French it sounds like, surrealist artists up until what time?

MRS. BYRON: No, there were Belgian. Magritte is Belgiun. Paul Delvaux is Belgian.

MR. McELHINNEY: Belgian. I'm sorry, yes.

MR. BYRON: European, anyway.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, European. I think it's better to say European.

MR. BYRON: You mean with the pre-Columbian?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. BYRON: I have a friend who has a very good collection.

MRS. BYRON: In Mexico.

MR. BYRON: A Frenchman who lived in Mexico. And he taught me all about pre-Columbian art.

MRS. BYRON: Well, actually, what's his name? The one—the dealer.

MR. BYRON: Raoul.

MRS. BYRON: Raoul, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: The last name, do you know?

MR. BYRON: Raoul Kemfer. K-E-M-F-E-R.

MR. McELHINNEY: Kemfer.

MRS. BYRON: Then all that was— You got it just before it started to—I mean before the problems.

MR. BYRON: And before it was forbidden.

MR. McELHINNEY: Before patrimony.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Because now, of course, with all the patrimony laws it's impossible. Someone told me in a prior interview, he told me—told us, I guess—that one of the ways that Rufino Tamayo's widow was able to organize the museum was to have him excluded from the patrimony Laws.

MR. BYRON: From before, yes.

MRS. BYRON: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. McELHINNEY: So that a work could be sold out of the country. But this is an interesting problem today with all of the countries, Greece and Egypt and other countries trying to reclaim, Italy—and sometimes with great success—important artifacts that have been lying in Western museums for the past 200 years. So you became involved with pre-Columbian art in the 1960's?

MR. BYRON: Yes, in the 1960's.

MRS. BYRON: What about Federico, Pedro Friedeberg— He's a Mexican.

MR. BYRON: That's right. And at the time two Mexican artists I showed. One is called Pedro Friedeberg.

MRS. BYRON: He was surrealistic and we have the table which is very surrealistic.

MR. BYRON: And who was the other one? Oh, and we have big gold pieces there.

MRS. BYRON: Oh, you mean Mathias Goeritz.

MR. BYRON: Goeritz, that's right.

MRS. BYRON: Mathias Goeritz who was a Mexican —

MR. BYRON: And Mathias Goeritz was in the beginning a surrealist artist.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] A lot of, I think, sensibility parallels between a lot of Latin American art and surrealist art. So it seems makes sense, certainly people now are very interested in somebody like Frida Kahlo, whose work is very strongly influenced by surrealism.

MR. BYRON: I had some Frida Kahlo.

MRS. BYRON: You had what?

MR. BYRON: I had two Frida Kahlos at the time.

MRS. BYRON: Of course that's [inaudible]. But you also sold some things to—what did you sell them for?—to Leslie [ph], who has also a good collection of art.

MR. BYRON: Yes. I forget where I sold them now.

MRS. BYRON: So did you actually have an exhibit like a whole exhibition solely devoted to art of the pre-Columbian period?

MR. BYRON: Yes, I did. Twice.

MR. McELHINNEY: And this was organized by this—

MRS. BYRON: No, by you.

MR. BYRON: By me.

MR. McELHINNEY: By you! So what were the criteria that you used, you know, to choose the pieces?

MR. BYRON: Oh!

MR. McELHINNEY: And how did you—

MR. BYRON: I met a man in Mexico who was a big authority on pre-Columbian art. He helped me to put this show together.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MRS. BYRON: You checked also with—what was the museum?

MR. BYRON: The museum here, no?

MRS. BYRON: Yes, about some of the pieces that you wanted to be sure that they were real.

MR. BYRON: Oh, the [American] Museum of Natural History [New York, NY]. There's a man at the—Numo [name?], I think he died—a man at the [American] Museum of Natural History, who was a great specialist in pre-Columbian art. And he helped me, too. The first show was a show of animals, the leftovers are there. These are leftovers. It was a big show of animals. The second one was Mathias Goeritz.

MRS. BYRON: No, but that's pre-Columbia art.

MR. BYRON: No.

MRS. BYRON: But you had another one of pre-Columbian art.

MR. BYRON: Another one, I forget.

MR. McELHINNEY: Do you recall the name of the curator at the [American] Museum of Natural History?

MR. BYRON: No. But that's easy to find out.

MRS. BYRON: Because he was well known.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's interesting because, you know, that collection was originally started in the 1840's, I think, John Lloyd Stevens.

MR. BYRON: Right.

MR. McELHINNEY: Copan for \$50 or something.

MRS. BYRON: Oh, you mean the Natural History?



MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, the [American Museum of] Natural History. And actually one of the first pieces in the MET [Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC] was that Frederick Church gift.

MR. BYRON: Yes, he's well known.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: You would probably remember if you'd tell him the name.

MR. McELHINNEY: We can look it up, curator. [name?]

MR. BYRON: That's somebody that you can find easily.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: Who was the specialist in pre-Columbian art at the [American] Museum of Natural History?

MR. McELHINNEY: Had you been interested in art of pre-Columbian and Mexico.

MR. BYRON: I became interested thanks to that.

MR. McELHINNEY: Thanks to that. So you were on a trip, you were traveling in Mexico?

MR. BYRON: I went very often.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, you did.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: From when?

MR. BYRON: From New York.

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean from—

MR. BYRON: Nineteen sixty.

MR. McELHINNEY: From about 1960. What inspired you to go there?

MR. BYRON: I liked it. I fell in love with it. And I had friends, collectors. One friend especially, Jean Louis.

MRS. BYRON: We went there—we went several times to Mexico.

MR. BYRON: We went there together two years, and I went on my own many times.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, many times.

MR. McELHINNEY: And where did you go—stay—when you were there?

MR. BYRON: I stayed with him in Mexico City.

MR. McELHINNEY: In Mexico City.

MRS. BYRON: And also coming [inaudible]. [Laughs.] That's a hotel, I can tell you.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. Where did he live?

MR. BYRON: In Mexico City?

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean in the city, yes.

MRS. BYRON: Rio de Janeiro.

MR. BYRON: Piazza Rio de Janeiro. Do you know it?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. BYRON: The house was falling apart.

MRS. BYRON: It was sinking also because the—

MR. McELHINNEY: A lot of the buildings are sinking.

MR. BYRON: But that was an extraordinary house.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, it was.

MR. BYRON: Because one day you saw it, and then you don't see it anymore. [They laugh.]

MRS. BYRON: That's right.

MR. BYRON: And his whole collection—he died a few years ago—and unfortunately his whole collection disappeared.

MRS. BYRON: I don't know what happened to it. It's a beautiful collection he had.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mostly art from the pre-Columbian era—period?

MR. BYRON: Oh, all pre-Columbian.

MR. McELHINNEY: All pre-Columbian.

MRS. BYRON: Only had pre-Columbian.

MR. BYRON: But that had nothing to do with Surrealism.

MR. McELHINNEY: No.

MRS. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean there is a kind of iconography. There's a kind of forceful imagery, I think.

MR. BYRON: Yes, that's right, there is.

MR. McELHINNEY: Surrealism at a time when a lot of people were interested in increasingly formal issues of style and abstract painting. And it remained kind of the one figurative thread that sort of endured across that period.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, because you didn't show much of the abstract. You didn't have exhibitions of surrealism [inaudible].

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Oh, yes, Merican [ph]. Did you ever show Merican [ph]?

MR. BYRON: Yes, I did. But he was not really a star. He was teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design [Providence, RI].

MRS. BYRON: He just died.

MR. BYRON: And he has nothing to do with surrealism. But he—it was close.

MR. McELHINNEY: So how were these exhibitions received, these exhibitions in the pre-Columbian?

MR. BYRON: Well, and inexpensive.

MR. McELHINNEY: Then.

MR. BYRON: Then.

MR. McELHINNEY: Was your audience, was your clientele surprised to see you going in sort of an anthropological direction, as opposed to—

MR. BYRON: No, I don't think so. Were you surprised?

MRS. BYRON: No, no.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's sort of—

MRS. BYRON: No, no. They were not. You know people are curious. They come to the shows.

MR. McELHINNEY: So it was a response, your own response, to the interest you had in it, based on your own taste.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Sometimes he had to show some of the French people that he didn't like. But that was Monique's idea.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, who for instance?

MRS. BYRON: No, actually it's nothing.

MR. BYRON: I don't remember.

MRS. BYRON: Maybe once.

MR. McELHINNEY: So now we're up to what, about 1970, early 1970's? How long were you exhibiting—

MR. BYRON: I think I was drafted when?

MR. McELHINNEY: 'Forty-two, you said.

MR. BYRON: In '42. No, no, no. 'Forty-two, that's when I— Is that when I was drafted?

MRS. BYRON: Yes. But that doesn't have anything to do with the gallery that you had.

MR. BYRON: No, no.

MRS. BYRON: I mean that was before. I'm just trying to remember. I think only, I'm trying to remember where you had the Nivola show, the first one, with the beds.

MR. BYRON: 'Sixty-one.

MRS. BYRON: Yes. But that was in the new gallery, wasn't it?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: So we're now in the new gallery. We were speaking about you took over the gallery—

MR. BYRON: From Emilio del Junco.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, but that's the other gallery.

MR. BYRON: He committed suicide.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

MRS. BYRON: Afterwards.

MR. BYRON: Afterwards. And he had four children.

MRS. BYRON: Oh, no, five or six.

MR. BYRON: Five or six.

MRS. BYRON: Six, I think six.

MR. BYRON: His widow is still alive.

MRS. BYRON: In Canada in [inaudible].

MR. BYRON: And has nothing to do with art.

MRS. BYRON: No. But anyway, you get it — Then from there you went to the film, de Rochemont.

MR. BYRON: Only for a while.

MRS. BYRON: Oh, a few years just. There was de Rochemont, and then you went to Dragon Production. Because you know at least five years before you opened the gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: And when do you open the new gallery?

MR. BYRON: Nineteen sixty.

MR. McELHINNEY: Nineteen sixty. And what was the address?

MRS. BYRON: The same one.

MR. BYRON: Ten-eighteen Madison.

MR. McELHINNEY: Ten-eighteen Madison.

MR. BYRON: That's the only one.

MR. McELHINNEY: Same one. And began by showing European surrealism.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And then evolved into exhibiting pre-Columbian artwork. Was it mostly pottery, or was it stone sculpture?

MR. BYRON: It was everything.

MR. McELHINNEY: Everything. Everything. What was the largest piece that you ever showed?

MR. BYRON: Hah! The largest piece was a Max Ernst sculpture.

MRS. BYRON: Is it pre-Columbian art—is it Columbian art, you mean?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. BYRON: Oh, pre-Columbian art.

MRS. BYRON: They were bigger.

MR. BYRON: I don't know what was the largest piece of pre-Columbian art.

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean you didn't have any giant calendars or anything like that?

MR. BYRON: No, nothing really giant.

MR. McELHINNEY: Just more intimate pieces like the ones we see here, we're looking at.

MR. BYRON: This is a pre-Columbian here.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: That's about the size.

MR. McELHINNEY: Having looked at a shelf between two tiers of bookshelves that's backlit behind some frosty glass, about eight or nine objects on that shelf.

MRS. BYRON: Well, there are two.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, there's another one in the other room.

MRS. BYRON: Right.

MR. McELHINNEY: Tell me about this piece here.

MRS. BYRON: Costa Rica.

MR. McELHINNEY: Costa Rica.

MR. BYRON: That's it.

MRS. BYRON: Well, a lot of people wanted to have that. By giving them one of them that one that does the assemblage. Arman.

MR. McELHINNEY: Arman [Pierre Fernandez].

MRS. BYRON: There are a lot of people want to have this piece or some of them.

MR. BYRON: This is a good, a very good piece. Costa Rica.

MR. McELHINNEY: What is the iconography? What is the—

MR. BYRON: It's a—

MRS. BYRON: A funeral piece, no?

MR. BYRON: That's right.

MRS. BYRON: Well, they're all funerals.

MR. BYRON: They're all funerals. I forget what it's called, if anything.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's a small stone sculpture of a little more than 12 inches in height probably, maybe a little bit more.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, I think a little bit more—like 15 or something, no?

MR. McELHINNEY: Maybe 15 inches. It looks like—I don't know, I don't know, is it a female figure?

MRS. BYRON: I don't know.

MR. McELHINNEY: Non-gendered figure of some kind. Anyway, how did it change your clientele? Did other people start coming to the gallery as a result of your exhibiting other kinds of work?

MR. BYRON: No, it was the same crowd.

MR. McELHINNEY: It was the same crowd. Well, I guess I'm curious about the collector side of it, and who were you interacting with among the collectors of art at that time. Were there any—

MR. BYRON: The Menil Foundation [Houston, TX].

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. The Menil—right.

MR. BYRON: Mrs. de Menil.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's in Houston now.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Always Houston.

MRS. BYRON: And also Ahmet Ertegun.

MR. BYRON: Ertegun and several collectors. The two brothers. But Dominique de Menil was the big collector. She was also very interested in surrealism.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And so after introducing the pre-Columbian aspect to the gallery as a kind of new genre of art that you were exhibiting, now you were showing European surrealism. A few American artists?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: But mostly European artists. A few Latin American artists?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And now archaeological or historic artwork. Were there any other evolutions in terms of the kind of artwork you were exhibiting?

MR. BYRON: No, but I showed some Greek antiquities.

MRS. BYRON: Ah, right, right.

MR. BYRON: I had two shows of Greek antiquities.

MR. McELHINNEY: And from whence did you obtain these pieces?

MR. BYRON: By going to Greece and asking for them.

MR. McELHINNEY: Really. That would be harder to do today, I think.

MR. BYRON: You couldn't do it anymore.

MRS. BYRON: No. And anyway some of the things were stolen by the authorities, American authorities.

MR. McELHINNEY: How did it work? How did it work to go to a country in those days and buy antiquities and then bring them to the United States.

MR. BYRON: It was easy, easy.

MR. McELHINNEY: But what were the steps? What was the actual process?

MR. BYRON: You bought them there, brought them in your luggage, and you took them to New York. That's it.

MR. McELHINNEY: That's it. I know that Italy and other countries have a whole process now where

you have to fill out endless forms.

MR. BYRON: Now. But then you didn't have to.

MR. McELHINNEY: Belles artes [ph].

MRS. BYRON: But when some of the bracelet was stolen.

MR. BYRON: Well, that's different. I had a show of antique jewelry, Greek jewelry from antiquity. And that jewelry I had it shipped to New York. And at customs part of it was stolen.

MRS. BYRON: By the customs.

MR. McELHINNEY: Really!

MR. BYRON: You know that happened.

MR. McELHINNEY: On what grounds?

MRS. BYRON: Just stealing, right? [Laughs.] Not very honest people, I guess.

MR. BYRON: I had, let's say, 28 pieces, and only 26 arrived. And I'd say where they are, "Oh, we don't know." And they were obviously stolen at customs. That happened many times to people.

MR. McELHINNEY: What year was that?

MR. BYRON: In the sixties.

MR. McELHINNEY: Sixties.

MR. BYRON: That was before the laws.

MR. McELHINNEY: So did the gallery grow at all and evolve. Did you begin to—

MR. BYRON: I don't think that the gallery grew at all. Do you think my gallery grew at all?

MRS. BYRON: No. No, because the space was always the same. It was a rather intimate gallery. The space was still the same even though you did some exhibitions of drawings. I mean you did some special exhibits like the boxes or drawings or, you know, that you thought about, and you gave exhibitions that you collected different artists.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, let's talk about a couple of these special exhibitions because, you know, the value of this conversation is going to be for scholars and other people doing research into the art world.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And many of them may actually be looking to understand what happened behind the scenes for one of these shows perhaps. Perhaps the exhibition of your pre-Columbian objects. What was the boxes show?

MR. BYRON: There were two shows. One was called *The Box Show* [1965]—and they were all American artists. And they were a hundred artists. And then there were a hundred drawings show,



that was afterwards, I think, two years later. It was called *One Hundred [American] Drawings* [1965], I guess. And that was quite—a good show. Both of them were good shows.

MRS. BYRON: You always selected the shows and the art. You didn't have anyone helping you on this.

MR. BYRON: No, I guess nobody helped there.

MRS. BYRON: No, I mean there were one or two different people in there.

MR. McELHINNEY: So there was no curator or collaborator.

MRS. BYRON: No, no. It's now that happens.

MR. McELHINNEY: Now more, yes.

MRS. BYRON: Before it didn't. It didn't happen so much.

MR. BYRON: No, I guess not. I forget.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, what was the inspiration for the exhibition about the boxes? And when we're speaking about the boxes, maybe we can research images between now and the next meeting.

MRS. BYRON: Brian O'Doherty was one. Do you have—you gave all the catalogs to the Archives anyway. You don't have any.

MR. BYRON: Yes, before we got them to the Archives.

MRS. BYRON: And what about the show in Japan with [Serge] Sabarsky?

MR. BYRON: Oh, surrealism. There was a show in Japan in '64, '65? of surrealism.

MRS. BYRON: Are you sure it wasn't—

MR. BYRON: 'Sixty-six? I can find out immediately.

MRS. BYRON: I know it was done with Serge Sabarsky..

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MRS. BYRON: And it opened in different places in Japan.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, before we answer those questions, can you tell me about, you know, the boxes?

MRS. BYRON: You know I didn't have any—I was traveling all the time. I was in publishing. I wasn't always in New York.

MR. McELHINNEY: So you weren't here for all of these shows.

MRS. BYRON: You know I was here. But I was traveling a lot because I was publishing things in the *New York Times*, *House and Garden*, whatever. And I had to go all around to photograph

residences. But, you know, I went to the openings obviously. But I didn't do anything about, you know, choosing anything. Charles would consult me about it. But, you know, it was very different for him. He usually had an idea that he pursued.

MR. BYRON: But why the boxes?

MR. McELHINNEY: Why the boxes?

MR. BYRON: I don't know. I thought it was a good idea.

MRS. BYRON: It was not a special box that you thought, that gave the idea?

MR. BYRON: But it went very well, and the people loved it.

MRS. BYRON: Yes.

MR. BYRON: And a lot of people were curious not to be part of the box show.

MRS. BYRON: Well, you know who was also there [inaudible]. I've forgot his name.

MR. BYRON: Who?

MRS. BYRON: Anyway it doesn't matter.

MR. BYRON: They were well-known artists of the time. *The Box Show*.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, was there any kind of particular trigger like an interest or something that like—

MR. BYRON: A direction?

MR. McELHINNEY: That inspired the show of the boxes other than it's a good idea. I think about perhaps somebody like Joseph Cornell, who was known for the boxes.

MR. BYRON: Yes. Mm-hmm. He was a part of the show. But I don't—

MR. McELHINNEY: H. C. Westermann or other people like that.

MR. BYRON: I was only interested in good boxes.

MR. McELHINNEY: In good boxes.

MRS. BYRON: Attractive. They are good. I mean you didn't do boxes because it was just a box by an artist. You chose carefully what you wanted.

MR. BYRON: Well, Cornell, for instance, had boxes.

MRS. BYRON: You always had very, he has very good taste. And you only selected very beautiful pieces. You never wanted to have something that would be called good or interesting if it was not attractive or good art. I mean you would never do that. It was always based on something which is very good.

MR. McELHINNEY: Something which—

MRS. BYRON: That he, being whoever it is. Chose and it was always his taste and nothing was forced on him to do.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right, right. And what was the response to the box show?

MR. BYRON: Very good, very good.

MR. McELHINNEY: Do you recall any of the critical?

MR. BYRON: The critical was good. I forget—the *New York Times* and the usual. With both shows, the critics were good. And they sold out.

MR. McELHINNEY: That's wonderful. So I imagine a lot of the artists who were in the show made boxes specifically for the show.

MR. BYRON: For the show, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: They weren't box-making artists. You gave them a challenge or an assignment, and they rose to the occasion. And can you recall, let's say, the top five boxes? Your favorite five boxes?

MR. BYRON: No. Can you? Do you know which were my favorite five boxes?

MRS. BYRON: Cornell, but I don't know particularly. I really don't know. I don't know.

MR. McELHINNEY: Were you doing a lot of publishing? Did you do a lot of catalogs?

MRS. BYRON: You did, no? But you give all of them to the Archives?

MR. BYRON: I did a few catalogs, not many.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, surrealism, the blue one.

MR. BYRON: Well, that one. That went to Japan.

MRS. BYRON: And also the surrealism, your blue one on surrealism.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: The blue cover.

MR. BYRON: Over here.

MR. McELHINNEY: Because a lot of galleries I know sort of also got very involved in publishing, and got involved with—

MRS. BYRON: I don't think so. I mean nowadays they are not even catalogs. They call them catalogs. Nowadays people have got—they are books.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MRS. BYRON: Now they are doing books. They don't do catalogs anymore.

MR. McELHINNEY: They might call them catalogs. But they're—yes.

MRS. BYRON: Yes, but it is not catalogs.

MR. BYRON: Anyway, I have them all here. I have a copy of the surrealist one. And I have a copy of —I can give you that.

MRS. BYRON: Because they already have that one—they have it I think [inaudible] No?

MR. BYRON: Perhaps. Do you need a copy?

MR. McELHINNEY: I could send along another one if you can spare one.

MRS. BYRON: But you want to keep one anyway.

MR. BYRON: Well, those I have many.

MRS. BYRON: Oh, I see that. That's okay.

MR. BYRON: Magritte, Max Ernst, and surrealism. Those three I have.

MRS. BYRON: Several ones.

MR. BYRON: Several ones.

MRS. BYRON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. McELHINNEY: So at any point during the time when you were running the gallery, did you maintain any contact with, you know, the cinematic world? Were you still involved a little bit in the movies.

MR. BYRON: Not really.

MR. McELHINNEY: No?

MRS. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: That was just a momentary thing.

MRS. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Were any of your clients former colleagues from the movie days?

MR. BYRON: Yes, some of them. I'm trying to think who.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who'd you bring along out of the movies into, you know, the gallery world?

MR. BYRON: Do you remember?

MRS. BYRON: No.

[END DISC 1.]

MR. McELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Charles Byron and Naomi Antonakos at Mr. Byron's residence at 25 East Eighty-third Street, New York City, on a snowy Thursday afternoon, the 25th of February 2010. Hello again, Mr. Byron.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Perhaps we could resume the conversation by asking Ms. Antonakos when she joined the gallery, when she came to work at the gallery.

NAOMI ANTONAKOS: Okay. Call me Naomi. It was '62, '63. And when you're young everything is young. But it was a change in the New York art world. It was mixed. I mean you had Roy Lichtenstein and you had everybody at the Dick Bellamy's. You had French culture with Charles and very eminent Greek people. You had on Tuesday night maybe ten max openings to go to. And everybody went to all of them. I think that the context of the gallery was so fertile and stimulating for the artists and all the art people. It wasn't so commercial, for better or worse. [Laughs.] But it was congenial and collegiate. I mean it was friendly.

MR. McELHINNEY: So the Byron Gallery is uptown. And were openings normally always on Tuesday evenings at that time?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And Charles's were the most elegant. Oh, he'd have some anise, pernod or something. Just much more sophisticated than most of us were. But it was, you know, a social university. I mean I'm saying it. But it really was true. Even sophisticated people would walk in and say, Oh, where did you get this stamp measure? Or—

MR. BYRON: All the galleries were doing the same thing.

MS. ANTONAKOS: It was the style to be dressy as opposed to huge. But I think he took the cake.

MR. McELHINNEY: It was not a Bohemian gathering.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Oh, the soaps. In the back if you went to see what soap or towels. Or if you went farther back where you could wrap a drawing, if you could see the paper that Charles bought to wrap things with, the string or the scissors. They could have been in a museum. [Ms. Antonakos and Mr. Byron laugh.] Everything, truly.

MR. BYRON: That doesn't sound right.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well—sorry. [Laughs.] But it's true. It's true.

MR. McELHINNEY: What had been your preparation for coming to work at the gallery? What had you been doing prior to that?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, I was working at CBS and going to galleries with older friends. I guess the first one was [Andre] Emmerich [Gallery], who was showing probably [Theodoros] Stamos at the time.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And had a friend who was a Greek. And we were going around together.

MR. BYRON: He's still alive, Stamos.

MS. ANTONAKOS: He died.

MR. BYRON: Oh, he died?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: I was wondering if there's any way to turn the radio off. I realize that that's going.

MR. BYRON: Yes, where is the radio?

MS. ANTONAKOS: I don't know.

MR. McELHINNEY: We'll just keep the tape running for—well, there we are. There's a funny—

MR. BYRON: Buzz.

MR. McELHINNEY: Back sound. I'm thinking that it's human, and there's music, and there's cellos and things like that. Okay. That's much better.

MS. ANTONAKOS: So this elegance extended very much to the spirit of sort of ecumenical choice of shows. I remember a show of about 150 drawings. And it was from Surrealism through people

MR. BYRON: That was [*One*] *Hundred [American] Drawings*.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Was it just a hundred?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Was it at your gallery?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes. And everybody had one drawing.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And there were a lot of new people like [Donald] Judd and [Sol] LeWitt, who were quite young in '62, '63. And another outstanding—it seemed at the time like a catch-all, but it turned out that all those people were important subsequently—was a box show. I think Virginia Dwan had had one.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, we—

MS. ANTONAKOS: You covered that.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, we spoke about it. But I'd like to hear your take on it.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, at that show, one thing that became clear was that whereas a lot of things were selling for 400 [dollars], 500, Cornell was selling for 5,000 at that time.

MR. BYRON: Oh, really?

MS. ANTONAKOS: A price, yes. So that was for me an indication of like, ah! There's something else, you know, I mean a different level was introduced with that. But I still think that the quality of the framing, the lighting, the installation, the presentation, the announcements, the courtesy, the hospitality.

MR. BYRON: The Menil Foundation bought most of the things.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Mm-hmm. Yes. That was exceptional.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what was, you know, the motivating element in the *Zeitgeist* of the moment to inspire you and people like Dwan to organize a box show.

MS. ANTONAKOS: It was clear that people were doing this.

MR. McELHINNEY: It was just on scene.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I mean the world wasn't that big that you could fail to notice something like this.

MR. McELHINNEY: There were a lot of boxes showing up in exhibitions.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Or studios, I would say.

MR. McELHINNEY: Studios.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Studios, yes, yes. Lucas, of course, Lucas Samaras.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So when did you come to work at the gallery?

MS. ANTONAKOS: You know I was trying to remember the dates, but I think it was '62 and '63 because in '64 I did something else.

MR. McELHINNEY: Or perhaps a better way of asking it is how did you come to work at the gallery?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, somebody said, "Charles is looking for somebody for the desk. Would you be interested?" I said, "Oh, I'd definitely be interested. I don't know if Charles is interested." But it worked out. And he'd had some very nice people working there. Because he was the hub, I mean, of the [Leo] Rabkins—the minute I sat down, the Rabkins had come to dinner. [Laughs.] And, oh, I should mention just in terms of the courtesy and character of Charles's operation was in that drawing show, and in that box show, every artist received a personal note thanking them for their participation when it was over. Or if it was lent by a collector or another person, that person received a note. I don't think we do that anymore. [Laughs.]

MR. McELHINNEY: It's an email or a text on the phone.

MS. ANTONAKOS: It was normal at that time. Or just here it is, thanks.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what had been your job at CBS?

MS. ANTONAKOS: I was proofreading album jackets and advertising copy and liner notes.

MR. McELHINNEY: So it was the recording industry. It was not the broadcasting or it was—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MS. ANTONAKOS: They had an in-house artist and repertory advertising, publicity. I was a generalist, and I liked theater, ballet, music, art. I liked everything. Art was probably the thing I knew least about. But this was a very good time to learn.

MR. McELHINNEY: So when you came to work, what was your first day like?

MS. ANTONAKOS: [Laughs.]

MR. McELHINNEY: I'm trying to get the other side of the gallery on your experience here. What's it like to work for Charles Byron?

MS. ANTONAKOS: It was always very gracious. It was always lovely. It was like—Charles was always wonderful at conversation. Charles was always there. He was always—how can I say? Charles is warm, courteous. You know even if you talk to him from outside. If you call up Charles and you say, "Hi, it's Naomi." He'd say, "Naomi!" [Laughs.] Always made you feel so— Really it was a terrific atmosphere.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what was your task list? You came into the gallery, and there's the desk.

MS. ANTONAKOS: You know three shows. I mean three-week shows. It's heavy.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's a lot of work.

MS. ANTONAKOS: It's heavy, it's heavy. Everybody does this who works in galleries, you know.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MS. ANTONAKOS: You do the cards, you do the shipping, you do the billing, you do all that stuff. Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: So immediately you just hit the ground running.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I just learned so much about—I mean you mentioned Mathias Goeritz, Herbert Bayer. Remember even Bernard Pfriem, that big, big, big drawing. That was very large. It was about eight feet tall. It was a very international set. It was even thrilling. It was marvelous. Yes. Marvelous. I hated to leave.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what was the first exhibition that you worked on?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Oh, God, I don't remember.

MR. McELHINNEY: The first one you remember.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, I do remember the drawing show and the box shows in particular. But there were many one-person shows. The most fun was hanging shows.

MR. BYRON: There was an [Stephen] Antonakos show.

MS. ANTONAKOS: At least one Antonakos show. The pre-Columbian show was interesting.

MR. McELHINNEY: Spoke about that last time.



MS. ANTONAKOS: You did, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, the pieces.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And I remember that Mr. Emmerich came in—say the opening was at six, he came in at three in the afternoon or something. He said, “Where did Charles find these?” And I said, “I believe they’re from Mexico.” He said, “That’s not what I mean!” Of course I knew—[They laugh.] But that was a very outstanding show. Surprising and thrilling and successful.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what was the operation of the gallery? We spoke about this a little bit. But just part of what the Archives likes to understand is how the gallery actually functioned. I mean what was the operational model of the gallery. You were working there as everything, I suppose.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Sort of general manager, whatever.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right, a general— Were there any other employees of the gallery at that time?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Don’t think so.

MR. BYRON: There as one more, yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: This is somebody to hang the shows.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, I can’t remember who it was, though.

MR. McELHINNEY: Was it a regular person who was at the gallery?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who sort of worked as a preparator—

MS. ANTONAKOS: There must have been.

MR. McELHINNEY: —and dealt with the framing and all of that.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, framing was done outside, you know, by professional framers. The bank was the Bank of New York on Madison Avenue.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is there anyone that you used especially as a favored framer?

MS. ANTONAKOS: No. Sorry. No.

MR. McELHINNEY: Were artists expected to put their work into exhibition appliances like frames? Or was that a gallery—?

MS. ANTONAKOS: There were so many strange media in those days. I do remember [Robert] Kulicke was a famous framer.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Kulicke frames are very hot. Both the plastic wraps and—

MR. BYRON: The metal frames.

MS. ANTONAKOS: —the stainless steel slightly rounded baguettes.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I guess we didn't really have like a house style. Like Emmerich did have those wooden baguettes with the gold or silver fronts. We didn't have a house style because I think it wasn't a gallery with a single direction. It was so various: Pedro Friedeberg and his golden chairs. You know, did you know those? You could sit down in them. Pedro Friedeberg?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: So there was no specific style that the gallery associated itself with.

MR. McELHINNEY: No, it was very mixed, right, Charles?

MR. BYRON: Yes, I guess so.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, yes.

MR. BYRON: Mostly surrealism, though.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. As we spoke about last time. A lot of emphasis on—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Hmm?

MR. McELHINNEY: We spoke I guess last time about your interest in surrealism.

MR. BYRON: Surrealism, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And how you were acquainted with a number of the people who we know as surrealist artists. And I guess what we're curious about is the genesis of the gallery as well. So from the time— How long did you work at the gallery?

MS. ANTONAKOS: A couple of years, I think. I think I was the third person you had in that role.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I think so. I think there was an older woman from South America? And then a woman who was married to an artist who was moving away. That's my impression, that I was the third. When did the gallery start, anyway?

MR. McELHINNEY: You can't recall the names of either of these people? Did you know them?

MS. ANTONAKOS: So sorry.

MR. McELHINNEY: But how did the gallery—I guess I'm asking you how did the gallery evolve from, you know, the beginning to, you know, over the years.?

MS. ANTONAKOS: You know I have worked in a couple of other galleries since then—it's many years ago. But it's my world. The Byron Gallery really did fulfill that sort of image that you have you're writing a novel and you say, "She decided to start a gallery." If you could think of all the sort

of fulfillment and style and effect and connections that that initial impression has on people. Even older people. It was possible to have a gallery like that with really just two people. I mean Charles really doing everything and just sort of following through with what he wanted to do. It was possible. I'm sure it's not possible anymore.

MR. McELHINNEY: Probably not in New York. Perhaps in other—

MS. ANTONAKOS: That's what I was thinking of, New York, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, in other towns perhaps. Well, to that effect, you've been involved with the gallery world for a long time. How have you seen, either of you, how have you seen the gallery business change over the years? What's been gained, what's been lost? I know these are big questions.

MS. ANTONAKOS: [Laughs.]

MR. BYRON: The gallery business hasn't changed actually. It's the prices have changed.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, some have said that, some other interviewees have said, that they regret the fact that there's less emphasis on aesthetics and taste and more emphasis recently on just big bucks.

MR. BYRON: Money.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, money. How did that come about in your experience?

MR. BYRON: I think the Art Dealers Association shows have changed the atmosphere anyway.

MR. McELHINNEY: How did they do that?

MR. BYRON: Clients who were interested and who bought.

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

MR. BYRON: More clients bought.

MR. McELHINNEY: So do you think it's a result of let's say back in the eighties this sort of, a lot more dealers coming on the scene, trying to present art as an investment medium rather than as a—or as a way of social climbing?

MR. BYRON: That I don't know.

MR. McELHINNEY: Or laundering money or whatever?

MR. BYRON: There are people who are very interested in a certain type of art.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: And they came forward.

MR. McELHINNEY: But how did that affect the price structure?

MR. BYRON: It affected the price structure—it brought the prices up.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: And surrealism especially.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. Well, it moved from being a contemporary genre to being an historic genre.

MR. BYRON: People like Magritte.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: Who was first a portrait painter became an important painter in a few years.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, because he changed his style or he—

MR. BYRON: No, the interest changed.

MR. McELHINNEY: The interest changed. And why do you think that happened?

MR. BYRON: The interest changed?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. BYRON: I don't know.

MR. McELHINNEY: Just changes in taste?

MR. BYRON: Surrealism is something that came overnight, and I don't know why.

MR. McELHINNEY: So at what point in time, I mean—

MR. BYRON: In the sixties.

MR. McELHINNEY: In the sixties. It had already existed as a kind of known genre since the twenties.

MR. BYRON: Oh, the literary.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes. But it really came into its own—

MR. BYRON: From '24 on, surrealism became more and more important.

MR. McELHINNEY: And how do you see it today? How do you think people are engaging it today?

MR. BYRON: Well, there are less collectors around. The prices have become enormous.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And how did that affect your business?

MR. BYRON: Oh, very well. The people like were saying—I'm trying to think. The Menil Foundation, who specializes in surrealism, became very good clients of the gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. BYRON: And because of them, many others came.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, it would follow that if the prices are going up, the prices that are being paid are increasing sharply and climbing, that it must have made it more challenging to acquire inventory as well—or more expensive.

MR. BYRON: It did.

MR. McELHINNEY: How did you modify your approach? How did you find consignments?

MR. BYRON: I got many things on consignment.

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

MR. BYRON: I couldn't afford to buy them directly.

MR. McELHINNEY: But at the beginning, a lot of the work that you were selling you owned.

MR. BYRON: Well, it was very inexpensive.

MR. McELHINNEY: And you owned it yourself?

MR. BYRON: Yes, some of it.

MR. McELHINNEY: So increasingly you began to deal more and more with people consigning works.

MR. BYRON: A Magritte painting in the beginning was about, for a little painting, \$50, \$75, \$150. As the years went on, it became a \$1,000, \$2,000. And right now I think it's \$100,000.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. And prices are going up and up.

MR. BYRON: And there were many collectors of surrealism.

MR. McELHINNEY: And how would you characterize them? Where were they coming from? Who were they?

MR. BYRON: It's a literary form. People like Andre Breton and other writers, mostly in France and in Germany, brought the prices up and brought the collectors in.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, who were the collectors? Is there a way that you could identify or characterize them?

MR. BYRON: I forget their names now, besides the Menil Foundation.

MR. McELHINNEY: The Menil Foundation. I mean what kind of people were they? Were they buying it because it was of interest to them intellectually?

MR. BYRON: Yes, intellectually.

MR. McELHINNEY: It appealed to their taste?

MR. BYRON: It appealed to their taste.

MR. McELHINNEY: But they were not investing per se.

MR. BYRON: Well, then they were.

MR. McELHINNEY: They were.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay. So everybody's sort of gambling on the prices climbing.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay. And how did they help the prices climb? Were a lot of these collectors also working through the auction process as well?

MR. BYRON: I think the auction process came afterwards.

MR. McELHINNEY: Ah hah! Afterwards when, what year? Like 1970?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Around then? And how did that affect, you know, the nature of collecting? Let's just say specifically the surrealist artists?

MR. BYRON: How did what, the—

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, how did the rise of the auction houses—

MR. BYRON: The auction houses?

MR. McELHINNEY: How did that change, you know, the dynamic of dealing and collecting as you—

MR. BYRON: Well, there was less and less art at a smaller price, I was going to say, available, and it brought the prices up.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did a number of people who were active before drop out as a result of the, you know, the change in the price structure?

MR. BYRON: No, I think they bought at a good time, most of them.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. So they acquired their collections when the prices were low and were able to sell and trade up when the prices increased. But did a lot of them, a lot of the collectors with whom you worked, were they also going to auction to buy?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And did you find yourself sort of in competition with the auction houses?

MR. BYRON: No. No. The auction houses in a way explained very well what those people bought.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. So that was a way of testing.

MR. BYRON: And also, in England and in France those things went on.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right, right. What was the big auction house in Paris? Was it Hotel Drouot?

MR. BYRON: Yes, but it's Sotheby's and—

MR. McELHINNEY: And Christie's.

MR. BYRON: And Christie's came right away.

MR. McELHINNEY: So I guess I'm trying to get a picture of how the gallery scene evolved for you. How you know the business changed, how the trends, new trends, affected your exhibitions, your— When we started talking, you spoke about Roy Lichtenstein, how the rise of Pop art and all these new genre—Op art; nobody talks about op art anymore. But Pop, Op, Color Field painting.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, it finally had a big success a few years ago?

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, yes. Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Nothing disappears completely. But there's sort of one movement after another.

MR. BYRON: Surrealism is a small group. So collectors of surrealism bought and continue to buy.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] What about artists continuing to work in that genre? Are there any whom you know?

MR. BYRON: Now people who call themselves surrealists now are not really surrealists. The surrealists are the surrealist school who are literary surrealists, I guess, and then no more.

MR. McELHINNEY: Breton, [Paul] Eluard, [Louis] Aragon.

MR. BYRON: Aragon and all those people.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, obviously that's a generation of artists who—

MR. BYRON: It's a generation that went out. Max Ernst, doesn't exist anymore.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Big Max Ernst show just a few years ago.

MR. McELHINNEY: But people have spoken about the evolution or the influence of surrealist art on people like Arshile Gorky.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And [Roberto] Matta and even—

MR. BYRON: Well, he was a surrealist.

MR. McELHINNEY: Jackson Pollock in terms of the automatism of the drip.

MS. ANTONAKOS: The twist —

MR. McELHINNEY: So I'm just wondering, with your unique perspective of having been involved in this whole field for so long, where do you see the living thread of influence today, the sort of how do we see this sense of content or taste or aesthetic? How do we see it manifested?

MR. BYRON: Well, today the taste has changed.

MR. McELHINNEY: Of course. Someone argued that—well, would argue the existence of taste.

[They laugh.]

MS. ANTONAKOS: And they do.

MR. McELHINNEY: But I mean how would you see it? I mean what—have you seen an exhibition in the last ten years where you say, Oh, this is sort of interesting. This is—

MR. BYRON: Still our exhibitions are surrealist, even today. As recent as a year ago in Paris there was one.

MR. McELHINNEY: I don't mean the historic art, you know, the now historic artwork. But the artwork that may be being done today by living artists.

MR. BYRON: It's not surrealist.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's not surrealism.

MR. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: But the influence.

MR. BYRON: The influence is quite big.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who do you see as—

MR. BYRON: A lot of other contemporary American artists, wouldn't you think?

MR. McELHINNEY: You mean people like John Currin?

MR. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: Jeff Koons? [Laughs.]

MR. BYRON: Jeff Koons, yes. Not that recent.

MR. McELHINNEY: I'm just curious to see if there's a taste for this kind of artwork, the genre of intellectualism, the blending of those literary and the individual.

MR. BYRON: There is a taste, but it's a limited taste.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Maybe in photography.

MR. BYRON: What?

MR. McELHINNEY: In photography? You mean people like Jerry Uelsmann, that kind of—if you remember him.

MS. ANTONAKOS: It's maybe easier to do something so completely—to juxtapose opposites and things like that in photography. You do see a lot more sci-fi. The kids are doing very strange things, and then they'll put in something elegant. I mean maybe that is a sort of—

MR. McELHINNEY: How about in film? How about in a person like Tim Burton? This exhibition [*Tim*



*Burton*, 2010] at MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, NYC],

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. BYRON: Maybe, a little bit.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I don't see it, but— The surrealist movement took place at a peak of culture. It was intellectuals and highly educated and highly refined sensibilities that consciously pushed—

MR. BYRON: And literary, it was a literary—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, and consciously trying to do something that hadn't been done before. Now we're living in an age of political art and social content that's back. So that's a sort of completely opposite tack to the refinement and sort of, can we say, elitism, which for me is not a bad word of surrealism. I mean surrealism, maybe it was popular in certain movies where you saw a dance sequence, you know, the dancers just appearing out of a pool.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, just [Jean] Cocteau himself.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes. But I mean even in Hollywood it would be easy, you know. What's her name? Leonard Bernstein's wife and all that. It touched popular culture, but popular culture, I think, emulated that high level. Whereas now the popular level is coming from a different direction.

MR. McELHINNEY: Dare we utter the name—when most people speak of surrealism, many people, the first name that comes to their lips and their minds is Salvador Dali, Avida Dollars. So—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, it was a shock to a lot of people in the Guggenheim [Museum, New York, NY] when they saw the early paintings. It was—Filipacchi was one sponsored, and then there was another publisher, the [inaudible]. And I think that just in terms of painting, that really was a surprise for a lot of people. Because I think in 1960, from the point of view of contemporary art, we didn't think very much of surrealism. I mean we wanted heroic action painting, and then in reaction to that immediately. So that was the sort of general context. Then after you grow up—

MR. BYRON: Anyway Salvador Dali did not appear to be pure surrealist.

MR. McELHINNEY: No, I'm aware of that. But did you have any encounters with him? Did you know him?

MR. BYRON: Salvador? Yes, I knew him quite well. Encounters, no. I sold some of his old paintings.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. His early works.

MR. BYRON: Yes. But not the ones that he painted in the sixties or seventies.

MR. McELHINNEY: Old paintings of his wife hovering in the air and that kind of thing.

MR. BYRON: Old paintings before his wife.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. You sold the pre-Gala Dali.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay. So what kind of a person— I mean he's so— I think recently there was a

film about him and [Federico Garcia] Lorca.

MR. BYRON: Yes, he was okay. He was—it was something for the public to see. But as a fellow he was all right. He was quite modest in his other ways.

MR. McELHINNEY: He was an outwardly extroverted, flamboyant, inwardly deeply shy man. Well, today, you know, is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Phineas Taylor Barnum.

MR. BYRON: Oh, yes?

MR. McELHINNEY: The original American showman.

MS. ANTONAKOS: How did you know that?

MR. McELHINNEY: Dali—I saw it in print somewhere on the Internet. But, yes, he was accused, I know, of being sort of too aggressively and skillfully a self-promoter.

MR. BYRON: He was.

MR. McELHINNEY: Was a lot of that envy, do you think? The purists envied him his lifestyle and the material comforts that he—

MR. BYRON: No, I don't think there was any envy. In a way it was two different worlds. The big collectors of surrealism did not buy Dali.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Right. But what about [Giorgio] de Chirico?

MR. BYRON: What?

MS. ANTONAKOS: De Chirico.

MR. McELHINNEY: De Chirico. Did you know de Chirico?

MR. BYRON: Yes. But you know truly de Chirico was not a surrealist.

MR. McELHINNEY: Pittura metafisica. He was with the early Italians.

MR. BYRON: But he was part of the movement.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. Was he accepted by the French as—

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay. So he was not handed his head like Dali.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Born in Greece, right?

MR. BYRON: He lived in Greece. He wasn't born in Greece. His father worked for the Greek railroads.

MS. ANTONAKOS: His father as an engineer? And I think a Sicilian count.

MR. BYRON: What?

MS. ANTONAKOS: And a Sicilian count or something like that. A Sicilian nobleman.

MR. BYRON: I don't think so.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I read it in an art book. In Volvos [Greece].

MR. BYRON: He worked for the Greek railroads.

MS. ANTONAKOS: He's supposed to have engineered from Athens [Greece] to Thessaloniki [Greece]. A big achievement.

MR. BYRON: And he lived there.

MS. ANTONAKOS: In Volvos.

MR. BYRON: About ten, 15 years. He spoke good Greek actually.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And then moved back to Italy when he was young. Yes.

[END DISC 2.]

MR. McELHINNEY: How did you know de Chirico, here in New York or in Europe?

MR. BYRON: Here in New York. He brought some paintings to be sold.

MS. ANTONAKOS: What was he like?

MR. BYRON: He was okay. He was—he didn't like the way he was treated.

MS. ANTONAKOS: A little sensitive?

MR. McELHINNEY: Artists seldom do. [They laugh.]

MS. ANTONAKOS: Was he a little sensitive?

MR. BYRON: But anyway he was a good painter but not really a great painter.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, he changed.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, yes. As everybody knows, there's the early style with the trains and the piazza and the clock towers and the—

MR. BYRON: And then there are the later ones.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. And the later ones which are sort of, you know, the gooey classicism and horses and—

MS. ANTONAKOS: But even [Johannes] Vermeer had some bad paintings at the end.

MR. BYRON: Who?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Vermeer, you know, the ladies singing. That's another interesting subject, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, I think that history doesn't want to allow any of the great artists to have a

bad day.

MS. ANTONAKOS: That's right. That's right.

MR. McELHINNEY: I think they all—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Let's keep the story simple.

MR. BYRON: But you know there are a lot of things that he did. And then afterwards he said they were not his.

MS. ANTONAKOS: De Chirico?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: When?

MR. McELHINNEY: He said what again?

MR. BYRON: They were not his.

MS. ANTONAKOS: He denied them?

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, they weren't his.

MR. BYRON: But they were his.

MR. McELHINNEY: They were his.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: But what about the rumors that some of the late work by Salvador Dali was made by other people and he just signed it? Is that just apocryphal?

MS. ANTONAKOS: You hear a lot, though.

MR. BYRON: It could be. Not paintings, they were drawings.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right, and prints, lithographs, that kind of thing, yes.

MR. BYRON: They were—yes. That Dalisigned to get some money. No, de Chirico was different. De Chirico, he used to bring— There was a, you know, every other year there's a show in Venice.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, the Biennale.

MR. BYRON: The Biennale. And de Chirico used to have some paintings there. And eventually he said they were not his! And they were his.

MR. McELHINNEY: They were his.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: So he was a surrealist after all. [They laugh.]

MR. BYRON: In that way he was.

MR. McELHINNEY: So which are the paintings are these, you know, the ones with the sort of heroic imagery and horses and warriors and that kind of—

MS. ANTONAKOS: The late stuff? Was it the late stuff that he showed in Venice?

MR. BYRON: No, he had some early paintings, but he made copies of them.

MR. McELHINNEY: Ah, this was going to be my next question. Because there is a rumor around that a lot of the early ones are actually later ones that he made—

MR. BYRON: That he made copies of.

MR. McELHINNEY: —that he made, yes. Which is perfectly reasonable practice. I mean if you look historically at a lot of artists working prior to the nineteenth century, there is an enormous amount of artists who are doing sort of their own what they would call in the music business their own covers, you know. They're own like the greatest hits.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I've heard of it.

MR. McELHINNEY: And, you know, it's not like some historical artists would only allow himself to do the painting one year. And then he'd have to go to the next portfolio.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, that isn't really the model. The model is the artist who has to do what he has to do. Versus the artist who says, you know, I could've sold ten more from '63. Why don't you—

MR. BYRON: In my opinion he made copies of—

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, I just paint ten more and sell them, right. So he did that. So he actually did sort of redo his earlier style.

MR. BYRON: He signed them earlier, though.

MS. ANTONAKOS: More and more complicated.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did he date them? Or did he not date them?

MR. BYRON: I think —

MR. McELHINNEY: Did he date them 1914 [laughs] or 1960?

MR. BYRON: I don't think—they're not dated, the copies. I forget.

MR. McELHINNEY: So there's a fine line between lying and being a surrealist, right? [They laugh.]

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: We'll remember that one. [They laugh.]

MR. BYRON: Some people like the late ones better.

MR. McELHINNEY: I don't think it would be bad at all to be in the Biennale if somebody else were to

do your paintings. I mean there's a piece there.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, appropriation. Everything happens.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. Exactly.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Everything happens.

MR. McELHINNEY: May as well appropriate your own work in the process, right?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Who better?

MR. McELHINNEY: So in other words, de Chirico, as you knew him, was actually doing two bodies of work at the same time, sort of the earlier style and the later style.

MR. BYRON: Absolutely.

MR. McELHINNEY: So did you ever go to his home or to his studio?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And he's got one of these on an easel and another one on an easel?

MR. BYRON: No. I went to his home, but he didn't have any of the paintings on an easel.

MR. McELHINNEY: Where did he live, here in New York?

MR. BYRON: In Rome.

MR. McELHINNEY: In Rome.

MR. BYRON: On the top of the stairs of the—

MR. McELHINNEY: Spanish Steps?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Spanish Steps.

MR. BYRON: Spanish Steps.

MR. McELHINNEY: That's where a lot of American artists lived up there in the nineteenth century.

MR. BYRON: Well, he had a big apartment there.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. At the top of the hill there.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Did he collect other artists? Did he have other artists' work around?

MR. BYRON: No, he only liked his own work.

MS. ANTONAKOS: What a surprise.

MR. McELHINNEY: What about Dali or any of the others? That's an interesting question: What did the surrealists collect? Because a number of them lived reasonably comfortably and had the means to acquire objects and paintings and so forth. Were they just swapping each other's work, or was it

all their own work?

MR. BYRON: Well, they bought work when it was not expensive. Afterwards, they didn't buy.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MS. ANTONAKOS: But from their own generation?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Or earlier?

MR. BYRON: I know that Max Ernst used to sell sculptures for \$200.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. McELHINNEY: But those were old-timey dollars, too, that really had value, right?

MS. ANTONAKOS: That's true. That's true.

MR. BYRON: I had one stolen. I think I told you. I had one stolen of a show of Max Ernst.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: And I hadn't heard for years until four years ago Sotheby's called me. Or Christie's. I forget. Called me up to say that there is a sculpture of Max Ernst. which comes from your gallery. And I said, "Yes, it was stolen."

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, you told me about that, right. You told us about this last time.

MR. BYRON: And what shall we do, they said. I said, "Well, you cannot get it back because Italian law does not cover those thefts. So what they did is that they made a deal with the—the Art Dealers Association made a deal with the Italian proprietor of that, whoever had it. And I was reimbursed much more than it was worth when it was stolen.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, good for you. Good for you.

MS. ANTONAKOS: You were—maybe you talked about it already—weren't you good friends with Julien Levi and Nivola and a lot of people out on the island [Long Island, NY].

MR. BYRON: Yes, some.

MS. ANTONAKOS: They came in a lot, and they would talk to you.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, of course, we're interviewing you under a program that oral histories of art dealers. And of course he's a very well-known art dealer, Julian Levi.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who represented Arshile Gorky, among other people. And you knew him well?

MR. BYRON: Yes, I knew him.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did he at the time have a gallery still?

MR. BYRON: Yes, he did.

MR. McELHINNEY: And was there any sort of exchange or interaction? Did you share clients or artists?

MR. BYRON: No, no. Because I came after.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. So when you opened your—

MR. BYRON: He wasn't active anymore.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. So you opened your gallery—

MR. BYRON: In '60.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. But he had already closed his.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: So how did you come to know him? Did he just—

MR. BYRON: Well, I knew collectors.

MR. McELHINNEY: So he was also a collector and a dealer.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Let's talk a little about you as a collector.

MR. BYRON: I'm not a big collector.

MR. McELHINNEY: You have artwork on the walls. There's a [Jack] Youngerman, his wonderful pieces, the pre-Columbian pieces.

MR. BYRON: Friends, small things of friends.

MS. ANTONAKOS: [Michelangelo] Pistoletto is it?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, I haven't seen his work in a long time. Interesting.

MR. BYRON: Who?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Jill Kornblee [Gallery, New York, NY]. Is this a Pistoletto?

MR. BYRON: Pistoletto, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Pistoletto. Is that from the late sixties?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

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

MR. BYRON: It's his wife—I think I have photographs of her.



MS. ANTONAKOS: From the other side?

MR. BYRON: Maybe it's not here; I don't know.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, it's there. It's there.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, I see. I see. So these were acquired mostly from friends.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: So as a dealer you never got into collecting yourself.

MR. BYRON: Not really.

MR. McELHINNEY: A number of people do, and a number of people don't. But a lot of the people I've interviewed, including Richard Gray and Eugene Thaw, both have wonderful collections of drawings.

MR. BYRON: Oh, Gene Thaw has marvelous collections.

MR. McELHINNEY: Of course, yes. But drawings, wonderful collections of drawings.

MS. ANTONAKOS: For the Morgan [Morgan Library and Museum, NYC].

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, the Morgan gift.

MR. BYRON: Gene Thaw has a very nice, but he's really an exception.

MR. McELHINNEY: In what way?

MR. BYRON: Well, he's a scholar really.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, he did tell me that he went to school at Columbia [University, New York, NY] for art history, and he decided that at least for his generation, that he was sort of in the wrong world to become a—

MR. BYRON: He used to sell posters.

MR. McELHINNEY: —a scholar. Yes, so he became a dealer.

MR. BYRON: On Forty-third Street. What is the name of that hotel there which has artists?

MS. ANTONAKOS: I don't know that.

MR. BYRON: Forty-third between Fifth and Sixth. What is it called? I forget. He had a little shop there, and he used to sell posters.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, yes. I'd have to look at the interview again. I seem to recall he was in business with a book dealer I think. Or it was some kind of—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Was it where they had the Roundtable? The *New Yorker* Round Table, that hotel? Wasn't that on Forty-third?

MR. McELHINNEY: The Algonquin?

MS. ANTONAKOS: The Algonquin.

MR. BYRON: There were a lot of us who used to go there.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Not the Algonquin?

MR. BYRON: Yes, the Algonquin.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. BYRON: He had a little shop in the Algonquin.

MR. ANTONAKOS: What a place that must have been.

MR. McELHINNEY: Forty-fourth Street, yes.

MR. BYRON: Yes, Forty-fourth. And Ahmet Ertegun was his first client.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Amazing!

MR. BYRON: And Ahmet bought a lot of things from him.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Excellent.

MR. McELHINNEY: So who was your most memorable collector over the years? Who was your most memorable client over the years?

MS. BYRON: Mrs. de Menil.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mrs. de Menil.

MR. McELHINNEY: And can you share any anecdotes about her?

MR. BYRON: Any what?

MR. McELHINNEY: Anecdotes, any—

MR. BYRON: No.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Did you speak French when you talked to her, or did you speak English?

MR. BYRON: I think in French.

MS. ANTONAKOS: In French, right.

MR. BYRON: I don't have any anecdotes about her.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, she was quite a strict lady, wasn't she?

MR. McELHINNEY: I think so. How'd you and she become acquainted? Did she just walk into the gallery one day? Or was there some kind of prior—

MR. BYRON: I'm trying to think. I forget. But I've known her from the beginning of her collection.

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

MS. ANTONAKOS: I remember once she came in the gallery, and she was talking about a certain artist. Well, it was Tony Smith. And she said, "I like it. Is he religious?"

MR. BYRON: Oh, really?

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, really.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And I didn't know the answer. I said, "I think so." And I called up Tony. And I can't remember the words he said, but he was so eloquent. Like [James] Joyce, you know. It was an affirmative answer. And not interested in, oh, we can sell sculpture. No, no. It was a very—So I think she was very—

MR. BYRON: She was not very religious, though.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, I don't know about that. But she had a force, she had a presence that you could say very little and have a big effect, is what I'm trying to say. [Laughs.] You know. She must have liked you very much, Charles.

MR. BYRON: I liked her. I think we got along well.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I'm sure. I'm sure.

MR. BYRON: But she was not generous in any way.

MR. McELHINNEY: How do you mean?

MR. BYRON: I bought something with her. It was strictly business at a high price. And I didn't have that much money.

MR. McELHINNEY: And what became of the piece?

MR. BYRON: She bought a lot of things from Iolas. Iolas was the best surrealist dealer in New York.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, we spoke of them last week.

MR. BYRON: Yes. And Alexander Iolas was Greek. And he was a ballet dancer and became a dealer thanks to Dominique [de Menil]. And she financed him, and he bought a lot of things with her—for her. That was before I had a gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: So this wasn't like some dealers today buy expensive artworks in shares. Did you ever do that?

MR. BYRON: One or two things, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So take a piece off the market with a couple of other dealers. And then offer it for sale.

MR. BYRON: Actually I would buy something with Iolas. And Iolas always would say, "Oh, if you buy this painting, I need your share before the end of the month." And then he wanted four years to ask for the share. I said, "Don't you want it?" "No, no, not right now."

MR. McELHINNEY: So did this occur more as a practice with, you know, the rise of the auction house and the sort of elevation of the prices? Did it become more and more important to buy things in shares because it was just more expensive to acquire them into inventory?

MR. BYRON: I guess so. I guess so.

MR. McELHINNEY: So you couldn't always acquire things through consignments. So occasionally you'd have to buy something.

MR. BYRON: I mean if you bought a [Jackson] Pollock—

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: Ten years later it was one price.

MR. McELHINNEY: And it kept going up.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Charles, you knew Iolas was very, very early, right, in Europe?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And did he open his gallery in New York before you?

MR. BYRON: Much before and closing before.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. BYRON: And he gave everything to his niece, Sylvia.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Sylvia. Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Was her name also Iolas.

MR. BYRON: No, de Cuevas.

MR. McELHINNEY: Sylvia de Cuevas. Okay, we spoke about this last week.

MS. ANTONAKOS: So did he encourage you? I mean he was quite a successful dealer. Did he encourage you to open a gallery? Did he say that this would be a great thing to do?

MR. BYRON: No, no.

MS. ANTONAKOS: It was strictly your open impetus and—yes, yes.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: So did he share any of his accumulated wisdom with you?

MR. BYRON: No, but I bought one or two things from him—or with him.

MR. McELHINNEY: So he was not like a mentor in any sense.

MR. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: No.

MS. ANTONAKOS: You're still more or less the same—

MR. BYRON: We've dealt in the same things.

MR. McELHINNEY: Just asking because of his activity in the business.

MR. BYRON: Well, he was financed by Dominique de Menil.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: And he bought for her. By the time I had a gallery, she wasn't financing anybody. And there was no reason for her.

MR. McELHINNEY: But she's still buying.

MR. BYRON: Oh, yes. And I bought at auction with her.

MR. McELHINNEY: You said you bought a piece with her. Do you recall what the piece was?

MR. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: Or who the artist was?

MR. BYRON: Well, first of all, at auction, she was very shy. And I would speak for her at the auction to get a piece. But she was buying it, not me.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: And don't forget she was a widow quite early. So she bought things alone.

MR. McELHINNEY: So among all of the living artists with whom you've worked, who was, do you think, the most memorable, the most—

MR. BYRON: Max Ernst, Magritte. I was on good terms with Magritte.

MR. McELHINNEY: So how did you and he become acquainted? Was that while you were in Europe or—

MR. BYRON: I don't know. I guess through Dominique de Menil.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see. I see.

MR. BYRON: I don't know. I'm just guessing.

MR. McELHINNEY: So how would you characterize him? I've heard some amusing anecdotes about him.

MR. BYRON: Oh, Magritte?

MR. McELHINNEY: Was he a funny man?

MR. BYRON: Funny, no. But he was—

MR. McELHINNEY: A wit?

MR. BYRON: Yes, he was witty.

MR. McELHINNEY: I didn't mean like Jerry Lewis, you know. I just meant if he was a—

MS. ANTONAKOS: He had a sense of humor.

MR. McELHINNEY: —an amusing fellow.

MR. BYRON: Yes, he was okay.

MR. McELHINNEY: He'd have to be to make those pictures. There was a show of his recently. They had a lot of—a whole series of paintings on wine bottles called *Femme-bouteille* [1950's].

MR. BYRON: Drawings on wine bottles? Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: They're paintings on wine bottles.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I can imagine.

MR. BYRON: He made quite a few. Most of them broke, though.

MR. McELHINNEY: He shouldn't have taken them to parties, I guess. He should've taken the wine out first. [They laugh.]

MR. BYRON: I had a couple of them, and then I forget. I think I sold them.

MS. ANTONAKOS: In the early sixties when I was there, did you later just not so much contemporary art? You just went back to surrealism? I'm sure you've talked about this already.

MR. BYRON: Most of it.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, yes. Well, how did you feel about that period of contemporary art—if you don't mind?

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, by all means.

MR. BYRON: I don't know.

MS. ANTONAKOS: [Laughs.] It was exciting, wasn't it? I mean you were so enthusiastic.

MR. BYRON: I'm really completely gaga.

MS. ANTONAKOS: [Laughs.] Charles!

MR. McELHINNEY: But what are you talking about? You're talking about like the seventies and eighties?

MS. ANTONAKOS: No, no, I mean just the period that I worked with Charles.

MR. McELHINNEY: So, you know, Pop art.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, I just the work—I wondered how Charles felt about the series of shows he had: the group shows and the one-person shows in the early sixties, when there was such a sort of I don't want to say social, but professional confirmation of this experimental openness. And especially doing it with such style. I can't help repeating that the world was so much smaller. You know when the Morgan [Library and Museum, New York, NY] had that show of Pierre Matisse, and you see that he held paintings from the twenties to the fifties. And they would sell something in the fifties because there was so little commercial action. And yet the level and the respect—and these dealers knew what they had.

MR. BYRON: At the [*One*] *Hundred Drawings* show, nothing sold more than \$200.

MS. ANTONAKOS: The prices were ridiculous, of course. Now—but at that time that was respectable. You know, I mean—

MR. McELHINNEY: It was a different dollar, too, people.

MS. ANTONAKOS: That's what I mean, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: What would the equivalent be today? I mean one to ten or to five?

MR. BYRON: And *The Box Show*— What was the name of this— He's been now the director of the museum in Southampton.

MS. ANTONAKOS: You mean the Parrish [Art Museum, Southampton, NY]?

MR. McELHINNEY: The Parrish Museum?

MR. BYRON: No, not the museum. I mean the—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Is it a foundation or something?

MR. BYRON: No, no, it's a college.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Southampton College [Southampton, NY]? Oh, Brian O'Doherty?

MR. BYRON: Brian O'Doherty.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes! Great writer, great artist, many hats.

MR. BYRON: I did a lot of—but he never finished anything.

MR. McELHINNEY: Aka [also known as] Patrick Ireland recently was laid to rest. Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Interred. The art is interred with his bones.

MR. BYRON: But Doherty was quite a man.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Still is. Still is. And he still remembers you with tremendous affection.

MR. McELHINNEY: He's alive and well. My wife studied with his wife, Barbara Novak, at Columbia [University, New York, NY].

MR. BYRON: Oh, yes?

MR. McELHINNEY: So we see them from time to time. He's a wonderful fellow.

MR. BYRON: He just died.

MS. ANTONAKOS: No, no.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who, Doherty?

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: No, no, no. No, they're alive.

MR. McELHINNEY: No, heaven's no. Alive and well, I'm happy to say.

MS. ANTONAKOS: They're out at the Getty [Center, Los Angeles, CA] now doing a stint together there. He had a beautiful retrospective at the Gray.

MR. McELHINNEY: At the Grey [Art] Gallery at NYU [New York University].

MS. ANTONAKOS: They're both major, Brian and Barbara. Both of them. No, I mean I think that the—you asked about the effect of surrealism. I do think that Charles's associations have borne a lot of fruit. I mean the artists and the people who worked in art. I think that his effect has been at an extremely high level and affectionate.

MR. BYRON: I have no memory. I've forgotten everything.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is that liberating?

MR. BYRON: Whatever it is.

MR. McELHINNEY: Can you not remember anyone who worked for you who has gone on to—

MR. BYRON: To a gallery?

MR. McELHINNEY: Notable achievements of any sort?

MR. BYRON: Well, we are.

MR. McELHINNEY: Apart from Naomi, of course.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Oh, no, no, no, no.

MR. BYRON: Well, first of all, there's a gallery there, wonderful galleries in France, which deal in what I used to deal in. And I can't think of the name. Who was the director of the—let me see. There were two brothers. One is well known. Who's that?

MR. McELHINNEY: [Richard] Oldenburg?

MR. BYRON: No.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Very good.



MR. BYRON: You're close.

MS. ANTONAKOS: They're both well known, of course, but still.

MR. McELHINNEY: They're both well known, one an artist, the other one—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Are they artists?

MR. BYRON: No.

MS. ANTONAKOS: The Rubins?

MR. BYRON: Rubins, that's right. Now what are Rubins brothers' names?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Larry [Lawrence] Rubin.

MR. BYRON: Larry Rubin.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And Bill [William] Rubin. Bill Rubin at the Modern [Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY].

MR. BYRON: Right. Now Bill Rubin was the curator of the Modern.

MS. ANTONAKOS: At the Modern. Huge impact. Yes.

MR. BYRON: And Larry Rubin had that little gallery in Paris.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, and then wasn't he Knoedler [Gallery, New York] for some time? Yes.

MR. BYRON: It was a little gallery, which was called [Galerie] Lawrence Rubin at the time.

MS. ANTONAKOS: See, that's what I mean: You could do that. [Laughs.] You could have a gallery. I mean you didn't have to be—

MR. BYRON: On the rue du Dragon.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Rue du Dragon. Well—

MR. BYRON: And that gallery exists still, but there's somebody completely different.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I picked up on your questioning about this sort of evolution of galleries, you know, from Pierre Matisse to Julien Levi.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, just—

MS. ANTONAKOS: It was something one could do as a kind of adventure. Now you'd have to have the Bank of England in back of you, which they do, of course, you know.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MS. ANTONAKOS: But that evolution is a fascinating one.

MR. McELHINNEY: And I think a lot of people have observed that a larger share of the galleries that are out there now are undertaken as ventures, not so much as a person with a deeply-held

aesthetic sense who perhaps, or intellectual—

MS. ANTONAKOS: I think you hope that enough will be done in the right way for the right things that art will go on, and you do believe that. I mean art will go on for many, many generations.

MR. McELHINNEY: What would be the right way in your opinion? Either of you?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, not to do things just for money. I mean that's easy to clarify by the negative. But I think it's the volume of— You know if you have acres of space, the artist has to show, you know, at least 725 paintings in a show. And now how many galleries in Chelsea? Over 300 or something.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, the number's shrinking now.

MS. ANTONAKOS: But you know what I mean. I do think that the volume relates to the evolution, the quality. It has to change the substance of the work. Larry Rubin?

MR. BYRON: Larry the photographer.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, garden photographer.

MR. BYRON: A marvelous photographer.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, yes. I don't remember her name, but I've seen her books.

MR. BYRON: I have the book here somewhere.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Did Elizabeth go with you to studios. Go, for instance, when you saw Mrs. de Menil or anything like that?

MR. BYRON: No, no.

MS. ANTONAKOS: No. She had her own profession, yes.

MR. BYRON: She used to work for magazines.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Oh, I know, a famous editor—famous!

MR. McELHINNEY: So did you travel a lot with your work?

MR. BYRON: Yes, quite a bit. But more so for the pre-Columbian.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, of course because you'd have to go to Mexico and Latin America. That was an interesting story that you unfolded last week about organizing that exhibition. So we were talking about your hoping that people today are opening galleries for the right reasons and doing the right things.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Oh, what did Willy Salalander [sp] say? He said something about nothing's more unpleasant than these generalized predictions of doom, you know. You know I'm sure that in the nineteenth century people like us had the same worries, you know. Where is it all going?

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, no galleries per se until the 1860's.

MS. ANTONAKOS: But I mean in general. You know I mean, oh, my God, look at this Impressionists, you know.

MR. McELHINNEY: Of course, everything new is shocking. So what kept you sort of anchored to surrealism? Seems like you had flirtations with other styles and genres. But you went back to—

MR. BYRON: Because of the literary world as well. I was very interested in surrealist literary people.

MR. McELHINNEY: So in the writing, the poetry.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who among them were you personally closest to, the writers, that is.

MR. BYRON: Oh, quite a few. Breton is one.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, he's best known—well, I don't if he's the best known.

MR. BYRON: He's best known as a surrealist. I have all his things there.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what memories have you of them as a group? Was there ever a social event where they were all in the same room at the same party?

MR. BYRON: No. I'm not very interesting, you know.

MR. McELHINNEY: The critical mass of— Were they amusing, these people?

MR. BYRON: Amusing? No.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Did they drink?

MR. BYRON: Not that much.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Really? Because in the early sixties, everybody drank, it seemed to me.

MR. McELHINNEY: Smoked cigarettes, yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Terrible, terrible.

MR. McELHINNEY: Big cigarette smokers. How about [André] Masson? Were you—

MR. BYRON: Yes, I knew him vaguely. I knew him a little bit.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did you know [Francis] Picabia?

MR. BYRON: Yes, a little more.

MR. McELHINNEY: How would you characterize him?

MR. BYRON: Very gifted.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Almost too talented perhaps. He could succeed at too many things. Which is why the work is all over the place.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Bill Canfield, you know.

MR. McELHINNEY: So if you had any advice, either of you, to give to someone who perhaps wanted to deepen their understanding of surrealism, what would you tell them to do?

MR. BYRON: Tell them what to do? I think the gallery in London doesn't exist anymore. But in Paris there is still a Galerie [1900-] 2000 [gallery name?]

MS. ANTONAKOS: Uh-huh.

MR. BYRON: It's a good school.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Uh-huh. What French museum has the best collections?

MR. BYRON: The best collection of what?

MS. ANTONAKOS: Surrealism.

MR. BYRON: Oh, surrealism? I don't know.

MR. McELHINNEY: In America you would say probably the de Menil Foundation in Houston.

MR. BYRON: I say the Museum of Modern Art, though.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right, MoMA. Arensberg Collection in Philadelphia [Museum of Art] perhaps?

BYRON: Yes. But I think the Modern has the biggest collection. We just forget. They don't show them all the time.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, they lost a lot of exhibition space to that big party room in the middle. [They laugh.] But that's the taste du jour as it were.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's sort of a pity that all of that—

MS. ANTONAKOS: I know.

MR. McELHINNEY: —exhibition space was lost. But it gives people a lot more space to lollygag on Friday nights.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Carter's [ph].

MR. BYRON: A lot of the big, well-known artists have a surrealist period. [Pablo] Picasso has a surrealist period. [Henri] Matisse has a surrealist period.

MR. McELHINNEY: Why do you think that is? What is so compelling about it?

MR. BYRON: That was the—the what do you call it?

MS. ANTONAKOS: The ethos, the *zeitgeist*?

MR. BYRON: Of the time.

MS. ANTONAKOS: *Zeitgeist*, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: *Zeitgeist*. This sort of absurdist—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, I think [Sigmund] Freud as being discovered, right?

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MS. ANTONAKOS: I mean the whole inner life of dreams and—

MR. BYRON: Freud, yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Crime and the S word, you know.

MR. McELHINNEY: Sex.

MS. ANTONAKOS: But yes. But yes. I'm from New England. Yes, it was hidden.

MR. McELHINNEY: People forget that [Egon] Schiele and [Gustav] Klimt were living in the same town as Freud, right?

MS. ANTONAKOS: How can you forget that? Ronald Lauder won't let us forget. [Laughs.] Thank goodness. But you know in America—I think that's sort of surrealistic.

MR. BYRON: I'm too [Carl] Jung to be a Freud. [They laugh.]

MS. ANTONAKOS: But it's almost a surreal gesture to open or work in this way in America. Sort of bucking all that America— First, you know, the—

MR. McELHINNEY: All the puritanical underpinnings of—yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, the regional stuff, the social stuff, the Ben Shahn, and then the heroica, Abstract Expressionism. Surrealism was not the big thing here at that time.

MR. McELHINNEY: No.

MR. BYRON: No. And never has been.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And so you have to really, in the historical consideration of it in America.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, you have— Did you ever, or have you any opinions of some of the Americans who sort of flirted with the genre? People who are a little under the radar for a lot people. I think people like Peter Blume or Paul Cadmus or Ivan Albright or—

MR. BYRON: A little bit.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes? Who among any of those artists had you any contact with? Any of them?

MR. BYRON: Not really.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did you not know Peter Blume up in Connecticut?

MR. BYRON: Yes, I knew him.

MR. McELHINNEY: Did you exhibit his work ever?

MR. BYRON: No. I never exhibited his work.

MR. McELHINNEY: But [Paul] Cadmus I guess also comes to mind.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: With the [*Seven*] *Deadly Sins* [1945-1949] paintings here over at the MET a block away.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Right. And the National Academy [Museum, New York, NY] I think has some things that it shows sometimes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And George Tooker, yes, that's the other one who just had a— Did you ever—

MS. ANTONAKOS: That's right, that's right.

MR. BYRON: I hardly knew him.

MR. McELHINNEY: I hardly knew him.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Charles was really European. This is the thing.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. So the American artists were not really in your sphere as much.

MR. BYRON: Not really.

MS. ANTONAKOS: And maybe they weren't as literary.

MR. McELHINNEY: They probably were not.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Maybe.

MR. McELHINNEY: What advice would you offer to a young person who is thinking about opening a gallery?

MR. BYRON: Oh! Be careful. [They laugh.]

MR. McELHINNEY: If you were a young person today, do you suppose that that would be a path that you would want to take?

MR. BYRON: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: Why not?

MR. BYRON: Nothing that I'm really interested to show.

MR. McELHINNEY: So the artwork that's out there—

MR. BYRON: My wife sees every young artist in town.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. BYRON: And I'm not in town ever.

MR. McELHINNEY: Ever. So she's—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Miraculous.

MR. McELHINNEY: So she's up on it all.

MS. ANTONAKOS: We all wish we had all this energy. [Laughs]

MR. McELHINNEY: But it's not your taste.

MR. BYRON: It's not that it's not my taste. It's not my doing really.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. BYRON: I think it's very nice, but—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Oh, but I think he did it. I mean maybe he doesn't want to do it today. But you did it, and you achieved so much, and you made so much happen.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. Well, that's why we're here. That's why we're here, to have this conversation.

MR. BYRON: You're losing your time with me. [Laughs.]

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, I was wondering if there was anything you'd like to add. I think we've been speaking for close to 90 minutes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Wow! That was fast.

MR. McELHINNEY: How time flies, I think so. And just wondered if there was anything you'd like to add for the record.

MR. BYRON: There is a dealer in New York who is very good at surrealism. And that is—can't think of his name.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Uptown?

MR. BYRON: Yes. He opened an association of dealers, private art dealers.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Oh, who can it be? Maybe we should call Elizabeth.

MR. BYRON: Elizabeth would know.

MR. McELHINNEY: There's a question on the standard list of bullet points that each of these interviews is supposed to cover. And I think it asks the interviewee what if you were to have some epitaph emblazoned above some temple of art, what yours would be?

MR. BYRON: Epitaph?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Epitafio. [They laugh.]

MR. McELHINNEY: Another Greek cognate.

MS. ANTONAKOS: First of all, what language would you have it in?

MR. BYRON: In English.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, you don't—

MR. BYRON: I'll do better next time.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Oh, Charles! [They laugh.] You're so modest.

MR. BYRON: I did quite a work with Sabarsky.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, you were speaking about that last time.

MR. BYRON: We had a show together in Japan.

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

MR. BYRON: I liked Sabarsky very much. And he was quite an extraordinary man in a way. He collected everything he could find in Austria.

MR. McELHINNEY: So was he one of the most important dealers that you worked with?

MR. BYRON: No, but he as an important dealer.

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean you said lolas and—

MR. BYRON: Well, no, because Sabarsky did only German and Austrian things. But we did that one show together, and we were good friends.

MS. ANTONAKOS: What show was it? What did you have in it?

MR. BYRON: A show of surrealism in Tokyo.

MS. ANTONAKOS: How was it received?

MR. BYRON: Very well.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Fantastic!

MR. BYRON: We didn't sell anything, but it was very good.

MS. ANTONAKOS: [Laughs.] But that's the work. I think that's glorious, you know.

MR. BYRON: And we had a very good time, yes.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Would either of you, would you say that an art dealer dealing art can be an art in itself?



MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, I mean certainly it can be done with tremendous refinement and imagination and insight. It can occupy the mind and the time of very, very interesting people. I mean Charles and all the names he's mentioned, they had a big impact on culture.

MR. BYRON: Do you deal in art?

LAURA SCHNEIDER: Not yet. [They laugh.]

MR. BYRON: Not yet.

McELHINNEY: Laura Schneider, my assistant, now speaking. Is that your ambition?

MS. SCHNEIDER: I'm hoping to go to art school. I mean I guess I'm starting to collect art very slowly.

MR. McELHINNEY: So here's a young person you can advise.

MR. BYRON: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: What advice, other than be careful, have you to offer?

MR. BYRON: Open a gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: Open a gallery! [They laugh.]

MS. ANTONAKOS: There you go!

MR. McELHINNEY: I guess if you want to do it, that's the only way, right? Just do it.

MS. ANTONAKOS: But you obviously are referring to Gagosian [Gallery], etc. But you know in Brooklyn there are—

MR. McELHINNEY: Who me? I wouldn't think of it.

MR. BYRON: You wouldn't think of opening a gallery.

MS. ANTONAKOS: [Laughs.] No, no, I mean the reference to these big spaces in—

MR. BYRON: But your wife is an artist.

MR. McELHINNEY: Art historian.

MR. BYRON: Art historian.

MR. McELHINNEY: Scholar.

MR. BYRON: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. ANTONAKOS: I think in Brooklyn there are these small—

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, Williamsburg, well this is a—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes, and they're very intelligent, and they're very educated, and they're doing good things.

MR. McELHINNEY: Let me then—and now I have another question I have to ask you—with your experience, having looked at Chelsea, let's say, would you have in your wild dreams ever imagine that such a congregation of dealers would appear on the Hudson wharves north of the meat market in your lifetime? Did you ever imagine that, that that would ever be an art center?

MR. BYRON: No. But I'm still not interested, though. I find that it's very difficult to find an artist that I would like to be associated with. Now Elizabeth, who is interested mostly in architecture, though—

MS. ANTONAKOS: Yes.

MR. BYRON: —she sees everything.

MS. ANTONAKOS: Well, it's a team.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, this has been one of the more—yes.

MR. BYRON: But if I were 20 years younger, it may be different.

MR. McELHINNEY: This has been one of the most sort of unusual conversations because of the multiple voices.

MR. BYRON: It's very kind of you to want to interview me. But as I said, I forgot everything. So—

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, I'm glad we got everything onto the recording that you couldn't remember. It's quite a bit. It's quite a bit.

MS. ANTONAKOS: [Laughs.] Exactly.

MR. McELHINNEY: And I thank you for it.

MR. BYRON: Thank you very much.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay.

[END DISC 3.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]