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Oral history interview with Clara Diament  
Sujo, 2010 June 8-16

This interview is part of the Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the  
Visual Arts Project, funded by the A G Foundation.

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally recorded interview with Clara Diament Sujo on 2010 June 8-16. The interview took place at Sujo's home in New York, NY, and was conducted by Avis Berman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project, funded by the A G Foundation.

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

## Interview

AVIS BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing Clara Diament Sujo in her apartment in New York City for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, on June 8, 2010.

I start the same way with everyone. Would you please state your full name and date of birth?

CLARA DIAMENT SUJO: Clara Diament Sujo. I was born on the 29th of August of 1921.

MS. BERMAN: Okay, and did you have a middle name?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. I don't think it was stylish in my time.

MS. BERMAN: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And you were born in Buenos Aires [Argentina], right?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I was born in Buenos Aires.

MS. BERMAN: And what kind of a name is Diament?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Diament is a French name, but it's my father's name. And because they traveled between Poland and Russia and France because of business activities, I guess, the last name was respected throughout. My father's Russian and Polish documents state "Diament," just as we have it. And those were when he was still young and not yet married and so forth. I've seen all of the documents.

MS. BERMAN: And what was his full name and date of birth?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Salomon.

MS. BERMAN: S-A or S-O?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: S-A-L-O-M-O-N.

MS. BERMAN: Salomon Diament.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Salomon David, second name, Diament.

MS. BERMAN: And do you know when he was born?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He was born on the 20th of July - because we all celebrated his birthday - in the year - I could ask my brothers and sisters. In 1885. My God, you bring memory to people. Is that what you do?

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, that's right. I've got a magic wand.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, my God, 1885.

MS. BERMAN: And when did he die?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I don't know that because I wasn't home.

MS. BERMAN: Was that when you were in Chicago [IL] or Venezuela?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, I think, it's before - I could ask my sister. She will have all of that, and I could let you know.

MS. BERMAN: Okay, but in other words, when you were an adult.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And what was your mother's maiden name?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Perla, like from a pearl, Borenstein. B-O-R-E-N-S-T-E-I-N. Without wanting to, you're making a cause for Jewishness. For Jewish kinds of - [inaudible, cross talk].

MS. BERMAN: Well, it is hard - well, I didn't -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I know, but I mean, it strikes me as something that has never been done.

MS. BERMAN: Well, we're just going to document. And what were her birth and death dates, do you remember?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: For my mother, I wouldn't. But I can ask my sister. I'll make those notes, and my sister will - [inaudible, off mike] - because she hasn't moved from one country to another - [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I can remember that she passed away on November 11th. My God, you bring memories to people.

MS. BERMAN: Mother's -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Mother's passing away date.

MS. BERMAN: Right, birth and death dates. And were they émigrés to Argentina from Europe?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes. And they were married already when they came, and they already had three children. They already had three children who came with them.

MS. BERMAN: And so were you the fourth child?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And were you the youngest?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. There are two more after me. One sister that's called Miriam, and she's called Chiche, which means a toy. [Laughs.] And Marcelo, who's the youngest of us all. And Marcelo also has another name, a Jewish name, but I - [inaudible, laughs].

MS. BERMAN: And what did your father do?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: My father imported furs from Europe, and it proved to be an easy thing to do and successful. He heard about the Patagonia, which is all of the south of Argentina. Almost half of the country is the Patagonia, where the climate is very cold. And he learned or suspected or whatever - he went to the Patagonia and discovered that it was very cold there.

No, he knew already; he knew. I'm sorry. He knew that there were red foxes in the Patagonia, and that those red foxes could be used to make the hats for the Jewish people who went to the temples in Poland and in Russia and in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia and so forth.

So he started an export business right there - went to Patagonia, got a man called Adolph to gather those furs. Already, you know, the animals had been cleaned of everything and just they had the furs. The furs had been left to dry inside, not outside, of course, not to spoil the furs.

And they started a big business with that export of red foxes, hares for the hats; rabbits for other things. And I don't know if that was started by my father or - they also did the colonies of you know what, chinchilla.

MS. BERMAN: Chinchilla?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. You know those animals?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes, they're great; they're beautiful.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: They're beautiful, and they were used for the finest fur coats and so forth. And he had an interest in people, so he created associations in Buenos Aires close to his home where he could take care of immigrants who had professions, even humble or distinguished professions, and they needed to be introduced to people in similar activities. So he created an association of Polish and something-else immigrants who had

already training in different aspects of being productive.

MS. BERMAN: So was it at that point where the – now, I am guessing, and you can tell me if it was earlier – did they come to escape the pogroms, or was it, he would be conscripted into the Russian or Polish army? Was he in Argentina before World War I?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I'm sorry. If my father arrived in Argentina before – yes, I would think so, because I was born in 1921.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Well, I was just trying to figure out when your family got there.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, fine. Well, since I'm the first one to be born there, my father must have waited a couple of years to give my mother some peace. So they must have arrived around 1919. But I can ask, because the date of 1917 makes some sense to me.

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, exactly. And your mother, I guess, had her hands full with all these children.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yeah, but she was kind of depending on other people. She was very good at that. So there were people in the house who were Argentine people who spoke Spanish, from which she learned Spanish as well, and yes.

MS. BERMAN: What kind of a household was it to grow up in?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Wonderful. We had big houses. The first part of the house was for the elderly people. And then my sisters – [laughs] – who came from Europe and my brother, and the others, we lived in the back of the house. The children had their patio, so they had swings and things like that.

And they had people helping, because my father helped all those immigrants. And when he saw that they had the capability to be a cook or a maid or employees for his office, he would give them the chance. He created an association of – I don't know what it was called, but it was certainly called – he gave a place to the Polish immigrants by naming them. And other nationalities. Czechs, he favored the Czechs. The Czechs were very capable at the time.

MS. BERMAN: Were your parents observant Jews?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yeah. In a respectful manner. I mean, not an exaggeration, you know? In a very nice manner. I was never – I don't know, I thought it was too much, or it separated us. Because we were very conscious that Argentina had given us this chance of being there and having the home we had.

We had two homes together. One he made his office; it was on top of our house. We had the house that had the lower patio and all of that. And next door, absolutely next door, there was another building that later was occupied by a very fine medical doctor, Dr. Cheitz [ph], who was a very educated man, and my father had a lot of exchanges with him. I'm still remembering him because I was so amazed at this – how relations taking place with a medical doctor and – [inaudible]. So my father –

MS. BERMAN: Was there a large Jewish community in Buenos Aires then?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: I mean, there has been for quite a while.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And my father contributed to that. He created a series of associations that were just to help the other people. I don't remember too much about that because I wouldn't have known what they meant. But he was instrumental in creating several associations that put the Jewish people together. And there were several synagogues. My father belonged to the most distinguished there, which is the one on Libertad that's called Libertad, meaning freedom.

And he would sit in there in the second or the third row, on the aisle, which is what he wanted. He was proud that he had been able to establish all that kind of activity, which I'm sure in Poland he couldn't have done it as a Jew, right?

MS. BERMAN: Goodness, no, the opposite. Glad, as you said, glad that he got out.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, he did. He did, and he helped, and he really aimed very high, you know?

I don't know if I told you that I believe my interest in the arts comes from the fact that there was a room where we couldn't go in. Because the room had paintings, and one of the paintings was of a woman, a kind of heavy

woman, naked.

So we were not able to - but the room had a glass window into the room. So you went into the corridor, and you could see anyhow, but you couldn't go in. I don't know if he was afraid that we would touch the woman or something like that.

MS. BERMAN: My goodness, what you had was a mini - [inaudible].

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right, that's right, that's right.

MS. BERMAN: Well, were there any other rooms in the house that had paintings in them?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: There must have been, because all along, whenever we moved, there were all those paintings to move. But they were not as striking and large and challenging like this thing. Why would my father have it? If he had a wife, and he had all those children, why would he have it?

MS. BERMAN: Well, do you have any sense of who these paintings were by or anything? You're saying no.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I wouldn't remember.

MS. BERMAN: So this was like forbidden fruit, I guess?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, you saw them perfectly, and we had those windows. That was a music room, and so we also had piano lessons in that room. Well, he had an open mind, and I'm happy to realize it so many years later, even though we were children and all that. And we could see it all, and we asked, and I don't know what answers we got. I wouldn't be able to even understand them now.

MS. BERMAN: Now, were there other sorts of interest in the arts, either music or reading, or what?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes. My mother expected to go to every opening at the opera. She was dressed before he came back from wherever he had been. They already had all their tickets, and they went to the opera - the opening of the opera. Yes, I don't know if they went to the theater. I don't know. My mother, I don't know how soon she caught up with Spanish. Not as soon as my father, not as soon.

But the music, yes, the opera, yes, and the concerts, yes. And they would take us. Argentina had already all that to offer to people. The opera there was really outstanding. People came from all over to the opera in Buenos Aires.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I think it -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Teatro Colon. Teatro Colon, it's called, which still exists and presents the most extraordinary things. It's fantastic, fantastic.

MS. BERMAN: And were there any museums or any kind of visual arts in Buenos Aires to speak of when you were growing up?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, there must have been, because I couldn't have decided what I was going to be. But there were collections, and I think I mentioned to you last time, then, because you made me remember that my father's lawyer - his name I knew, but I can't recall it. My father's lawyer, to whose home he had to go for many things.

But there were so many children in the house because he would take the children to wherever he went. So we were taken to this lawyer's - I must remember the name. I think I gave it to you last time. I could remember it. Maybe it will come back again.

Anyhow, he had - I can't tell you - there was one painting [inaudible]. And my father had great respect for that. And so that may have indulged in me the idea, or brought up in me, I think, the idea that this was a way to live, and this was a way to this and this. And my father would remark about this and that.

Many of them were copies of classical paintings; like those stores in Buenos Aires will have those things. And you could see them from outside the windows of the store. But I don't know how many were legitimate or not in the house of the lawyer. That was a very distinguished family, and they wouldn't have settled for market copies or something like that.

MS. BERMAN: What kind of a kid were you?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Laughs.] Wild. Wild. I liked boys more than girls all the time. [They laugh.] And already,

when I was 13, I chose the school that I wanted, which my father fostered, which was a school that trained women, only women, to be secretaries to ministers later. Can you imagine? And there I was sent at the age of 13.

And it was a great school, a great school. I remember the professors as outstanding. But there were also people who were well known in the city because they wrote this, or they were in this kind of public domain or in a kind of a public activity as lawyers and this and that, the other, and so forth.

But the thing that really marked me – [laughs] – you know what it was? I don't know why. At the age of 13, so as not to go on vacation with all those children – [they laugh] – which were my brothers and sisters, and they were kind children, but okay, I decided to look for a job. I don't think I got the job until I was something like 15. But then it was Abbott Laboratories.

MS. BERMAN: It was what?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Abbott Laboratories from Chicago, A-B-B-O-T-T.

MS. BERMAN: They still exist.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, so they're very important. They have made great discoveries for health, yeah. Well, I don't know what I'm answering, but my older sisters were considerably older. It was a difference of 12 or 15 years. One of them worked as an assistant to my father, so she was, like, a favorite sister. So I wanted to be somebody's assistant as well, I guess.

So I saw this ad in the paper, and I went and applied. I had a wild mess of hair. They laugh.] Nothing like yours. And I'm given the job to be during my school vacation – high school vacation – because I wouldn't leave school for anything. But I am to be the secretary to a man who comes from Mexico called Manuel Doblado, who is an export manager.

Manuel Doblado, the export manager for Abbott Laboratories. And he goes to the several branches, and he comes to Buenos Aires. His nephew is a youngish manager of Abbott Laboratories in Buenos Aires. His name is Fernando Rincon-Gallado – Fernando Rincon-Gallado, with a double "l." And Rincon-Gallado is the nephew to this man, Manuel Doblado – the export manager. So he's been given the management of the Buenos Aires branch.

So I start working for him. And Doblado hears of what I'm doing and so forth. And then Doblado comes every so often, I don't know how often, for two weeks. He visits the other branches in Japan and everything else, and he comes also to Argentina. So he sees that I'm kind of adroit at being a secretary, because my father had to have his office in the house because we were so many children. So we had all been trained as secretaries, men and women and so forth. So he offers me the job to go to Chicago. I know no English. The man has –

MS. BERMAN: But you're still in high school at the moment, or in school, or – you're still 15 or 16? Because that's –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, let me be precise. I don't want to invent.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Well, anyway, why don't you tell the story, and we'll figure out the dates a little bit later.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no. Well, I finish high school when I'm 17. And I finished high school, so I must be 17 when I go to Chicago.

MS. BERMAN: Okay. I just want to ask you, what subjects did you like or were you best at, at school? Were you a good student?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. I could do mathematics. I could type because my father has his office with the house, so we had to do all kinds of tasks for him. And I would do anything for my father. So I typed; I filed; I did anything. So he found there a young girl who was very prepared to be a secretary and help him. He didn't need English in Buenos Aires, but he needed the Spanish, and I had the Spanish.

So before he leaves, he tells me that I have a job in Chicago, just like that. "Well, Clara, you have a job in Chicago. You have to get ready for that." And I said, "But I don't know any English." "Well, you'll learn. You know French; you know Yiddish; you know this." Okay, my father wasn't opposed to my wish. I wanted to go to Chicago.

MS. BERMAN: What about your mother? What did she think?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I can't remember her because she was not so well in health. She didn't speak Spanish. We didn't learn Polish, as I remember – [inaudible, cross talk] –

MS. BERMAN: How did you communicate with your mother?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, we spoke Spanish, and she would have to understand what we had said. And when she said – oh, well, we knew Yiddish. So the communication with my mother was with Yiddish.

MS. BERMAN: With Yiddish.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But she learned Spanish. She was not dumb in any way, and she liked to read. She liked to go to the opera. She liked expensive clothes. She took my father everywhere she wanted to go. [Laughs.] So she was not a dumb figure there. My father respected that very much.

MS. BERMAN: And you had also learned French in school, too?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In high school, yes. You made a choice. Because that was a school that also pretended to – pretended and actually did it – to teach women to be assistants to important lawyers or important doctors and this and that and the other.

MS. BERMAN: So it was kind of a finishing school, but it was also academic.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, oh, yes. There were five years of it.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Now, what was your relationship with your mother?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I had all the respect, but it wasn't anything compared with what I had for my father. I saw all he was doing for the others: concerned with poor people, concerned with institutions, concerns with helping the Jewish hospital. That was becoming the most important one.

And I could see what my father was doing for my older sisters. That was amazing, how he got them into very fine schools. Not private; public schools. But it was much more difficult to get in.

MS. BERMAN: I mean, were you thinking – had this job not come along, were you thinking of a university education; would that have happened, do you think?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, it would because it was a logical step, but I don't see myself thinking of becoming a doctor or a lawyer or, you know.

MS. BERMAN: Well, you really identified with your father as a human being and as a businessperson, I guess.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, right. But I saw other things happening, you know? I saw how much music was taking over. And we had music as well. And we had a fantastic piano teacher I had never remembered until you asked me. Will I remember her name? I think it was something like Evita. I won't remember. But I can ask one of my sisters.

MS. BERMAN: Right, so did the – well, you know, your father was –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, the name is coming: Dina [ph], Dina, Dina. But I don't remember the last name. [Laughs.]

MS. BERMAN: Oh, that's okay. Well, I was going to say, your father is in the fur business. Did the Depression affect his business?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I don't think we had a depression in –

MS. BERMAN: In Argentina? Or it wasn't apparent; there was no sense of cutting back or anything like that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. But my family, my father was very active with many associations he created. I wish I could remember the names, but –

MS. BERMAN: Well, that's okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Concerned with the hospitals, concerned with – oh, finding – with the immigrants. That was a very important thing to find. To find them jobs, to find the schools for the children of the immigrants, and that kind of thing.

MS. BERMAN: Well, before Chicago, did you ever travel elsewhere in Latin America before that? Had you left Argentina?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. Because my father liked swimming in the sea and so forth, so we had a house in Punta

del Este in Uruguay. And so we would go there. But also we went, before Punta del Este, which is Uruguay – a fantastic place with very important homes – everybody in Argentina was going to a place called Mar del Plata, three words – Mar del Plata – because of the –

MS. BERMAN: Silver Sea. No, no, *plata*, – anyway –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Say it, say it.

MS. BERMAN: No, "plata" isn't "silver"; that's –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, it is?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: It's called sea – not a river, but a sea – sea of silver.

MS. BERMAN: Silver Sea, right, right.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Because the moon shines on it. That was the name, yes, Mar del Plata. And then some cities started taking that name of Plata mixed with something else like that.

MS. BERMAN: That was a resort in Argentina?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That was in – Mar del Plata in Argentina. Everybody went there. We didn't go there; we didn't understand why. And we wouldn't be told why, and they never – I think it was because my father knew that he would see there all the immigrants that he had possibly placed in this and that and the other.

And it so happened, I think, my older brothers and sisters would be taken to Mar del Plata, and they would come back with those stories about all the people they had to say hello to and this and that and the other, that had come because my father had been instrumental in doing this thing that you called the immigrants and signed the papers for them before they came, you see?

MS. BERMAN: So any other travels outside of Argentina before you went to Chicago?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: We would go to Punta del Este, where my father had this thing. I don't remember that we went – [inaudible]. But when he offered this, and he offered that they would pay for my learning English, and I would work there, that's what I wanted.

MS. BERMAN: So you went, and you got to Chicago. And how did you find a place to live and all of that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, you know Chicago. Abbott is a very responsible company, and they bring people from all over the world, because they are really a worldwide – they are in South Africa; they are everywhere. So actually, I got off in New Orleans [LA] from the boat. And in New Orleans, I had someone waiting with a ticket that would take me from New Orleans to Chicago.

Well, I have that ticket, so I go to the station. I take the train. On the train, I meet a man who is the man who discovered the oil fields in Texas. And he prepares me for the whole Chicago experience: what I should do, what I shouldn't do, that I shouldn't date older men, that I shouldn't – [laughs]. Everything that – [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: How did – you understood him?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I don't know how I understood him. I think he spoke French. I think he spoke French and some Spanish. I understood. And he understood when I spoke to him in Spanish, so he probably – Texas and so forth – he knew Spanish, yes. That's right. Good question.

Okay, so he tells me what to do and not to do; not to go out with older man. And I said, "You go out with older men for what?" You know? [They laugh.] And this and that. But in New Orleans, when I get off the boat, already they questioned why such a young girl will be called to Abbott's. Don't they have enough girls that they can hire as secretaries in Chicago, and this and that.

MS. BERMAN: Who were American.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: So I was afraid. I was very afraid. But when I get on the train, I meet this man who discovered the – and he prepared me for life out there. He prepared me for life. It was fantastic.

MS. BERMAN: And was it useful advice?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, how I should – if the young men will try to approach me and not be totally gentlemen,



something like that, he would call it. And so forth. And that I should expect the company to explain what my rights are. Ask them to do it in writing. That they should do it in a way that I would understand what it meant in English. And that I was - [inaudible] - in Texas, in America in those years.

And when I arrive in Chicago, there are two fellows dark as the night. I had never seen dark people in my life, I think.

MS. BERMAN: Maybe you saw some in New Orleans, but you weren't there - or no? Anyway.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: There, I was unconscious. But those two people are from Abbott, and they are there because they are Mexicans, and they speak Spanish. They are to welcome me and so forth and they will help me in whatever I needed.

So I don't remember when I start looking for a - no, before that, Abbott takes care of sending me to the high school in North Chicago. And there, they asked one of the important people there who can teach me English: that Abbott has given me this job; they want to sponsor me in whatever way that I could be sponsored and so forth, and one of them will take me to the high school.

In the high school, the superintendent comes to meet me and hears the whole story. And there aren't many stories like that had happened before. And they bring in a teacher who already has white hair and glasses, so she intimidated me a bit. But she started to talk to me in a manner that I understood. I could answer some of her things, I guess. And first, she refused to teach me English because she didn't know any Spanish. But I think I asked her to have some confidence and give me a trial period and see if I could learn with enough - that I knew other languages, which was true.

My father had visitors from different countries. And we heard all kinds of languages in the house. So she said, "Okay, we will make a trial." And she was fantastic as a teacher. So anybody who didn't even hear would have learned with her. Elsie Katterjohn is her name.

MS. BERMAN: What was her name?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Elsie, E-L-S-I-E-. And the last name is spelled K-A-T-T-E-R-J-O-H-N.

MS. BERMAN: Elsie Katterjohn, okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Katterjohn, yes. I can tell you, that woman, she read. She mentioned all the great philosophers. She mentioned this and that. It was like recovering my father, you know; the education, the this and that. But she taught me. She taught me English from the basic things, because I didn't know it. And she had patience.

And I think a very important link was created. She didn't have children; she didn't have sisters; she didn't have this and that. And for me, it was a phenomenal person. Suddenly I had a mother, frankly. It was like a mother figure to me, doing a lot more than my mother actually would have been able to for me.

So I felt very supported. She was a writer. She published her books. And that was an ambition for me. And -

MS. BERMAN: You were interested in writing, too?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Had you written in -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I wrote well, but just because of illusions, you know, as a young a girl. I don't remember what I was writing at the time. I was certainly not writing about art, no. But I wrote about the books that I read. That, I did. To memorize them better, yes. That I read.

I wonder where those notebooks are. They must be somewhere because I haven't thrown out things. I didn't have a thought - [inaudible]. Okay, so Elsie Katterjohn. Well, Abbott had a man called Roy M. Cain, C-A-I-N, like a famous Cain. [Laughs].

MS. BERMAN: Like James and - right like James M. Cain, yeah.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And Roy Cain had pensions for us. And he was buying works of art for Abbott Laboratories. And not only that, Mr. Cain and somebody else - the name I don't remember - they started a magazine called *Abbott's Therapy* [Abbott Industries, *What's New?* 1933]. And *Abbott's Therapy* was translated - you won't believe it - into Japanese, into French, into English, into every market. But I remember that surprised me with Japanese. Where did they find that character?

MS. BERMAN: Well, I also - although there were Asian - I mean, they were in middle of World War II then, so there was no Japanese market for them right then.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, that's right. That's right. I don't know how the other states - [inaudible] - things well. Okay, I'm very conscious of what is happening with Japan. I am. And I don't know what to do if I have to get out, if I have to stay, if I have to do this and that.

Somebody must have advised me to be calm about it, that I would know when the time would come for me to leave and so forth and so on. So I stayed, and I had all this phenomenal teaching of English with Elsie Katterjohn. I had the magazine and this and that.

MS. BERMAN: What was your connection to this magazine?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, I translated for the Spanish editions. And somebody else translated to French and so forth. But the magazine was mainly professional, of health and what the - Nembutal. They were the discoverers of Nembutal. What Nembutal did for operations. It was the first - I think the first - what do you call the thing that you give to a patient that has to be operated?

MS. BERMAN: Anesthesia.

MS. DIAMENT-SUJO: Anesthetic. The first anesthetic, yes.

MS. BERMAN: But did you still have secretarial duties, or did you move completely into translation?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no. I still had secretarial duties because Mr. Doblado wouldn't let me go. And Mr. Doblado taught me very useful things. He taught me, for instance, that we had this tremendous - Abbott was worldwide, expanded industry and so forth. And Mr. Doblado told me that his previous secretary, who was Mexican and very shrewd, she would save all the stamps in all the mail that came in every morning and sell them.

So I started - the same men - the men who used to buy them from this woman once saw in an envelope addressed to Clara Diament at Abbott Laboratories, the office of Mr. Doblado, and he realized that I had taken the job. So he comes in, offers me to buy the stamps -

MS. BERMAN: Offers you what?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: To buy those envelopes from me. I thought he was insulting me. How could I sell something without buying this or that? So I don't know who I consulted, maybe one of the fellows there who was always helpful or something. And they said, "Well, if this girl was a difficult - spectrum - to live up to, if she was able to do it, and you have the person offering to buy it from you, you sell them."

So I started having a fortune from those envelopes. And I started learning about geography and the different countries and the different industries in the different countries, because it was all on the stamps and this and that and the other. And I got that extra money for my books, for going to the museums, for whatever I needed.

MS. BERMAN: Did you like your job?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. They really gave me a lot of space. So much space that when I decided I wanted to be home, I wanted to be with my father, and if I didn't [inaudible] the whole experience and so forth, they - what's it called?

They give me the tickets back and so forth. They made no opposition whatsoever. They felt that I had been away for quite a long time for a single person and all that. And no, they facilitated everything. And not only that. I felt, by then, very strong. Don't think that I only waited for people to come and offer me things. [Laughs.]

So I told Mr. Doblado, I said, "Mr. Doblado, throughout those years" - I stayed there for four years; that, I remember - "I made all those friends of all your salesmen throughout Latin America. Why don't I have the right of stopping? If I have to pay for the extra cost of the passage and so forth, I would pay. I want to go through all those cities and get to know Latin America, because I've gotten to know how they work, how they speak, how they write, how they this and that." And they were all young fellows. [They laugh.] So he said, "Yes, you plan your trip, and you go."

MS. BERMAN: So before I let you leave Chicago, what were your important activities there outside the job? Did you make friends?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I would go to lectures. I would go to the museums. The Art Institute [Art Institute of

Chicago, Chicago, IL] was the -

MS. BERMAN: What was it like to see the Art Institute? I would say that was probably your first major museum outside of Argentina.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But it was in Chicago, so it was just around the corner from me.

MS. BERMAN: Well, that's what I meant. In other words, that museum, what was it like, versus whatever museums that were in Argentina that you weren't aware of? When you saw it, what were your impressions?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I was very impressed. I was very impressed. And the whole thing spoke to me and moved me. It was not just the knowledge that would get into your head. That was the difference. It was like a sensual experience, which it is.

MS. BERMAN: And did you have any works of art or areas that really struck you?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I remember, but it may not be right - it might be a mixture of so many things; I've lived strongly as a young person - of many nudes of large sizes; in the size of a real nude.

And, I don't know how, I met Katharine Kuh. And when I told her that I come from Argentina and that they have art from the rest of the continent and so forth, she started asking me questions about Argentina; and there's a museum in Argentina, and there's this and that and the other.

So I don't know how much of a relation I established with her, if I brought her, thanking her; probably I did. That became, like, a person that I had there by me, Katharine. So much so that when I start my gallery - I think it's when I start my gallery in Caracas [Venezuela]. First time, you know what I started with?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, [Marcel] Duchamp. But we will get there. We will get there.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, okay.

MS. BERMAN: I will ask you about Katharine later on. I'm just keeping you on the track there. And I just wondered, did you form any personal relationships, any romances or anything in Chicago to keep you there?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I probably had, because I fall in love very easily. [They laugh.] But the fellows were really fresh, and I was not prepared for those kind of things. But I had fellows with whom I went to films or something like that. I remember a Mexican fellow who was kind of fat, dark. And he was assistant to my boss in some things. Very fine person, as a person. But then there were the others - the ones that were the heads of the departments who were very attractive people. I still see them every once in a while in my imagination.

MS. BERMAN: I was going to ask you, did you see anything else of the United States when you were in Chicago? Were you able?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I would go to New York. But in New York, my father had a branch of his export of furs and wax and other things. And my uncle didn't have any children, so he was very prepossessed - prepossessing with the children. I wasn't there too often, but every once in a while in the summer, I would - I think he would offer me a trip, and I would go for 15 days.

It was not an easy relation. They had never had children. She was nice and kind. But he was kind of teaching everything because he had to teach you everything. He felt that he had a - he had swallowed the United States, and he had to pass it on or something.

And they didn't have the dedication of my father. They didn't have the love of reading or music of my father. They were different people. But they were good people. She was very kind. They never had any children, and the relation with my father was important to them, so they were kind to me. And they didn't bother me. I lived by myself. I had that kind of freedom.

MS. BERMAN: So you take a trip, you leave Abbott, and you go back to Argentina and -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But before I go to Argentina, I stop at every one of the branches.

MS. BERMAN: Which would be in -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In everywhere. It's in Mexico City, in Nicaragua, in Colombia, where they had three branches in three different cities. And they had very interesting people there. Very interesting young men very concerned with their work, serious. And also, they had an education. They probably were university graduates that would get the branch of Abbott for Bogotá [Colombia] or Caracas or anything like that. So they were very

nice to me and very respectful.

It was beautiful, and I always think that there was an education in those travels, you know? It was not only because Mr. Doblado had written them a little note or three lines or whatever it was. They had quality in themselves, you know?

So I go through the whole West Coast, and then I come back to the East Coast and go to Argentina. In Argentina because Mr. Cain – R. M. Cain had formed a collection for Abbott. And the collection was being used and reproduced in the magazine they published called *Abbott Therapy*, which was also translated into Spanish, *Abbott Terapia*; translated into French, *Abbott Thérapie*. They really meant things. They really meant seriously about things and so forth.

So I come back to Argentina and I – they had put an ad in the paper. I saw an ad in the paper. No, I started – I applied for a job at Abbott.

MS. BERMAN: In Buenos Aires?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In Buenos Aires. And I get the job because I was Doblado's assistant. I get the job there. And there is a man there who is Doblado's nephew. His name is Fernando Rincon-Gallado. And he gives me the job as a secretary there.

MS. BERMAN: I should ask you, what kind of art did Mr. Cain collect for the corporation at that point?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Very good American art. Very good, as far as I could tell. They were not buying [Jackson] Pollock and [Willem] de Kooning and so forth because it was not the time for them, you know. But I don't think I remember. I think you asked me, and I couldn't remember. Maybe I see images.

MS. BERMAN: Okay, so American art. So you're back in Argentina working –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: American and maybe because they were – they always thought of themselves as somewhat international. They must have had things from Japan because I see things like – [inaudible].

If they had strong relations with a country, he would be eager to make use of that connection to buy paintings for them. They had a collection. Abbott had a collection. And they published that collection in those magazines. The magazines were large, like the size of your notebook. A little bit wider and maybe shorter. And in color and everything.

They gave everything, because they were not the first medical company in America. They had the competition of Parke-Davis, who didn't do anything of the kind, as far as I know. But Abbott was up front with that collection and lending and *Abbott Therapy*, the magazine.

And I have seen – and I probably kept them but no longer – that the Japanese branch of Abbott would make a Japanese publication in Japan of an *Abbott Therapy* in Chicago. Can you imagine?

MS. BERMAN: Right. Okay, so you're now a secretary in Abbott Laboratories in Buenos Aires.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In Buenos Aires. So I have to show that I'm worth something, because the manager was an interesting man, and he was very open to all the girls around him. And he would take me to dinner.

But his conversation was interesting for me, and I didn't see that was enough. But at one point, I realized that those relations of a manager with his secretary in Argentina meant another relation. [Laughs.]

And so what do I do? I go to the largest editorial house, which is called Editorial Sudamericana, in Buenos Aires. I tell them that I think I have command of the English language, and I certainly have command of the Spanish language, and I also know French very well, and that I would like to attempt a translation of books into Spanish.

And of the books that they say that they are in the process of having considered into translations, they show me two books by Richard Wright. And I have read Richard Wright already.

MS. BERMAN: Had you ever – I suppose it was not possible – had you met Richard Wright in Chicago? No, okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: You asked me that before. No. No way.

MS. BERMAN: Well, just asking. So that would have been *Native Son* [Richard Wright. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940] and *Black Boy* [Richard Wright. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945]? Would those have been the two books by then?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Anyway, two books by Richard Wright.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And then they gave me other things for translation. One is a British writer.

MS. BERMAN: So you quit Abbott or not?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I'm sorry?

MS. BERMAN: You quit Abbott?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, you know, you did that at home. You got the commission; you took the book; you started working. You revise it, maybe, with a person who would read it with you and analyze it and - [inaudible, cross talk] -

MS. BERMAN: So you successfully translated Richard Wright's novels.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Not novels in plural. I don't remember if it was - one for sure, maybe two. But not Richard Wright, no. I did Langston Hughes. I did four or five, but I don't remember them now, and they are in the libraries that have been put away in storage there.

MS. BERMAN: That's all right.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. And then I started writing with the English things that I wanted to write or whatever. Yes, but the most important thing then is that I'm interested in the arts. And I don't paint, I don't draw, and I - that's not what I need. I need to understand, get into the paintings and this and that and the other.

So when I come to Argentina, and I want to stay in that field - and that's definite for me - I start asking, and nobody can give me a source of information or anything like that. But somebody tells me - I remember I'm on the street with someone, and he tells me that - yes, I remember this. The professors of the universities have been fired because they signed a document - all of them - all of the major professors and writers and so forth against [Juan] Perón.

MS. BERMAN: I will ask you eventually what it was like to live under Perón. That was one that was going to be a question. But anyway, they signed that.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: They tell me that the professors have been fired. And I had seen that document in the *Prensa*, which is a large newspaper like the *New York Times*, but even larger. And it was full, full, full, full of names of the people who refused to accept that that would be the law in Argentina.

And I say, "Well, what I want to learn is about art. I want to understand art. I want to understand it. I want to learn the history," and so forth. And they tell me, "Well, you know, there is a bookshop." But because the artists don't find work, the artists don't sell their works at this point; this is a time of crisis for anything like what you want to do. "But there is a library where a certain critic, a very cultured man, is going to give lectures on the history of art and on the interpretation of the arts."

My God, I just lived there. So I go there. It's a bookshop that has two stores. It's called Fray Mocho. The name comes from something in Spanish literature. *Fray* is the way you identify a religious person -

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, "brother."

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right.

MS. BERMAN: Brother. And M-A-

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: M-O-C-H-O. Fray Mocho. And this is on the street called Lavalle - L-A-V-A-L-L-E. Lavalle and Callao. It's not far from my home. I go; I inscribe. I pay for my lessons.

It's a group. They come from all kinds of walks of life and universities. I see there the most important pediatrician in Buenos Aires. I see there this and that and the other. I said, well, so I sat well in the back.

But because I didn't know anything, I didn't know that I couldn't interrupt the professor to ask him questions when I didn't understand. So I would ask questions. And one day, he approaches me in the class and says, "Well, what other difficult questions you brought today for me?" So I realized that I was in the field of the things. And I didn't ask any more questions, but I started sending in notes about the classes and asking him in the notes for questions and this and that and the other.

And soon enough, there was a very fine group of people. Some of them were university people already. One was a major pediatrician. He was so handsome. And they were very interesting people from all walks of life. Some people were white-haired. And okay, then I go. I sit in the back because I know I'm the most ignorant of them all.

And then every time, he pushes me forward. He pushes me forward. And he says, "Why don't you let me sit in the back, because I want everybody to ask questions?" So I started being very open about my questions. I led them all. And the class became very alive. It wasn't only Romero Brest discoursing, you know? There was a participation of people.

MS. BERMAN: So that was the teacher, Roberto Brest?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Jorge Romero Brest. Two last names, phenomenal man, phenomenal. Phenomenal. I realized from the classes, I remember now, that I was acquainted with what he was saying, but how could I be acquainted? I had never studied this and that and the other.

And so I started making notes. And I can show you. I have 32 thick notebooks like that in shorthand. They're downstairs in a box. But they have also been – and that was in Spanish. I sent them to Argentina, where they knew the same shorthand system, because there are several: one for English, one for Spanish. And I have them all typed out in Spanish. And eventually, I want somebody to edit that because it is fantastic lecturing at a very high level of knowledge and interpretation and clarity. And well-spoken, because he was a good writer. I also have his books.

And just the work of making this happening – just translating from the shorthand to the Spanish and this and that, it's made me assimilate everything in a manner that I cannot shake it off. And I want to give those originals to somebody who will give it the shape that it needs to be shaped and then translate into other languages.

Because I have read all the others that were writing and publishing and so forth – not all of them, of course, but I've read the major ones. And I've never found anybody with this depth of interpretation – [inaudible] – certain people like yourself, when you write – and you don't write often enough – [laughs] – because you're so busy.

MS. BERMAN: Wait, were the classes on modern art, on medieval –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, we started with everything.

MS. BERMAN: So it would be, like the Caves of Lascaux [France] to [Pablo] Picasso or something?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Of course, of course, yes, yes, all the way, all the way, all the way. He had illustrations for everything. They were projected at the time. There was an absolute silence. I don't know how he got that silence, because we were all very fervent people and a big class. It was not 12 people; it was, like, 40 people.

After a while he decided he would start a magazine. The magazine was called *Ver y Estimar* [1947]. I have all the copies in one box here in New York with me. And we wrote for that magazine. And sometimes, he would create groups of three or five people to work on one subject and produce one essay, and that essay was to go into the magazine and so on. And those were people that were doctors, and they were writing on art. They were lawyers. They were, really, a very substantial group of people, yes.

MS. BERMAN: And are you living at home at this moment, or are you living on your own?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I am living in my family's home.

MS. BERMAN: And still working at Abbott during the days?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no. This is Buenos Aires, right?

MS. BERMAN: Right, right. Well, I meant you came back, and you had this job in Buenos Aires. These classes are at night?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, I applied to Abbott because I knew that having bought –

MS. BERMAN: No, but you're still working there while you're taking the classes with Brest?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I don't know if I'm still working.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Maybe not.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: First of all, I didn't need it, because my father supported [me] in every way. And then I dedicated my time to art. I was translating my shorthand for the lectures. We had to read a very important amount of books. We had access to the books from Romero, from this, from that, the library. The museum has a very phenomenal library.

MS. BERMAN: So you were actually devoting yourself to education at this moment.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, no. I also went to the exhibitions. I wrote some reviews. I didn't like that so much. And then I did marriage, and then I have these kids.

MS. BERMAN: Okay, now, that's what we have to find out, is that – now, Jesus Sujo was an artist, correct?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: My husband?

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, my husband comes from a family of artists in which one woman studies piano, who now lives in Berlin [Germany]. The other one studies violin in Berlin with – I know his name, but it may not come up so quickly – Kauflesch [ph], Kauflesch. And the third one is not so good-looking, and she decides to be an actress. And she goes and takes the lessons from a very important man, but I don't know that I would remember – [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: [Constantin] Stanislavski?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I'm sorry?

MS. BERMAN: It's not Stanislavski.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Say it slowly.

MS. BERMAN: Stanislavski, the acting person? He was an important teacher of acting.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Of acting, yes, a very important one [Max Reinhardt], but how come it doesn't ring – I can –

MS. BERMAN: Well, I guess what the question is, who was your husband, and how did you meet him?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, wow. [Laughs.] Is that of interest to the Smithsonian? Okay.

MS. BERMAN: Well, he was an important part of your life, obviously.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Absolutely, absolutely, no question about it. Okay, when I come back, that's a very – and you really found the right moment, historically. I come to Argentina. I come to Argentina, and I meet this young man, Abi Sujo, A-B-I, and Sujo, S-U-J-O. And what is he doing at the time?

Oh, but Abi Sujo doesn't mean anything to me at the moment. [Laughs.] He has a sister – [laughs] – has a sister who studied with whatever – and they go to the opera, and they go to Colón [Argentina]. And not only that, Juana is a very, very accomplished violinist. Everybody speaks of her with immense respect.

The other one is a big, big actress and she's so ugly-looking. You have no idea – [they laugh] – how difficult it must have been. And what was it, piano, the violin? That was my favorite sister. And the actress, yeah.

And so how I get into this? Well, I get into the classes. This is one thing I want to pursue, because of all I have seen of the paintings in Chicago and all of that. So I go to the classes. And then Jorge Romero Brest starts the magazine. Did I get to that?

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, *Ver y Estimar*, and we all contribute. The magazine is written by his students. Okay. Meanwhile, I guess my children were born almost at the same time.

MS. BERMAN: Wait a minute, wait a minute. I still don't even know what your husband does.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, okay. My husband is the one man in that family where the older sister plays the piano -

MS. BERMAN: I don't care about them. I want to know about him.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, okay. He's already married. And he's the son of the same family as the one who's the pianist, the violinist, and the actress. What is he doing? He's studying medicine.

MS. BERMAN: [Laughs.] Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Which he doesn't finish. He studies medicine. He has been married before to a woman of a family that I think had only that daughter and that has a lot of money. And they don't get along or whatever, so they separate. And because of that interest in the arts - no, not because of that interest in the arts. It's because I get to know his sisters, the violinist, and we become good friends, although we are separated in age and many things.

And I'm attracted by that family. That's the whole thing. That family's another monstrous thing of art. So that's -

MS. BERMAN: Oh, so you met him through the sisters.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I met him through what - yes, actually, through Anita, because I go to her violin concerts, and I'm very struck by that.

MS. BERMAN: So Abi, by now, is divorced from his other wife?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. He's divorced, of course.

MS. BERMAN: And when was he born?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He must have been six years older than I was.

MS. BERMAN: And just for housekeeping purposes, when did he die?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He passed away after I divorced, after we had married and had all those children and -

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, I guess I don't know when - I guess when did -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Ask, ask, go ahead.

MS. BERMAN: Do you remember when you were divorced?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Let's see. That's a date you don't celebrate for, so I can't remember. [Laughs.] But I have it. I have it.

MS. BERMAN: Right, okay. We'll put that on your notebook, when you were divorced, because obviously that will make a difference. Did your father like him?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. My father was a man who respected people, so he was the man I had chosen; he liked the family, although it was not a family with power or money or anything like that, but he understood that my interest in belonging to such a family was because of my education or whatever my interests had been so far, so he helped him in many ways. He advanced him certain capital.

First, he had studied in England, textiles. And manufacturing and the machines and all of that. So my father helped him establish a mill, a small mill. He managed it well, and it worked well and gave us a normal income for a small family that was not pretentious in any way. But he brought for me this whole family with - the violinist was congenial and a good friend.

MS. BERMAN: Now, I'm confused because your husband's name was Abi. Who was Jesus Sujo? Was there a Jesus?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Jesus? You mean, Jesus up there?

MS. BERMAN: No, no. Was there a Jesus Sujo?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Jesus [Rafael] Soto.

MS. BERMAN: Soto, okay, that's the artist.



MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's an artist, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, okay, I was confused. Something different.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: It's okay.

MS. BERMAN: So you are married, which would have been about '47 or '48, I guess?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, something like that, or '45, yeah.

MS. BERMAN: I think it was a little after that, just because I think you were in Chicago then.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, you're right. But I met him soon after – yes, by '47, I must have been married. Yes, my children, I think, start being born, 1948. Jeannine is born in 1948.

MS. BERMAN: Right, right, so you've got – so meanwhile, besides this art class, I want to ask you, for cultivated people, or for people who are – what is it like living under Juan Perón for you? How is it affecting you?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Good question. When we are in those classes of Romero Brest, there are people – very interesting people – and people who are professionals in medicine and, well, the main pediatrician was a very attractive character in many ways and broad and this and that. Put the question again?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, I'm asking you what it was like to live under Perón.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, all right. So we go after Perón – actually, I owe everything in my life to Perón. Why? In the opposite side. When I come to Argentina, and I want to go to the universities, the best professors of the universities have been fired. And so the people who [have] intellectual interests and professional interests and so forth are looking for those groups that are studying. And I find about the arts that this is a group which – [inaudible]. So I go to that class. That class, major doctors, the major pediatricians, the major lawyer, the major this, the major this, people from the music, they were there to learn about art.

MS. BERMAN: So because the professors were oppressed, you profited. Let's put it that way. I mean mentally.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, it opened a window through that small bookshop, which had a second floor, where you could pay the minimal amount.

MS. BERMAN: So but also, in your own family, did you feel a lack of freedom – you, your family?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no. Because my mother had passed away when I was 13, and my father had six children. Three had been born in Europe, and they were different from the three that had been born in Argentina. He managed all of that. And no, we didn't feel oppressed; we didn't feel – it all depended how much strength for flying you had.

My sister is a very beautiful girl. She's two years younger than I am. Has a lot of sympathy, a lot of joy; she's never read a book to the end probably. She didn't need to. [Laughs.] And she'd do a career of her own. She married shortly after I married, and we had children shortly, one after another, something like that. Her interest was more in – she's a very pretty woman and decided –

MS. BERMAN: Hey, you – are you kidding? You are just gorgeous!

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, I'm not.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, you were. I've seen the pictures! [Laughs.]

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, but you should see what she looks like, what she looked like and so forth. I didn't feel that I was missing anything.

MS. BERMAN: Well, with Perón, when you were there, were you aware that they were sheltering Nazi war criminals?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes. Not only that – not only the Nazis, they were sheltering our own people because they had ideas of freedom and exchange and freedom of speech and freedom of publication. No, that was very openly felt.

The newspapers felt it, so the newspapers gave space to those voices. Imagine the major pediatrician, who was, besides that, the most attractive man you could imagine, the major lawyers, the major this. We needed escapes; we needed escapes because our world was being destroyed. We couldn't think. The newspapers

couldn't write the newspaper the way they used to. There was no freedom of the press. And that was a conscience, and, you know, you are 13 and 14, and you know that freedom of the press is an essential life for a country, right?

MS. BERMAN: And also, of course, I don't know if you – did you ever witness, did you ever see Evita [Eva Perón] or witness her?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: We saw her in the street, but it was just, like, seeing garbage or something like that. We knew, we knew – my father read a Jewish newspaper, but he also read the *Nación* and the *Prensa* on Saturdays and Sundays. And he also read a very interesting newspaper that was freer than the others, which was the evening newspaper. I don't remember the name. There were several of that kind.

And then there was a very active Socialist Party in Argentina, even with Perón. And this man, Alfredo Palacios, with a big mustache, he spoke. He spoke, and his words were being reproduced. And there was a socialist party, and the socialist party had gatherings for the young people. And we went there to hear what this was all about and so forth. I don't know if I understood what it was. I knew what it meant, but they said – I was not marked by that directly.

MS. BERMAN: Now, you moved – the family moved to Caracas in 1953.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: My family only. That means my husband, myself, and my three children were born – [inaudible, cross talk] –

MS. BERMAN: Right, yes, I was saying – well, why did you and your husband and children move to Venezuela?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, okay. [Laughs.] Okay, my husband has those three sisters. One is a great pianist shaped in Berlin. The other one is a great violinist whom I love, Anita. And the youngest one is an actress, Juana Sujo. Juana Sujo, because Perón is anti-Semitic, cannot find a job in the theater, which is what she does. So she has a small – [laughs]. I'm getting into deep territories. She has a job with the radio station. There are several. This was an important radio station that is owned by a Jewish person named – I don't know, anyhow. Okay, she has a job there in a – those cheap things, the theater and the radio – it's called what? Those programs that every night, they show another chapter?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, like a soap opera.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: The soap opera. She's an actress with the name Juana Sujo, in a soap opera. One day, she goes to Radio [inaudible] – is the name of the station. And she's stopped at the door by a woman who is an actress in those soap operas. Her name is Eva, but I don't remember her maiden last name. Eva whatever.

And Eva stops Juana and tells her, "Look, I have an important date today. Can I borrow a nightgown from you just for the night?" And my sister-in-law answers her in a bad manner and accuses her of – whatever – what she's doing, favoring this government and so forth. She was immediately fired, and that was her only means of livelihood. She had been married to an actor, I think. I don't remember too well. She had two husbands.

Okay, anyhow, she's fired. She's fired; she can't get a job. What job can an actress find? She didn't dress well; she didn't wash well. [Laughs.] So a few actors and actresses had left already for Venezuela because Venezuela had formed a film company. And either she writes to them, or they write to her, and she's offered a job for the first film with [actor] Arturo de Cordova. Who is going to refuse that?

So Juana gets ready, and she goes to Caracas to film her first film with Arturo de Cordova and –

[Audio break.]

By now, you don't want tea or coffee or whiskey or something?

MS. BERMAN: No, no, why don't – we'll go on for another few minutes, and then we'll quit – [inaudible, cross talk] –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I'll give you whatever you want to. I just feel that I'm taking your time.

MS. BERMAN: No, no, this is the object. But anyway, so she gets –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: You're not cold?

MS. BERMAN: So she gets the job –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: You want air conditioning, or you want it off or whatever?

MS. BERMAN: Everything is fine.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: My God, you're easy. [They laugh.] Well, Juana, she cannot get the job in Argentina. She has the opposition of Perón. Can you imagine Perón making – so she writes to her fellow actors and actresses who are already in Caracas, Venezuela. There are three or four. And one is a good friend, is – [inaudible]. And so they tell her, "Come, because there is an industry of films starting here in Spanish, and you'll get a job immediately." So she leaves everything, and she goes.

Then the situation with Perón and all the activities – even my husband who had a factory to manufacture the materials that they make the suits for men, that kind of materials. He had studied that in England, when he was in England.

And so my sister-in-law, who is very attached to her brother and vice versa, she insists. What are you doing in Venezuela? Under Perón, you won't be able to continue with your factory. So Abi leaves for Venezuela, which started the whole thing. And then he calls and says, look, this is the way to go, and can we sell that – we had a house which was ours, a very nice house in a very nice northern neighborhood and everything. Our children were adjusted in school and so forth.

But I've always been very politically conscious and read about it all the time, and I knew what it meant to live in Argentina under Perón or to just try another territory. And we knew that Venezuela had good links with the United States, and my husband had studied in England so he had the language. My children had gone to a bilingual school, so English was fine to us.

So we go to Venezuela. And Abi lands the representation of ICI [Imperial Chemical Industries] of England, which is a big medical corporation in the world. It's called Imperial Chemical Industries. That's why ICI. ICI is starting to create branches in all of the important cities in Latin America. And Abi knows English because he's been educated also in Great Britain. So he lands the job because there's a company called the H. Carren [ph] and Company that represents the cycle that they need, okay.

And so he gets their representation. And after three months or four months, because he's capable, he establishes a very good link with the doctors. He wanted to be a medical doctor, so he had that background, so the whole thing helps him out. The English that he knows, the medical background, those kind of thing, that being a medical professional now.

So he gets their representation, and he is creating a chain of people who visit the doctors and recommend their products and so forth. And that starts rolling because he's very capable, he's intelligent and so he gets other people to help him.

And so there we started selling our house in Argentina and moving to Caracas; buying a house in Caracas, sending my children to the best schools, having all of – [inaudible]. And once I get all of that organized, I start looking into the museum and –

MS. BERMAN: Just before we get – I mean, how did you feel about moving to Caracas? Were you in favor of it?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Even though you would be separated from your father?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, that was something, but my father would have advised me that I should think of my children, not of a father. And for my children to be educated in the schools, as Perón had transformed those schools into nothing, the image of how you teach and all of that, there was no question. And I had already lived in the United States as a single woman, so it was bringing me back to the culture that I had been shaped by, in a way.

MS. BERMAN: Well, why was Venezuela more English or more American-oriented than Argentina?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Because of the oil. We had oil in enormous quantities, and the prices were going up and up and up and up and up. And we were closer, and the families in Venezuela could send their children to American schools.

MS. BERMAN: Right, yeah, of course, geographically, I had forgotten. Of course.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Is that enough of a jacket for you?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, certainly.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I can close this air conditioning. I don't need it.

MS. BERMAN: No, no, I was warm before. I'm okay.

So, right, the oil. There would have been a lot of people from the oil company – Americans from oil companies there.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. The Americans really occupied a very important role in creating an educated structure that was an imperative for the country to develop the cleanliness, the quality of the schools. And there was a British school that I can't tell you enough about. An extraordinary British school. They had already gone to a British school in Argentina, and I knew that that was the way to go, and that's what I would have wanted for myself, also.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, and so there also would've been a lot of British and American children in the schools, too.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Absolutely, oh, yes, oh, yes. Because you already had to have some English to be able to – yes. And there were a lot of American executives coming to Venezuela because of the oil, so they had their children, and they had their things, so it was a mixed community of great respect both ways.

MS. BERMAN: Okay. So then you said you began to look into the museum, which would have been the Museo de Bellas Artes. Is that –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. Well, how did this happen? Well, because my life has always been in the museum, Sundays this and that; I take my children to this and that. I start becoming familiar with the artists because I'm offered a job to teach at the school of fine arts. The three principle artists in Caracas at the time: Alejandro Otero, very important; Victor Valera, a sculptor –

MS. BERMAN: Gego [Gertrude Goldschmidt]?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Gego, not yet. Gego comes later from Germany with her husband. And when Gego comes, I'm already an important factor in the art school, and we get her a job. And also her husband, who is a magnificent artist, Gerd Leufert. G-E-R-D L-E-U-F-E-R-T. They both come from Germany. She's Jewish; he's not. I think they met in a concentration camp, but I'm not so sure at this point.

Anyway, they are a magnificent couple. They feel wonderful with us. They feel very, very well. And Leufert gives me the first sight of his work, and I start working representing him. I start creating work for Gego. I already had my gallery.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Okay, so we should sort of stay in the '50s. So Victor Valera and Alejandro Otero are the most important artists at the time.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Not Victor Valera. Valera comes later. He becomes a very important sculptor. I think very highly of his work. No, the important ones are Alejandro Otero. [Pause.] Okay, Armando Reverón is already recognized as a very important artist. You know that this painting here is by him, yes? Okay.

Armando Reverón is a major figure. And I understand him immediately. I don't know why or how or because it's a different thing, but I'm very attached by it. I'm really emotionally touched. I can't just get away from those paintings, because it's not easy to get into them, as well. More so because of the landscape scenario, which is a repetitive subject, so in a way, you don't try so hard.

But I go to the place where he lives by the beach, and I read about him, and I also did some things that I don't remember. But I did things that helped Reverón. Well, I taught him at the school of fine arts. And I think we had some posters made so that the children would become aware of the voices that were starting to be heard in Venezuela and that were important. It was easy to get those posters made because the tobacco companies would use him for this and the others. Yeah.

MS. BERMAN: What were you teaching at the school?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Interpretation of art and art history, from way back. According to the ages of the students – not the ages; the groups. But they were all adults. They were not children. I didn't have children, at least not to teach.

MS. BERMAN: And what was Otero like at that moment?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Otero. A great start. [Inaudible.] He had lived in Paris without eating; he had to –

[Audio break.]

MS. BERMAN: Otero.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, Alejandro Otero was the star when I get to Venezuela. He's creative, he's intelligent and he has a knowledge of a history of art, not as a class or anything like that. He has an interpretation. He has a profundity. He's lived in Europe. He would get a scholarship for one year to be in Paris, to be in Madrid. That's it. And he married a very, very wonderful woman, also a painter, a magnificent painter. Mercedes Pardo.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: My God, how much you know. Mercedes Pardo. Great painter, great companion. They have three fantastic children. Those are actually one of my first friends. And I see Alejandro's work. I know that this is my place, in a way. I really felt like that.

MS. BERMAN: And did you feel about her work the same way, too?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes. And we have wonderful things by her.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, I think she's a very good artist.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes. How come you know all of those artists? How did you get to those books? Because there's no other way!

MS. BERMAN: Well, that's why I had to wait for a while before seeing you. I had to look up the artists before we had discussions about them.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, Victor Valera was another one that profoundly moved me because he has a fantastic sensibility - [inaudible]. If you can give him a spinach leaf, he'll make a garden out of the spinach leaf. I love gardens, and I love gardening. I had spaces for gardens in the houses in which we lived which were not sensational; they were fine houses. That's all. But I can convert a piece of empty land into a garden since I met Victor Valera. He's an interesting artist, sculptor; he's done graphics; he's done - I mean, but he's also very good with gardens and things like that. It's incredible what he can create and how well.

We have a sculpture by him - [inaudible, audio interference]. We have a sculpture by him. It's a tall - more than two meters. And it's an incredible - I have the reproductions, and I have the photos, because I would like to do something important with that sculpture. Anyhow, at one point, I can show it to you. We have it; we have the reproduction.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Well, besides the museum, at the time, in the mid '50s, what was the artist scene like in Caracas?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, there were galleries. The bookshops would also show works of art. The bookshops had art books, because I could always find things that I had not read.

And then we had places in which we met, like the - [inaudible] - because Alejandro Otero was one of the people who was there for the classes. And his wife, Mercedes Pardo.

MS. BERMAN: But that's in Argentina. This is in - we're now in Venezuela.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, we are in Venezuela. In Argentina, that was different. Am I mixing it up, and you have it right?

MS. BERMAN: Well, that's okay. I was just asking about in the -

[Cross talk.]

- in Caracas, that's all, about the -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right. Alejandro Otero and all of that. And - [inaudible] - is in Argentina?

MS. BERMAN: This is a question because you were talking about the American influence in Venezuela. Was modern American art influential to Venezuelan artists then?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. Not modern art, no. Not modern American art.

MS. BERMAN: Contemporary. You know, Abstract Expressionism or anything like that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Abstract Expressionism, yes, yes. But American artists such - which artists would you be thinking of?

MS. BERMAN: Well, I meant the New York School because that would have been the contemporary art at the

time.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: It was too early. No, it's too early for Venezuela to -

MS. BERMAN: You know, Pollock, de Kooning -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But we don't see them. We don't see them. There is no way that we can see them. And there are very few books [available] that are being published in the United States because I looked and had bought what I could find.

MS. BERMAN: Were you aware of them?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I was. Not because I had been in the United States. No, it's because I come to Argentina. I come back to Argentina; I go to the [inaudible]. And, yes, there we were conscious of what Jackson Pollock was and then de Kooning, and it's important. And thanks to those great professors, because they had the reproductions. We had the system in which you put it into that machine with the light, and you see them, big, like that, and you're electrified forevermore.

MS. BERMAN: Right. So you were - okay, so you're teaching at the museum. And at some point -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I'm teaching at the museum? Wait, no. At the museum, I'm not teaching. This is Caracas or Argentina?

MS. BERMAN: Caracas. We have gone - we're over Argentina.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. In Caracas, yes. I meet Alejandro Otero and Mercedes Pardo. I don't know how. I don't remember where. I may remember later. Well, I see their work at the museum. Not much of it. They didn't pay too much attention.

How did I see their work? How did I? I think it is because they know that I'm a student of Romero Brest. And so they start approaching me and that kind of thing. And socially, we got along beautifully. They had small children like I did. They lived in San Antonio de los Altos. They didn't have a good financial position. And we felt we could help them in many ways, and we tried, and we did. And I think my husband got involved in patronizing other people - a publication on Alejandro Otero.

And of course, I was there at the museum every Sunday. On Sundays, the families would go to the museum with the children, with the husbands, with the grandparents, with everything. And soon enough, I went to the museum. It didn't take me but weeks. And offered myself to work for the museum without pay. And they took me in, in whatever capacity I wanted to work, just because I had studied with Romero Brest.

MS. BERMAN: That was the teaching job?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, that was participating and suggesting - no, it was never a teaching - a paid job. I was teaching at the school of fine arts. That was a paid job but little money.

At the museum, I didn't get paid. I wanted that activity, and I would have done anything. And also, I didn't need it. I didn't need it. If I had to, I would have applied for that kind of thing, but I didn't need it. But I wanted - what I needed was the job; be able to do it. That's what I needed.

MS. BERMAN: So you were eventually - what was it, the head of the Friends of the Museum? Was that what it was?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, I was. I was not the head of the Friends. I wouldn't have taken that position. But I was part of it. And I was the one who moved the scenario because I knew this, I knew that, and it was so - they didn't know about art. So I could make the suggestions about the acquisitions. And the artists sensed that. They would offer [for me] to visit their studios, would try to [show me their] new work, try to see this and that. But they would ask me, look - they asked me, for a reproduction for the newspaper for this, what should I do? I would act as an everybody - as a name for that person.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I guess "facilitator." That's kind of clumsy.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, that kind of thing.

MS. BERMAN: A liaison.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes. But I wanted to be able to be in that world. That was my world. And I recognized that I had that kind of capacity.

MS. BERMAN: So you got to know all the artists that way.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, I knew them. And they were my students at the school of fine arts, and I loved that kind of activity. That was fantastic. And they would go with me to the exhibitions and see the exhibitions with my eyes. But first, I would ask them that they should tell me what they saw, because I would be incapable of seeing what they saw, I would tell them. [Laughs.] There were often outbursts of such a phenomenal thing, but I never would dare ask them if I could record it or anything like that because that would not have been understood. That would have been [seen as taking] as some advantage or something like that. And I didn't need to do that to them. So it was a fantastic thing, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I think that this is a good time to stop for today. And next time, we'll take up what you collected for the museum and your work there. And we'll move onto the center that you founded. Okay, thank you very much.

[END DISC 1.]

MS. BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing Clara Diament Sujo on June 11, 2010, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, in her apartment in New York City.

So we left off in Venezuela in the mid- to late 1950s, when you really began to become a cultural leader in Venezuela in terms of your work and art. But first, I'd like to ask you a couple of general questions.

When you got to Venezuela, what were the differences that you noticed between what the Venezuelan artists were doing, the contemporary ones, versus in Argentina?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I had just left now that they were much advanced, because Argentina had the fantastic museum already with wonderful things. And that was their lesson, in a way, and their inspiration. It was the past.

Venezuela was a new country, in which all the structures were being reconsidered, reworked, rethought. They had no attachment with the past. Respect, yes, but not the influence. Argentina had that influence.

The museum is extraordinary, and it's open to the public. You go in all day and every day of the week except Mondays. Anyhow, it's an impressive structure. It's placed among gardens. All the across the museum are gardens. It's a phenomenal presence.

In Venezuela, it was just the smallest building. But I went into the building - because I can't live without museums - and I started walking around, and I [was] surprised because everything was new. It meant that Venezuela had something to say. And I was going to help that cause.

And from just being there - and I probably went there every day - it was just so moving that there was a freedom. Imagine, I come from nowhere, I have no name, I have no - and I can suggest this, and I can suggest that. And I suggested they - [inaudible]. Oh, no, they had the initiative once of putting an article in the paper saying that they wanted the citizenship of Caracas - am I repeating myself?

MS. BERMAN: No.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: - to have a say in the life of the arts and the museums in Venezuela. There was also a science museum [Museo de Ciencias Naturales] where there was a very brilliant man who was my daughter Jeannine's major inspiration and professor and all of that. His name J. M. Crusent, J. M. for José Maria. Crusent, C-R-U-S-E-N-T.

He was the director of the science museum that had, of course, pre-Columbian things and many things. He was very well informed, a very educated man with dedication to that, but he was also a painter, and an interesting painter. We have some - not here - but we have paintings, and they must be in the records, the photographs and all of that.

So that was an inspiration. I had to give everything - [inaudible]. I had to give it to Venezuela. That's how it worked. And there were no impediments; there were no jealousies. There were no - nothing. Everything was open, transparent, fluid. It's a phenomenal country, until then they have all these uproars now. Not now. I'm not too familiar with how things are going now. But it's been - [inaudible].

It's a country of many young people. There are no older people there. Well, maybe 50 or 60. But the others, I don't know where they go. [They laugh.]

MS. BERMAN: Now, when you got there, what kind of art was in the museum?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: They had pre-Columbian things.

MS. BERMAN: This is the art museum?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. Well, it so happens that what they called the science museum is just across the street. And they had pre-Columbian things. And Crusent, who was also an artist, was the director there. And he was extremely – he could move everything – not politically.

He was an inspiration to everybody. And I could sense that very well, because my daughter became a student of his at one point or another. She was also an anthropologist later. It was an open territory. It was really fantastic. It didn't have the culture that Argentina had. It didn't have the European influence. It was free to fly, and it did fly.

MS. BERMAN: And so what were your main suggestions, in terms of what they should have in the collection or what they should show - what were those?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I think that what I saw as a possibility - because the museum didn't have a tremendous budget behind it or anything like that - was to create a collection of the Venezuelan artists that had already developed their own careers. And there were quite a few. Then to see what the younger people were doing.

The younger people were teaching at the school of fine arts, and they were there with me all the time. I could see where the thing was going, and they were mostly of very humble origins. Did I tell you this?

MS. BERMAN: No.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: One day, I'm walking on my street, and I see two of the three fellows who are from my class - now, it was not like that. I saw that in driving back home there was always one of my students getting off the bus. And that was a neighborhood where my students couldn't live. Their families came from another strata of society there.

So one day I asked him - no, I was walking on the street, and he comes from this - the other side with somebody else, and he says, well, "Como esta la profesora?" And I say, "Muy bien." He said, "Que paso?" And I'd tell him, "Well, we just finished moving to another house, and I finished setting things up and so forth."

And then he looks at me, and he said, "You know, I live in this - [inaudible]." I was very surprised because I knew that his mother - I saw him getting off the bus always, and I asked him where does he live? I couldn't understand him living in that neighborhood.

And he said that his mother was the washing woman in the family there and so forth and so on, which made us forevermore very open and friendly in exchanges. And to this time, he would always make some sculptures that he would think I would either buy, or he would give them to me. They are still with me.

MS. BERMAN: Right, you're just getting up to show me these sculptures.

[Side conversation.]

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He also made large sculptures later for the government. It stands on the streets and this and that.

MS. BERMAN: And what is his name?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Carlos Prada. [Laughs.]

MS. BERMAN: Carlos P-R-A-

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: P-R-A-D-A

MS. BERMAN: Like the clothing, right? Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right. That was one of them. There were a few others. But he was a very special one, also, and his modesty. There were also a number of women who were painting or drawing.

MS. BERMAN: And what were some of the important works of art that came to the museum through your influence?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, well, we started reviewing the major artists from Latin America. And let me see if I



can remember - [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: Wilfredo Lam?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, that was the first one, Wilfredo Lam. And then we bought Roberto Matta.

MS. BERMAN: Well, these artists were alive, of course. Did you have personal contact, or through dealers?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I would just write letters. They would answer. I would get their addresses. I would ask the embassies of Venezuela if they could possibly find this artist who lives in Madrid [Spain] or this and that. And they would give me the addresses and the telephone numbers.

I would call them. They were immediately, like in tears, so moved that anything like that - they were so far away from Venezuela; they had left Venezuela maybe seven or 10 years before. And Venezuela was reaching out to them in some way. But we not only bought the Venezuelans. I wish I could remember exactly which.

MS. BERMAN: Well, but Matta was not from Venezuela, and Lam was not from Venezuela.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, I was looking at the Latin American spectrum. I wasn't going to -

MS. BERMAN: Right. Well, how about those artists? Were those someone you would go through - those more well-known artists that would go through dealers?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, of course. I wrote to each one, and I would tell them that we are in the process of creating the first collection of Latin American art at the museum level for a museum that is already involved in this project. And they would always reply and send me photos. They would not specify a price. They would give me the freedom to do whatever I could with the funds that the museum was availing.

And they were not tremendous funds. But then, I think that I approached private people, and they incorporated with checks. And I would do whatever I could with the money that was coming in.

We also created, like a membership, so that anybody could come in and give 100 bolivars a year or 50 bolivars a year. And they were very precise, because Venezuelans are very correct people. And to belong to a museum was something that had never happened there.

And the museum was active. They had good directors. One of the [directors], Armando Barrios - Armando Barrios, who had had a European background already - he had been to Europe; he had seen museums; he had seen the works of the major artists - he was not only focused on Latin America, because that was a notion that, in a way, I feel guilty for inventing. [They laugh.] And he would be very knowledgeable and very ethical.

And his wife was also very correct. I don't remember - she had, also, a field of activity, but I don't remember what it was. I don't remember what it was. But she was absolutely in support of everything he would do at the museum. Had a nice family together. And they were supportive of each other's dreams and projects and so forth.

The museum would be open on Sundays, open to the public, and it was full of the parents bringing the children, because it had never happened before.

MS. BERMAN: I want to know what you just said - you just said that you felt somewhat guilty about was inventing the concept of Latin American art?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, because it didn't exist as a purpose or a collection that I can think of now.

MS. BERMAN: Well, but I don't understand why you would -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Why did I focus on that?

MS. BERMAN: No, no, no. You said you felt guilty.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, because maybe the museum would have gone into a European direction or something like that, because that was the logical thing. There were people with money that you could, if you would speak of buying a Picasso - they never bought a Picasso, but maybe they would have bought Picassos and - [inaudible] - and this and that and the other. But it took on - it took on. It was something you were close to, could understand it, and it didn't sound like an impossible thing.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I would say it was pioneering. Wouldn't you say that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Later on, you would think so, too, because of the courage it took, because of the impressive strength that it was given. Strangely enough, the museum in Buenos Aires, which is much more important than the one in Caracas, never followed the route. It's not an accusation. It's just that they were already – they had a good collection of European value.

MS. BERMAN: Well, you were also, during this time – you understood it; you championed abstract art.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Was that a battle?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, not for me. It was a conviction. What the others thought?

MS. BERMAN: I mean, did you have trouble introducing abstract paintings into the collection?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. We had good professors at the school of fine arts – people who had already spent time in Europe. It was not an impossible thing for people in Venezuela to go to Europe and spend one or two years, or the parents would take them for this and that.

MS. BERMAN: Now, I also noticed that in the collection, and what you showed, is that there were really a fair amount of women artists.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, but not because of inclination of – not even of being fair. I looked at that work. It's just that there happened to be many, many women. One of them was Mercedes Pardo.

In their family, which was Alejandro Otero, the husband, and Mercedes Pardo, the wife, they had children. They lived outside of Caracas in a place called San Antonio. San Antonio de los Altos. I don't know why they have that long name. And they became really as close as family. My children and their children had similar ages. My daughter was flirting with the younger fellow in their group. But they were just wonderful people.

And they were – I must say – they showed for my modest work a very sympathetic attitude that I don't know that I had encountered in Argentina, because in Argentina, there were many students of Romero Brest and many people who had studied with Romero Brest and so forth.

And they probably didn't have access to the same things I had access [to]. I had access to books. I had access to do things. I had access to travel, as well. So that was a help. And also I had lived in Chicago, and the museums in Chicago were fantastic, and exhibitions in Chicago. And Abbott created a very important collection that was used for a publication that they had called *Abbott Therapy*. I think I mentioned it last time. And Mr. Cain was very interested in art.

MS. BERMAN: Well, are you traveling in other parts of South America, yourself, at this moment, looking at art or artists?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Good question, because it's a bad answer. [They laugh.]

MS. BERMAN: Not necessarily, but you seem to have, at some point, established a contact or a relationship with the Museum of Modern Art [New York, NY]. Now, how did that come about?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That started very early, and I tried to think about it the other day. Well, I was a member of the Museum of Modern Art, because how could you do anything about art without visiting the museum in New York? And it was kind of accessible for me.

And I had friends in the directors. They were interested in coming to Venezuela and seeing the possibility of showing things from their inventory. They organized exhibitions that came to Caracas and then went to Buenos Aires, because I had the links there, and I would pass them on. Argentina was not as eager because there were too many people giving opinions of this and that. And they felt, always, much stronger, as they were.

MS. BERMAN: I see that in – this is 1957; I'm looking at the chronology – I think you must have been in New York, because you wrote an article about Matta – a Matta show at the museum?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, right, right, right. I had that liberty because it was a four-hour flight, and it was not expensive. And when I went, I don't know where I stayed.

MS. BERMAN: Who were your friends at MoMA?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well one of them forevermore is Kynaston [McShine]. Yes, we are brother and sister – [inaudible]. We understood each other; we had the same inclinations, and we were very critical in analyzing. He

was phenomenal.

But there was also – the man who was director there, we were able to bring him to Venezuela and visit the collections, because they were collections of really very good things. Very good things.

MS. BERMAN: So this was Alfred Barr?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Alfred Barr was one of them, but there is another one. I see him, but I can't remember.

MS. BERMAN: René d'Harnoncourt?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. He had another status, and he probably met the very high society of Venezuela, but not me.

MS. BERMAN: Now, I also see that you did an article on – was it on [Candido] Portinari's murals for the U.N. [United Nations, New York, NY]?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, when it just opened, [his murals at] the U.N. And that was a phenomenal affirmation of my ideals, my hopes, and this and that. And I happened to have come to the opening [in 1957]. I was just so surprised. It was so phenomenal. The ceiling was just higher than the skies. There was a very good construction. The light was fantastic.

And the choices – I think I was critical at the time, but I'm no longer critical. The choices were correct as far as selection of the artist and the paintings that were available within some distance.

As a result of the opening, someone came to Venezuela who was very linked to the Museum of Modern Art.

MS. BERMAN: [William] Bill Lieberman, maybe?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's later. And he doesn't have the push or the presence of an affirmation, you know. He does as a person but not as a voice for the arts.

MS. BERMAN: Dorothy Miller?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. Bill Lieberman becomes much more influential after all of that, yes.

MS. BERMAN: It's hard to figure out who this person might be. I guess I'm – '50s, difficult.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Kynaston is a very phenomenal person –

MS. BERMAN: Right, but he would be later than the 1950s, too, I think.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: A little bit, a little bit. He's already there.

MS. BERMAN: Well, it will come. Now, were you – did you know Portinari at that point?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, through correspondence. But the respect with which I will address them and the cause – there is one possibility that's opening up for the artist, and then that's this possibility, and that the Museum of Modern Art would sponsor it was the right direction to establish as the parameters through which such collections could be formed.

There were some women. They lived all in the '50s. And one passed away in the last, maybe, 15 years, if not more than that.

MS. BERMAN: Was it Mildred Constantine?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: She was, but not with us. She was, of course, in whatever she did with MoMA.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Oh, just giving it one more – Elodie Courter? She did circulating exhibitions.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: What is her last name?

MS. BERMAN: It would be Elodie Courter Osborn.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I don't think any – [inaudible.]

MS. BERMAN: Okay, I'm I'm going to stop guessing.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no, that's one way in which I can respond, because your memory is so much better, and you have so much more references.

MS. BERMAN: Well, then, I will give up, but what was MoMA's promotion of Latin American art or attitude toward Latin American art?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: It was absolutely respectful. They realized that they had an opportunity to discover a continent. They realized that it would help to gather the feelings of all the Americans for the Americas, which - [inaudible].

We were separated people. People from Peru didn't have anything to do with the people in Ecuador. The people in Ecuador or the people in Bolivia didn't have anything to do with Chile or with this, with that. So, no, it was very, very excellent.

And the United Nations helped because they had some very interesting and cultured people who understood the role of the arts in gathering the nations, you see.

MS. BERMAN: Well, when you would show various Latin American artists, not just Venezuelan, at the museum, was there an emphasis on their identities, on their national identities?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. It was just, like, a common [factor] on identifying them. And we didn't even attempt to make it a solid block of things, of, you know, you had the territory that was all your own, and nobody else could enter it - no, nothing like that. Nothing like that. Just respecting the introduction - those words, those new people, all those things.

And there were drawings, and there were photographs, and you could resort to any kind of things. And there were a few little films that I can't be very precise about, but there were a few films. There were a few short films done in a very primitive manner.

They were circulated, and I would have access to those things. We didn't have e-mail. It was just a matter of exchanging by mailing or visiting.

I would come to New York very, very often. And I also would go to California, because Jeannine, my daughter, was studying at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles]. She had a small apartment. And so I would visit her to be with her. But I also would see what was going on there. It wasn't much. But it was important to see it.

I did go to Mexico, because I had worked for this Mexican man who really opened so many doors for me. I saw the museums in Mexico, and I saw the art in Mexico. I saw the pre-Colombian things in Mexico, and that was such a tremendous revelation that those primitive people had been able to create those things. They wouldn't only use clay or stone. They would resort to transparent stones that were very available in different colors and so forth. It was a great thing.

My former boss, Mr. Doblado, he would sponsor all those things because he was Mexican. And Mexico already had a contemporary museum. He had seen it, and he was a rather special person, very special person. I think of him critically at times - critically in trying to really - was it just ungrateful, because how grateful could I be? Immensely. Just he had the right attitude. And I took on that atmosphere from him, you see, that he had taught me. And Abbott bought a lot of - but not because of Mr. Cain.

MS. BERMAN: What artists did you meet in Mexico when you were there during this period?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I was just a little - [inaudible]. I had nothing to offer to -

MS. BERMAN: No, no, I'm talking about when you were there in the '50s. In other words, when you were working for the museum.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In Caracas?

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, when you were in Caracas and then went to Mexico.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But I go to Mexico as a curious person who has a lot to see and so forth. I met some of the people in the museum that were in the organization of the museums. But the artists were not to be seen except in certain occasions. They were rare, and I would not always have access to those things. And also I was young, and I wasn't going to be - [inaudible] - about being included or anything like that. I would never do that.

But Mr. Doblado would always encourage me to do this, and, "Have you seen that? You should see that." And Abbott had and still has a very considerable collection of art.

MS. BERMAN: So you kept up with Mr. Doblado later in life.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no. I never felt that I could approach those people in a friendly manner no matter what my [inaudible] was. But you see, Thomas Messer would move a lot of things around me. And he was just so generous.

I also introduced with him the idea of Latin American art. He did an exhibition of Soto. In the '40s, I think he did it. And then of Alejandro Otero. And it was – I would not challenge him, of course, but I would – I don't know how I did it, but something like announce to them that there would be a revelation if we got involved.

And Messer, immediately – I mentioned the Soto exhibition. He started the organizing the exhibition. He organized the exhibition, the exhibition was a success, and after that, he could draw with the idea of the Latin American artists.

Messer was, and is, fantastic. He's very much alone. I think he's very much alone, very much alone. I saw him at this inauguration that they did at the Guggenheim [Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY], and we had dinner at the same table.

And when I called him a couple of days later to see if he wanted to come for lunch or something like that, he was, like, afraid of being called again into the – [inaudible] – the life of a museum director or something like that. And he would say, always, that he was writing, but I don't know what he has been doing, because I haven't seen anything being published.

MS. BERMAN: Maybe he's working on a memoir. Who knows?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I wish he would.

MS. BERMAN: I wish he would too.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And I did – as a matter of fact, I asked him if he would ever consider. Call him one day; he would be someone fascinating to interview. After that dinner at the Guggenheim – because they had arranged something of the architecture of the museum and whatever – I called him because I felt that he was, like, afraid of people and all alone.

And I could feel that he wanted to be left alone, although he has a good rapport with me and all of that. Or maybe I thought that perhaps he was writing his memoirs. But I didn't dare suggest or ask or anything. But that would be someone so important to, you know –

MS. BERMAN: So were you involved in organizing shows with the Museum of Modern Art?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I would have some say through Kynaston – but not in an important capacity. Other people include me as part of their activity. And I've always been kind of shy about promoting my own self. It wouldn't be in my nature. I wouldn't do it.

MS. BERMAN: Why did you resign, eventually, from the museum as the director of the Friends of the Museum?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Probably because I started Estudio Actual.

MS. BERMAN: Right, well, I think –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And the two things would not be –

MS. BERMAN: Right, right. Well, let's move on to how that all came about. So let's talk about Estudio Actual and what happened. That sort of thing. We need to do that.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, okay, Sotheby's had been approached about doing a series of auctions on Latin American art. And somebody from Sotheby's – I should remember. Amson [ph] talks to me about it, and what would I have, and what do I think of the idea, and this and that. And so I promised to cooperate, of course, and tell them who has what and this and that and the other. And of course, whatever we had, which wasn't substantial, they could borrow, of course.

Who is the person? Anyhow, it must have been the first catalogue, and we have those catalogues. So they want me to – yes, now, I remember. They want me to help them with their organization of auctions and this and that and the other.

And it's Edward Lee Cave who works with the corporation that has to do the real estate. He is on the board of the larger auction house which is Sotheby's. And he is supposed to favor the idea of starting the Latin American

exhibition. He doesn't know anything about Latin America, and somebody directs him to me.

And I say I will help him in every way he wants to. And he says, "Well, who do we go to?" I was able to give him the best names in each country. They got the works from each country from the best artists.

And because I was in Venezuela, where I was already – I had already started at Estudio Actual, the exhibition on Marcel Duchamp; they knew about it. And they asked me to cooperate with the first auction.

So I give them the names of the artists; I give them the addresses; I give them the telephones. I tell them that if they want me to see the works, I will suggest which are the best works to show and this and that.

And so we put together this first catalogue, which is beautiful, and we have it. And we sold – because the people I knew socially in Venezuela, I would tell them that this was happening. Those are people that are in affluent positions, so they come to New York at the same time, and they buy from the same auction and this and that and the other.

And there is a whole craziness [of] who is going to beat the other collector and this and that and the other. And the husband of one of my best friends, who was Otto Atencio, who has and had a lot of money – he passed away – he then asked me what I think if he bought the Lam, because there was a big Lam, if he bought the Matta. Well, he started a collection. And his wife, who separated soon enough, also started another collection. And their children started collections.

So the whole thing was growing and growing. And so when I saw that I had – without ever being to an auction – I had never been to an auction. I didn't know how they worked! But Edward Lee Cave was a very fine person, very fine person. He understood – he was clever enough to get the best names, the best information with his auction. And because I told my collectors already that they should be there and buy the Lam for Mr. Atencio, and buy this and this and this, the auction was a success. I can't get over it, because I had never been to an auction, really. I didn't even know how they functioned.

So I go back home, and I kind of think, what am I going to do with myself? I'm not going to be part of the auction scenario. And so that's how I decide to open the gallery in Caracas. And when I think about it, the only way that I could find the spirit that I wanted was Duchamp, and I called him on the phone. And I think that part, I probably told you.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, but not on the tape. You didn't tell me for this. You just told me the story when I was researching.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, okay. So this is how the thing takes place. And then with the Marcel Duchamp, the government, when they saw the ad in the paper with the sculpture – I have the photo in the kitchen of there – they really wanted to support the idea in every way. And it was easy, really. Then we organized the second.

But then, with my first exhibition, Duchamp, people came from all over. People came from Italy; people came from Spain. People who were already collecting or were museum people, they had never seen a Duchamp exhibition, because Duchamp had not been given an exhibition.

MS. BERMAN: Right, not in Latin America.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Not in Latin America, and very few in Europe, too. He was always talking about it. How come it needed Venezuela to make him a figure, or something like that? And I would never believe that. But it was the case.

It was the phenomenal education that I got from Jorge Romero Brest. That was an extraordinary inspiration: the capacity to see and make seen without maybe analyzing it in profundity, because you can't dissect a painting. It's creating an atmosphere.

And all the other students in the class were even better prepared than I was. There were people who were already architects, doctors, surgeons. They would come to those classes.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Well, I want to stay with Estudio Actual at the moment. And I also just want to straighten something out for the record, because I think there's a little bit of confusion. You were describing the Latin American auction, which I think took place about –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In '79.

MS. BERMAN: Right, so that was in New York; that happened in '79, but you founded Estudio Actual in 1968.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: So therefore, I think that auction happened before the CDS Gallery, not before Estudio.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, no, absolutely.

MS. BERMAN: So I just wanted to straighten it out for the tape.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's how I'd [inaudible]. If I was able to help to make that first auction that is a success or whatever, to even make it happen, okay, why was I doing it [there] and not doing it in Venezuela, where I had my family and my kids and so forth? Why don't I? And then that's how I started.

MS. BERMAN: Well, that leads to CDS in New York. It doesn't lead – but we're not quite there yet. Okay. I want to know, before this telephone call to Marcel Duchamp, what kind of a building was it, and what did you – in other words, what was the concept of Estudio Actual?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: The concept of Estudio Actual, very frankly, was to create a continuation to the teachings of an extraordinary professor of mine. So I'm asked by Edward Lee Cave to cooperate with this first auction of Latin American art because they have this offering from a few collectors who have other things, but they do have certain works of Latin American art and so forth

So I helped him with the selection. I helped him with getting more things and this and that and the other. And it's because I see that the first auction sold out that I say to myself, what am I doing in Venezuela? And I come to New York again, and I start seeing the galleries and what it would take and this and that. And walking on 79th Street, a woman stops me right at the door of this building that had not been finished.

And they said to me, "Don't you want a space for your gallery?" I didn't know them because I don't even remember them. And I said, "Why are you asking me that?" And she said, "Because we want to have a gallery here in this building." I said, "Well, how cheap is it or how expensive is it?" And so I started walking in, and I realized what I could do with the space. It was accessible.

And I don't start here. I started on 75th Street between Madison and Fifth Avenue. It's a home. It houses a magazine called *Vision*, Spanish/Latin American. They occupy two floors and we take two floors. One is the entrance and preamble and so forth, and then the second one is for the exhibition.

And then Katharine Kuh comes to visit, and Hedda Sterne comes with her. You make me remember things. [Laughs.] And Katharine Kuh is the one who knows me, and she introduces me to Hedda Sterne.

And that's how I start representing Hedda Sterne. She tells me that you have to visit the studio. And I went to see the studio, and I saw what serious, serious work it was, and the value of work was impressive and so forth.

So I organized a first exhibition. For the first exhibition, we had very important figures coming. And even for the Latin American one, because we had an ad in the paper, we had the visit of a woman from Mexico that was so important. Yes, she was an artist. A very important, scandalous woman. The most important woman figure in Mexico.

MS. BERMAN: Remedios Varo?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, before her, before Remedios Varo.

MS. BERMAN: Leonora –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Leonora Carrington, no, before that. Frida Kahlo.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, Frida?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Frida Kahlo. I think it was Frida Kahlo.

MS. BERMAN: I don't see how because Frida died in 1953 or four [1954]. It couldn't be Frida.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Frida dies that early?

MS. BERMAN: That early, yeah, while you were still in Venezuela. Because Frida died before Diego, and Diego died in 1957.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: The knowledge you have is amazing. In one head!

MS. BERMAN: Not the collector Dolores Olmedo Patino? The one who had collected all of them?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, but maybe it was a collector.

MS. BERMAN: You know what I want to know? About Katharine Kuh's visit to Venezuela. Why don't you tell me about that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, that was fantastic. She had absolutely no perception of Venezuela being a less important country than the United States. She was a woman from Chicago, for which New York is just as important as Chicago as Los Angeles [CA] is.

She was fantastic in every way and so cultured. She knew European art. I had the impression that I had never met anybody who knew so much about European artists. I had never met. Except for my professor, Jorge Romero Brest, because he was able to spend time in Europe, and he was always a very erudite person in whatever he touched and so forth. And Katharine Kuh was that kind of a person, too.

MS. BERMAN: What did she want to see in Venezuela?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: When she comes? It's her own research. It's her own interest. She's not directed to anybody. She's coming to discover. And she was not going to do it in Venezuela alone. She went to other countries as well, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I was just wondering what you brought her to. If you remembered what you showed her or what was -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, she saw the Duchamp exhibition; so when she saw the Duchamp, she did what I would have done, just jump on a bicycle and come to see it. Duchamp had not been given important exhibitions. That I have not researched, so I don't know.

Duchamp was a figure in the shadows for just the people who had awakened to his call and to his phenomenal presence. He was an erudite when it came to arts. He knew everything, and he had all the references fresh in his head, as I do not have it anymore, as you can tell.

MS. BERMAN: But you called Marcel Duchamp on the telephone directly, and he said to have an exhibition - it was all right, or what?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Let me see. He asked me, what did I want to show, what did I want to do with the exhibition, what did I want to show? I didn't know. I said, "Well, I want to show your work. I have nothing to say. It's you who will say it, and you will have the full freedom. I'm not going to make the choices. You have to make the choices. You have to tell me from which period you would like to start; we would you like you decide where you want to start."

And he liked that kind of freshness and improvisation, which I probably think that you might enjoy now from me. [Laughs.] And he was totally decided. I give him the address where the works had to be done. I gave him the shipper. I gave him the customs things and all the things.

As I had worked in an office with important people and all of that, I could manage that kind of - what this needed and that, kind of. Also, in my father's office because he had six children, and my mother had passed away. My father's office was peopled with his children. We had to work with him. We loved working - I loved working with him.

But I was the one who had more of that inclination. My younger sister was a year and two months younger; she was about a completely different life. And my youngest brother was three years younger than I was. And they had different interests in just living, I guess, and life, and dresses and cooking. I don't really - they had different things. And they did their own lives.

MS. BERMAN: What area of Caracas was the Estudio Actual in?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: It's in the area that's - if I remember correctly where we start, it's really close to the museum. Very close to the museum.

MS. BERMAN: And how big was your space?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Not very big. It was two little offices in space, but I had enough space to show it.

I start in my home. I started in my home, yes. Because I had to take care of the children, and I had to make the meals. Not make them but just be there for my home.

MS. BERMAN: Are you still married to your husband at this point?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes.



MS. BERMAN: Now, you had exhibitions at Estudio Actual.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Right. I would show Marcel Duchamp and -

MS. BERMAN: Right. Did you sell work?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. And Duchamp would not believe it, but I called him to tell him that I had placed the first - because he told me, "If you can place some of those works, you'll make me very happy," or, "I'll be very glad, and I want to cooperate." His attitude was just evangelical, very frankly. Not a question, not a warranty, not a this, not a that.

There were other times - you see this sometimes, important people who are difficult to work with. But for him, he told me very frankly that, "Why wouldn't I do it?" I said, "Are you sure you want to do it? Are you sure you are asking for the right protections for yourself, your works?" And he says, "You know what? Nobody has asked me." So the exhibition went very well. And I sold the first work. And the government bought the one that I used for -

MS. BERMAN: The poster.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: For the poster, yes. Quite a government, right?

MS. BERMAN: Yes. And then what's very interesting, and maybe you can describe this, because this must have been the first in Latin America, the show with Robert Rauschenberg.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I don't know if it was the first in Latin America, but, well, in Chicago, I had already seen the world of Robert Rauschenberg, in Chicago. And it had stayed with me, and to show to Latin America what the arts in the United States were like -

Because at that time, for Latin America, America was nothing. They didn't have the respect; they didn't have the knowledge. How could they? They knew the music, the popular music, but they didn't know the classical music. They didn't know the great things. Just because America was not busy enough in propagating the knowledge, you know? So that's the main thing.

Oh, you made me remember: the young person in me wanted, because of what America had done for me, in shaping me, that I would make the recognition of the United States a different thing than this attitude of indifference, of just putting it aside or something like that, you see?

MS. BERMAN: And then how was Rauschenberg's work received?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Fantastic, fantastic. All the young artists, all the young anything, all the not-so-young. It was fantastic.

MS. BERMAN: And you also, early on, had the geometric abstraction, the work of - tell me if I'm pronouncing this - Elsa, is it, Gramcko?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Elsa Gramcko, yes. She's a very interesting artist and one we knew personally, because it's a family in which the oldest daughter, Ida Gramcko, was a great writer and a great poet. My sister-in-law knew, somehow, the Gramcko family. And Ida Gramcko was a very wonderful poet and writer, older than me in many ways, and also already a figure of importance. I didn't have a direct contact, but I saw Elsa Gramcko's work, and I became very taken by that.

And my children were very taken by her. She didn't have any children, neither one of them. And so they had a good rapport with them. They would come to my home often, or we would go to their homes, which were simple homes with a patio. From the patios, you saw little narrow doors. And you didn't know what went on behind those doors because somewhere - [background noise, inaudible] - there was a family that somewhere rented out to other people. They were modest people with a great profile in every way.

MS. BERMAN: And what was Elsa's personality like?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: The warmest in the world. She took over my children. She was wonderful to everybody. She was wonderful to the employees at the museum. Whenever we had an exhibition, she would never expect them to be on their knees for her. Elsa was fantastic. And also the poet, the oldest sister, Ida Gramcko.

And also, Elsa Gramcko was married to a wonderful man who was called C. E. Puche, P-U-C-H-E. He did photography, great photography, extremely creative photography. And he was also very fond of my children, and they would come often. At least once a week, they would be in my home for dinner or something like that. But the great thing was not when they came to my home; it was to go to their home, because it was one of those

old houses with the big patios and the rooms around it.

Very wonderful people: the mother, there was a grandfather or grandmother. They were lovely to my children. And there was somebody else – oh, the husband of Elsa Gramcko, who was a photographer, C. E. Puche. And there was somebody else after that. I don't remember. And there was another very important figure of an artist, Alejandro Otero.

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, we've talked about him already.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, you mentioned him before I even did.

MS. BERMAN: Right, right. Now, Elsa Gramcko and her husband, could they make a living by their art, or did they have to do something else?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He had a job, I think, teaching somewhere. Elsa didn't have another job. They lived in that house, which was the family life, so Elsa would have, maybe, two rooms there. Ida was already out of the house. And then when they married, I don't remember exactly if they went to live somewhere else. All in very decent conditions and pleasant, but in a way, a little bit above elementary. But they were given full recognition as intellectuals, in every way.

MS. BERMAN: Looking through some of the exhibitions that you had of various Latin American and modern artists, it doesn't look like – and I don't know if you weren't interested at the time, I see abstract artists, representational, other things. You weren't too interested in Pop Art, were you?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Laughs.] I don't think I ever was. I understood that it was a phenomenon that had to happen because the younger people were becoming interested in the arts. Who would have been the most outstanding artist? Even in my country, you don't remember the most outstanding Pop Art? Well, in a way you could put Rauschenberg under Pop Art.

MS. BERMAN: Right, well, I would say he and Jasper Johns were founding fathers, or proto-Pop Art.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, but Jasper Johns had already another – [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: Right, right. No, it's not a criticism. It's just an observation. The two to have had would have been maybe [Andy] Warhol or [Roy] Lichtenstein.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yeah, but they were not really seeing that. Lichtenstein's work, I had become acquainted with. Warhol, I didn't have much of – there was not enough of an intellect in it. Still, at this point, what do you think?

MS. BERMAN: Well, I think certainly –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: What did you want to say?

MS. BERMAN: No, I think especially during the '60s, he was doing very significant art. And certainly –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: At the beginning.

MS. BERMAN: Yeah. It certainly plugged into the American zeitgeist. There's no doubt about that. But you showed so many, I just noticed that – if that was just because it was an absence, because you were so catholic otherwise –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I just didn't get into it. I didn't get it.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Let's see, you also – it's kind of interesting, you did have Americans. You had Adja Yunkers.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Because I met him through his wife, Dore Ashton. I had read Dore's books. I was very impressed with that intellect. And then I saw his work and I felt very strongly for it and for him. I also felt him totally, like, alienated or isolated. He didn't have that other kind of presence that a Warhol would get, and for what?

MS. BERMAN: And you certainly supported Jesus Soto. You had many shows of his work.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes. I represented him completely. I would send works to other places so that – also, you know, when you meet somebody like Dore, with her intellect and her capacity, and this figure of her husband and so forth, and you realize the difficulties in their lives – they had children; their children had to go to

schools. It was very difficult. So I really did everything I could for her.

And for Adja, I did very well for him because the work was very good. So we sent things to Europe; we sent things to California. And I had those two daughters living in California, and they would take care of trying to sell prints of Adja, and they did. They did sell some things, yes.

MS. BERMAN: And then very early on you also had Armando Reverón, who had – [inaudible, cross talk] –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Now, tell me what he is like?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He is a unique personality, a man who lives by the sea in a hut, H-U-T. There are monkeys, cocks – how are they called, C-O-Q, the husbands of the chickens?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, rooster, I guess. But cocks, C-O-C-K, right.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: C-O-C-K?

MS. BERMAN: Yeah. You were right in French.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Laughs.] Okay, *le coq, oui*. Reverón, of course, there was no question. Also, my daughter Jeannine went into – she started as an anthropologist and an archeologist, you see? So she had this approximation.

She was obsessed – is that the term? – obsessed with the whole thing of the anthropologist since she was five or six. And all she wanted was to go to the science museum in Caracas, which had, because of Crusent, all those pre-Columbian things and all of that. And that became her career. She was outstanding, and she's written some books as well.

So that created a very strong link for me with the people that my children admired and followed and were taught by. I'm eluding something in your question, I think.

MS. BERMAN: I was asking about Reverón.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, okay, so Reverón was the figure for Jeannine, that kind of thing. And so we would go the beach and see from outside. We never went inside. I don't think I ever went inside. Yes, I did. Because of an exhibition, I had to go in, yeah.

MS. BERMAN: What was he like to work with?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He was really quiet, and he was just there. He didn't want to impress you or to show you anything. It was more this woman who took care of him, who would ask you, "Well, what else do you want to see?" And she would try to help with this and that.

The place was magic. The place was magic. And the work is fantastic. Even today, when I am critical of my own opinions, I question it. You can't question it.

MS. BERMAN: Was there any other –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: You've seen that one?

MS. BERMAN: Yes. Was there any other dealer representing him?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. I wasn't even representing him. That would have been a pretension on my part. No. And then he didn't have much of a body of work. The works were coming out, and somebody would go and visit and buy them. And so the whole collection was dismembered in a way, you know.

But he had the support of – [inaudible] – and those beautiful books he published with those wonderful texts. I don't know how he could write so well. And now they continue to do translations into English. Do you have any of those books?

MS. BERMAN: No, I don't.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I have them, and I would be happy to give them to you. There's one very important one that was published in the last few years that has a lot of information on the productions. I have it in my office, so you will not be leaving without it, or I'll send it by messenger because it's kind of heavy. Those chocolates are to be eaten.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, oh, they will be. Also, I want to apologize to you vis-à-vis the Pop Art question. I see I missed one. You did have a show of Robert Indiana.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes.

MS. BERMAN: So, sort of in the same family.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. Limited, though. Somehow, and it's not a pretension – for me, then, art was not something that you just look at and you're very impressed. But to get to the core of it was to find the intellect behind it, right? And Duchamp is an example of that, because I think Duchamp is the first one in which you see the intellectual competence more evident than anywhere else.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, well, he would have said that, too. He didn't like, quote-unquote, just retinal painting. That's what he always said.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right, that's right. And then I was obsessed with the figure of Pollock since I was – I just can't be very precise, but Pollock was for me, when I was living in the United States – how did I get that phenomenal intensity when it came to Pollock, everything by Pollock, everything? And I could detect a Pollock just from walking into a gallery. I would just see a Pollock there, and I would just look.

MS. BERMAN: Now, I see that you also had, let's see, Roberto Aizenberg?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes. I discovered Roberto Aizenberg.

MS. BERMAN: Well, why don't you tell me about that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Aizenberg was in Argentina. How did I meet him? Well, he must have come to the classes of Jorge Romero Brest, because the artists, the painters, the doctors, the lawyers – I can't tell you the personalities I met through those classes. Because they would come either to fetch their wives or to the lessons after their business.

MS. BERMAN: So did he contact you, or did you contact him about it?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I would have to go and express interest and be very shy about it, because I was nobody.

MS. BERMAN: But he showed the work there, so –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, but this is after that.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Well, that's what I meant, yeah.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And already, when this is done – and I can't thank the fellow who did it enough. He's a fantastic person. We are still in contact. He was instrumental – at the museum, he was instrumental with the Fundación – [inaudible]. A very fantastic personage.

MS. BERMAN: No, it's very helpful to me, too. I just am picking out some important artists and interesting things that you did. I see that you had a show of Art Nouveau, which is a big surprise.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Because Jeannine had a passion for Art Nouveau, and I wanted her to participate in how you organize, how you make the contacts, and this and that. And I wanted to do it for her because it was just bringing that notion away to Venezuela as a new notion, and so that she would take an interest and follow me up.

MS. BERMAN: And did she ever follow you into the arts?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no. She had chosen her career. Her career was archeology. She had published books. She had worked for the museum with Crusent, as his main assistant.

Look, you'll be happy with this, now.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, let me lift that for you.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Did I pass this to you before?

MS. BERMAN: No.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: This is Jeannine's book.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, that is marvelous.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And Jeannine was only 20 to 22, 24, when she wrote that.

MS. BERMAN: Very impressive. And this book is called *Design in Venezuelan Petroglyphs* [Jeannine Sujo Volsky. Caracas, VE: Fundación Pampero, 1987]. I'm just saying it for the tape.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: This is Glenn, my Glenn's book.

MS. BERMAN: Right. And her name, her married name, was *Jeannine Sujo Volsky*.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. The last name is a full name, Sujovolsky, but my sister Juana is an actress. She took off the -volsky, so she stayed with Sujo. So the only solution we had was to separate the Sujo from the -volsky because from the -volsky, they wouldn't even know who we were.

MS. BERMAN: I see. So in other words, your husband's full name was Abi Sujovolsky?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, that's his first –

MS. BERMAN: And that would have been – I get it.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: This is my son, Glenn.

MS. BERMAN: Glenn Sujo.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I bet I'm making you happy at this moment.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Which is called, yeah, *Legacies of Silence* [The Visual Arts and Holocaust Memory. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2001].

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And you know what it is?

MS. BERMAN: *Visual Arts and Holocaust Memory*.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And Glenn has now been working, like, five years, I think I told you, with the support of the Imperial War Museum.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, in London?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In London, but he goes to Israel to visit this man who has all those things from the concentration camp. And he's writing the book, and he's getting – well, it's a big story, and it's going to be in more books than that. He has a book that's the size of a Bible, like this, three volumes, red covers. But he works and works and works at that.

MS. BERMAN: And does he live in England?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, he lives in England. He lives in England since they went to Dartington Hall [Dartington Hall Trust, South Devon, UK], but then coming back and this and that.

MS. BERMAN: Very impressive. Dartington Hall, you know who else went there?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Where? Who?

MS. BERMAN: Mark Tobey.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes. Yes, we know that. Yes, yes, yes, we knew that.

MS. BERMAN: That's the only other person I know who went there.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right. I saw it once, yes. It's a phenomenal place. And this is my other son.

MS. BERMAN: I have this book.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: You have it, okay.

MS. BERMAN: And you know who gave it to me?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No.

MS. BERMAN: Susanna [Torruela-Leval].

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, I'm glad. Oh, yes, you mentioned that the other day. His wife is a brilliant girl, and she will continue writing. She writes very beautifully, and she's a very wonderful person. She's raising their child very well, and she's now doing something else that she told me. She teaches. And it needs a trip in the car to get to the university for her classes. But she continues with a life of consequence.

MS. BERMAN: Now, I think I would like you to tell me - someone who seemed to be very close to you, who you represented, I guess, and put full support was Jacobo Borges.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes. Jacobo Borges comes from a very, very humble - obviously, I don't know if I ever met the mother or the father, or if they're known or whatever - a communist, a revolutionary, a person who had kind of reserves if I would ask him to come - I don't know if it was - even to the gallery or to my home - I wanted to break that kind of insecurity that he had, or whatever it was, rebellion or repulse or whatever it was, or everything together. Not an easy character. But he was so talented. His drawings, his line alone, it's just flying. Content and expression and this and that. And totally alone and totally - whatever income he had, it was probably to eat.

He was married, and they had children, maybe one child or two. I don't remember now. There was maybe more than one wife along the way, not because he was not correct or anything. And the wives never amounted to much. It was just - it happened and happened and continued as a good relation does.

But he had a lot to give. And we published books. They are really good. Very wonderful work. I don't know why I don't - oh, well, you saw the big painting on the second floor, right?

MS. BERMAN: Right, right.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yeah, okay. That's his, too. And a man who would know - he would read; he would know about films. Orson Welles was a very important figure for him, so he put him in that painting downstairs. And next to Orson Welles, he would sit his brother and paint his brothers, if he were another Orson Welles next to them. [They laugh.]

He had a good memory. He knew a lot of things. And he also read. I don't remember what he read, but he read. He read, and he was conscious that there was a lot more than making a living and this and that and the other.

His wife of some years also did something that had to do with the arts, but I don't remember what it was. But she kept a low profile to let him fly above her and that kind of thing.

But he was an interesting man. He had read and the things were still alive in him. People resented the fact that he came from a humble family. I don't know if I ever met the family, but I saw the intelligence. And he read, and he read, and the reading stayed with him.

MS. BERMAN: Why did people resent his background?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He was not easy, you know? And also because Venezuela has a certain standard or a higher platform or whatever. Not that they make it evident in any way; it's just that they try very hard to prove themselves and so forth. And Borges, not having anything to stand on, had proven himself 100 times more, you see?

MS. BERMAN: Yes. Was his work difficult to sell?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, not for me, because I had a prestige. If I was behind Borges, the people would come begging for the paintings. Yes. And the drawings are fantastic. He did great, great - [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: Well, I see that you showed Joan Miró.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Some things, yes, because when you manage a gallery, sometimes you have to think of not isolating the people because it's not what the people are looking for - [inaudible]. Yeah. I don't know what it was, but it was not a great exhibition. I don't remember what I showed. So many exhibitions.

MS. BERMAN: I'm just looking at some of the ones that might be of interest. And unusual, like Louise Nevelson, too.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Ah, well, that was a conviction with me. And I brought the sculptures. I brought the sculptures, yes.

MS. BERMAN: And how were they received?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Very well, very well. I don't remember what the sales were like. It didn't matter. Just to do it was fantastic. And the people responded.

I was showing them not in a gallery. I was showing them for the museum. So we had the space; we had the proper lighting. The people who would help me hang the exhibitions were just so - I would tell them, "By now, you can do a surgery on my brain if you want to." [They laugh.] They were so exact with the millimeters and the centimeters and this and that. Wonderful people, wonderful people. Venezuela was a very wonderful country to go to, indeed.

MS. BERMAN: Well, now, I want to ask you about, to the common person, probably, the most well-known Venezuelan artist who probably almost never lived in Venezuela, Marisol [Escobar].

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. [Laughs.] You're phenomenal. Well, Marisol came from a conflicting family. The mother and the father didn't have too much in common. And I don't know why, she's like a perturbed person. She's not - what is the word in English? It's not that her mind doesn't respond or anything like that. It's that she has an insecurity that has lived with her for 60 years.

And the father was not a person that was like a permanent presence. He was there and the mother was a very, from what I gather, was a woman that has been inferiorized [sic] or something. She never had a great feeling about herself. She felt - [inaudible] - her size and this and that. And Marisol must have had perturbations - can you use that word?

MS. BERMAN: Perturbations? Sure.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: - of the mind, of insecurity. There was this brother who was so slender and older, but he didn't amount to much. Nobody ever knows what he did. I can't even think of what he did. But he looked pleasant and always neat and quiet. He must have had some of the problems of Marisol but not as acute. I don't know what he worked at. I don't know where he stayed or what.

There were people who are left to grow as an animal, or something like that, you know? The mother didn't have too much to give them, and the father was not so close. But she's brilliant and honest and feels she is a real person. What she feels is what she transmits. What she says is what she thinks. What she dreams is what came to her dreams. I have immense respect for her.

Early on, somebody in Britain - I'll recall very quickly - made a book on her and was able to catch - in a way, discover - many of the things that have influenced Marisol's upbringing. The mother was not a person of education. She was probably obsessed with - not obsessed. She just thought that living was eating and sleeping. And she was not a person who was well known. She didn't like to be known or something like that.

And Marisol has some perturbations that are not caused because of an illness. It's because she had difficulty growing up. And you know what her supports are? The maids that come - not that she has two or three maids. She may have one maid and a nurse, was what she had. That's her support.

And when somebody like myself, who has always admired her and respected her, seems to be approaching her a little bit, she's afraid she doesn't know where she is. And so you better - [inaudible] - because you may be doing harm. So I seldom approach her. Sometimes I would call on the phone and talk to the nurse or talk to the maids. Whoever was to come to the phone. Marisol may not want to come to the - doesn't even think of coming to the phone to talk with me or someone. So I talk with the maids, and I just tell her to tell Marisol this or that.

I used to go and visit more often, but it perturbs me at this point that I cannot do anything for her. She's like in another planet, another world, not that she loses her sense of logic or anything like that. It's just that she doesn't feel strongly enough to live in this world or something.

MS. BERMAN: Does she still - can she still do any work?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No.

MS. BERMAN: That's too bad.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And she has her - [inaudible]. I don't know where she's living. I really don't. You can't even ask, because you have to leave her on her own basis. You should not ask. I should not ask her.

MS. BERMAN: That would be impossible, even if you wanted to call her.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, well, no, yes, it could help. When she was living somewhere near here, I would go by.

And I think I took her to the hospital twice, or I took her to see a psychiatrist or something like that.

But the best thing you can do is just not do anything, because you will not – I don't. I cannot find the way. I did accompany her to certain analysis, to this and that. But I realized that I was not helping her. So I wasn't even helping myself because I – those chocolates are very difficult find anywhere. [They laugh.]

MS. BERMAN: Except here. Thank you.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I just have them because somebody was very generous.

MS. BERMAN: Well, it's very sad because she certainly was talented. Many years earlier, when she was younger, you showed her in Venezuela. Did she ever –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I don't think I showed her.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, well –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I did?

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, remind me, yes. What is the title of the exhibition?

MS. BERMAN: It was an exhibition in, let me see, 1973. And I just wondered if she ever came to Venezuela to see shows. Did you ever see her in Venezuela?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. But she wouldn't make appearances like coming to the gallery. I think she lives with the feeling that she doesn't belong in this world.

MS. BERMAN: But her brother lived in Venezuela.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But he's also, I think, a bit perturbed. He's very much alone. He's nice looking and youngish. He doesn't have a companion. I've never seen him with a woman or with a man. They had a difficult life because of the mother being a rather perturbed person. And the father, I don't think I knew anything about him.

MS. BERMAN: And you had another show in '74. So that was quite a bit.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I'm glad. [Laughs.] Thank you. You make me respect myself. I gave her two shows?

MS. BERMAN: Yep.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Wow, claro.

MS. BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: How about some more water?

MS. BERMAN: Nope, I'm fine, thank you. I still have some.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But those chocolates, don't waste them.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, no, I'm not. Believe me. And then, actually, you had Josef Albers.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He was a god to me. I had access to his studio. I organized his library. And it all came because I think I was asked to do the translation of a book on him. Is that it?

MS. BERMAN: I'm not sure.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: You know better than I.

MS. BERMAN: No, this, I don't know, so tell me about that.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes. That must have been Thomas Messer who knew that, because of Venezuela having such a rapport with all geometric art and all of that, that I could see Albers's work, and that was beautiful to do. That was so beautiful to do.

MS. BERMAN: So you went up to Connecticut and –



MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, and I stayed with them, and it was very nice. And I think I brought him to Venezuela for just a few days, because he was rather old back then. But that was always Tom Messer, pulling me in on this path for certain things, because he knew that I would respect it and do a modest work, which is what I've done, but it would be significant. And also, I translated a book on Albers.

MS. BERMAN: And how – what was Annie like?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Very, very, okay, okay. Not a fighting spirit in any way. She was there, supportive and quiet. And she has her own work to show. And I would make it a point that I would like to see what she had done lately, and she would show, but always doubting that anybody will have any interest in her, so it's difficult. You have to be careful because it could be misinterpreted as having condolences – [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: That you were having what?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That I was giving my condolences because her work was not Josef Albers's. And I also – I think I wrote the book, and then I translated another book on Albers. That's how I became acquainted with his thoughts. It was very wonderful to be in his company, to listen to him and to – [inaudible, cross talk].

MS. BERMAN: It's unusual that the artist made the trip to Venezuela, I'm sure.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, if you offer it. But if you don't offer it, they cannot make it, because Albers was never very much into money or anything like that.

And he felt comfortable with me because I didn't pretend I was a – the Katharine Kuh relation comes up in this survey of yours. You know who Katharine Kuh was?

MS. BERMAN: Of course.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Good. She was a very important figure for me from –

MS. BERMAN: For Albers, too, a friend of his.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right. That's how the relation starts.

MS. BERMAN: Yeah. And I also see that you had a [Alexander] Calder show, too.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, but that was easy because [Carlos Raúl] Villanueva, the architect, had bought a number of Calder's, and we had exhibitions. He had his studio because of the city university. That's a very important thing about Venezuela.

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, and who's the architect, again, that you were saying?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Carlos Raúl Villanueva. Actually, I think I have his book here. Yeah. And others, but this is the biggest.

MS. BERMAN: Very nice.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: *Premoderno en Sudamerica*, all the texts they were able to put together, the authors. And this is, of course, a city university. Look, this is the Aula Magna, which of course, has been photographed. This is the inside. This is the outside. Look at the work of art that he balanced with the architecture from outside.

MS. BERMAN: Wow, really marvelous. Really inspiring.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, he was fantastic. You know how I met him? And this is what made my introduction to him as well. Venezuela is like so – warmer, they are not cold. But they are afraid to be more than – so I take my children to the first pediatrician, my three children. They are okay, but I have to have a pediatrician from the start because I don't know where to go and – [inaudible] – when we're leaving, he said, well, you are not asking me about yourself.

And I said, but I'm not a patient for a pediatrician. And he says, no, no, no, you have to go – and I'm going to call him right away – you have to go and visit Carlos Raúl Villanueva and get to know him. This is the pediatrician that you visit the first time with three kids. So he calls him, makes me an appointment, and he says – and I said, well, okay, at four o'clock, on what day – what do you mean, "What day?" Now. He's waiting for you. So then I had to go.

And that was the best connection in the world, because this man had a background. This man could understand – I could understand him, this and that. And I started writing – [inaudible, background noise] – conversation, and

we had them published a press or something like that. I don't remember where they are, but we did it.

So the city university, the play of light and shadow that he worked with in those places. And the works he does – the [Fernand] Léger is marvelous. And it was the first visit to a pediatrician in Venezuela in Caracas. This is here, Villanueva and Calder, yes. And they got along famously because they were both so easy to be – this is the writing of Villanueva. So imagine, you go to a pediatrician, and they send you to the best person you have to know in Caracas, Venezuela.

MS. BERMAN: That's wonderful.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And, yes, and that is an enormous campus, an enormous campus with sculpture, with paintings.

MS. BERMAN: That's right. They have beautiful abstract murals in there, too.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Geometric murals.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And they call – this is the older building, which is where the new school of – for professional – [inaudible] – based on the –

MS. BERMAN: And the Greek temples.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes.

MS. BERMAN: But those look quite nice.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Look, immediately, the Calder is immediately there. [Inaudible.] This is exemplifying the architecture that the architect, Villanueva, had done. This is for working people. The government sponsored this kind of architecture, and Villanueva was the one who designs those –

MS. BERMAN: The colonnades. No, no, no, they're beautiful. They look – the apartments look good.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes. And they are in the very good sun of Caracas. The skies of Venezuela – but you know what they did with their gardens: they make an example of everything which is the flora and the fauna of Venezuela.

MS. BERMAN: Now –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Inaudible.] They use – [inaudible] – for the different – because I think it's the chemistry department. Let's see what might be more exciting for you to see. You see, they use the walls for the murals by the artist. [Inaudible] – Mateo Manaure. Here it is. [Inaudible.] Look at that. And there was no history of city university that would have Légers and things like that.

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, that's for sure.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No country in the world. And they used – [inaudible]. I'm sorry, this is – does it say?

MS. BERMAN: No.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I think it's Léger. And this is Mateo Manaure, a Venezuelan artist. They gave space to Venezuelans, and they brought five later. This is the Léger. Oh, and you know, Calder's by the dozens.

MS. BERMAN: [Laughs.]

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And standing Calder's. Look at the Mateo Manaures – oh, this is giving you great picture of Venezuela. I'm so proud I found it. I'm sorry – sorry I'm not. Those are different photographs. This is Venezuelan artists of the level of Léger, and you would prefer the Venezuelan works sometimes than – [laughs].

And how it was maintained. This is also murals by a Venezuelan, Mateo Manaure. Oh, and this play of light and shadow that he favored, because Venezuela has so much sun, and it can be very hot. So you walk to those places, and the air: the fresh air comes through the walls.

MS. BERMAN: When you decided to open a gallery in New York, did anyone else want to take over Estudio Actual?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I think I left my people there to continue working, and they did until they had other

reasons to do something else.

MS. BERMAN: Because it went on – it went on, I see, till '83, but I didn't know if someone else took it over and renamed it or anything like that.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no, no.

MS. BERMAN: Well, by then, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, would there have been other contemporary galleries in Venezuela?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, of course. There was Adler & Conkright. They came with an American – Conkright is an American woman. And so she had her own vision, and they were good visions and very informed because it was the same gallery that exists here in New York. And there was a very important organization, stronger than mine, called Galeria Mendoza.

Eugenio Mendoza was a very important industrialist, a man with more sites than the money in the banks and this kind of thing and his wife, also, who I knew well. She was extraordinarily dedicated to the calls of culture and art. They were powerful people, and they would put the money behind the plans.

And those people were – they marked the society that Venezuela was returning to, they really did.

MS. BERMAN: And did any of these people learn from you? In other words or –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I'm sorry?

MS. BERMAN: Did any of these people learn from you, or you know, the people you tutored, shall we say?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I don't think so, because they had the example of an architect like Carlos Raúl Villanueva; look at that.

MS. BERMAN: Right, well, I just didn't know that if –

[Cross talk.]

No, I just wanted to know if some of your people, as you say, if some of the people that you encouraged formed major collections or opened galleries on their own.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, they formed great collections. I don't know anybody – well, maybe some of the younger people who had worked close to me or something. I think just because they had not had the opportunities that I had in my life and come close to the work and look at – being able to see something like that and be on the list and you know – [inaudible].

And there are very good descriptions about how he had planned the play of light and shadow, and he was brilliant and very dedicated. He always had time for me. This is Mateo Manaure doing something – [inaudible]. Okay, and the city, look, the conscience of involving the city with the city university.

MS. BERMAN: I think that this is a good time for us to stop.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay.

[Cross talk.]

MS. BERMAN: Right. That'll be all for today.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I just want you to imagine what –

[END DISC TWO.]

MS. BERMAN: This is Avis Berman interviewing Clara Diament Sujo on June 16, 2010, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, in her apartment in New York. I had said last time that we were going to start discussing the New York years, but when I went over my –

CLARA DIAMENT SUJO: In New York?

MS. BERMAN: The New York years.

But when I went over my notes, I saw there were two or three areas left from Venezuela I still want to ask you. And it's about a couple of artists who are important whom we haven't discussed yet. So I want to know about

them and your relationship to them and what you did. One was Jesus Soto.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. Before Jesus Soto, there was someone in Venezuela called Alejandro Otero, who was a tremendously influential personage because he was communicative. He was everywhere, at every one of the exhibitions or the important events in music or in theater, if he could afford the tickets, because he was always short of money. He had a family.

Alejandro Otero, really, the first meeting with him, knowing what he had seen, the artists he had been able to meet in his short stays in France, was so illuminating. He had not gone to college. He was a man with a basic education, had been teaching at the school of fine arts, and did it well. He was an inspiring figure, and he was able to do those - have you seen the color rhythms, the vertical paintings with the elements, geometrical elements?

He did a series of it. You know the commitment of an artist to stay within that form, or size, and then develop a language for those elements in color that were geometric elements, like this, and then crossing themselves. And such a tremendous group. There must be more than 24. I think of 24. I don't know where that comes from.

But there were more, and just to see if he had been able to exhaust a subject with quality, with authenticity, with uniqueness in each one of the works, and with such quality. And he didn't have the money, but he used very contemporary manners of - what is it that he used? They were, like, being printed on the wood, and still they defied the laws of resistance, because 25 years later, or more like 35 years later, they are in impeccable condition. Very important books have been done on his work.

So Alejandro Otero was really the mind that put the creative attitude, but also, like, a systematic kind of thought in developing a language. Yes, that would be the word, a systematic way of going after the subject. Then, if it was yesterday, he just has to repeat the experience and just go on and on and see how he can change it and so forth.

But the spirit of creativity that was in Alejandro Otero and Soto was much stronger, purer, and much more creative. They were not repeating themselves. It wasn't, yes, this is just changing from the circle to the rectangle to the this to the that. He's a very good artist, and he's very good at finding new techniques. I don't remember why he had that thing, but it was some profession that he had at one point. And so he was -

MS. BERMAN: Is this Soto?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Carlos] Cruz-Diez. Cruz-Diez, yes, because Diez was able to use the new paints, the new techniques, the new ways of photographing a work of art so that you could superimpose a portrait of the same work on different panels. And he's doing it to this day with very great success, because he has a lot of support in many places.

But Alejandro Otero was a great inspiration in Venezuela to get into that field where geometry has so much to say. And then Soto had experienced that, but he left early, and in France, he felt free to do all the experimentation. All of them were brilliant. And Alejandro Otero was also a very fine intellect, very fine intellect.

MS. BERMAN: And what was your relationship with Soto?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Very close, very close. I supported Soto very much, which was a difficult position to take because I had been so concerned with the work of Alejandro Otero, whom I met when I came to Venezuela, and Soto was in Paris. But I discovered his work, and I started traveling and visiting. We were very good friends. He would come to Caracas and this and that.

And Cruz-Diez is like a third product of that development with quality, dedication, great professionalism, a very fine family man as well. And they really created, also, another group of younger people who'd experiment in that.

They were my students. I saw them develop. And they were getting away from the example and trying to become as free as they could. They were capable, very capable people, from very basic strata of society, all of them, Soto and Cruz-Diez. Cruz-Diez had a little more support from his family, but Soto and Alejandro Otero had very, very little.

Some very important books have just been published. I can show them to you. They are downstairs in the - [inaudible] - and they have accomplished an incredible feat because they never had money support; they never had schooling. They never had families with money. Just they're raw, wild, in a territory that's so difficult; and they achieved what they have achieved.

MS. BERMAN: But there seemed to be a real emphasis, or real popularity, of geometric abstraction in Venezuela.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And what would be the reasons for that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, [Victor] Vasarely comes to Venezuela – what a great question – Vasarely comes to Venezuela.

MS. BERMAN: Vasarely, okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. When does he come? Oh, yes, before Vasarely, this is the man who did it all. This is an architect named –

MS. BERMAN: Oh, Carlos Villanueva.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Carlos Raúl Villanueva.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, we discussed him last time.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. And he brings all these artists to work at the city university, create those tremendous murals. And this is what we see when we arrive in Venezuela. The city university was being made, so I went, and I said that I needed to be busy with my subject, which was the arts, and that I will do anything. I didn't have to be paid. When they heard the phrase, I had a job for 10 days a week. [Laughs.]

So you see, this is what they see, the capacity for creativity is – [inaudible] – and so they start developing – some of them were employed by the city university to help those artists, because those were large, large works, in some cases, with small mosaics. And so that's what developed the whole; look at that. And we had , [Alexander Calder] living there. His example, his attitude in life, he was the most accessible person you can imagine, to this day.

MS. BERMAN: It's beautiful.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And we had music. Can you imagine what music was like then?

MS. BERMAN: And I want to ask you about another person. Who was Angel Hurtado?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, he's a very interesting man with whom I worked a lot, because he did films on the artists. And he has a very fine body of work. He had also lived in France for a number of years. He's an educated man, very, very pleasant, very pleasant. There is something that in Spanish we would call *hidalguia*. What would that be?

MS. BERMAN: Hidalguia?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Hidalguia. It comes from a man who has, comes from an – descends from an important group.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, is that from *hidalgo* [Span., untitled nobility]?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Hidalgo, yes.

MS. BERMAN: So hidalguia, okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. Dedicated, quiet, very special individual, very special. And they all found that ours was a place where you could come to eat. Ours was a place where you could come for whatever you needed, or to establish a bank account or something like that. My husband would help them in that sense. They didn't need much help. It was just making a presentation, that kind of thing.

And so that was our life. Can you imagine how it was for my children, because I got mixed with the children, with the artists, and this and that? I had several children, and Soto had several children, so it was a great thing they got from that experience.

MS. BERMAN: And besides being a filmmaker, was Hurtado a painter?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, he was a painter. But his filmmaking – and we did together, he and I, several films that I have somewhere on the artists of Venezuela, visiting their studios and photographing their work and that type of thing. Nobody paid for it. I don't know how we managed it. [Laughs.] Well, there wasn't anything but buying the film and processing it and that.

MS. BERMAN: Well, those would be important things to save, you know, because those films are probably very rare now.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes. We have everything.

MS. BERMAN: And I would like you to talk about the artist – just your sense of her work and your sense as a person – Gego [Gertrude Goldschmidt, known as Gego]?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Gego, as you know, is of German origin. She comes to Venezuela as an immigrant.

MS. BERMAN: Well, she would come with her husband, I'd imagine.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But her husband, I think - didn't they meet in Venezuela?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, I don't know that. I don't know that because he has a German name.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Gerd Leufert.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Wonderful artist, wonderful person. Gego was much more strict and Germanized, very Germanized; people had trouble understanding her, accepting her, in a way. I realized that there was a tremendous genius in her. And she was an architect, graduated in Germany. Can you imagine?

Well, her work took on tremendous importance as time went on because she worked very intensely. They had two children. I don't remember if they were – I think they were her children, her children. She comes with her children. Leufert didn't have his own children, but it was a very good union between them, wonderful people, generous, open. They both taught at the school of fine arts.

And at the school we, the professors, had meetings with quite strict regularity. It was one meeting after another. So we were able to achieve things, and the students were very bright, very bright students. Venezuelans have - I've often thought that it was like an animal sagacity. I loved that aspect of them. You could jump from a text that was strict to this and that and something that was totally inventive.

MS. BERMAN: To whom are you referring there?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: To the Venezuelan artists.

MS. BERMAN: I see.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: They were growing up in that midst, and the people that became my students.

MS. BERMAN: Could you get to know Gego? Was she someone you could be friendly with?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, oh, yes. And Gego and Leufert would come at least once a week for dinner at my house. They enjoyed my children. My children enjoyed them. I don't know how they understood each other. My children knew English, but Gego depended a lot on the German. And Leufert, everything was so easy to understand with him and get along with him and this and that.

They were generous people with everybody, were able to put together without much means a respectable, limited household. But I felt so wonderful there. It was so authentic. That's what they were, authentic. And they never expected to be given the notoriety – that's the wrong word – given the importance that they deserved.

MS. BERMAN: In retrospect, what do you think the most important accomplishments of Estudio Actual were?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Laughs.] Well, it might be presumptuous, but the fact that I start – I had an exhibition by Marcel Duchamp for which the whole press, in many places, knew that the exhibition was a loan of Marcel Duchamp's private collection.

And that provision that he put even from the first telephone conversation, that as long as I would take care of seeing that – [inaudible] – would benefit from whatever sales we may or may not have in Venezuela, it's well, and that – [inaudible] – would be taken care of somehow. He didn't say "taken care of." I don't remember, considered or informed. Something like that, you know. But we were so successful that the government bought the first action- that sculpture we have in the kitchen, with the – [inaudible] –

MS. BERMAN: Oh, yes.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That gave us something. I don't remember exactly, but it was something, was 22 - \$26,000. And that was still a lot of money in Venezuela. That had never happened before with any artist, that an artist would confide, to a country in the background, the whole collection.

And it just had to happen because he was - I don't remember how, but Duchamp was linked to the Patagonia. I don't remember how, but it's historically a fact, not that he was born there or anything - I don't know how - it must be known in those immense files at - [inaudible] - because they never turned around a paper.

Yes, he had been to Patagonia, and that's what gave me the courage that he would know that Buenos Aires was linked to the Patagonia, and he would lend me a few works. And he decided to send everything he had. And we started with all of that. I didn't twist anybody's finger or anything.

But the other artists, like Alejandro Otero - they were very supportive, and they were very cultured. Also Marcela Pardo, the wife of Alejandro Otero, she had been in Europe many times. She spoke very good French. She was educated. And then there were a few German artists who contributed a lot, and that was the group of Gego and the other people around her. They didn't think of themselves in German artists in any way; I'm just trying to place them. And then the Boultons had a lot to say.

Alfredo Boulton, the man who wrote the book [*History of Venezuelan Painting*, 3 vols.], he was a very important figure, tremendously important. This was a society man, really, in every way - the way he lived, the way this and that. But the arts were his primary interest in every way, in the way he lived. And he wrote very well and published many books, and he facilitated it.

I know an example that is almost ridiculous, that Mrs. Boulton, Yolande - who I had not become friendly with because I don't have a facility to make friends with women, and at that time, the star figures were male - she would make sure that her driver and car were at my disposal for whatever I had to do every day. Can you imagine anything like that?

And she had her own things, and she had family and home. They lived up the mountains, so she couldn't walk up the mountains to go home. And I never asked her for anything. So her driver became my driver; I just would have to call him and tell him what I needed him to do. And he will take me here and there and take me up the mountain so that we could talk. They are just very special people, very generous.

And another thing that opened doors, and I have to give him more credit than anybody else for me personally, was Jorge Romero Brest, the man with whom I studied. [To Marya Mettatesta, Ms. Diament Sujo's assistant:] We have sent to storage those boxes, right, with my notebooks? I have, I think, 36 short -

MARYA METTATESTA: I think there's a binder on him - [inaudible] -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: We used to have, in that little room, a box in which we had all the books in which I took my notes in his classes, one after another. And they were translated from shorthand, in which I would take those notes.

And they have been typed out by somebody. Those books were sent by Federal Express to Argentina two at a time - and there are 30-something - and a girl there who had studied the same shorthand would type them out and send them to the computer. So we have all of that and that is really brilliant. I haven't read anybody else that I would consider superior to that man, but that is also loyalty or whatever. [Laughs.]

MS. BERMAN: Okay, well, that's just great. And now we will move to CDS Gallery in New York. And you have told me about the auction of Latin Americans.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right.

MS. BERMAN: So then you found a space at 13 East 75th Street, correct?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: If you ask me, I won't remember it so quickly, but that's it.

MS. BERMAN: You decided to open a gallery in New York. How is it going to be different from Estudio Actual?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I didn't plan it, because I had to first understand, you know, what was going on and have a better introduction to the other galleries. I didn't expect to be different. I wanted to be just useful and capable.

And of course, I knew I had a cause. And the cause was proven to me when I saw what we did with the first auction of Latin American art. I had never been to an auction in my whole life. I didn't even know how they - my father had taken me; now I remember - to auctions of - [laughs]. Are you accepting everything? Live cattle. That's what we went to. That's so funny. And the horses, the horses as well - live horses.

Okay, but Venezuelans are very special people, and they gave me – you see Mrs. Boulton giving me her driver and car. They consigned the works that I wanted to have for the first auction. And not only that; they came to the first auction – not only to watch for their own works – just to see what an auction of Latin American art would be all about. And they bought. They bought.

They didn't buy because it was a cause célèbre for all of us, but they started having that collection that you – [inaudible] – can afford it, and you buy it, and this and that. And the people at the auction houses were very good, very good, capable and – the whole community became one thing, you see. That's the power of art: it puts people together, and it's forever.

MS. BERMAN: So your opening exhibition was *Masters of the Americas*.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. And we had to visit – I think I remember the name of the artist of –

MS. BERMAN: Well, I think you had Abstract Expressionists; you had people like [Robert] Motherwell or [Arshile] Gorky. And you had Pollock.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I didn't show American artists; I showed Latin American artists.

MS. BERMAN: But you had some Americans mixed in, because didn't you have a Pollock? I thought you had *The She-Wolf* [Jackson Pollock, 1943]. I thought you borrowed it from MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY].

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right. I had the Americas, not Latin America.

MS. BERMAN: Well, of course, Pollock was intensely influenced by [Carmen] Cicero. He knew Cicero, of course.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, but Cicero never had anything over Pollock.

MS. BERMAN: No, but Pollock did have a connection to –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, just a curiosity or something with his –

MS. BERMAN: Well, how did you get that Pollock from MoMA?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Because of Kynaston McShine. Kynaston has been my brother ever since we were born or something like that. We are very, very linked and intensely devoted to each other, to this moment, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well, also, I think you must have advised Bill Lieberman. Why don't you tell me about that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I didn't advise Lieberman. [Laughs.] You asked me twice the same question. I don't know where I said it in a manner that meant – no, I never advised Bill Lieberman. Bill Lieberman was a very open man. He would come to the gallery, CDS, from the start to see what curiosity that we were. And he never gave himself too much importance. I don't know why.

So you could talk with him and suggest things. And I could sense that he wanted to learn about art that the other people didn't know about.

So he saw, for instance, a Laura Carrington that somebody had brought me on consignment or something like that. And he said, "Somebody wants to give us a Laura Carrington for the museum [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY]." And I said, "Well, how wonderful, then you could have two," maybe, or something like that. I don't know if I – yes, I gave ours. And I don't know exactly how they got the first one.

He would see the Jackson Pollocks that I was able to get. There was, like, 35 of them. And I gave him the two best ones. I mean, he chose two, and he said, "Those are the best ones you have in the group." I said, "Well, do you want them?" "Yes, of course." He was delighted and so forth.

And many episodes in which it was so easy to contribute to his cause, you know? But it was an automatic reply from him. Amazing, amazing.

MS. BERMAN: Well, on the exhibition you had of the psychoanalytic drawings of Jackson Pollock, wasn't Eugene Thaw Pollock's dealer? I just wondered how you got that.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I got them – well, I would have to go to the files. I don't remember how I got them. But for me, Pollock was – I think, from the time when I was at Abbott already, because Abbott was collecting art. That's a very important influence in my life. But I hated everything they – I hated everything because, of course, I was not prepared to see it, to understand it. It was very strong.



And I think I mentioned to you the artist that was prevailing then. An artist from the *Chicago Sun [Times]*, that they collected. It may come back, and I'll call you, and I'll tell you.

MS. BERMAN: Okay. And also, having a little to do with the Museum of Modern Art but also more about Latin America, did you have interactions with Nelson Rockefeller because of his interest in Latin American art?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Not directly or personally or anything like that. I knew about him; I would write him letters. This is one of my weaknesses. I would write him letters about this and that. They would always be unanswered. They would always be unanswered.

He lent us work – oh, he lent us work for the first exhibition at the auction as well. Can you imagine the bravery? He would not sell them, but he lent them to give them support.

And there was another man in Venezuela married to one of my best friends, Sagrario. His name was Otto Atencio. He was a man who had never bought a painting in his life. He had money. He was not pretentious in any way, but he was married to Sagrario.

MS. BERMAN: S-A-L-A-D-I?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: S-A-G-R-A-R-I-O, Sagrario Pere Soto de Atencio. Pere Soto, two words, de Atencio. She was also very supportive of the fact that I had opened a gallery. Her husband prompted that, but she wanted it. But she was very clever. She wouldn't show it. [Laughs.] So, yes, takes the initiative.

And he became a great collector. He was the first man to buy from the first auction of Latin American art. And as soon as he knew that I was cooking that thing up, he said, "I'm going to be there," and so forth. And I knew he would buy the most important work. And he did. He built a very fine collection.

It's all gone to auction now. Can you imagine the families that could only profit from having the collection? It was totally this man's. I don't even know where the paintings have ended [up]. They're fantastic paintings. Mattas and many things, many things. Great Reveróns. She was very loyal to Reverón. She must have had, like, four or five Reveróns. And very good ones.

MS. BERMAN: Was Matta an artist you got to know?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, but almost in passing because I've never – Argentina and Chile never understood each other and – [they laugh] – so, and he wouldn't come to Argentina. But I have met him. I remember him clearly: very sanguineous, very womanizer, and intelligent, very intelligent. He writes very well, as well.

MS. BERMAN: Well, who were your major patrons, your supporters, here in New York once you opened the CDS Gallery?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Good question. My great support was Bill Lieberman because of the things that I gave to the Metropolitan. He showed some interest in that like – woman artist –

MS. BERMAN: Oh, are you talking about Carrington again or someone else?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He showed an interest, for instance, if someone had donated a certain artist to the Metropolitan, he would mention that to me. And I would say, well, we have this thing and so forth. And then, eventually, either I would buy it, or I would donate it to the museum. I don't want the shadow of profiting from a billionaire's freedom and the friendship in any way.

He was so absolutely *un caballero* [Span., gentleman] in every way and a very good friend, very good friend. You knew that it was not because of professional this and that. A professional basis, of course, was the basis, but outstanding man. So much – I'm trying to remember. We gave him two of the Jackson Pollocks, but he had done something – I don't know what it was.

He had done something that favored us, so when he started looking, and I saw that he – those two attracted him; it was some piece. And he took them with him – he would not wait to have them sent or freight or in nothing. And I knew it was something that meant a lot for him to present it to the museum director at the time, who was also a great person.

MS. BERMAN: Well, what about early collectors here in – for the New York gallery?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Latin Americans, you mean? Or in general?

MS. BERMAN: Well, I'm wondering if you had other than Latin American collectors at that point.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes, of course.

MS. BERMAN: I mean, who were some of the important – the collectors who were, shall we say, North Americans who came to your gallery?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: The Duncans – Barbara Duncan, yes, Barbara Duncan. I just have to go downstairs and go through the cards and give you names, if you want to write it down. We can check some of the –

MS. BERMAN: Let me go get my notepad. I'll be right back.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay.

MS. BERMAN: Okay, yeah, that would be great. And I'm just going to go on with some of the other questions.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, you have your own pad?

MS. METTATESTA: Yeah, I'm going to go get it.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no, no.

[Audio break.]

MS. BERMAN: Oh, thank you.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: There's more, there's more.

MS. BERMAN: That's okay; this is plenty. [They laugh.]

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, I'm missing a very important figure.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Thank you. [Inaudible.] I don't know how I got the privilege of coming to New York as often as anybody could make it. And I would come to see the exhibitions. I would get the New York papers and see them once a week or something like that, see the exhibitions.

And I became acquainted with Thomas Messer. And at one point, I suggested that he should come to Venezuela, and I would like to show him what the artists in Venezuela were doing in the field of kinetic art. Well, what do you know? Tom Messer – takes him less than 10 days to be in Caracas.

And it's a day when I have an appointment – not an appointment. I have an invitation from the most important collector in Caracas, which is a German fellow by the name of Hans Neumann – Hans Neumann. He had two N's at the end or just one? And I said, look, Tom, I have to go because he's a good friend and a very important future collector and so forth. Do you mind if we stop on the way – I don't remember where we were going farther on. He said, no, I'll do it. So we come to this door. Did I tell you this *episodio*?

MS. BERMAN: No, no.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, I did tell you?

MS. BERMAN: No, you didn't.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, okay. So we leave the car and the driver and all those things and the chauffeur. So we park the car; we ring the bell. And Mr. Neumann himself comes. He's a very tall and handsome man, and comes to door and opens the door: "Hola, Clara," and they become petrified, the two of them.

They are both Czech. They've all gone together to the same chemistry school. They've known each forever in their lives since they were six, seven. And so Tom says, "Well, Clara, we got the best sponsor for the Guggenheim." [They laugh.] And so I got them to do the Soto exhibition, and that was a tremendous success.

Tom was so open. I would just describe the things. I didn't have a photo. I didn't have a book – there was no book on Soto. But I would tell him about the things that moved and this and that, and he immediately gave Soto a very large exhibition – large, sort of things that had to be moved and was very costly to move and very dangerous to move and damage and – they were – they had gone to school together.

MS. BERMAN: So Hans Neumann sponsored it?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. And sponsored and was there to buy works of art. Hans built a very fine collection,

very fine collection. And I don't think it was because I was guiding him, no. He was – had the criteria. He would look for the books; he would ask and this and that, but it was his own making.

MS. BERMAN: Was it completely Latin American?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no, but he realized the importance of the creativity of the kinetic direction. Okay, so early, you see. And he took the easier road, which was the Sotos, and it was Diez, and all of that. But he must have had Alejandro Oteros. I don't remember them in his realm, but he must have had them.

And also, he would be in a position to buy things for his corporation. He manufactured paint – everything, every building in Venezuela, all of, throughout Venezuela, had to be painted by Neumann's paints. Montana was the name of the company. And they were collectors. They were buying new things with very fine criteria and very independent criteria as well.

And he loved the fact that I wouldn't go to dinner unless I would bring good books – recent books and this and that. And he would read them. [Laughs.] He would go through them carefully. So the Venezuelans are a very special people, and they were in a position to be open and challenging to themselves and participate in things.

And it gave them a reason for being in Venezuela, because Venezuela had the best theaters, restaurants – [inaudible]. And it was a very strong currency, very strong currency – [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: Now, this seems very unusual, but it turns out, you were the first gallery in New York to have a Stanley Spencer show?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's what I think, yeah.

MS. BERMAN: So how did that come about? How did you arrange that?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay.

MS. BERMAN: It's so unusual.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, you know that my children have been submitted – [they laugh] – to British education ever since they were born, okay? So I have a loyalty to Great Britain. I would go often to see my children. Sometimes I would have the three children in England, and I was without children, you know?

So I would see the exhibitions, and I would know the Tate to perfection. [Director Nicholas] Serrota is one of my friends for many years, and he took me to dinner, to dancing. We would have really good meetings of intellectual curiosity, exchange, and this and that. And so Great Britain was a very important source of everything I knew, in many ways, you know?

I visit those museums and to go back in the history that type of British museums – so – I lost your question?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, I just asked how the Stanley Spencer exhibition came about.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, well, once you see a Stanley Spencer, you go nuts. There is a such profundity in his works. Sometimes, I look through the closets – [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: Oh, I know his work very well.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes, okay. Just to –

MS. BERMAN: Sure, let me just pause this.

[Audio break.]

How did you arrange it though? Where did you get it from? Where did you get the –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I would just buy them from –

MS. BERMAN: Or take them on consignment or?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no, I would buy them. I don't remember. I will have to check in the cards when we come down. Whoever had them, because it became such a conviction for me, and I was able to get a – we had maybe more than 20 works, and they were mainly works on paper because otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do it.

MS. BERMAN: Right because he did so many murals.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. But you go into the Tate, and I would – anytime I would go to see my children - I think before I went to see children - I went to the Tate to make sure - [laughs].

[Side conversation.]

Because Buenos Aires is very close to Uruguay. We had a house in Punta del Este – my father loved [inaudible] – created, like, a Russian home with the type of oven that you had in Russia and all of the – well, so at one point, we had a house in Punta del Este for the summer. He loved to swim.

And somebody approached me on the street to offer me those paintings by the Uruguayan artist Pedro Figari.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, my goodness.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And he had 25 of them. And I bought the 25, but don't think I was in the money or anything. I've never been in the money. I don't know; whatever he asked, I paid. We got them.

They were all authenticated in Uruguay, and they have those stamps. But I still didn't believe them too much because Argentines were a little more demanding and so forth. So I took them to Argentina and had them checked at the museum of Argentina, where you can't fool a [inaudible], and I had an authentication from Argentina about those works.

MS. BERMAN: Just for the tape, you're showing me a small Pedro Figari painting.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I'm sorry?

MS. BERMAN: Oh, I'm just describing this. It's a musical scene of bongos.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, it's a dance. And it's called – they all have a titled – I'm sorry, what does it say here?

MS. METTATESTA: *La Coquette*.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: *La Coquette*. *Coquette* is a woman who is flirting all the time.

MS. BERMAN: Right. "Coquet," yeah.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: *La Coquette*, okay? And there are all kinds of – [inaudible] – all in this size; I think we got 40 –

MS. METTATESTA: I think that would be 14 small.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, more than 14, no. I think there are like 25.

MS. BERMAN: And these are all from this original buy that you made? Amazing.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, you can be very sure that they never made more than four digits, or whatever, and were not in – maybe in dollars, I don't think so. I never had money, money, money. So it was the regular – [inaudible] – pieces.

MS. BERMAN: Now, was Figari someone that you would have been able to meet, or was he dead? I'm not sure of –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no. In the art scene in Argentina, in the rich collections, they would have Figaris as important things because I don't know what else they could have had. There were other important Argentine artists, and this is a Uruguayan artist. Because my mother was not too capable to take care of the children or something, or too dedicated to other things, or whatever, we were taken where my father had to go.

If he had to go to his lawyer's, who were a very fine family of people, he would take, I think, me and somebody else of his children. I would see their paintings and I had seen Figaris there. So I don't know what point in my life – we go to Montevideo [Uruguay]; I'm already grown up – and somebody offers me those 25 – but there are more than 25. Twenty-five is what I have now, right?

MS. METTATESTA: No, there are 18, I think.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In total? Okay, so that's what I bought, because I never started doing anything with them until now.

MS. BERMAN: Is that because the climate is right now, or –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: It's just that – you know, that fellow up there, very high up, who dresses all in white? He may come for me one day.

MS. BERMAN: Oh. [Laughs.] No.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, of course. I hope he does. Well, I cannot keep on going on like that. I have to find a place for all of those kids of mine, and I'm glad to let it happen. So we've offered a few, right?

MS. METTATESTA: We've proposed an exhibition, but we haven't –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Ah, we've proposed an exhibition. We'd better not speak about it, because he never answered, and it would be just so perfect for them. But, let's see, next?

MS. BERMAN: Well, speaking of exhibitions, since you have been in New York here, or in the United States, what are some of the best exhibitions of Latin American art that you've seen? What are a couple of outstanding ones?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I'm sure Messer did them. Yes, Messer did them, and that was a first, the first – in plural; I can't say exactly that it was the first one. But he made several exhibitions of Latin American art. And that exhibition with the Soto, an immense Soto – it must have been like five, six meters tall. And they opened up the ceiling, and they put that work, but there were whole exhibitions on Soto and a publication.

Messer was somebody with such a devotion and knowledge and sensibility and such a very correct way of doing things – talking to his employees. He was an example for gentlemen. But he also knew and saw – he didn't take five minutes to understand that Latin America had a body of work that was of importance, and he started those exhibitions. He's very much alone now. And that would be one more great subject for you and such a pleasant person.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, he's lovely. He's absolutely lovely.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Now, are there any interesting research centers of Latin American art? Are there universities or museums that really do a good job in researching –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: NYU [New York University, New York, NY]. They published a book, and it's a very good book. And they also do things; for instance, I went, out of curiosity, to see an exhibition that I had seen already, that Rafael Romero for the Fundacion Cisneros had put together for NYU. You should have seen the quality of the exhibition that he put together, how well displayed it was, what coherence there was. And they had somebody from NYU, probably the one who directs the department.

MS. BERMAN: Edward Sullivan?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Probably, but it was not Sullivan, I think. I was very impressed. I think it was somebody – not independent, but somebody from NYU, like a professor there. He gave a wonderful lecture. I was in admiration of him, very well published. I think he's the author of the publication they've done. That must be the same person, yes.

MS. BERMAN: What about down at the University of Texas at Austin? Are they doing things there?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, they're very active. They have a lot of resources to do what they want to do. They have an excellent director, an excellent director, and they have two people there that are working very hard. Do you remember their names?

MS. BERMAN: Well, the first one, the first name is Jackie, but I can't remember her last name. Jacqueline somebody, I think, is their – I can't remember.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Man or woman?

MS. BERMAN: A woman.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: There's a woman there that's important, and I can give you the name. It will come in a moment. We can give it to you downstairs. It's easy to write it down.

MS. BERMAN: You know, I want to ask you, just going back to that first important auction of Latin American art, since then –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. That's Edward Lee Cave who paved the way for that.

MS. BERMAN: Right. Well, what do you think about it? Do you think that there should be separate auctions of Latin American art, or do you think it should be integrated with other art? If it's 19th century, should it be in with other 19th century, or 20th century, or do you think it's better to have it separate?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I like the idea that it should be integrated. But it is so difficult to open a field for art from the country, and more so if you try to do it for a continent, almost, right, because it's almost half, more than half the continent. But if you have the impulse to do a Philippine exhibition, you should do a Philippine exhibition. Then if it happens to be an Oriental exhibition, then you include Philippine together with this one and the other. For us it was a good way of establishing the solidarity of nations.

MS. BERMAN: Because I think Latin American art continues to have separate auctions. Am I correct?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And do you like it being separated, or would you prefer it integrated?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I think the fact that we organized those separate auctions has given a profile to Latin American art that wouldn't happen any other way. So if the Philippines would be active enough to organize one exhibition, every three years, of Philippine art, you would learn about the Philippine art. Because the important artists would be included, and other important artists would - [inaudible] - find a way, so you learn about it and so forth.

We came late to the scene, so we don't have to do exhibitions on European art. You do ones on French art or this and that. But I think it's a much bigger cause if you take up a continent than if you take up a nationality. I thought from the start that if we didn't start by making a Venezuelan exhibition or a Colombian exhibition or a Puerto Rican exhibition or whatever, that the continent had a cause - and for me it has had a cause because of my father's strength. He was so contributing to causes in Latin America, without calling it Latin America. I think the name came later.

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, I think it was called South America.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, so, South America. Yeah because you wouldn't even name Central America, because people wouldn't even know which were the countries or something. And North America has made a statement by calling itself "North America." So I think you gave the idea. [Laughs.]

MS. BERMAN: Now, also - because I think she was just pretty much starting then - were you - obviously, a very prominent dealer in Latin American art now is Mary-Anne Martin.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: In New York?

MS. BERMAN: Yeah.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: She started right after, or right at the same time.

MS. BERMAN: Right, she was head of auctions or did Mexican art.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes. She was at that school.

MS. BERMAN: And did you advise or mentor her in any way?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No. She was here alone, on her own. No, she was independent.

MS. BERMAN: And how did she get interested in that area, in Latin American art?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Because she comes from Mexican descendents. And she speaks very good Spanish, and she lived in Mexico. She lived in Mexico. There's where, I think, she worked for a gallery in Mexico.

MS. BERMAN: I see.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And then she started. Very hardworking.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I was asking you about the auctions, and now I'm going to ask you about the museums. Do you think it's a good idea to have culturally specific museums?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I think it adds to the scenario, and it makes people who may not come from the doctorate in whatever, make them aware of something that they had not paid attention to, they had not listened - and

countries develop much slower than we people because they don't die, so they are going to be on the scene.

In medicine, for instance, medicine is a global thing. But then one becomes an investigator in this field and the other one and the other field and so forth, so the whole medical world gets enlarged. So both things are useful. We should not disintegrate; we should integrate, but we should let things develop on their own, of their own facility and so forth. And you should participate in this dialogue because you have -

[Cross talk.]

MS. METTATESTA: - contribute on this.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, you do. You do, you have the knowledge as well.

MS. METTATESTA: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Of course, I have to prove my concentration answering those difficult questions, but no -

MS. BERMAN: When did you join the gallery, Mary?

MS. METTATESTA: Just a month ago, not too long ago.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, well, a little more than a month.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Before that, you had an introduction to Latin America somewhere?

MS. METTATESTA: To Latin America?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Or to Latin American art.

MS. METTATESTA: Well, through my father at Duke, we have the - my father had the Duke collection [Nasher Museum, Duke University, Durham, NC], and they had a large collection of pre-Columbian art. And he'd been to Venezuela.

MS. BERMAN: I think you've been here a little more than a month, because you were here when I arrived.

MS. METTATESTA: Yeah, maybe more than that. I have no sense of time.

MS. BERMAN: Well, okay, I'm going to move back into some of the gallery exhibitions and things you did. You represented Mel Edwards.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. I represented Mel Edwards, because I had been very unfair in my life. When I started working at Abbott Laboratories, when I was 17, Mr. R. M. Cain was the treasurer of Abbott Laboratories, and he was a collector. And he started buying works by the African-American artists, and I didn't understand it. I didn't understand that art, and I didn't understand other arts either. I was so young.

But I resented very much the fact that in a medical magazine of such impressive luxury and everything they'd put into it, that the art was of those people, and the photographs were of those people. And there was nothing that was not about the art itself, in a way, somehow. When I came to Chicago, and I see those people - and I'm a Jewish person, and I know what it means to have that seal on your nose - that's a good expression, seal on your nose, because we do have it - I feel sorry about them, and I feel how unfair it is.

And on the train where I would go from North Chicago to Chicago, where I lived - it was an hour ride both ways, one hour in, one hour out, plus one hour - I see that the African-American students that may have gone to my same schools and all of that, they had to stand because there were not enough seats.

They were such nice people and educated people. They were always appropriately combed and this and that. I felt so terrible about this, just couldn't stand it. So when I finally decide to go back home - I missed my father. My father's presence has been very important.

I go back, and I know the main editorial house is called Editorial Sudamericana. And shy as I am, and I'm maybe 17 or 18 or 19 by then, I go and tell them that I read and this and that, but I've never seen a book by someone who is not white skinned, that's all. And he knew what I was saying.

And he says, "Well, do you have anything that you want to suggest?" And I said, "Yes, I brought my books of African-American - " - they were not African Americans then, I don't know, that's - that would have been very pejorative.

And so he says, "Well, would you like to translate a chapter or two?" So I did. And it was Richard Wright. And it

was the first book from which – I don't how to make the translation – the publishers, I don't remember what. And I may have, and I think it's somewhere in that room. I could see if I have it there.

Okay, so I translated *Native Son*, and that became, for me, a cause in my life. As a Jewish person I could understand that predicament better than other people and so forth. And I wanted to pursue that, and I translated other books. And I continued reading them, and then I – is that the question? Why did I start representing [inaudible] works?

MS. BERMAN: Yes.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. It wasn't because he was black. I had not met him. But I saw his work; I don't remember where, a very small exhibition. I was interested. I think I would see him at the – what is that museum that we belong to? And I always want to go – where Lowery Sims is the director. The –

MS. METTATESTA: Lowery Sims?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Lowery Sims.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, Studio Museum [Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY].

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Studio Museum, well, that immediately became a cause for me, and Lowery and I became very friendly, and we would go to dinners together – she and I – to dinner together, only I went to her house. And we continued to be friends. And when she was working at the Metropolitan, and she was working on the Pollock drawings, that's how I got to see them and see quite a number of them.

And I did something with those works; I don't remember what it was. Maybe I wrote a review or something like that. Anyhow, Lowery has been a great friend, and we live very close by, and we will go to eat together. When she became the director there, I would be there at everything that they had.

I don't see her lately. That's when she was at the Metropolitan, she works on the Pollock drawings. So I knew of the existence of all those works, yes. And I helped her to put an order in them at one point, and we classify them; they are not dated, some. I don't know what guide we used to start putting them in such a way that they will have an order in the drawers, and so that's what we did.

And that has become – because of the way, in Chicago, being a black person was a terrible thing. It was even worse than being Latin American. [Laughs.]

MS. METTATESTA: Didn't you say that your exposure to black people started in Uruguay when you were younger? Didn't you say that you were sort of –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes.

MS. METTATESTA: Enchanted, curious. Were there quite a few?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, well, of course, you are certainly right. That's when I see colored people, and you could see it.

MS. BERMAN: Because the Figari painting is of dark-skinned people.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, but I don't see black people in Uruguay. I don't remember seeing black people in Uruguay.

MS. BERMAN: Well, segregation in Chicago was pretty violent.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And I lived in their neighborhood. So I would see them. I would see them, and I knew what it meant. But I saw it also in the school from which Abbott – high school where they sent me to meet with a person who was going to find a person who would teach me English. And nobody wanted to teach me English, because nobody there had Spanish.

But I saw this woman with the white hair, and I asked her if she would give me a trial. Let's try two, three weeks, and if you think that I can learn quickly, and you have interest in teaching. But she became my mother. She became my mother figure. A very beautiful mother. I mean she was not making sure that I eat the soup or anything like that. She was concerned with my interests and trying to answer those interests in the – [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: Did Lowery Sims introduce you to Mel Edwards?



MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I saw his sculptures somewhere. Maybe at the Museo del Barrio [New York, NY] or – and I don't remember. I saw his work.

MS. BERMAN: And what is he like?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Fantastic. First of all, what surprised me was that – not surprised me but made me confident, you know, that I was this little pale woman, and that there was this giant of a man. And there we were; we were going everywhere – to movies, to theaters and concerts together.

And he had such an attitude of respect and protection at the same time. I met his family; he would bring them to the gallery, of course, for exhibitions. For me, it was a very important cause to assume. It must be something of my Jewish background getting into the picture, as well, you know? And I'm very happy if that was a cause.

Then I met his family; we got along famously. And uncles, and this and that, and I would go to their home, and they would come here. But Mel became separated, needing to have another kind of sponsorship. And I respected that, although I continued working with him.

But then he becomes kind of lazy or less active and less productive. And I just didn't know how to handle that, because if you cut the chain on which you are working, you'll lose momentum. So to see my loyalties and even saving those little things and so forth that I introduced him - you know that I put Mel Edwards's work in the White House when [President Bill] Clinton was there?

MS. BERMAN: No, no, I didn't know that.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, yes, and it's still there. It's a small thing about this size.

MS. BERMAN: I guess about two feet high is what you're saying, or three feet high?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. No, not three, not three.

MS. BERMAN: Two feet?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: And was that through an art advisor, or the Clintons?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no, we gave it to him. Mel said, "Yes, if you want to do it, do it." So nobody paid for it. We didn't pay; she didn't pay –

MS. BERMAN: But somebody said, yes, that they would accept it.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes, because they had to go; they can't take individual decisions, so they went to whoever was in. And it was so immediate and so happy for them and for me. And it was just at the beginning of the presidency, and it happened in the lives before, you know, it was easy.

MS. BERMAN: Now, do you have any kind of acquaintance with [Fernando] Botero?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. Yes, out of respect, yes.

MS. BERMAN: I just wondered what – he is so famous - so what is his life like?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, well, he had it easy because his subjects were, what would you call them? Humorous. [They laugh.] That's it. So that's an easy door to open. He's an educated man, and in Colombia there are many artists of qualities. And I would go very often to Colombia because I would buy art, and I knew the artists, and there are many others of interest.

But it was not one of the things I could fall for and so forth. I would handle work by him. And one day I finished doing for the Cisneroses, another Cisneros, a very wonderful fellow, a brother of Diego. I was making their collection. And I knew of a Botero mural that was probably the size of those five doors. And the subject was this one he had been -

[Side conversation.]

[Audio break.]

MS. BERMAN: You were showing me the drawing you had which was for the mural, which was about, sort of, studies for the work of [Andrea] Mantegna?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, yes, yes, that Botero did -

MS. BERMAN: Yeah.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: And the inspirational [inaudible].

MS. BERMAN: It's interesting, I never would have thought of him as being inspired by -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He's a very cultured man.

MS. BERMAN: - Mantegna.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: A very fine man.

MS. BERMAN: It just shows that artists never look one-to-one because, you know, Mantegna is so sculptured, and he's kind of so stony - but there it is.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, that explains Botero right? Yes. Don't miss those two terms when he writes a text of me and - [inaudible] - round?

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, exactly. That's interesting. And then, I think Botero had Marlborough [Gallery] for quite a while, right?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, many, many years. I never represented Botero and I wouldn't have done it. I was just making collections. In the collection of the American art, if you have the spirit, and they have the spirit - Botero, I don't remember if at my place the collection was priority.

MS. BERMAN: Tell me about the collection you formed for Nabisco.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Nabisco?

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, I think you formed a Latin America collection or a corporate collection for them?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, because there were those very [inaudible] was the name of one of the - no. It's a very similar name. He's in the newspaper today. The two people who owned - they bought the first corporation; acquisitions were made by those people.

They were in the paper only yesterday, and the day before as well, for something else, very important people who buy companies, corporate buyers, corporate buyers. I think they were in the paper even today.

MS. BERMAN: I assume this was Latin American art that you got for them?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I didn't get art for Nabisco. No, it was, I didn't do anything -

MS. BERMAN: Excuse me; maybe I'm mistaken. I thought you had formed a corporate collection for Nabisco?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I wouldn't be surprised if you remember better than I do. I don't remember it. But the people who owned Nabisco, they are two famous corporate buyers. Kravis, Kravis.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, Henry Kravis?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Kravis, right, Henry Kravis.

MS. BERMAN: Kravis, Kohlberg, Roberts is what it is.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's right, okay, Kravis. My God, my memory should be in another person's mind. Okay, here I am at 75th Street, and a young fellow, evidently Latin American, comes in, and he says he wants to buy - works, probably on paper, for a corporation.

The corporation is called Nabisco, and I think it has to do with cookies, but I don't remember what those cookies taste - [they laugh] - like and so forth. But the fellow is quite handsome and very nice and Latin American and very pleasant and so forth.

And I said, well, we have a lot of Latin American, and he says, well, I would like to put Latin American art, he goes initially, because I think he said, very frankly, and I admire at his honesty, that a Latin American will promote his importance. He was quite a guy. Anyhow, so he's forming this collection and so forth.

And I said, well, I have Latin American art. Can you show me? And they are making offices in the Florida section. Can you show me something? So I said, well, can we go to the storage so that you can really see a lot of things and tell me what line of thought - he's an architect, and they know that. Okay, so he starts putting this aside and this aside, and I think he is dismissing and dismissing; he's always dismissing the whole thing that we show him.

And I'm getting a bit tired of - and this and that. And so I started asking very decisive questions, because finally nothing is going to happen. Nothing is going to happen. He bought like 40 or 60 - and it never happened in my life and never happened again. [Laughs.]

MS. METTATESTA: Was it the - [inaudible]?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: From Kravis, from Kravis.

MS. METTATESTA: So you were showing him the works in person, and he's just saying, no, no, no?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He's saying, put them outside. He's going to take them to the corporation and present them, and he sold them all to the corporation. I mean, we sold them to the corporation. He was acting as an architectural advisor.

As a matter of fact, he became one of my best friends; he's the man who helped me put this apartment. He's the man who broke down this wall; we had a wall here that separated the two rooms. Oh, that disappeared in one day. I get down here; all we had was studs on the floor.

And we've been very, very good friends. The friendship didn't stop; he passed away, and that stopped the friendship, but I always - I'm in contact with his sister and her parents. I make sure that I call his sister often and that kind of thing. So that's the first collection. When I see her, I can do those things with just one finger, no this and that.

MS. BERMAN: So this guy came in and picked out 40 or so works out of the storage, and then they bought them all, and that was -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: So it was sort of 40 or 50 at one blow?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. METTATESTA: Wow.

MS. BERMAN: Did they ever come back again?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, they just didn't have any more walls. He thought of everything. He knew exactly where everything was going to go and all of that. But he and I continued to do things together, not as important as Kravis or anybody else [inaudible]. But we did things, and more important, he's been such a great friend, well, to the point that he decided the color of my bathroom and this and that and the other one. We'd go to concerts together and so forth. He passed away.

MS. BERMAN: It was all works on paper, did you say, or almost all?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Mostly that type of thing, simply because for a corporation it's the best thing to make people even think, the employees to look at it. So it was a good idea, and he framed them all - had a line of thought for the frame so they would have a unity. And they paid immediately, because one of the corporations was always in the news. So I learned a lot about them.

So I knew what to look for, and he was a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant, brilliant speaker. There's nobody else I have known. I learned immensely from him. His sister, finally I got her a job as a librarian for the bookshop of the Miami Art Museum. She went to live in Miami [FL]. She brought her nephews who lived in Colombia to study in the United States, and some of them are still here. I am in contact. I used to call her recently. I haven't called for a few Sundays, and I would call.

MS. BERMAN: Let's see. I'm just going through. You mentioned Lowery Sims before who was, of course, the scholar of Wifredo Lam.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: I wondered if you had known Lam at all.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, I did.

MS. BERMAN: Could you talk about him?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. Lam was the most quiet man I've ever met in my whole life. But he had a skin and a color that gave such warmth to friendship. Well, I think Lam gave me, to start with, on consignment a very large number of drawings, I think of 40, but I couldn't swear by that. You would have to go to the cards. I think like too many, 40, but that's the number that comes to mind. We placed them immediately. It was so easy. So we became friends, and then you know the Metropolitan has a large collection of Lams.

MS. BERMAN: Right.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. I don't have to do with that. It was not my doing, I'm sorry to say. Laurie, Laurie, Laurie could orchestrate that, and she was working at the Metropolitan. Not only that, she was able to restore those that were not in good condition. She was able to – you know how capable she is. She could analyze every one, number them, and classify them. She did all of that for those drawings.

But you know what? The Metropolitan never showed. So Monday if I find a – [inaudible] – who wants to buy them back from the Metropolitan, the Metropolitan would sell them back. I'm not going to do that. I'd rather have Lam in the Metropolitan.

MS. BERMAN: Right, right. Now, who were some of the younger artists in your gallery who you'd like to talk about?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, Americans or Latin Americans or both?

MS. BERMAN: Whichever or both.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, I instituted a collection, or a series, of young American artists, and names –

MS. BERMAN: Well, I could give you some of them.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: If you give me one, I can come up with the other ones. I started with one –

MS. BERMAN: Well, there was one Stephen De Staebler.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, but he's not a young artist. He's a sculptor before I found him. Stephen De Staebler, no.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: But I had a series, and I had one month – every month I had another young artist that I had uncovered somewhere.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I meant less than well known; when you started, he wouldn't have been sold.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Roxi Marsen was one of them.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Roxi Marsen.

MS. BERMAN: But there was a guy named Jim Peters.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Jim Peters, I was going to tell you, brilliant, but that man had a Ph.D. from – in medicine or in psychoanalysis. Jim Peters, brilliant, brilliant, brilliant artist, brilliant person, brilliant, fine family, young family. She was also a painter, and they had two or three children, and we were very close as families, Jim Peters.

That I gave each month an opportunity for an exhibition to a different young artist, and that started with – I think it was Roxi Marsen and then Jim Peters. Do you have that – were you able to put together those –

MS. BERMAN: Well, there's another one, named Jane Egan, too.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, she's a woman who is now almost 100, and she's dying.

MS. BERMAN: Oh my goodness.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: She's dying, beautiful little woman this size, slender like anything, with a family, and she does those wonderful things – you know, the constructions that everyone – [inaudible] – I wanted to return them to her or what – she's brilliant. She's brilliant, brilliant. Jane Egan, she's dying. She's 98 or something like that.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, my goodness, okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Who else? Can you think of –

MS. METTATESTA: I'm trying to think.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Inaudible] – the announcements, the binder that has the announcements?

MS. METTATESTA: Oh, yeah, sure.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That would be helpful, I think, just by-passing them. You have the keys with you?

MS. METTATESTA: Yes, I have the keys.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. Jim Peters, we have him, right?

MS. BERMAN: Yes. Let's see. Well, I'm not sure. There was a woman named Vera Klement?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Vera Klement, she's an older woman. Vera Klement lived, if I'm right, in the Chicago area.

MS. BERMAN: Right, right.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. They were good artists. I didn't go by the personalities. I saw the work. People would submit. Remember, they used to – people used to send the galleries –

MS. BERMAN: Slides.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Slides and photos and very well composed press releases, curriculum vitae. Let's see, Jane Swavely was one of them, and she is in New York; Jane Swavely, S-W-A-V-E-L-Y, very interesting artist. They get lost, and you cannot continue forever, and as you see, the spark continues to spark.

MS. BERMAN: Right, right. You say also sometimes when you – you don't have an exhibition space anymore, so artists often – living artists need that, too, as well.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, but I stopped having exhibition space. Why did I stop?

MS. BERMAN: Well –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, because of things in the street level. I probably thought that it was no longer the way to show work by an artist. I didn't think that I was continuing anything by doing that except making it possible to sell works of art of an artist and so forth. But it was not my total motivation or something.

MS. BERMAN: Let's see. I'm just looking at my list of other artists here that we should talk about.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Roxi Marsen, Jane Swavely, Jim Peters, those were the – you wouldn't ask me. You know? I'm more than 88 years old.

MS. BERMAN: I know.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: How do you know?

MS. BERMAN: Because –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I told you already? Nobody else knows it.

MS. BERMAN: Well, no, because on the first day, I asked you your date of birth.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Oh, you did? Okay.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, so I know.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yeah, I'm 88 years old.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, you're 88 and 10 months.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, and 10 months, that's right, and I've been working since age of 17. Even before that, we helped my father in his offices, and I loved anything that had to do with my father. So I really worked.

MS. BERMAN: Did you know Lucio Fontana?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. BERMAN: Tell me about - now, he's very -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: He's my inspiration in every way.

MS. BERMAN: Oh, tell me about it.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: When I go to Europe to study, he's one of the artists that I - oh, no, before that. When we come out of the classes of Romero Brest, which is on the street called Florida, which would be like the most fashionable street in Buenos Aires, but that's where we had the space. It was given by an important philanthropist who admired the work of Romero and was a friend of his and so forth.

So we got that space, and that's where - no, the space we had was this bookshop, Fray Mocho, Librería Fray Mocho, which I find when I just come back from the United States, and they have talks about art and teach about art, and there I go. The speaker is called - [inaudible] - and that becomes my dogma.

I start going to all those classes and taking those notebooks and no notes in shorthand, and those are like 32 notebooks like this thick. Those were the spirals, the thicker ones. Then I realized that I don't have the preparation of the others.

The others were lawyers and doctors and this and that. What was I doing there? But I continued going. Then I got married. I had my children. I had to take care of my children. But I don't interrupt the classes. I continue. I have the ways of doing it, and what was I -

MS. BERMAN: This is about Lucio Fontana.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, Lucio Fontana was a good friend - thank you, memory - of Romero Brest. So he would come to the classes, too, and many of the artists - not many, but some of the artists would come one year and one the other. So Fontana liked young girls, raw or cooked or broiled or whatever, you know?

So he would come to the classes, but just because he wanted to follow. We would walk on Florida Street from one end to the other, and he would see the backs of the girls and the legs of the girls and this and that and the other. I probably was not one of the ones that were favorite of his looks, but somehow we established a good relation. So he said, "Well, you have to come to Italy. You have to see the art of Italy. You can live in my studio because nobody lives there. I don't want to live there. "

So I go to Italy just to live there, and I get myself a room in the place and so forth, and I start making his breakfast. I learned a lot from him and seeing him working, his solidity, his seriousness, the concentration as if he was transformed into somebody else or something like that. He let me organize his papers. He let me do this. He never paid me a cent. He didn't have to pay me a cent.

But you know what he paid me with? You know what I lived with? You know what sustained me? You know what gives me my health? I was given there a plate of soup every day. That was my only food the whole day. I organized his books, and there was a platform higher than that that had a floor, like a floor like if you had a theater. The whole thing wrapped around, and I was on that platform.

He put away. Every money he got, he would buy from the younger artists. I would go with him on those expeditions, and it was very interesting. So he would buy this and this. He didn't have money. He just had this income, this small income. So he would bring them in and put them up there, and I was the one who had to keep order of everything.

But that thing [the platform] never came down, with the weight of all those paintings, because that's the proof that God exists. It was incredible, the amount of paintings. For that work, I was being paid a plate of soup. For that work for him, that's what I did for him.

I didn't prepare the canvases or anything like that but what a fantastic - and then he would go to the - with the money he made from his own work, he would go to the Trastevere to visit the poor studios of the younger artists, and he would buy from them himself. But he was a great collector. He was expecting to find the - you want more water or something?

MS. BERMAN: No, I'm fine.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: How about you?

MS. METTATESTA: I'm fine.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay, Fontana.

MS. BERMAN: Now, did you go to Italy – was this while you were married or before?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No.

MS. BERMAN: Before you were married. I don't know. But I'm just checking. So this was –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, no, no. Let me think. I was able to get – yes, I traveled to Europe while I had children and left my children with probably the person we had. No, no, this is before. This is before, because I stayed for quite some time, yes.

MS. BERMAN: Well, there was also the experience. I guess you go to see Rome too.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes, Rome and the whole of Italy. I did a whole of Italy. I went down to see the Caracalla and to the ruins and Pompeii and everything. I was very thoughtful because I was very ignorant, and I knew I had to learn. I knew I had to. Then I'm sure Romero would tell me.

MS. BERMAN: So that was your first trip to Italy when that happened, probably?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes. Not the one week with Fontana experience, no. Let me see. No, I think I went to Italy before that. I don't remember how.

MS. BERMAN: Then you later showed his work, too, at some – of Fontana.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Not exhibitions. I never had an exhibition of Fontana, unless I had his works on paper, no. No, I would not exploit my professors or anything like that.

MS. BERMAN: Well, I just meant when you were in Venezuela or New York, if you had Fontana. I mean, when you were a dealer.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I never got together, and I wouldn't have had the audience for it. It was so rarely – it's not like Fontana today.

MS. BERMAN: That's interesting that you were his assistant.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: What did you bring?

MS. METTATESTA: Oh, the exhibition catalogue.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: The exhibition catalogue, very quickly, and thank you very much, thank you. Well, you know how many exhibitions we've done?

MS. BERMAN: I know, that's why – I know, nearly 200.

MS. METTATESTA: So that's a lot, 200 or so, a few hundred.

MS. BERMAN: It's almost more daunting to look at that. That's why I edited it, because I looked at all of it.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay. No, what was the question you just – about the young artists?

MS. METTATESTA: Oh, the monthly exhibitions of young artists.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Do you see glasses of mine here? No, how was I working without glasses?

MS. BERMAN: Well, see if you can use – maybe my reading glasses would be good.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: No, I think they're here. Maybe it's in the kitchen.

MS. BERMAN: I'll pause this, then, while you look.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: – find them. Thirteen Americans here, Graham Campbell, Jim Gingerich, Judy Glantzman, with a T and a Z, Jim Peters, we have it. Graham Campo, Jim Gingerich, I said it, Judy Glantzman, Cletus Johnson. Cletus is spelled C-L-E-T-U-S, you know him?

MS. BERMAN: Yeah.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Sam Messer, Sam Messer, Jim Peters, Norman Sunshine, he disappeared from the scene.

MS. BERMAN: Norman who?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Sunshine, Sunshine.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I could make copies of this and send it to you if you want me to.

MS. BERMAN: No, this is fine. This is fine. I just wanted a sampling.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Okay and sculptures here also and master drawings, Lucian Freud, Henry Moore, [Amedeo] Modigliani, [William] Baziotes, Balthus, contemporary art from 10 countries. A very important cause for me was the work of Hedda Sterne.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Of course.

MS. BERMAN: And her friendship, being able to see her almost every week if I wanted; certainly I would do it every week, because I was representing her, and I didn't want to step on her toes. So I wanted to be sure that she -

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: What was important to you about Hedda Sterne - what qualities did she want in a dealer?

MS. BERMAN: I don't think she knew what qualities she wanted. For me, it was a cause that a person - that knowledge, that sensibility, that dedication. At that age in her life, she had not been given recognition. Ah, but you know what? Okay, I'm blaming myself. I'm giving myself credit for what I don't have the credit.

Katharine Kuh, whom I knew from the Chicago area and who was directing a museum in Chicago at one point in a very prominent manner - Katharine Kuh comes to New York to my gallery, and I know who she is, and we become close and understand each other. We are happy to find each other. It is like getting together in Chicago, but we are in Caracas or in New York, in New York.

She says, "Well, you have to visit Hedda Sterne, and I'm going to call you, and I'll go with you as a way to make sure that I go." So I would go with her, and I saw the body of work, and I saw the person, and I understood that it was a call for me for what I could give to the scene. She was easy and pleasant and such a phenomenal figure for me, phenomenal.

The love, the dedication, the generosity to sit down - and I thought I was having tea with my father, and it was Hedda. And we would talk, and she would talk to me about France. She would talk to me about England, and I had heard all of that from my father. I was in heaven with her and then seeing her paint the art, and for that I was prepared. I could see a painting when it was a painting, and when it was not a painting, I knew that it was not a painting.

MS. BERMAN: Why do you think she was under-recognized?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, maybe many things. One of the reasons could be that her husband [Saul Steinberg] was a very well-known figure, a notorious figure. He was the man who illustrated the *New Yorker* and had every cover of the *New Yorker* every week and so forth. Envy, and her age, she had this home with three floors. Which artists have three floors? It's just that her husband was very caring for her.

Even when they were separated, I saw it. He was regular in his visits. I had to study when the visits took place so I wouldn't be obtrusive and be there or something like that, you know? But I would have the support of very important collectors, and placed her work with very important collectors in America, American collectors of important figures in society and those kinds of things.

They would see, and I would make them see, and then even the project we had with the New York airport, that they would even consider that they would do it, but it finally didn't turn out. But probably it was not - we should have done more or something. I don't think they even did a mural finally. I don't remember now. I don't remember. I would remember if they had replaced Hedda with somebody else. They probably didn't do the mural or something.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: So this was a mural commission that she was supposed to have.

MS. BERMAN: Yes, from the airport, yes. They called her, and she presented the two projects. And one of them



is the one that's there by the lamp. That's one. The other one is one which is blue.

MS. METTATESTA: That's in the office downstairs.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: That's in your office, that's right, which I want to give to the Tate. But the person who is handling that for the Tate has not come back, and I cannot push it on them and so forth. But it would have been wonderful.

MS. BERMAN: Well, believe it or not, I think I am out of questions.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: I don't believe that.

MS. BERMAN: I just wondered if there's anything you'd like –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Inaudible.]

MS. BERMAN: If you have anything that you would like to add.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: How about you?

MS. BERMAN: Yes, is there any question – yes, what would you like –

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Are there things that we have not mentioned?

MS. BERMAN: What would you like to find out that you think we haven't covered?

MS. METTATESTA: Give me a second. I haven't heard what you've covered in the past two meetings, but I'd like to hear more about the Estudio Actual years.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Inaudible] – well, you know how I start, because he's there and he's teaching us.

MS. METTATESTA: Duchamp?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yeah, so when you study with Marcel Duchamp, else can you do? You just take off your clothes and jump into the river or something.

MS. METTATESTA: So why did you decide to move to New York?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Well, I started auctions of – [inaudible.]

MS. BERMAN: That's a good question. All of a sudden you just got – I'm just giving up all of this time in Caracas and – in other words, it isn't just the auctions, but all of a sudden – I realize you were successful with the auctions, but to just give up where you had lived for so long and all your friends and your network and everything.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: [Inaudible] – one of the strange things was a husband of one of my best friends – [inaudible] – and to satisfy this much younger wife that he has, he starts buying some art. He's the first one to come to the first auction. He buys another group of things, and he calls me about this, that, and the other.

So I said, "If I can do this, what am I doing in Caracas?" I'd done almost everything I could think of and somebody – I had very good staff, as you know, people I'm still in contact with. They can continue. They don't need me, and from here I can have more ideas, more –

[Cross talk.]

MS. METTATESTA: So part of your motivation for doing the New York auctions was born out of the cause of spreading the knowledge of Latin American art?

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: Yes.

MS. METTATESTA: That makes sense.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: It was such an easy way to do it. You can just refer to all the other countries. Venezuelan auction, I wouldn't do that. Then Edward Lee Cave was such a phenomenal person to do anything with. Strangely enough, he was going to do a trip to Latin America to establish a chain of people who would have to do with real estate and could use the facilities of the auction houses for real estate, which he did.

So I gave him addresses here and there. So we became a daily contact between us. He's a very funny man and

youngish. So if he can do that, I can do the other thing, and I don't have to travel. But he had to - [inaudible] - in Ecuador, Paraguay, and this and that and the other. I can sit in Caracas and do it. I can go to New York and move there or something like that. So it would be easy to do it.

MS. BERMAN: Okay.

MS. DIAMENT SUJO: So there was a question in between -

MS. BERMAN: Yeah, we've really already done Estudio Actual in the other meetings, so of course - I just wanted to let you know that I wasn't dissing your question, but we did it.

MS. METTATESTA: No, no of course.

MS. BERMAN: Okay, well, I think I'm pretty much done, and thank you so much, unless you have something else you'd like to say?

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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