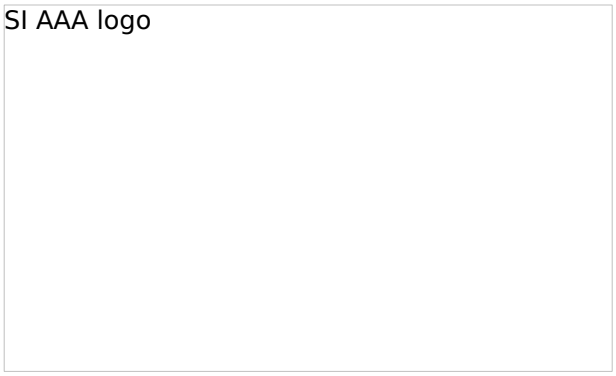

Oral history interview with Rhona Hoffman, 2015 June 18-22

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Transcript

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Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Rhona Hoffman on 2015 June 15. The interview took place at Hoffman's home in Chicago, IL, and was conducted by Lanny Silverman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's Chicago Art and Artists: Oral History Project.

Rhona Hoffman reviewed the transcript in 2021. Her corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

LANNY SILVERMAN: This is Lanny Silverman for the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art and I'm interviewing Rhona Hoffman at her home.

RHONA HOFFMAN: [Side conversation.] Hey, Stella.

LANNY SILVERMAN: June 15 part one.

RHONA HOFFMAN: [Side conversation.] Can you stop using that tape thing?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Here we go and it sounds like the levels are pretty good. I guess the—I know it's impolite to ask a lady, but where and when were you born?

RHONA HOFFMAN: May 29, 1934 in the Bronx, NY.

LANNY SILVERMAN: In the Bronx. So you are an East Coaster. That's kind of what I was thinking, we were talking. Did you have parents that were supportive or interested in art? Did you start out being interested in art as a child?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, as a child I painted and I danced, took dancing lessons, and I played the piano. And my parents took me to MoMA and they, you know, so yes they were cultured in that regard. Neither of them collected art. We had reproductions of Van Gogh, some Picassos though.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting. So what—do you remember the show you saw? Because I remember as a teenager, my parents—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, it was no particular show. It was just that my mother would go quite often into the Whitney and there was a painting that either she liked or I liked that she would leave me to, that was a Tchelitchew painting. And actually—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I love Tchelitchew.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And there was this—the painting was actually out at MoMA very recently. It was called *Hide and Seek*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I know *Hide and Seek*. It's a famous, the most famous painting.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, right. And so she would park me there and I would count the number of things in the trees. So—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, they did a huge show. My parents took me into New York. I saw a show that the Huntington Hartford, there was a show. It was Tchelitchew and probably Dali or something like that. And it was a huge—those things with the heads with the X-ray vision kind of things. I probably was a teenager. I was very impressed by that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I was little.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, this is even earlier for you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I was little. I was a little kid.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you saw art and you were interested in it at an early age. Did you see yourself as a child? Did you see yourself ever being where you ended up?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I never dreamed of being an art dealer. [00:02:00] It happened by accident, which I'm sure will come up later in the interview. But no, not at all. I wanted to be a famous artist. I was very good. I mean I was a good art—painter, but I also took dancing lessons with Martha Graham and I took piano lessons. I played piano for 17 years, not very well, but I was a good dancer. And I took painting lessons and painted. None of them—my mother saved them but I threw them out when I found them later.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, I was going to ask what they look like. What kind of—were you doing—

RHONA HOFFMAN: They were very realistic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Realistic. So you weren't a Conceptualist or you weren't—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, no.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —avant-garde as a young child.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I was avant-garde but not a Conceptualist.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, tell me more about that. Avant-garde in, what, lifestyle or—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I just didn't—rules were not to be paid attention to.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Ah, that's interesting.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Most rules.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, well I don't know about you but my parents came out of the Depression so despite the fact—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, my parents did obviously too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, so they were very supportive but they—obviously, I was about to ask about why you didn't become an artist. My parents always wanted me to either have a backup plan, even though my dad had an art scholarship that he had to renege on because of the Depression.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, my mother never—my mother was very well educated but not because she went to college. My father graduated—was born in Williamsburg. My mother was born in Budapest but she came when she was three. My father went to City College, and they didn't ask me to do anything but what I needed to do.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's incredible. My parents were supportive in that regard too. They really—whatever my interests were, they left me follow them. Did your interests change?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Listen, I complied. I did everything they wanted me to do. I was a star. You know, I did all those things, and I did well in school, and I was popular, and why were they going to be pissed off at me?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, because keep in mind, this is a period of time when there were prescribed paths.

RHONA HOFFMAN: My parents, though, were very—were progressive Democrats.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There, that's what I'm hinting at is that they were not your ordinary—

RHONA HOFFMAN: You can just ask me directly because I'm tired, but my—I tease people and I don't even know if it's true [00:04:00] but I say even my piano teacher came with the *Daily Worker* under her arm. But they read *The Nation* and they read *PM*. My mother occasionally went to Washington to lobby for this and that. My—the ADA, America for Democratic Action. They were called—in New Rochelle where we ended up living—they were called Parlor Pinks. My best

friend, Susan Sacker, not best friend but one of my good friends, Susan Sacker's father's name was Harry Sacker. And he was one of the lawyers who defended the six communists in front of Judge Medina who had a heart attack during the thing.

Well, that's all right. My—Susan's mother got a rash that never left. But so I come from an environment that is very quickly associated with freedom and freedom of thought. They were literate, literary. Their friends were also. In those days, my mother's generation, if you went to school and graduated, and you weren't married when you were a bambina—

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I was getting at, particularly for women.

RHONA HOFFMAN: The women, you went and you taught school for a while until you got married. So their friends were also that left-wing part of the world.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They have more open views of what was possible for a woman.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, even my grandmother who was, you know, was Hungarian, when Franklin Roosevelt died, my mother said the first thing she did was race to my grandmother's house to see if she'd had a heart attack because she was in love with Franklin.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, no. Many people were. And actually that's an important thing. So you were in a skewed sort of environment in terms of America in the '50s and whatever. You were in an environment that was very supportive of the arts and of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I went to camp—even the camps I went to. I went to Camp Woodland when I was a little kid. My sister did too and Camp Woodland was run by The Little Red Schoolhouse, Norman Studer, Norman and Hannah Studer. [00:06:00] Pete Seeger was there sitting under a tree. In fact, there's a film of Pete Seeger, which I just gave away so many, where he talked about his life, about being blacklisted and thing and he couldn't get a job. But finally, he said, and everyone thinks—I gave them all away because people think I lied or at least was speaking in hyperbole—where he says, "Finally, this left-wing camp gave me a job." And across the screen comes Camp Woodland, Phoenicia, New York. So that was my camp.

And eventually, my sister's counselor was Charity Bailey of Little Boxes on the Hilltop. So I was raised on folk music as well as the *Young People's Concert* at Carnegie Hall with Leonard, what's his name, something Ganz and then later Leonard Bernstein was the person leading that. But many years later, the camp was closed because they were all indicted by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

So the next camp I went to was called Shaker Village Work Camp, another very cultured, you don't learn to swim but you learn how to sing Bach. [Laughs.] So that's—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I guess that's an interesting backdrop and I guess I have sort of prepared questions.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm sure it created me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But I'm interested to just follow the flow of where we're going with this, because this is a fascinating time for me. I mean, I was very, very young. I grew up in the '50s, but blacklisting, did you have friends, or your family, or did you know people who were blacklisted?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I have no idea. I was too young.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You were too young to be aware of that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: To be aware of it. I don't think—I don't know. I know my parents would have gladly murdered what's his face?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Eisenhower. No, who?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, no, no, no, no.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Before that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, the person who ran the committee.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, not McNamara. [Joseph McCarthy]

RHONA HOFFMAN: Same ilk but—

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] We're both losing it here, but—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, it's really so funny.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It is. Everyone.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, everyone knows who that is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But in any case, yes. [00:08:00] He was an evil person.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, no. He was—he was evil and the thing that's so interesting is that Robert Kennedy was so much a part of that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He was a counsel for, I know—

RHONA HOFFMAN: He was the counsel.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I know Roy Cohn.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Roy Cohn.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Cohn, Cohen, whatever—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Cohn. Cohn. Jew.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I know he was—that's the other thing that's very fascinating too, also gay, I believe, and therefore, like, so hypocritical as we continue to see with the politics today. The ones who make the most noise are the ones that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The sad truth was, really came out of that really wonderful movie recently called *Imitation Game*. Did you see that?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure, yes, yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That man was hung out to dry because he was gay instead of celebrated because he cracked the code and saved the war.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, you can win the war and yet you still—yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, so you grew up and what made you—I mean you could easily, you said, just stay with Martha Graham which is pretty amazing right there. And you played piano as well. What made you veer towards art rather than those other things?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Because I painted. That's what I did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That was probably your first passion.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I liked it. Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Did you have any training? You had mentioned that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I took painting lessons.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You took painting lessons and did you go to school in terms of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —Any training in terms of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, no, no, no. I went to Vassar and my first—I took—I was going to take a class in—a practical painting class. But then I took my first art history class, 105, and when I looked up at the screen and went oh, I'll just hang it up. Because I realized, I mean I had a—I'm smart. I realized that that was just really sort of fooling around stuff, but I really didn't have any

kind of ideas formulated or any kind of—not even I don't want to say gestalt but—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Artistic vision.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I was more—it was very clear to me that I was—had eyes better to appreciate than to make.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know those feelings of being aware of your limits.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't—I didn't consider it a limit.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's the other thing. [00:10:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's not a limit. It's just—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I mean I ended up becoming a curator and I could do the things I loved just like you in a slightly different fashion. I think things—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I was never disappointed that I couldn't paint.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Me neither. I don't think—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean it wasn't really a passion. It wasn't anything that I thought of as an occupation.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You didn't have to do it like many people talk about.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I felt no need to do it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It wasn't a driving force.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It wasn't anything. It was just something I did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you loved the arts so that's the way—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I liked [playing] around with paint. It's fun. I still like it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you still do some—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't do it, but I paint—I have my galleries painted constantly.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you have—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I have a much better appreciation of—I think, though, that having done some painting, it's much easier for me as a gallerist to deconstruct what someone else has done because I know how it's done. I know how difficult it is. I know what—I understand the vocabulary. I understand the motions of making things. So it gives me—I think people—a lot of art dealers, if you went and you interviewed lots of art dealers, you'll find that many of them painted or did that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I think I agree. It helps a lot because it's dealing with artists, which we'll get to. We're coming to that eventually but that's a whole other thing, but it helps to be able to understand what the process is and also the—what's a reasonable demand or isn't.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I find there's a difference between understanding what the process is. That's an intellectual endeavor. There's an understanding that comes when you're hands on where you know how the process feels and you've done it yourself. There's a completely different association to making art when you have that in your repertoire.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I guess we're skipping—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Or mixing paint, and you know how to mix—for instance, the painting lessons I took, we had to do—copy a picture, [00:12:00] one of my best paintings of this very black face, beautiful African male. And we weren't allowed to use black. So that was the exercise in learning how to make black, to make blue-black, green-black, yellow-black, all that black. Well, that was probably the biggest thing I ever did was understanding that how to do that and how—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's not just theory. That's actually—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, that's actually paint. That was oil paint, mixing oil paint to create the illusion of blackness even though there was another color there that was predominant.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I guess we're going to skip around a little bit because we're—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Sure, why not?

LANNY SILVERMAN: —We ended up doing circles with Vera yesterday. But I guess one of the questions I had was what made you into a gallery dealer?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, it was a total accident. It was because I got divorced and I got screwed in my divorce. I didn't have any money.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Is this Donald Young you're talking about or—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: This is before that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, my children's father.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so this is before that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, before Donald. So before that, I was on the Board of the Art Institute. I was on the Board—I mean I was a nice, wealthy, Jewish lady. And then when I got divorced, my husband didn't want to get divorced so he snuck away the money, gave me some child support, but he gave me the ability to go to work. And I was running the MCA, running the store, which I started.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I didn't realize that. That's wild too. Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, Helyn Goldenberg and I started the store and ran the store for years as a business.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So Grace Hokin, I don't know if you know that name.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I know Helyn Goldenberg but yes, okay.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Grace Hokin had a gallery in Bar Harbor, Florida and one also on Ontario Street in Chicago. And she came across the street, my proverbial way I explain my life. She said I'm so happy you're finally getting divorced because it wasn't quiet, and I'm really sorry you've lost all the money. [00:14:00] But why don't you come across the street and become the director of my gallery in Chicago. And I said Gracie, I don't know how to run a gallery. I don't know anything about it. She said, "Don't be silly." She said, "You've run a business for the museum for 10 years."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: All the collectors are good friends of yours.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, that's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: You studied art history at Vassar and the rest I can teach you in 10 or 15 minutes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So it was kind of just happenstance. Things fell—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was completely fluky thing, yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that was—so that's before Young Hoffman. You were working for her for —

RHONA HOFFMAN: About a year.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And then—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Because then Donald and I got together.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you formed that gallery together, I assume.

RHONA HOFFMAN: My divorce became final in '74 and then Donald and I got together both as—in our private lives and in business, '75, and we opened the gallery October '76.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that was across from the MCA at that point.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, it was on Ohio Street. It was over Sayat Nova.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yes. I know Sayat Nova. Sure. Wow. So the gallery, I was going to ask you about the changing art scene, because I know the galleries where some of them, including Young Hoffman—

RHONA HOFFMAN: There were a lot on Ontario.

LANNY SILVERMAN: On Ontario, but I didn't even know about the Ohio—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think we were the—no. We were on the second floor. Rebecca Donaldson and Andree Stone had the D'art Gallery.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Is Andree still around?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, she died.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I wondered because I don't hear anything.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, no, but Donaldson is—she lives outside of Aspen, Rebecca. And they were on the third floor. That was it. That was the—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And it was a much smaller gallery scene, even when it consolidated. It was pretty small at that point.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I guess. Who was there then? Richard Gray was there, Phyllis was there. What's her face? Then there was somebody named Dobkin who had a gallery and [00:16:00] Marianne Deson had a gallery. And D'art Gallery, Richard Feigen.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Allan Frumkin was there. Main Street Gallery was there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't even know that one.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So there was considerable art in Chicago.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But it was more consolidated than it is today, perhaps, but that's another question.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, but that was the good news that it was more or less consolidated. The bad news is what we have now.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, it's all over the map. We'll come to that eventually because I'm sure I want to ask a little bit about that. But so let's talk about Young Hoffman. What was the dynamic there? Did you have a division? I don't know if you're comfortable getting into the dynamic in terms of your relationship or end with the professional. You're fine with that. So I guess the question is, were you doing more of the curating or sort of working with artists? Was he the business end or—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He was—you mixed the things up.

RHONA HOFFMAN: We both did both.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Both did both. That's good. And in terms of your aesthetic, I mean I only—I came to Chicago in the '80s, late '80s and at that point, I think I visited it once when it was across the MCA. What intrigued me about the gallery was that you guys—you and Marianne

Deson had a reputation for picking challenging art, work that had some cerebral content but also had some guts and was well crafted, both of you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And what led you to that particular—I'm characterizing, I don't know if I'm mischaracterizing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's okay. No, I don't mind.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's a reasonable characterization. If it is, what I'm curious about is just what led you to that particular sort of choice or focus.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, the way you describe it was the toughness and challenging, that's part of it. The other thing was that we both liked the same art—kind of art. So it was easy to be partners since we both liked the same things.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That helps. Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And we—the—what is loosely or unfortunately named minimal art was something that we really enjoyed. [00:18:00] It was also a fact that we wanted to show art that wasn't seen in Chicago. Everyone was showing Harry Yu. Phyllis Kind had become associated with Marilyn Fischbach Gallery, so Alex Katz and this, and this, and that. Marianne, I don't know what she was doing but she was—she has—Marianne has a great eye and she would do a show with the great artists. I mean she had Stella. She had this one. She had Bruce Nauman, but they never showed again with her because, I'm not going to talk about it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Again, that might not be—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Whatever it was, but they became one-off things and that's something that Donald and I did not want. We wanted to—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You wanted a good relationship with your artists.

RHONA HOFFMAN: We wanted to stay with an artist. If we liked the artist and we liked the ideas, and we liked the way the ideas were manifested, then we wanted to have a relationship that went over time. First of all, that's good for us in our personal lives. It also takes a while for the public to get used to the art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Particularly in Chicago.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, not particularly Chicago. Chicagoans are pretty smart.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I think so, but the art that we're comfortable or familiar with is the stuff that was the prevailing trend. There were a lot of things going on that weren't.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, that's true and then that's not true. I mean they're all true. There's a 360-degree playing field. And the thing about the gallery was also that Chicago had—I did this in another interview recently, I feel like I'm—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're repeating yourself.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm repeating myself.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, no one else will have seen that one. So don't worry about it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Was that Chicago has a history that can be easily verified by the fact that there were small but very well-fortuned, smart people affiliated with museums who collected the art of their time. The Impressionists, the people from Lake Forest who foisted [00:20:00] that collection up the Art Institute. The Surrealist collectors that came after, the Picassos, the Dubuffets, the thises and the thats that came after it in the '50s and '60s. Mort Neumann.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Of course.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, Muriel Neumann, Gerry Elliott, the Sternbergs, the Manilows. I can go on, and on, and on. That's what Grace meant when she said all the collectors are your friends. I mean I belonged to the Society for Contemporary Art then. And in those days, it wasn't at the Art

Institute, it was in people's homes. It was the Marimonts, or the Hogans, or the thises, or the Shapiros, or the Bergmans. So there's this history. This is very, very strong, vital history of collectors in Chicago buying and supporting art that is contemporary to their lives. And I think Donald and I then—I don't know if we talked about it, but it was just there.

And so Manilows, Gerry Elliott, Morty Neumann and Rose, all these people came and supported us right from the get go.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So it is very natural. For you, I mean it didn't—there was no leap of faith or it was just very natural kind of transition.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, and also, you know, that Jan van der Marck having been the first director of the MCA who was a genius curator, the first show that he did at the MCA in 1968, I believe, was—title was *Paintings to be Read, Poetry to be Seen*. He next did a show—he did another show, which predated MOMA's *Information* show, which is now so celebrated.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And Jan did it. It was called Art by Telephone.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Wow.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He was the one that he, like Christo wrapped the museum. He's the one who did this and that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yes. I missed some things in Chicago that were pretty wonderful. I wondered about that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, the MCA was really amazing. Jim Spires, at the same time, although he was too cheap or too whatever, [00:22:00] too wealthy to buy art, if he had bought everything he did for these shows, then the Art Institute would have one of the most incredible contemporary art collection. He did this thing called the American show and I don't remember how often it was. It may have been every other year, maybe every third year, but he showed what people still call cutting edge. He showed, in 1974, Anne Rorimer was his curator, Anne being a brilliant curator. They did a show called *European Art of the '70s* in 1974 where they had [included Marcel Broodthaers and Victor Burgin, and also Gerhard [Richter], [. . . –RH]—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm impressed because this is—

RHONA HOFFMAN: They had all these people.

LANNY SILVERMAN: People need to know this because Chicago is stereotyped.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Daniel Buren. Well, this—I have the catalogue. I mean it was a great, great show. They did—the Broodthaers was the Winter Garden room. And they had [inaudible], Jan Dibbets. They had—so anyway, then he had another American show, which had early Bruce Nauman and the—oh, the MCA also gave Flavin his first museum exhibition.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting because that's not what you would expect either.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Why wouldn't you expect it?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well—

RHONA HOFFMAN: You don't understand the Museum of Contemporary Art and you go back—

LANNY SILVERMAN: The history—mostly what you hear are the complaints from artists that they haven't supported the local art scene.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, they're so full of shit, and you can keep that in please.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] That's fine.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I am just so—let me just tell you something.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're tired of that particular route.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You know what kind of artists say things like that? Really bad ones.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I hear you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Really mediocre artists who are not going to survive any kind of thing, who are never going to be in a museum.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, the thing is, there's also stereotypes in terms of what Chicago—it's not just Don Balman and Dennis Adrian's cadre, but there's certain kinds of—Chicago supported abstract art. We had Miyoko Ito. We have wonderful things. We have sculptors.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But Miyoko Ito isn't a great artist. She's a good artist.

LANNY SILVERMAN: She's a good artist, but I mean we had a lot of abstraction. We had Conceptual art. I mean, more—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Who were the Conceptual artists?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, more recently I think of Inigo Manglano-Ovalle.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But that's contemporary.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's very contemporary—[00:24:00] but back then I don't know if we had Bob Peters then. Let's go with that. He's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know who he is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Robert Peters, he was Conceptual sort of installation. So he was back, way back. So there was—what I'm saying, there are undercurrents that beat out the stereotype.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Look, the MCA was founded to show the best art of the century, to show the best art and not to confine it. It's not supposed to be a local museum. It was showing art that was international.

LANNY SILVERMAN: International, of course.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And that was their subject. That's what they did and the artists who, "They didn't show me," fuck it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I hear you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I am so sick. I realize I wasn't so great. I stopped painting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Come to terms with your—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Enjoy, and if you really don't want to stop painting or making sculpture, keep making it. But don't keep complaining.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, that's one of the things I—well, I've been to a lot of cities where that's the complaint. One of the problems is if you then start to show local art, it gets either ghettoized or put in a different context.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, local art remains local. I mean if you're talking about local art that stays local, but I don't like the term regional. It used to be regional.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That was the big term a while back.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There was the big term but there—and there's another subject we should get into. Chicago has no press so it stayed pretty local.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That was a nice topic.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, so the MCA actually does show—I don't like it either, the 12 by 12 shows. I think it's a little bit but it's not enough.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, that's what I'm getting at. It's sort of in between. It doesn't—

RHONA HOFFMAN: On the other hand, it's not their job to support Chicago artists.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's what you were saying.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Once they find them and they give them those shows and they really like them, they do incorporate them into their other programs.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Of course. I mean there are success stories. Look at Kerry James Marshall or others. There's people that are, well, he—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, Kerry's always been out there in the world. He had a New York dealer too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, Shainman.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He always had Jack.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Actually, we showed him before—I think Jack came to see the show at the Cultural Center. That was the first thing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, that's possible.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He had Koplin's gallery out in LA but he had [00:26:00]—he didn't have Jack saw the show at the Cultural Center. That was the first show he did in Chicago and actually, from there it was like he was a hit from the beginning.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, and Kerry stayed very loyal to her.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, because yes, he died. I think the husband was alive when we did the show and—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Did she die?

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, she's I think still around.

RHONA HOFFMAN: She's all right. Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, I think she still is. I haven't followed that. I guess let's go back to the—you've opened up a lot of topics that we'll get to because I have them in my prepared list, but some of the things when I was talking about challenging art and exciting art, you also showed a lot of political art and a lot of women.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I'm a very political person. So it's my gallery. So I can do what I want.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Exactly. Well, that's one of the great pleasures and that's the way as a curator I feel is that you can support what you love and that's a way of giving voice to some of your interests. So you showed, like, Vito Acconci.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I still do.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, well that's great. Vito Acconci, Gordon Matta Clark.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Still do.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Still do. Yes. And those are people that are sort of avant-garde at the very least and possibly not the easiest sales. Maybe—I mean presumably Gordon Matta Clark is a little tough to deal with for collectors, no?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No. Now, it isn't.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Now, it isn't. I meant back then.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, the Bergmans bought it, Manilows bought it, museum bought.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Eventually I'm sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, at the time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, even at the time. So there is support. That was going to come—that was part of my question about your—already addressed this issue. There were apparently some very educated and sophisticated buyers in Chicago even way back, and I guess one of the reputations that I've heard, this again—maybe this is perhaps apocryphal but one of the questions is, you

know, the reputation that the collectors had is that they would often not buy—they go to New York to buy the art. They wouldn't buy it here but you're here to say differently, I'm sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think that both—they both did. One of the things—I think the beginning of this horrible 10% discount thing came because people would buy art out of town because they would save the tax.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, that's what I was going to get at.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So the 10 percent discount was the thing that covered the tax. [00:28:00] Now, became—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You already get the ten percent and not pay the tax, so—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I don't know. No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't know if they did or they didn't, but—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was just a bigger pool, but we had some people—the people who bought from us also bought in New York, or also bought in Paris, or also bought in Cologne, or also bought—because the people who buy art who are interested in the subject of art and art making, and the history of art, travel. I travel all over the world with the same curators and collectors. To go—Panza, the first thing he'd say after hello is, what work have you seen. Everyone says that. What have you done, where shall I go, what shall I do. I came back from Venice. What was the best thing you saw?

LANNY SILVERMAN: What's next? Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's all about information.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And I keep trying to tell people, art is not simply a visual exercise. It is also an ideational one. And art that is worth anything is a manifestation of some idea or ideas. And art that is not, I'm not interested in.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So let's go back again to where we were with the Young Hoffman Gallery.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Okay.

LANNY SILVERMAN: When you split from Donald you then had your own gallery.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Did that change anything about what you did or didn't do, or you just—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Since it sounds like you two were in sync, your aesthetic and also your way of working together, it probably was just a more—

RHONA HOFFMAN: We just, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Just a physical split.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, we still fit like—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, and he still maintained, I know from seeing, following his gallery as well, he still maintained an active interest in the same kind of work.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Let's go back to the feminist issue, because I know that's an important issue for you. Back in the '60s—I mean this is before the Guerrilla Girls even, one of the complaints apart from locals complaining about—always about not getting representation, one of the complaints in the art world is that women are given short shrift in most of the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Were.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Were. It's probably changed quite a bit. It's not completely done, but—[00:30:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, it is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You think so?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Mostly, in America anyway.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really? So you think it's different in Europe?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Perhaps. I don't want to be that sure of it because I don't—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm wondering that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I can name a lot of very famous European artists who are female. So—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, likewise, but I don't know what their careers—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But not a lot. There are more men.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Louise Bourgeois. I mean there's some wonderful—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, Louise lived in—on 23rd Street. So—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, I don't know if that's—that's more—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, she's not European.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes. So did you make—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But Isa Genzken.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Rebecca Horn.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Bridget Reilly.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Eva Hesse, but she's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Eva Hesse lived in New York.

LANNY SILVERMAN: She lives in New York, of course. Yes, I was thinking she wasn't—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I mean, am I a feminist? Yes, of course I am.

LANNY SILVERMAN: What I wanted to ask you was did you make a conscious—here's the question, I guess.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Did you make a conscious effort? It just happened that you're interested—that you did tend to show more women perhaps than other galleries?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's not an accident but it's not entirely a conscious, you weren't like saying, it wasn't an agenda.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It wasn't an agenda. But I found that women artists, maybe because I'm a woman, had—were manifesting art that was really interesting to me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman, God, I can list so many of them, Sylvia. I just bought back a Sylvia Mangold watercolor that I sold to Claudia Luebbers years ago and every

time I went to Claudia's Christmas party I'd say—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, it got away. Why did I do that?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Why did I let her buy that? I just paid—so Sylvia Plimack Mangold, who was still a hard sell. Not a hard sell but not everyone's appetite. But there were so many women, Cindy, Barbara, Jenny Holzer, Kiki Smith, all doing so many interesting things and it's what they call, what Barbara Kruger really spent a lot of time doing, which was that the whole art world [00:32:00] seemed to be about the male gaze. Well, what about the girl gaze?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And then back in the '70s, when I got divorced, and even though I did all the bookkeeping for the family, I paid all the bills, I bought everything. When I tried to get an American Express card, they said, "Are you working?" And they wouldn't give me—I could not buy—a woman could not get—an unmarried woman could not get an American Express card. Fast forward to when they offered me one. I said go—I don't want you anymore.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Really, now that you come to me, forget it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I was young and I was involved with reading Germaine Greer as the Female Unit, reading Betty Friedan. Gloria Steinem and I are absolutely the same age. And so all of those, all the literature about that and about women, and today—now, I have to be a feminist against because of all those imbeciles, those republicans.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's going back in circles.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, they never—

LANNY SILVERMAN: They never went away. They're just holding on.

RHONA HOFFMAN: They never went away but now people are trying to change things so that their opinions are becoming—look, Marco Rubio and what's his face, Walker, are talking about—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Scott Walker.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Scott Walker, of being on a ticket together. And then we have apocalypse.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Apocalypse now. Well, yes. The thing is that they never let go but I think they're threatened now because let's face it—

RHONA HOFFMAN: We have a court that could do it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Not only the court but the fact that the population is about to turn. It's not going to be all white males in the future. It's going to be very hard for them to maintain. This is the dying embers, I think, of their hope. I'd like to be positive about it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'd like the world run by women because we're smarter than they are.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I think there would be some huge improvements. Let's face it, there are evil women too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, the problem—the big problem with the world—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Look at Thatcher.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —As I see it, is that everything that—the decisions on everything are based now upon money. [00:34:00] Fracking, for instance, right now, has been proven to cause earthquakes. It destroys the water quality but the money will not stop it. Cuomo, in New York, has banned it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, that's exceptional. That is kind of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: So the fact is that who runs the world? Money runs the world?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's the big issue that's—we're not going to be able to resolve that in an hour and a half.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, we don't, I know, but someone has to.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Someone has to because—

RHONA HOFFMAN: There has to be a national law.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because I don't see it changing very quickly.

RHONA HOFFMAN: How many parts of a planet can you destroy at one time?

LANNY SILVERMAN: And the unfortunate part is, it's what makes people really frustrated because forget about the parties or the politics. It's really about the corporate—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The American people are so stupidly educated, if at all educated. And the church, the churches, the religionists who are also based in money—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, of course.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Based in money.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Look at the Vatican Bank.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Nice little pedophile priests. It's all about money and they are going to defend it. I mean a friend of mine the other day said there's this nice young couple who were Catholic. And they went to their local stupid priest who told them that they should practice rhythm and that a woman has six days before and six days after her period where she cannot conceive. Oh, yes. Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Right.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And the man at least said, well, that means we can't have sex half the—more than half of the month. He said, well, you can have sex but you just can't have intercourse. And so this is—I mean that was an eye opener for me that—

LANNY SILVERMAN: How much have we changed?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, the thing is we don't educate people. We have the worst education system in the world.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, it's appalling and not to mention our healthcare system. We're getting—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But no, but the education system is pretty pertinent to the art discussion because the [00:36:00] first thing that is eliminated from budgets of schools is music and art. And it's the two things that save people's lives in the end. I really truly believe it. I really—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, if you could travel to other cultures, as I have and I'm sure you have too, you see in other cultures its part of people's everyday lives.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, and why is ISIS destroying that culture? Because they know how powerful it is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's threatening and they are also very male dominated.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's very threatening.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Male dominating and that's a whole other topic too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, that's the testosterone.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, and it's a real serious issue in terms of the fear—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Serious, it's horrifying.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, fear of women and anything feminine.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I want to pick on something—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, women are just for raping. Come on, get with it. Get with the program.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Exactly. Let's go back, I want to pick up on something you said. You mentioned you regret—I know this because I'm a—even though sort of ethically it puts me in a strange position, I collect tin toys, but I also collect art. I'm a collector. Are you a collector? You say you regret letting some—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I bought one plant. Look what's happening.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm not so good with plants either. I'm better with objects.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really. You like plants.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Toby's good with plants, not me. But so you have a lust for discovery of—in other words, you also collect whether it be art, like its other cultures, I know.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, so that's—and has that ever become a problem in terms of letting go of stuff, like when you really are—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, there's some things I never let go of and then there are others that come and go.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're okay with that, just being a temporary guardian of the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting too. Let's see, in terms of—I mentioned you've also shown political art. So you still represent Leon and Nancy, yes?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, so there's political art as well. That's near and dear to your heart as well and there are other artists I'm not—I'm blanking out on who they may be. But I'm sure there are other—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Jenny Holzer.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, of course. Jenny Holzer. Yes, yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Barbara Kruger.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Barbara Kruger. Of course, you've mentioned them already. So—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Michael Rakowitz now, whom I show.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you actually—[00:38:00] so your lineup, if people wonder what your lineup is, it comes out of you, your past, your history. It's very much you. It's not market driven or you don't ever look at—you mentioned some things as like Sylvia Plimack Mangold. You said that's a tougher sell. You don't look at that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's not market driven.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Market driven. But you've managed to still be standing here after 40 or 50—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Forty years next year.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Forty years of this and you still manage to do this, which is impressive to me because I, myself, love challenging art and actually that to me is the most exciting stuff and there's nothing wrong with classical things or Modernist things, but it's not an easy business I would think.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: What do you attribute—this wasn't a question I had in mind but how do you think you managed to?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I show good art and people come look at it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you know the right people to buy it and you have the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Sometimes. No, but not anymore. I mean it used to be in the real hey days of the gallery in the '80s you'd get eight paintings in, say, and you'd have 10 or 12 buyers. Now, you have 12 paintings and maybe eight buyers.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there are people that there are waiting lists for and that's the other thing that's new to the art. It didn't used to be this. You have to be the right—now you have to be the right person or approve. There are many galleries—I have friends—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, that's highly exaggerated. I'm sure it is true. I'm sure it is. Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I had a friend who ran into that in—it is true. I have friends who collect—a friend in Wisconsin, in Madison and Chris Johannsson, I guess he got a piece there pretty early on, but he was trying—he has a pretty advanced taste. He's a filmmaker but he has pretty advanced taste, but oftentimes he gets beaten out because they won't even—who's he? He teaches film at UW—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I sell to anyone who wants to buy, but there is—it couldn't be, like, a little list. But if you come to a gallery and the work is sold, and there—then we call you the next time we get more work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're not—you don't play that game with that whole waiting list.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I mean I'd rather a museum buy it or a really good collector, but—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, placing the art is important and that actually helps the artist's career, [00:40:00] helps everybody. But there's—it's gotten to the point where the art galleries—I don't think that's just rumor from what I can see.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, in many instances it's—

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's people that they want to—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's the way it goes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's the way it goes. Do you—I wasn't planning on asking this right now, but I guess it comes up. Do you do any sales online? Has it changed in terms of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: We have started doing some online. We use Art.net or we have a website and people will call us, but it's getting more and more. It's getting bigger and bigger.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because I noticed that's the other thing that's happening with galleries is more and more things are sold before they're even shown because someone looks at it online and says, yes, I'll take two of those or whatever.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know. That doesn't really happen to me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's not your experience. Going back—circling back over to where we were talking about, about your sort of stable of arts, what attracts you? When you're looking at what's next and you're thinking about—you probably have plenty enough artists and this isn't meant to be a tip for artists, but what hooks you into a new artist? What gets you excited about a new artist to represent?

RHONA HOFFMAN: The same thing about the old artist.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Something challenging?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I've got to like it and I have to find it interesting. I have to find it—I don't know if challenging is the right word. I mean there's a coming together, even in terms of Leon who makes these big, nasty paintings but they're still beautiful.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They're beautiful, beautiful decay.

RHONA HOFFMAN: They're beautiful and so there's a—there's got to be an integration of the idea and the presentation that is visually appealing as well. No one—you don't convince anyone that your idea is good by making an ugly thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I was going to ask you about that too because I guess—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Although, beauty is not in the eyes of the beholder.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there's ugly beauty. There's the wabi-sabi thing, that whole thing about imperfection and about decay, like Schwitters or, yes, or Leon's, that sort of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, but I just came from a—I was just looking at a whole bunch of Schwitters in Hanover, Germany recently, and he may have been saying that but that's not what he did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [00:42:00] What do you mean? He was looking for—

RHONA HOFFMAN: He was talking about decay and ugly but he didn't make decayed, ugly painting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He didn't take things off of the street or stuff like that?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, he did but he put them into a collage that was exquisite.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's what I'm saying. Well, you can take—it's just the materials that are—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I mean plebian or whatever, flotsam.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That was just about saying that all materials is worthy, is valid.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well ahead of its time.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Or of its time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or, yes. Where was I going? There was something I was going to ask you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: About why—what makes me like a new artist?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, that was part of it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I have to look at it and it has to be challenging. Sometimes I look at art that someone else is showing or that is there and it bothers me, and I don't particularly like it. So I look at it more, but the only work I know isn't going to be—end up in the gallery, something that goes, eh. Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't want anything that is just okay. You want something—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I would prefer something that's not okay.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You want something that's—you'd rather have something that's provocative.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I can buy wallpaper.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure. Well, sometimes people use art as wallpaper, I'm sure, and as a matter of fact, when you're surrounded by art all the time, sometimes it become—I'm surrounded by some very challenging things that after a while they almost disappear in the background.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But it's not like that. It's like a book. I mean the book is on the shelf and you don't really know it until you open the pages and start reading. So I mean art is compelling. You can come home and not feel like looking at your art. So it exists but not for you that night.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, well it doesn't have to be always in the foreground. That's I guess my point.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, it's just you're not paying attention every time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know what I was going to ask you. I was going to ask you, you alluded to this before but I was going to ask if you've developed—it sounds like you wanted to only work with artists that you felt comfortable with for the long-term. And have you maintained relationships with artists? Have you crossed those barriers between, like, professional and sort of personal with artists?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Mostly, sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that usually is the case.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That usually is what happens.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, so you have an ongoing relationship. [00:44:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean it's like any other kind of friendship where you both find out you like to play ping pong. So you play ping pong together and eventually that becomes—you become friends.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure. So the other thing I was thinking about was have you jump started any particular artists that you've really got them started that you're proudest of? I mean who would you say of the people—not the—because you've shown some established artists but you've also made—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, some of the people you call established weren't so established when we started showing them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I'm getting at. Did you give them their first—people that you're proudest of in terms of getting them—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not first. I don't know about first but I mean, mostly there isn't first. Mostly, there's early simultaneity.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Things just sort of are in the atmosphere and—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes. I mean Vito Acconci was in no place when we picked it up and Sol Lewitt wasn't a household name. Donald Judd wasn't a household name. None of these people were. They were starting out in the '60s. No one—I found an Eva Hesse even in the '70s and called everybody who should have said, oh my God, I'll take it, and they went, Eva who? So I'm happy with, like, helping Spencer Finch. There are a lot of people. I showed Cindy Sherman in 1978, so does that count I guess?

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's when she was a white wall system [ph]—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: She wasn't in Buffalo. She was in New York at that point?

RHONA HOFFMAN: She was in New York. She was coming. No. Janelle, who worked for Leo Castelli, found her. I found her at Janelle. Janelle was about to open a gallery that became Metro Pictures.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Of course, yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Barbara Kruger wasn't well known. A lot of people weren't known. I mean there are lots of them that weren't well known.

LANNY SILVERMAN: To me as a curator, that's the most exciting thing is to really find—it's the thrill—it's maybe because I'm a picker too. I like finding stuff. It's the beauty of finding the gem

amongst all the crap. [00:46:00] It's going thrift shop or wherever it is but it's also out in the world is finding someone and seeing that they're undervalued and having them—so you've had that experience.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That's not a big thrill for me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's not a big thrill for you?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I like when I go to flea markets, I like doing that. But I don't do that in New York.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't see it as an analogous process?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: From what you're saying, they're usually fully formed as artists. They just—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, because the fact is you don't find them when they're in vitro.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I'm saying. They're fully formed as artists. They're just not—

RHONA HOFFMAN: You see them. It usually used to be you'd to go an artist space, or Exit Art, and the young collaborative galleries that artists formed are where you find them. So the real finding is the art—other artists find them. And then you pluck them out. You can be second or third. Curators find them through dealers.

LANNY SILVERMAN: A lot of times.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Mostly.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: What happens is among all the people you know in the art world, you find that there are groups or single numbers of people with whom you usually agree. You have similar tastes. And so you talk amongst yourselves and you—that's who you speak to. What have you seen, what do you find interesting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what you're talking about when you get back from the B&O. You just basically—it's like what's hot now.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not hot. I don't like hot.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't like hot. You want—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I think hot's fucking stupid.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's too much in fashion or something.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, it's just stupid. It's not hot. You know, it's not hot. It's hot for someone but what's hot for you isn't necessarily hot for me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: What's hot is the money again.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, I see what you're saying. Yes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Where was I? I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Thinking back, blanking out now myself.

RHONA HOFFMAN: My fucking hot thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I got going on that. Wait a second here.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Sorry, American Archives. I swear. [00:48:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't think that's a problem at all, and whether they edit that out.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But again, it's a matter of taste and what—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're talking about other artists and—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's a matter of taste, what you like and what you don't like, and what you can have, and what you can't have. People like Ed Rucha. Ed Rucha was out of favor for many years and now he's very, very much in favor because people have finally come around, going okay, I get it. It took me 10 years but I get it now. Bruce Nauman moved to Pecos, New Mexico and his career went sort of—plummeted. But then he comes back and makes some fabulous art. And someone goes and says, "Hey, I don't care where the hell you live. This is great stuff."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, it's quite possible today to not have to be in New York or it's—the world has changed so much in terms of social media and all that stuff. But I guess what we were blanking out about is just about being—not so important—it's not the flea market find. It's more that the artist is already developed. It's more just that they're undervalued and that it's more just giving them the arena. I mean I think—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Undervalued in terms of not money. Undervalued, just not—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Not getting an audience or attention.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Getting attention, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The money is another story.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, there's a—it's a bad word. There's a fashionability. There's some things that go out of where you—they're great but you can't see them because your era is just out of sync with whatever was going on. I mean the biggest example I can—is Velasquez. The men always owned them but they had them in the basement for a number of decades.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a lot of things in the basements of museums that come out.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It just was out of sync and you have a certain amount of space. You can't show everything. You keep accumulating. That's what storage is for. So it cycles in and out.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And some things are forever but not ever present.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, and in terms of—I guess one of the questions, [00:50:00] oh, this is a question I was going to ask about later. I asked a little bit about social media and stuff like that, and marketing. I imagine you're going to be pretty cynical about this, but did you notice that Kehinde Wiley's paintings are now in the—is it Netflix, that series about the hip hop culture?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I gave him his first show, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know. That's why I bring this up. It's now become marketable. Now, when you market art, when I was in LA, I remember everyone saying, oh, I got credit in this movie or that. Artists were really into the opposite of what you're into, into the making it big, fame, getting all the attention and money, that whole sort of rap. And I guess now—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm going to say that Kehinde—although we don't work together anymore for various reasons—he is an artist who is very much involved with his art. He loves the attention because he's an actor. You know, he loves that, but he's a serious artist. And he's flamboyant. He likes to fish. He likes to make a scene, but it would be wrong to dismiss him as an artist because he's so flamboyant.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It makes sense from what you're saying, of course, that he would then take to having paintings in—as a backdrop to TV series or whatever.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Why not? That's been done forever. Arnie Glimcher, when he went into the movie business, put good art in his films.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's what I'm getting at, when you're in—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Edward G. Robinson was an art collector. I have a book called *Hollywood Collects*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Vincent Price. Lots of people. Steve Martin.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There were lots of Hollywood people who were well educated.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's a tradition. It goes back way—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know if it's a tradition but they were educated people, and they liked art, and they had money to buy it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure. That makes perfect sense. I want to go back to a theme that we started, sort of just touched upon, which is something to do with the politics in Chicago. This came up a little in some other interviews I've done, but the history of Chicago. Which, this is before my time but you mentioned the Art Institute versus the MCA. [00:52:00] At one point, the Art Institute was the, for lack of a better term, the *goyishe* institution. You mentioned the Naumans and the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: There's a word I really loathe.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, we can just say that it was definitely—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was perceived by Jews to be unfriendly toward Jewish people.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So let's hear your take on that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: The Blocks—I mean the Blocks didn't, they didn't go out and take a thing, say I'm not Jewish. But Mary Block was a Jew. Mrs. Mayer [Beatrice Cummings] was—I was on the Woman's Board.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you would know. This is why I bring this up. I'm curious about—this is something that's been transmitted to me as the history of Chicago and that the MCA was brought—came about largely as a sort of redress—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was in part because the Jews felt ignored or unwelcome, or they felt too Jewish, which may have been partly their problem. But the Art Institute as a general museum at the time was not really paying much attention to contemporary art except for Jim's and Annie's shows once every other year. There wasn't a lot of contemporary art being shown. And as I said before, there were lots of people in Chicago, Joe Shapiro, Ruth and Leonard Horwich, all kinds of people, Mort Neumann, Claire Zeissler. I mean it goes on, and on, and on, who were interested, Grace Hokin, who were interested in art of their time. And decided to break off—they weren't breaking off of anything but to go off and open a museum for contemporary art. It was primarily led by Jewish people but there was—John Cartland isn't Jewish.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that's somewhat incidental. It's more because the Art Institute was focused on the past than Modernist art, and so forth.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know that they were focused on the past, but they weren't interested in having—always having a contemporary exhibition up. [00:54:00] It was part of a general museum that also included contemporary art but was not primarily contemporary art. And it wasn't just art because we used to kid around that maybe the Museum of Contemporary Art should be called the Museum of Contemporary Arts. Because at the time, Alene Valkanos was what Peter Taub is now. And she brought in—there was performance art all the time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: New Music America. I came in for that too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, there was Ginsberg, Eleanor Antin, Chris Burden, all kinds of—Allison Knowles, Dick Higgins, all kinds of people, Happenings with Allan Kaprow once. So that was always going on and that cannot be done by a general museum. It wasn't faulting the Art Institute. That's not their purview. That's not what they do. And so it was mostly—I'm trying to think, yes, it was primarily Jews. But—

LANNY SILVERMAN: But that sort of mythology is—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The nastiness is undeserved.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's kind of what I was getting at. That's what I've heard and—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I just really hate rewriting history incorrectly.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's the thing is that when I came here that's what I heard. But of course, you know, being Jewish you probably are sensitive to hearing those stories.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Can you turn that off a minute?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm—

[Audio break.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't know where we were but I think one of the things I wanted to ask you about that we sort of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: We were talking about Jews.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yes. We were talking Jews but enough with the Jews already, and actually it's neat to have an alternative version of that story.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, no, it is and then also the men's council was formed. There were lots of people who were not Jewish who were on the board and who are backers and still are on the board. So it was—

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's a simplification.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I hate to say it was a simplification. It was a, what do you call it, it was an error. I mean there's a little bit of truth to it in that the Jewish people, [00:56:00] most Jews did start the museum. But the reason is not that they were alienated.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, well that's just the mythology that came to me when I got here and I don't know that anyone's corrected it. So it's just fascinating to hear another version of it. And actually, part of what I wanted to ask about, to go towards, was what we hinted at before, which is how the gallery scene has changed. It was the Ontario area. I came into the Superior Huron area, which everything was very condensed. You could have your drink of wine and you could go to see all the galleries in one evening.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You mean River North.

LANNY SILVERMAN: River North. I guess that would be the formal name for Superior Huron. The warehouse building that burned down, I came to be—

RHONA HOFFMAN: That was tragic, both because it was a Louie Sullivan building but also it—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Tragic for the art world too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It also decentralized the art thing. Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I was getting at. Yes. There was everything in one area and, you know, I was at NAME and Ben Stratton was above me, and all these commercial, non-commercial, everything was all the Artemisia right next door. So that was a big trauma in terms of the art—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Marianne Deson was in there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, sure. And everyone. They were all in that one building. Well, not all but mostly in that one building.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, there are lots on Superior Street.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, there were some others. I was thinking where Sid [Block] and Bob Hiebert where they were. I'm not sure where they were, but—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Struve.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, Struve. So basically that was the next iteration of the sort of gallery scene. I guess you've been—you've seen many different ones. How has the Chicago physical art scene changed over the—and now it's spread out all over, we hinted at, and now there are kids doing things in their apartments and pop-up galleries.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, that's an exercise in futility.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, and then there's also pop-up—there's a whole other world of galleries now. So what changes have you seen and how do you think it effects—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The same ones you saw. But well—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm curious to hear your view of it because you're obviously—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I think it's too bad because I can just tell you a story, my ex-father-in-law was a lawyer but also he was a real estate investor and he also found [00:58:00]—he represented a couple of oil companies. So we came to—we were driving around so much, driving around. And he said, oh my God, there's a great corner for Gulf oil. I said there are already three gas stations on there. He said "Yes, and if there's a fourth, everyone will know where to find gas." The same goes for the art galleries and I think what's really too bad is that to have—they're a big geographical space, to have the art gallery situation dispersed over the city is really tragic in its own way. Because today, as we know, we have all these gadgets. There are three on the table right now as we speak. You've got a bunch in there. We've got people who have kids, who have to go to school. We have people who have jobs. They have to do this. Our lives are very, very complicated and very, very filled up time wise.

So in order for someone within the city, whose lives are here, to go to all these various neighborhoods is ludicrous. They're not going to do it. They can do it if they fly to New York, or fly to San Francisco, or fly to LA because they're not working. They're out of their own everyday lives and they have all this time to do that. But for the people living in Chicago, there are just too many places to go and too many disparate neighborhoods to make it viable. Coupled with the fact that no, there's no critical mass here. There's no newspaper. There's no anything.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That was a question too in terms of—well, there was at one time *New Art Examiner* and there was—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But that wasn't really the—

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, it wasn't a major publication. There was *Dialogue*, which was based in Ohio.[. . . –RH] That led into my question, which is why does Chicago get no respect? In the era of regionalism, when eventually Hairy Who put us on the map for a while, at least it got some attention.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well it's coming back.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Very true.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean it's very popular now and it's the 50th anniversary this year. [01:00:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, it makes sense because there's the graphic novels and a lot of things that have picked up on that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Some of it is really good art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, and that's also the case.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And the ones who aren't are going to die on the vine.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, you're sort of a Darwinist about this. The good stuff will out and—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Always.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Always. I can tell.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Except that what is good today might be—could reverse itself in 100 years.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There is fashion and there is, like you say, there are some things that are just not lining up with the times. But yes, it's interesting too because, well, in terms of Chicago art, well in terms of writing, it doesn't—we don't have the publication, the journals that New York has. So do you think that's one of the problems with the Chicago art scene?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, it's one of the big problems.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I hear from a friend who, Barbara Hashimoto, who lived out in Los Angeles, is it was a better sense of community, more community support among artists. Do you find that there's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, everyone lives in so many different places and there was more coverage of art back in the '60s and '70s. Dennis Adrian wrote for the *Times* and Franz Schulze wrote. Now, there's nothing. We have Laurie Waxman who's really very good but she's got an occasional piece in the *Tribune*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And we don't even, have, like the newspaper—even Alan Artner, like him or not, there's still the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I always liked Alan.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I liked Alan too. And the thing is that he was always—whether you agree with it or not, I mean there's sometimes I disagree—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's not about agreement.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, it isn't and actually it was very articulate and very good. And even at the *Reader*, what's his name? They had someone at the *Reader* who was pretty good, Fred what's his name?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Fred Camper was very good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, but we don't have any of those outlets anymore.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Fred's very smart.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He's also making art now, photography. That's another story. We won't go there. We'll have mercy there but I guess the question is, it's always been a problem. There aren't that many and now it's worse. There are fewer outlets. The *Sun Times* are wherever, no, it was the *Tribune* that was Alan and even—they're not even hiring writers anymore. They haven't replaced them. I guess it's something, the whole market—

RHONA HOFFMAN: They do have some time, because the same people as own the *LA Times* as own the *Tribune.* But you have a critic out there, Greg Knight. [01:02:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't mean Greg Knight.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean Christopher Knight who has a regular column always for LA. And also, now, we're a flyover place. And—well, we are.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or a major, yes, airport in terms of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: So—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, the other question that has to do with the changing art world in addition to the galleries is also the art fair scene. There was a time when I first got here that Navy Pier was one of the premier, you know—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's coming. We are again—

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's coming back, but—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, it's come back.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's come back, you think?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you're doing well with it too?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think art, I mean this year the new additions are—some of the big guns are back, like White Cube, Listen, Mathew Marks, what did I say, Pace Gallery is coming back. So you have some of the bigger galleries coming back.

LANNY SILVERMAN: When I came here, and John Wilson was on our exhibition committee at the Cultural Center, it was at Navy Pier, which is where it's returned. I'm thinking about the—you've seen the iterations at—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm not going to go—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're not even going to go there but you're just feeling good about the fact that it's—but now the competition is, you know, there's Art Basel in Miami. There's more international fairs than ever. There's many in New York that weren't—

RHONA HOFFMAN: You could just travel every other day.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, there's more and more of them.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But there are still premier fairs and there are still local fairs. So Art Basel Miami is here. That's going to be—that's premier. Art Basel, which is happening in Basel, Switzerland next week is *de rigueur*. FIAC, Frieze, but Cologne is now still coming back but is still more local. [01:04:00] Paris Photo in Paris is very good but I don't think it's going to be replicated again in LA.

So—and then there are all these satellite fairs. But people have different appetites for art. So we're talking about museum, what they say is art—museum-destined art, or hopefully museum-destined art exists in this art fair. But then there are all the other art, which people like and want to buy.

So it's a cornucopia.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, you think it's good that it's thriving, and that there's all this competition?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I don't. I just accept it. It is what it is. And it's changed the art world exponentially.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: People—there are people who don't buy anything until they go to fairs, because you can see two or 300 hundred galleries at a clip.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's like going to Walmart. It's shopping. You can see a lot.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, it's not like going to Walmart.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I mean that only in the sense that you can see a lot, all at once, as opposed to—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, it's not. It's like going to—if—the analogy would be complete if you could say that there was a building with Walmart, Sears, Target—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Right. Because there's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: This—because they're all under one roof.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's even bigger than that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That's the analogy.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's bigger than that. I got you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That's the analogy.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Walmart is just a Walmart.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's got a particular [laughs] focus that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. So, Walmart is just one gallery.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But that's what I'm getting at. It's a potpourri. You can do it all in one shot. It's like a shopping mall for—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But, now, it isn't. Yeah, it's that way, but then you'll have the—like in Miami, you've got—I do Miami Basel. And then there's Miami. Then there are 23 other satellite fairs—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —which, some of which seem to be thriving.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you must be exhausted because you go to a lot of this.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I can't go to the satellite fairs because I'm participating in the Art Miami Basel. I'm in my booth—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —making a living.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But that's what I'm getting at—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The fact that there's so many must—when I'm having trouble scheduling this, and I'm realizing you're moving around a lot, it's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I'm looking at stuff, too, and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Well, that's the pleasure is to—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, right.

MALE SPEAKER: —is to find the, you know, find the things that engage you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, right. [01:06:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: But, at the same time, that's exhausting. A little like we were talking about in Chicago, you can't just—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't find it exhausting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You—you're energized by it?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I have a lot of energy. I could sell it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's great [laughs].

RHONA HOFFMAN: I could sell energy.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I know that feeling. And, actually, let's see. I guess we're talking about the changing art scene. How—you've also been through—I, as I said, I came relative—I came after the—some of the major things. Like, you saw Monster Roster. You saw Imagism. And who knows what? It's, sort of, a mixed-bag these days.

RHONA HOFFMAN: What's the Monster Roster, what is that?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's Franz Schulze's group. That's the Rosofsky, and Campoli, and—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —who else? That [laughs]—so, that never got your attention? You were here for it. But, it went right by you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I looked.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I'm trying to think who else. There's some others, but—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And even Corbett vs. Dempsey is picking up some of those artists again.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He's—they—I—John and Jim are—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I said to John and—I love them both.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, they're great.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think their gallery's terrific.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It is.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It really is. I said, haven't you run out of dead Chicago artists yet?

LANNY SILVERMAN: [laughs] Well, I just tried to send Art Paul their way because he's still alive, but he's getting up there.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Is he really?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, he just had a show. I did an essay for his introduction at the Ukrainian Museum.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Wow.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm trying to get them to go down there. I try to get him to visit because Art did—envisioned his supporting, you know, people at *Playboy*. As the graphic designer, he made his own art. And it's a pretty well-kept secret. And not everyone knows that. But they do great catalogues. I don't know where that money comes from. But I'm impressed that they—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Corbett, they managed to find a way to do it very economically.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And they did really beautiful catalogues.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And they're representing a lot of artists. So, that's a—that may be a question for later, too. But that's a gallery that you—I noticed that in some other interview you mentioned them when you were, perhaps—

RHONA HOFFMAN: They're terrific.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm very—

LANNY SILVERMAN: They're really good. But they are doing a lot of the historic. And I'm glad they existed when I was at the Cultural Center. We got a lot of these people's, shall we say, spouses and children wanting to do the shows from the ancient history, shall we say. And I'm glad that there was that outlet because [laughs]—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

MALE SPEAKER: —because there's only so many of those you want to do.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [01:08:00] And, you know, the—when the widows and the people call us up, and they say, "Yes, they deserve a show." But, you know—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I'm not going to do it.

MALE SPEAKER: —I'm not—be the person [laughs].

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you need—so, Monster Roster didn't do anything for you. But you, also, saw Imagism and whatever else came after.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I didn't—they weren't very good artists—

LANNY SILVERMAN: They—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —during the end. They're just very mediocre, aspirational. But didn't quite make it, or I just don't like it. Or they are great, and I don't—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I'm not—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —know what I'm talking about.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I don't—I think I do know what I'm talking about because it's really—it comes out of this brutalist art from Dubuffet and the very European tradition.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RHONA HOFFMAN: And the Art Brut, which I do like.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And there are lots of good artists within that. But they are the—they're the also-rans.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's also historic. It comes from post-war. It's that, sort of, slightly depressed —

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —period.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But it's that brutalist art from—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Brutalist art. It's a whole other era, too, in terms of speaking of times or—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean, architecture was the same thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was all that stuff. But they just didn't—I don't think they had it. I think it was just really hackneyed.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, what changes have you seen since then, since—things that have engaged you more, or gotten you more excited about in Chicago? I'm thinking about the Chicago art scene. What—what have you—how would you characterize—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think there are some really good, really first-rate artists here. But we can't keep them here because there aren't enough galleries to employ them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or the critical, you know, like—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, they just—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —press and the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: There's no press. There's no—there aren't enough galleries to represent. So, they go off. But I think we've got—we've got, you know, we've got Kerry James Marshall. We've got Dan Peterman, who has a big reputation in Europe, but not here. You've got Michael Rakowitz. You have Iñigo. You've got Judy Ledgerwood. Richard Rezac is now going to have a big show in Berlin—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's great.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —and in London. We have Julia Fish's great show now with David Noland in New York. June Leaf, who was a fabulous Chicago artist—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —someone I showed—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —is going to have a show at the Whitney because Carter Foster just discovered her.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.]

RHONA HOFFMAN: And he's the chief curator there. And he loves the work. And there'll be a show of her. [01:10:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, you were saying about being the right time. I just—things come back again sometimes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I explain to artists that if you're really good, if you're really good—and I'm not saying, "You're great—" I mean, if you're great, great, great. I'm just saying if you're a very good, substantial artist, think of it like a lighthouse. You're sitting on the beach. And you've got a lighthouse that comes around. It hits you. Bingo.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Everything's great. It keeps passing by. But if you stay on the beach, the damn thing comes around again.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Eventually—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Eventually, it comes around again.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, that's your view, is that the talent outs, it eventually comes—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They're—but there are—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —counter examples. People that take—that may take hundreds of years before they're appreciated.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or things that just—

RHONA HOFFMAN: That's the way you say it, that's the way the cookie crumbles [laughs].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that just happens. And, sometimes, there's people that never have that kind of success. And, perhaps, we—there's probably artists out there that, you know, [laughs]—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, it depends. If you're talking about money success, that's one thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I mean, more success—

RHONA HOFFMAN: If you're talking about accolades and respect—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I meant that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —most really good artists, whether they're popular or not, have a coterie of other artists, and critics, and collectors around them to make them feel justified in their endeavor. I mean, they're just not well-paid.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And, sometimes, I guess—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And they're teaching a lot.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You mentioned the coterie. But, sometimes—I was talking to Vera [Klement] about this. Sometimes the skills that make an artist succeed—because I met Eric Fischl very early-on when I saw his career just as it skyrocketed.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Whose? Whose?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Eric Fischl's.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I used to live with April Gornik's step-sister. And so, we went to visit him in Nova Scotia. And I watched—it's interesting, too, because she was way in the background, at that point. And I was very impressed by her. But I watched as he had great schmoozing skills. And he had the sense—and the good old boy network that we mentioned or alluded to. He had Peter Schjeldahl do a studio visit.

And I know this because it was—he was very nervous about this. And then, you know, two months later, there's an article on *Artforum*. And then it boomed. But those skills of—it's not just the networking part. You mentioned the coterie. [01:12:00] But it's good old boy network. It's, also the ability to market yourself, to schmooze. These skills are—this is what a lot, in terms of the art world—

RHONA HOFFMAN: He had Mary. He got Mary. Mary Boone. And Mary Boone was in a—was in the—she was a starlet.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: She was a star. So, Julia, and David Salle, and Ross Bleckner, and Eric.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They all skyrocketed.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah. They all—well, Mary's very good at that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. So, that's one of your—I mean, what do you make of that particular skill? Is that something you're impressed by?

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's what happens. No, it happens every place.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It happens in business.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Is it charm, are you talking about? Or are you talking about—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Mary?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, she's—well, Mary worked for the Bykert Gallery. She's a very smart woman—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —very shrewd, and with good taste in art. But, no, that's just the way—that's life. That's life.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Some people get it, and some people don't.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, in terms of that—going back to schmoozing, or, at least, returning to that concept—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But he didn't do it by schmoozing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, he was very charming—

RHONA HOFFMAN: He's a—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He is still charming. I still know him.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I have lost track of both of them. But I guess the question is, are you seeing more of that with the younger artists? These days, a lot of artists are less involved with the craft of making art. They hand you a disc and say, "You do it, or get fabricated."

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know anyone like that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't have that? I've had that happen.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But even if they're having to have it get fabricated, yes, people had it fabricated.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, way back? Yeah, the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —Minimalists you're talking about? Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But that's not having—that's not hands off.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You go to the fabricator. You're totally involved in having it made.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But that's also a different attitude, in terms of the skills of art. It's as much people wanting —

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, it isn't.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there are younger people that, I think—we can have this argument. But I think there are younger people that are more interested in the fame part of it, in the marketing, and they—and becoming famous.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I don't give a shit about them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean, why are we talking about them?

LANNY SILVERMAN: —that interests you, not in the least? Yes, they—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not to—I have no interest in it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I could have predicted that because of what you're saying in terms of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I have no interest in it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —the market.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There are people who are at the bottom of the heap every place.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you think that's just, sort of, a desperation, in terms of trying to get—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I just think that some people are, like, what they are. Whatever it is. Some people are always disgruntled. [01:14:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I don't even just mean they're disgruntled. The ones that are—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And some people want something for nothing. So, you want to just be a—I don't know. What are you talking about?

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm talking about the need for fame. I often say that if you wanted to be rich, famous, or get lots of attention, there's far—if you're bright enough, there's far easier ways to do it than the art world. But there are a lot of kids—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Like what?

LANNY SILVERMAN: —at a school. Oh, I don't know. If you wanted the most money—well, a lot of the kids are doing start-up companies. If I had a kid, I probably would forget about college.

Probably would just give them money. And if they're, you know—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Why? You don't want them to have a really nice, internal life, and know about philosophy, and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I was just—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —learn about things? You just throw them off on the street—

LANNY SILVERMAN: What do—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —and have them make money?

LANNY SILVERMAN: What do you think [inaudible]? No [laughs]. I'm playing devil's advocate here.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, okay.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm just saying, in terms of success—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —the things that we both are so skeptical about—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, it depends on your definition of what's successful.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, in this culture, it's power and money, which is what we got at.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, but I'd—well —

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —not in—again, not 100 percent. There is still—it's a pie. And the pie has pieces in it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And some parts—some of the pieces of the pie believe in that. And other people don't. That's not acceptable every place.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. And, actually—

RHONA HOFFMAN: This isn't exactly Sodom and Gomorrah yet.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, we've also got this, sort of, counter-narrative. I'll play devil's advocate in another way. That it's, like, follow your heart kind of thing that everyone's been talking about since Joseph Campbell, whatever. There's a lot of, like, you know, forget about the prevailing corporate, disgusting, sort of, capitalism and all that stuff. There's people that are really enamored of the notion that they need to do what makes them feel good. I don't know how your —what your take on that is. But that's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I think people should do what makes them feel good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: We—I think we all agree to that. On the other hand—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But you—sometimes you can't do that for your job. Sometimes you do that for your hobby—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —or for your avocation.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure. And there's a lot of people like that that just don't have the skill to ever make a job out of it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, but they—no one—you know, you choose what you want to do. And if it works, it works. And if it doesn't work, don't blame me, Sam. [01:16:00] [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I completely agree with you. And that's what I was hinting at when I said I became a curator—became a gallery—I was aware that I wasn't going to become a great poet or an artist, not great enough to [laughs] make the money and make a living out of it. So, I figured out a way to do what I'm passionate about—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —in other regards, which is—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —sort of what you're saying your career has been. There's a, sort of, a parallel in that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I didn't—I didn't—I mean, I was 17 or 18 years old when I stopped painting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But you also had some really—if you were studying with Martha Graham, you had some feedback in from the world that could have gone—led you in another direction, no?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I guess.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's certainly enough—I mean—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean, I was doing this when I was 15 and 16 years old. I didn't have to think about anything in the future. I was just living—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Just doing it because you love it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —I could just live in the present—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —live in the moment. And my kids accuse me of living in the moment.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really? [Laughs.]

RHONA HOFFMAN: I do live in the moment.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.]

RHONA HOFFMAN: Some of the moments are longer than others, you know?

[They laugh].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Definitely. I'd go back to your childhood, a little about the '50s and whatever. I came after it. The political left make me think the—your family and other kinds of surroundings. Were you—you were around when the Beat era was around, too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You mentioned Ginsberg. But, I mean, that whole thing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, Ken Kesey and, you know—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because I have some—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —and Kerouac.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —I had—yeah, I had some dealings with them.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —Ferlinghetti, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I definitely had some dealings with that. I brought them to a number of them for a Beat reunion, and was in Madison 20 years ago before—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —I came here. So, that was something that affected you, too, in terms of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, it's just interesting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Just interesting, sort of, phenomenon.

RHONA HOFFMAN: William Burroughs held [my attention for a long time –RH].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I loved it. The literature was great.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, no, that's why—

RHONA HOFFMAN: *The Last Exit to Brooklyn* was one of my favorite books.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, I'll be sure—no, I had a feeling. That's what I was going to add. So, you're, also, very—I have the feeling you're also involved with film, and all media—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LANNY SILVERMAN: —and literature, and those kinds of things.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And do you have time—God knows, do you have time to keep up with contemporary things in other fields, too? [01:18:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: Sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You still have time to do that? That's good.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not consummate—you know?

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] Well, I—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But, yeah. No, I—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —have trouble figuring out—we both have a lot of energy. I'm having trouble figuring out when do you have time in the day to go look at films? You're busy all—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I do. I do that at night.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —Michigan. You're at the Venice Biennale [laughs] last week. What's the one you mentioned—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I was in Germany at a wedding.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. What's next week? You mentioned the next fair.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm going—I have to go back to New York. I have to go to Austin, Texas. Then I have to go to Istanbul.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, you travel a fair amount?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you love to travel?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I know how to do it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're good at it by now?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, I don't—I—no stress.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Do you do it only professionally? Or do you do it at—speaking of avocation, do you do it—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I just came back from Colorado, so—

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, you do it, also, for your relaxation—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah. Well, I—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —if there is such a thing?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, my kids are—I have some kids living in Steamboat now. So, I went there to do a little hiking, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's interesting. Because I was going to ask you if it's 24/7 art. I knew —

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't know you very well, Rhona, but I guess I know you well enough [laughs] to know that that might be a question, that there is—there is—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm a skier.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're also—there are other things that you do, too?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Tennis.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Sailing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Wow. Again, where do you find time for all this [laughs]?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm exhausted just thinking about—

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: —where this is all—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —taking place.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And I have time to waste, too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Wow. That, I don't see you as wasting time.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I do. I stare into space.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay. So, when I hinted that I sit around in my jammies on the, you know, a snowy day—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I think. I, sometimes, waste time just thinking.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, see, that was the pleasure for me of retiring was finally finishing Proust, doing things that I always put off because—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I did that already.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Well, I didn't—

RHONA HOFFMAN: [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: —have time to—I didn't have time to do that when I was busy like you. Just always looking at the next thing. And it's hard to not. I mean, if you love this stuff—

RHONA HOFFMAN: My reading is greatly reduced.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. And that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah. I went to the airport, and I didn't have a book to read. And I went into

the—my friend, David Noland, is Irish. He gave me some really great Irish writers. And I went there thinking that I was going to find it at Barbara's Bookstore. Of course, I didn't.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's one of the things I have to do today is order them. And the only book I could find that was new that I want—that I would read is Toni Morrison's new book, *God Save the Child*—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —which is okay. [01:20:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, you read? That's the other—that is a pleasure for you is reading non-art books? So, something that I always wanted to do more of because I featured myself as a writer.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I don't read art magazines anymore.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I look at the—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —the other thing—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I look at the pictures.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Look at the pictures? That's what a lot of people do.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And I don't lie about it [laughs].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Well, the thing is there are a lot of artists that do that, too. I've caught a lot of artists—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, no, no. I'm going to read—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —that don't read.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There's an *Art in America* article. I've been curious to read the article on—I read selectively in the art magazines. I want to read the Doris Salsedo. There's a woman I showed—an artist who I showed when Madeleine Grynstein back—way back when.

LANNY SILVERMAN: When she was at the Art Institute, you mean?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, you mean—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, before. When—simultaneous when Madeleine was at the Art Institute, yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But way back?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Way back. Because Al—my friend, Brooke Alexander and—Brooke and Carolyn Alexander was showing Doris.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I loved that show. I [inaudible] one of the best shows.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, Doris is a genius, brilliant artist.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's one of the best shows I've seen in a long time. I've been recommending it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, she's one of the greater artists in the—in a long time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And I'd seen that article in *The New York Times* about the chair piece. It's gotten some national attention, I guess.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Which chair piece?

LANNY SILVERMAN: The one with the—it was not Parliament, but the—where the chairs are on the outside of the building.

RHONA HOFFMAN: On the outside of the building, yeah. There's another chair piece she did in the Istanbul Biennial a number of years ago—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —which is even more amazing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Wow. Well, anyways, I had seen that *New York Times* article. But it was, like, it was sort of a revelation because it's a major artist who I had missed any shows that you had. So, it was—that was way before I got—that's in the '70s or something, or—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, no, no.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —'80s?

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was '80s.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Before that I was here, though, I think.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But, yeah. It's an artist that I just wasn't aware of. There's, as I say, there are a lot of artists that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, my God. There's artists in every country who—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And wonderful ones—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —are worth looking at.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —that you wonder—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. And that's really what's complicating the world now, is that the—1982 is a watershed year for America realizing that American art wasn't the sine qua non.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: They—the—John Neff was the director of the MCA at the time. And there was a documenta in '82. So, a big busload of Americans, and lots of the museums, went—it was the first documenta I remember going to. And I started going in the '70s, [01:22:00] where there were a lot of Americans. And they went—I mean Donald Young and I did a George Baselitz show before the documenta.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Wow.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And he is, "Oh, my God, their things are so expensive." And we go, "The guy is, you know, he's brand new to you, but he isn't brand-new to Germany."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there's a lot of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: So, but it was the first time where Americans—the collectors I knew went—and a lot of New Yorker collectors I knew, too—went. And had their minds blown by the panoply of possibilities that they saw. And it's when America started to look seriously at other places. Now, fast forward to now. Now we're looking at South America and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Africa.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —Asia—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Africa.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —and Africa.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So, the—it's now that the art world is now so enormous. It's just gigantic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Which is great. It's just an awareness that people have talents every place, every place.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And things that are unexpected. Look at someone like El Anatsui. I mean, you get someone who comes from a traditional African culture and did something that's pretty amazing, and very contemporary, and very engaging in issues that we talk about in—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But he did something, also, very old-fashioned.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He used materials that were at-hand.

LANNY SILVERMAN: At-hand. That's where we talked about—and the, you know, like [laughs], going back to Schwitters. It's, like, using everyday materials. Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Those were his everyday materials.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Those are his—that's his background. Let's see. What else? So, there's probably some formal questions that I had.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Okay.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I guess the fact that you're still standing. I wanted to talk about, by [inaudible].

RHONA HOFFMAN: [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: You still have—but the fact that things are more spread out, and that there's now internet sales, and there's now all these fairs.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's hard.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It makes it harder for you to succeed, in—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —in terms of just commercial—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —issue?

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's exhausting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And, actually, you do how many fairs? You do Basel. What other fairs do you do?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I don't do Basel—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You do?

RHONA HOFFMAN: —Switzerland because I really like to play.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You just do the Miami? [01:24:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm a—and I don't want to be working all the time. I can't—if I'm working all the time, I'm not learning anything.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So, I have to find places where I'm the one walking around and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You want input.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I want to get things coming at me—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —instead of me spewing. I do a New York fair. I do Miami Basel. I did Hong-Kong, Miami—Hong-Kong Basel for three years. I gave that up. Chicago, New York, and Miami, basically. And I might do—I went to Frieze in New York. And I just, I don't like it. And I'm—if I did anything, I might do FIAC.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, you're comfortable with just—you're—you can let go and you have good people at your gallery. So, you can do a fair amount of this. Do you bring any of them with you?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I bring everyone with me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You bring everyone with you? Oh, you just—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I leave someone behind and then they switch.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I was wondering because—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —I didn't even know about the logistics of that. Because that's tricky, in terms of, you know, having someone who's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, I have a great preparator. So, Ben comes every place. He basically gets a vacation.

[They laugh.]

RHONA HOFFMAN: But, no, I have everyone come.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, let's see what—hang on a second. I had to—I would imagine, from what we've said so far, that the fad—it may have been a passing fad, I sure hope so—for irony and for casual disregard for making beautiful objects has passed, and that you would—

RHONA HOFFMAN: That never was over. There were always people making art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's always people doing that. But there were—it seemed to have a certain currency that it was big. There was a lot of art that you would see where people cast off things. And there was a certain disregard, and a fair amount of irony.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't agree with you, but—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Hmm?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't agree with you.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You think—and that's what I wanted to ask. So, how so?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Say—so, you're—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I'm saying my—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —postulate again?

LANNY SILVERMAN: My postulate is that the art world seemed to really be rewarding irony and casual disregard for making beautiful objects, in the old-school sense. [01:26:00] You don't think that was the case?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You think there wasn't—I've been to enough places where I see a roomful of stuff that's totally—I won't mention names because there's good and bad within anything. But there—I've been through enough of that where it's, like, if the person doesn’t care enough to engage me, I wonder why I'm supposed to care about this?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know what you're talking about.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I am trying to think of specific names, but—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I haven't got a clue as to what you just said.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.]

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know where you go [laughs].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Where [laughs] we're going with that. I'm—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, where do you go—where do you find this to be the case?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Where I find irony in the art world? Oh, I think that's something that's been kind of—forget—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Irony in the art world or irony in the art?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Irony in the art. Not in the art world. I'm talking about making art that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, people do it. I mean, people do ironic things. That's perfectly—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Of course.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —acceptable.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And there's good and bad within that. I can think of someone, you know, like, Shrigley. Whatever his name is. Where it's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: David.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, David Shrigley—where it's probably ironic. But I'm amused by it, and it gets me. But there are—for every one of David Shrigley, there's about 10 of them that I just think it just seems so snide, and not passionate, and not sincere. It seems like it's more an attitude.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You're very prejudiced.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's—I'm—as an interviewer, I'm trying to—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And I don't know what the—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —who I'm speaking about.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know what kind of art you're talking about. But, obviously, not very good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that would be the way I'm characterizing it. But I'm just wondering if you have that impression of that?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So, that's not something that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, there's 100 degrees of difference in the art world. Irony is a little part of it—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And so, that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —to be ironic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Most of the irony exists literarily.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Usually, but there are—there was a—I think, maybe I'm incorrect in this postulate as you're putting—

RHONA HOFFMAN: What's his name. Damas, Shrigley. But there's very—there's not a lot. R.J. Crumb.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You mean Robert Crumb?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Robert Crumb.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Robert Crumb. That's a whole different sort of thing than I meant.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, it's still ironic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it has irony in it. But that's more—is much literary to—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I don't know what other art you're talking about.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [01:28:00] Well, if it's not something that I—it's interesting because it elicited a strong response. But I don't have off the top of my head the specific artists that come up with. But—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, then don't make a general statement about it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I just think—actually, I think there was a lot of comment in the art world about irony. I think it's a topic that's come up. The other thing that's come about, in terms of recent trends—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Molière is ironic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, of course. But I, again, we're talking about [laughs] a whole different century. And it seems to be one of those passing chances—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know a lot of visual art that was ironic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And it's usually in—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Cartoon, maybe.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Cartoon is one kind of irony. But that's not what I'm getting at. How about—since that didn't elicit a whole lot, other than [laughs]—

RHONA HOFFMAN: My wrath [laughs].

LANNY SILVERMAN: —your wrath. And since I don't have a specific example—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, I know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'd have to think about it more to come up with it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, come back and tell me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Come back, maybe, tomorrow. I'll come up with some examples of what—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But there's a whole other trend, in terms of avant-garde art towards—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Sometimes Sophie Calle can be ironic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I love Sophie Calle. And, actually, she's one of my favorites.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But she's, also, as much a writer. And she does things that are—you had mentioned—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Ironic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, they're ironic.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But it's something else, as well. It's not just pure irony.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. You've come up with a good counter-example, Rhona. You just sold me on [laughs] on—because I love Sophie Calle. And I hadn't thought of her as ironic. But I guess

I would have to—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, she is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —think that. That's an interesting one. That's a good move there. But I need to find the counter-example before I come at you with that question. But let's go back to, or come to, something else that's been big in the art world. Relational aesthetics and bringing art out into the art. I know you're—

RHONA HOFFMAN: What is that?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's the thing, like you look at Adam Brooks and Matt, you look at Industry of the Ordinary, people doing things that are—this was done in the '60s where you start to take art out into the community. This is about dealing with—who was it who had the place to eat in Soho or wherever it was in the '60s?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Gordon.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So basically—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But that started out—that was a different thing. Gordon opened that—it was an artist cooperative [01:30:00] restaurant and the artist, his friends, and the people how were there, everyone had to cook and make dinner in order to get free food.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It was functional.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was functional. It wasn't for the public. It got to be for the public later.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, what I'm getting at is that, like, look at Tiravanija, the Thai artist. The people that are cooking dinners, that are doing things or doing things in the community, or taking—since one of the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, social consciousness.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Social consciousness. The criticism I often give, because maybe we're talking about political art now, maybe that's the bigger topic.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Michael Rakowitz does that also.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, and there's a lot of people that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Theaster Gates about that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, that's where I'm headed here. That's definitely in that realm, or even Dan Peterman, the idea that you do something in the world rather than putting it into a gallery. That would be my criticism that I give to a lot of kids or people that want to change the world and they go to the art world. Well, you're preaching to the converted. Why not do a billboard or a social networking, or whatever it takes to change the world. So, you're down with that kind of work. You find that taking it out into the world, even though you're a gallerist—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I didn't say that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I'm about to ask it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Why would I be a—I got Barbara Kruger a billboard years ago.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you were doing this way, way back.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Way back. I got Alan Turner to give me the LED sign at O'Hare for the Hyatt Regency. We had Jenny Holzer on the LED coming into Chicago.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I'm coming at you with a very interesting question.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm all for public art. I think Creative Time in New York is brilliant. One of my artists, Spencer Finch, had a solar-powered ice cream machine in Central Park.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I actually saw pictures of that. It looked kind of fun.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was great. Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, I just was curious about that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, it was wonderful. Anne Pasternak, who runs Creative Time—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know, I met her.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —is now the director of the Brooklyn Museum.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The Brooklyn Museum. I saw she went there.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, she's great. No, I love public art. There's always been public art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's true.

RHONA HOFFMAN: David in Piazza is public art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And taking it out to the—so you're supportive of it going out into the public. That's something.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Why would I not be?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, if you're political [01:32:00] that would be the question I would have is why put it in a gallery—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, you're limiting art very dangerously. You're saying that if I do this, I can't believe in that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, no. I'm saying that it would make perfect sense from your politics that you would be not only supportive but passionate about it going out into the world because you want to change the world.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't want to change the world.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't want to change the world.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That sounds like a god damn—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Mess.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, no. That sounds like having a messianic conscience. I don't have that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, wouldn't you like—okay, if you could make corporate powers take them off of the pyramid of the power, whatever you want to call—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, if I could destroy corporations, I would. Yes, sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay. So—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I would cut their income drastically. You can have one-tenth of what you make.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, so I guess that's what I'm getting at.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, but that's not what I'm—that's not what art is for. Art is for, look, when something disastrous happens in the world, who comes forward to support it and raise money for it? The corporations? No, the artists. And I'm talking about musicians too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Because they are the—the artists are the heart of the culture. They are the people who are inclusive even when they're selfish pigs sometimes. We're all selfish pigs sometimes. But art is an inclusive—it's a societal inclusiveness, and people feel very strongly about things. There's no point in making art if you don't feel strongly about what you're doing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And it's very hard to make political art too, and have it be successful. We mentioned Leon Golub.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There are lots of people—Venice has a lot of political—I don't want to say it's political art. It's art that's involved with government and politics. But it's also, it's about the culture. [01:34:00] And if politics is part of the culture, then you're just doing the same thing but you're just looking at it from a different point. What's her name, Adrian, not Adrian. Yes, she just got a Lion's Prize at Venice. A lot of artists make art about the world that they live in. It's in response to the world. Kerry James Marshall, that's what he does.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure and actually, I mean I think there's a tradition that goes way before that. I mean I think art was freed up after Modernism to make art that was about, not just internal. That's the stereotype perhaps that it's about your personal vision, but it can also be about responding to the world and—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Daumier, Goya.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes. And there's always been a tradition of political—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Always, always.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And I think probably—

RHONA HOFFMAN: All things are possible to be included in art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I guess what I was getting at with this terminology and this new sort of way of thinking about things that are political is that it's not even necessarily art. It could be making dinners. It could be doing something that's not traditionally an art—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But if you served that dinner on replicas of Saddam Hussein's dinnerware, it's a dinner and it's political.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yes. That has a different—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And that's what Michael Rakowitz has done.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, so that's great. What did you make—going back to dinner, I guess this is a free association. This came up yesterday when I was talking.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, you know, art feeds people. It feeds them intellectually, it feeds them emotionally, and it can even be real food.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you could put them all together. What did you make of Judy Chicago? There's an—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not much.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, well, that was my criticism is that there's something that was meant to be—to bring out the history of china painting and to give attention to other histories—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I respect that but she—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —Judy Chicago show.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But the dinner party, which is now permanent at Brooklyn, [01:36:00] what she did though was she excluded a lot of really good artists because she made it arts and crafts instead of just art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I'm talking about just about the ego, about sometimes how personal sort of making it the Judy Chicago show in a way and having, like, you know, a cult of people that complete the work and not giving them as much credit, maybe the China paintings—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, get real. You're not supposed to get credit for every god damn thing you do.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's true. But on the other hand, if there are—

RHONA HOFFMAN: She is the artist who conceived the idea. You were the peons who made it happen. No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I hear you. That's actually—that's a good point. And I guess I was just

thinking in terms of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Are you a failed artist?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Writer, artist, done it all, done a lot of things. But I'm not one to whine, like you say, because one of the reasons of why I work with artists, and musicians, and have done all this stuff, and be writers, and it's because it's not—I wasn't going to be able to do that but I'm aware of my limitations.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, exactly.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And I know, like you, I know when I see something that's the real thing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Listen, I don't have the David Zwirner Gallery either. I'm not Pace. I'm not these big mega gallerists.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But you've been around longer than they have. So in a way you've got a certain, I don't know—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I have my little niche.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You have your little niche. You've succeeded just like I've managed to make my little—carve my little path out. You've managed to do the same.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I feel like I'm fairly big.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, no I think that's an important part of—I think that's pretty close to—let me see where we're at in terms of—because I want to save some things for the next time.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Okay, when are we going to meet? Let's call it quits now.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, that's good. Let's end here.

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LANNY SILVERMAN: It's been so many times by now that I should know it. Oh, whatever.

RHONA HOFFMAN: All right. So that's good, right? Is that good?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I think so.

RHONA HOFFMAN: How many of these have you done? Okay?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I guess this is round two of the irony issue. I did a little bit more work to come up with some things. I should confess that what I was really—just for a quick introduction to it, what I was remembering were things that I didn't like so I didn't know their names. Something at the Whitney Biennial several years ago where someone had stuck a list of their favorite records and a whole bunch of, heap of stuff, as I call it, at the power plant in Toronto. I don't know who that was but it's like it could have been anyone's living room. I guess the issue for me, and I did a little research and I found that part of what I was doing was conflating something that critics call pathetic art and you eluded to that with cartoons. Someone like Raymond Pettibon and Mike Lash.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I didn't say pathetic art. I didn't use that term.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I'm using it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I see.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You mentioned comics prior and when I mentioned irony, you said maybe like comics and I was thinking well yeah, Raymond Pettibon and we had Mike Lash in town—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —and Sean Landers, Mike Kelley perhaps.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Maybe even Richard—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, Mike Kelley is very serious. There's no irony, I think.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No irony there. Yeah, that's probably a bad example.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think there's pathos and bathos.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. And I guess part of what I'm conflating is both irony, you know, throwing in your face the lack of competence. I'm thinking of certain kinds, you know, like Raymond Pettibon or Mike Lash, where it's deliberately not well crafted and the idea is—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I disagree.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I think that's where we need to—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, we don't meet because I totally disagree. Raymond Pettibon's drawings are absolutely fabulous and they're not incompetent in any way. I think that we have to go back. [00:02:00] I think that irony resides more likely and more often and better in literature than it does in a visual capacity.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There's very little irony in the visual. Irony really takes place with a play on words and so you find it, as I said, last time we say Moliere, farces, Oscar Wilde, all those people who dealt with ironic—even David Mamet, irony; Samuel Beckett, irony.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: "I must be going, I must stay." It comes from *Waiting for Godot*. I don't see it visually.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, now the people I mentioned tend to use text, which is what you're talking about, and even Richard Prince, I mean, he's a different—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Richard Prince is—he's sort of a copycat of John Baldessari, word—what do you call it? Word paintings.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: His jokes are old-fashioned jokes. They're really vaudevillian.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Baldessari's was more serious and maybe if there's any irony it would be a Baldessari but there's no irony in those. They're just old radio jokes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And I guess that brings up a topic that I was going to sort of transition to anyways, this notion of appropriation like with Richard Prince, taking even like old New Yorker cartoons—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —and just lifting them and using them.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So how do you feel?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm totally cool with appropriation art. I actually showed a Sturtevant and she was such—some people got really annoyed with her appropriating their work. Others really respected her and liked it. Oldenburg originally was very annoyed when she copied *Store Days* but then he got used to it. Duchamp, on the other hand, when she replicated or appropriated his performance of Rose Sélavy's performance, [00:04:00] he knows the ending, he knows how he did it. He nonetheless—he got into a taxi cab, he went to the theater, he climbed the steps, and he read, "There will be no performance tonight," went down the steps, got back into his taxi. So he appreciated that kind of appropriation. In fact, he participated in it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And he also is probably a good example of irony in somebody that I really respect, however, irony—I mean, I guess irony is kind of when you almost mean the opposite of what you're saying or that you're—it's sort of on the sliding scale. It's not—

RHONA HOFFMAN: On a very mundane level, irony is you've got a man and a woman who have disliked each other all their life. It would be like Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Scalia who are on opposite sides. They are on opposite sides of everything but the way law is practiced and they are ironically the best of friends. They vacation together. I just finished reading an article in the paper this weekend. They vacation together. Her husband was a great chef. When he died, Scalia cried. They were very, very close. But the irony of being a strict constitutionalist and her being a person who thinks the Constitution should grow with society, the irony is that they are best friends.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm sorry, that's irony.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I guess—I mean, you won me over with the Sophie Calle example, and I guess there are a lot of examples that I probably do like. But there's something about—I guess what I was responding to and this is my personal taste so I don't know how much this is relevant to the interview, but you reacted strongly, but it's partly—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well I'm not crazy about Pettibon, I mean—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, well it's partly that sort of—things that are hard to explain to a lay public. Why is this so casually done or done in a way the person doesn't seem either sincere or that they really care about it. That's kind of what I think—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But irony cares.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Irony cares, but yeah, it's a little bit different. So I think I maybe missed—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Irony cares about the issue. The way they portray it may [00:06:00] point out the foibles of something or the—whatever.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's fine. We can move on.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Let's drop irony, please.

LANNY SILVERMAN: We can go on from that but I think I maybe mislabeled it perhaps.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Maybe.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The only thing I'll do, I'll transition out of irony—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Good, I want to get rid of irony.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, we will but it's probably one of the chief ironies that I don't usually give—I often give as an example when I give gallery talks to people that don't understand the art world, I talk about Piero Manzoni canning his shit and I love that because it's kind of—where else can, you know, shit be turned into gold. It's worth probably a mil today, the can of shit, and the best part of the story in terms of adding to the, for lack of a better term, irony is that now there are conservatives trying to keep the art-life boundary—you know, the cans are leaking so they have to conserve them.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh I did not know that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And what I usually bring this up as an example for is the issue of value in art. That's where we're getting away from the other topic.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, okay.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's to say that, how do you value—how do you come to terms with—how do you assess value in the art world? It's a handful of people, perhaps, a cabal that I couldn't even maybe name.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well there's a lot of different ways of valuing. There's many—value is not

necessarily money.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Value has to do with esteem as much as it has to do with the price. So people who are valued may not charge a lot of money for their work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Very often sometimes—not very often. I don't know how often. But there are artists whose work is really what people call important to the world and very, very well esteemed but it falls into a visual category that the general public doesn't really want to own. They want to respect it. They want to see it but they don't want to buy it and take it home with them. Therefore, that price level [00:08:00] will stay relatively low for many years or maybe forever. And then there's the mediocre to brilliant artists, where everybody wants a painting. People love paintings.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So there's a microcosm in a macro—whatever you call the opposite—there's a huge, I mean vast range of prices for paintings and very often it's the people who are in the most museum shows, the critics.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know there's auction records—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The critics who propose them, the fact that they are great sometimes enters into it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, hopefully.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And very often the prices come with rarity, scarcity. Some of the prices today, if you want to get into it, I think people are laundering money and doing all kinds of nasty things to get into it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But as museums proliferated in the '80s, particularly like in France when what's his name who was president—oh whoever, decided to decentralize the culture of France and they started building museums outside of Paris and decentralized that. As more and more museums open all over the world, and more and more people went to museums all over the world, it sets up a scarcity of some artists so that when a museum buys it, going to deaccession—it's not likely to be during your lifetime. So the more art a museum owns of the people who everyone values, the more competition there is to acquire it and then things go to auction and then there are street fights over it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well I guess I'm not going to be too tough on you but I want—

RHONA HOFFMAN: You can be tough as you want. I'm tough.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, you were tough on me on that lay issue but I'm kind of curious—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Be as tough as you want, I don't care.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —because I know in terms of just capitals in terms of supply and demand and in terms of value—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, there is something to that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. I guess one of the—there is something from what you just said but I think what mystifies people, [00:10:00] I don't know if you read that book the Six Million Dollar Shark Tank or something that talked a lot about this, I think, for a lay public to try to explain who assesses this value? Is it the curators? Is it the auction houses? How is this—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes is the answer to all of the above.

LANNY SILVERMAN: All of the above.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But I guess what mystifies people is someone will see something that they may be don't understand that, like a Raymond Pettibon drawing, something that looks casual, or even a Matisse thing that could just be a beautiful sense of line. It took him a lifetime to get to. They don't understand how this is now valued at a million dollars whereas something that, you know—

RHONA HOFFMAN: —Fewer and fewer people take that position now. There aren't that many luddites wandering the earth anymore because they're so used to seeing this and if you look at the numbers of museum attendance, you will find luddites turning into art lovers. Museum attendance is up exponentially. No matter when you go to the Art Institute or the Metropolitan Museum, there's a line. There are hundreds of people waiting to get in all the time which means people are beginning to appreciate art, except for the ISIS people who are destroying all culture.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well that's another story.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I would like to drop bombs on them and kill them all. I'm not kind in that respect. The general public, the ones who just don't want to get it, just forget about them. I don't care. They'll either get it or they won't get it. It's unimportant and I think it's a stupid argument to keep talking about them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, the people that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And I don't think you have to—you don't have to justify everything to people who aren't interested and who don't want to learn. So I forget them. I won't even deal with it. But the people—I really am opposed to a lot of these high prices because as I said, I think there are people who are buying with their ears and not with their eyes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a lot of that, sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But they have been—there's all kinds of pluses for being a collector. There are parties and all kinds of excursions, all kinds of things, ways of traveling which make your travel more interesting. [00:12:00] And I don't fault any of that because if you—everyone's looking for a way to make their lives more interesting. If buying a couple of paintings or a lot of paintings and being—and enter into a dialogue with other people who are similarly interested, and you go traveling all over the world and have a good time, is that so terrible? I mean, where are you going to fault someone? The only thing you can fault them is you're going to be jealous of the fact they have the money to do it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a lot of that going—there's some equity issues.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's always a distrust of people with money. So the things that they do and collect and things like that are possibly—yeah, there's a lot of that going on.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But you can name any subject. You know, you can go the fashion row—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Anywhere. Fashion has the same issues.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —the houses they live in, the vacations they take without art. How many pairs of sports shoes a kid has.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean, some of them have hundreds of shoes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I really don't think that we're going to stay on that argument about that I'm going to call them luddites. I call myself a luddite when it comes to tech stuff. I can't close my gallery ever because—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because of the alarm system?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Because when something goes wrong on my iPhone or my computer, I need

people to come and help me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well you're not alone.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm incapable of learning so I understand what a Luddite is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The world is changing really fast.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well going back to the value in the art world in terms of like you said some people—prices are very low. There was, of course, you know the Conceptualists from the '60s, '70s, part of their—this will possibly appeal to your political sensibility. Part of what they were doing was sort of an attack on the art world and the monetizing of art and it was to make art the idea and not be about the object. But the irony in what I'm about to ask, isn't it ironic that if you take some of those things like someone's direction for the angle of the sun at a certain point in time written down on a piece of paper, [00:14:00] the piece of paper is now worth a fortune.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It depends on who did it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, well of course. But I guess what you're buying is almost not just the autograph, but it's also—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well tell me who you're talking about?

LANNY SILVERMAN: What's the person who did the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Are you talking about Larry Wiener?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Larry Wiener is one of the people but there's someone else who did the things with the directions.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Sol Lewitt does it all the time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sol Lewitt does that but he also has—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But there's a product. No, there's a product.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a product. But I'm talking about someone—there's On Kawara, but the person I'm thinking about—

RHONA HOFFMAN: On Kawara has a painting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Douglas—what's his name? I'm blanking out on the name.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Douglas Gordon?

LANNY SILVERMAN: I think Douglas Gordon may have done this. That may be who I am thinking of. Where he came up with like a specific dimension and a specific point in time and the date and that was written down on the piece of paper and that's now, you know, worth—it's probably Douglas Gordon but I'm not sure. I have to do my research there. But something like that, I guess the point is though that the point was to take away the commodification of the art world, you know, how much things became valuable because an artist was associated, and then all of a sudden it seems like those things have value even though that was sort of a protest against that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But with Larry Wiener and Sol Lewitt, it was never about protest. It was all about conceptually—for Sol Lewitt it was about that the idea drives the art and doesn't have to be made by him. Neither does a bridge have to be made by the person who designed the bridge or the architect doesn't build the building. His sculptures can be made by other people with very, very clear things. Lawrence Wiener when he did that, he had a program to put it on the wall. It wasn't just that but it was about that people were not used to having art that was really relevant and that was word art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Even though if they went back in time, just like Sol with his wall drawings.

What do you think the frescos in the churches are? They're wall drawings.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And what do you think the calligraphy is all over the Asian and the Middle East? Calligraphy is painting. [00:16:00] So now when it's done in English, people go, "Oh my god! What the hell is that?" But over a couple of decades people go, "I get it." Jenny Holzer, words.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Of course. Well text is a separate issue—well not separate, but it's a related issue but I'm not even talking so much about text. I'm talking about putting an idea down and having that be—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't know who that is. The only person I know where there's absolutely no product is Ian Wilson, who conducts conversations and he's considered an artist.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. That's a good example.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's not very expensive. When I brought him to Chicago in the '80s, early '80s, it was $1,000 to bring Ian in. He had 25 people and it was an extraordinary event. It was more theater than it was visual art. He's a word person.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I met him, I think, at the Cleveland Museum. He came through in the '70s somewhere.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. But sometimes it just takes—the cognoscenti can grasp something very quickly. They're up on it. They know the history. They just keep following it and there's an evolution of art. For the people who don't spend their time always looking at art, there's a time lag because they see it once, they're going off to work, they're going to a movie. They're going to see Inside Outside, and they see it, and they went to the gallery but it takes them a while to digest it, and then maybe 5 to 10 years later, after seeing a lot more art, they go, "I got it."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Information is traveling much faster.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean, everybody doesn't digest the material at the same time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or take it as seriously.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I have to. I'm being paid to do that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's your job. Well, we'll get to that in a moment because I have some questions about that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But I guess along just to sort of maybe finish that off, if you'll say, fortunately, I think—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No. I have a good time doing stuff like this.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, well who gets anointed? That's the other thing that people want to know. Why this person? I mean, yes, quality is often a large part of it. What are the other factors that you think makes somebody be the anointed star of the moment? [00:18:00] And here I'm not so much talking about the money issue as I am about the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The shock? The shock of the new?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, the African artist with the—speaking of, we're back to the *merde* issue again, the Ofili, what's his name?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Chris Ofili.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Chris Ofili, yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He's a great painter.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. No, I love his work. But that certainly got attention because of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well that was attention because someone made it attention because he used dung for his paintings to rest on. Now they hang on the wall. But the dung was very much a part of his paintings because he's talking about a culture where dung is really important. Anyone who goes to India, you realize that it's used for fuel and it's used for rooftops. It's a very important product. Without it, they don't live so well.

LANNY SILVERMAN: We're going back to Anatsui in terms of materials at hand, for him that was a material.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you don't think he had any aim to shock, for example?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well no. He didn't have any aim to shock but he certainly had an aim to explore the situation of the poor people who take—where the culture is part of having dung, even though you don't want to talk about it. It's ever present. You go for miles in a car in India and you see shit drying on the hillside along with the mustards and the peppers.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's a part of their life. It's not a big deal.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. So I guess shock is—you're saying shock is one of the sort of shticks that gets—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I don't think shock. I mean, with Chris it was disgust. People got, oh—

LANNY SILVERMAN: What's that doing in a gallery?

RHONA HOFFMAN: What's that doing there? That's ignorance. That's just ignorance playing, and conservatism which I loathe on every level, particularly governmental. But let's see, Damien Hirst.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's where I was headed.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You were headed toward Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's exactly where I was going next. You read my mind.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Jeff is much less shocking than Damien Hirst. Jeff Koons' early work, I bought them. They were basketballs floating in an equilibrium tank. [00:20:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Jeff Hudson had them.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I bought them. He had a show of three equilibrium basketball tanks and he sold the show out, three of them. I bought one, Donald Young bought one, and Lou Manilow bought one. They were $2,500.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Wow!

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. But it was—he was a young artist and those of us who spent a lot of time looking at art went, "Wow! That's great!" So that happens. When you know something, if you are a literary critic and you read a new book, you're more likely to catch all the content as well as the style more so than someone who's a casual reader. That's all we're talking about. Talking about expertise.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. I just read recently that Jeff Koons collaborated with Richard Feynman, the physicist, to get the balls, what looks to be—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Speaking of casual throw-away—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh no one ever accused that of being casual.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, and actually, you could say Jeff Koons—I mean it may be fabricated by a team but it's very beautifully made. That bunny—it always amuses me that it's a stainless-steel thing, that thing that looks like a Mylar thing. Sometimes what looks really casual and cast

off, like with the equilibrium thing, requires a lot of research or a lot of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well that didn't look very—that didn't look easy or cast off and neither did the rabbit.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm thinking of this—keep in mind, what I'm thinking as an educator—

RHONA HOFFMAN: If you want to keep Jeff Koons in mind, then I'll agree with you when you start doing the inflatables because that looked like a real inflatable and it wasn't. It was steel or metal, whatever.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes. But the shock of the Damien Hirst was taking an animal and putting it in formaldehyde.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Again, not so easy to do. Apparently they've had to redo them and same thing again.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, there are leaks, sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There are problems with that. I mean, just what you use, the liquid, all the stuff.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I think this is all about—when you take the money away, and let's take the money away and just stick with the art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm fine with that. Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: If you take another subject, you can tell—let's talk about high fashion and people go, "Oh my god, who would wear that?" and then next year it's at JC Penney. [00:22:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well those lines are being blurred just like in the art world. Couture is now coming to the whatever—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. Because as a public, we're more aware of things and they accommodate and like things more quickly because media gets it out into the street. We have newspapers. Everyone knows what the fashion is. Everyone knows what the new movie is. Everyone knows what book is being written. Everyone knows about everything because it goes—because the way we get information to people is now in nanoseconds, smaller than that. So it makes it easier for people to catch onto something.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that just brings me to something else—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And the other thing about art is that the audio guides have probably informed more people in the last five years than we have educated in the last hundred about art. I go to museums. I take audio guides. There's an on/off switch. If it's getting boring, I turn it off. People are being educated in their museums with audio guides. It's no longer, "Oh look at that tree, it looks so real." They're actually listening and learning, young kids to older people, and it's very—the only museum that charges still is the Met. Everyone else gives it for nothing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's funny too, yeah, because it seems to me that—as an art educator, that's always a problem and I've had this conversation with some of the artists I have interviewed is how much do you want—and I mention this, some artists are not very analytic and don't want context, background, or explanations. They want the art to speak for itself. You've heard that before from artists, I'm sure. But then again, a lot of people really need some sort of grounding, and what is this, what's it doing here.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, the thing is this. For instance, in my gallery, there's always someone to talk to. We are very fortunate. We get to meet the artists, if we show in contemporary. [00:24:00] We get to meet the artists. We get to ask the artists questions. We get to learn.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Someone walking in does not have the privilege so they're coming in cold and looking at something, and since art is about ideas and stuff, not just a pretty picture—although I'm not opposed to pretty pictures—people have to have an entrée.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And whether it's me in my gallery or the women who work with me and other people who work in other galleries or whether it's the museum's audio guide, what people are doing is what the school systems never do, and that's educating people on how to look at art. For instance, I remember one years and years ago when there was a Guston show—no, a Mondrian exposition—and I took the audio guide and they had people like Wynton Marsalis talking about Mondrian and about how he used to go to the jazz clubs. So these—the good guides are making art very, very real. Very, very real. It's not some crazy thing that someone does.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well I think Europeans generally—this may be a generalization, but I think they're much more comfortable with art and with it in—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well they haven't eliminated it from their school system.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Whereas I think in this country there's a certain distrust of that whole field.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But not anymore.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I think it's changed.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think less and less, I hope.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Let's hope so. And I agree with you. That's where I was headed. I was going to, just as a free association, I was thinking about—you mentioned about how media has really changed everything.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh yes. The information goes out immediately.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well it's also the edges are blurring. I look at Target ads. I don't know if you notice, but some of them are spectacular.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I love Target. Are you serious? I'm a big shopper there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Not only the shopping there. That's another matter. But in terms of their ads, the graphics. It's some of the best and hippest graphic design. It's unbelievable.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Let me tell you, the people who are doing ads went to the School of the Art Institute or they went to Parsons. [00:26:00] They're art-educated people.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah. And you can see some of that in the—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The people who ripped off Barbara Krueger back in the '80s went to art school.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's a funny—speaking of irony, that's a funny irony because she's taking popular culture and signage and then it turns upside down and then like it goes back and forth.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. But everything in the world is designed.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: The Bechers, when they took the pictures of the industrial buildings, those buildings were designed by architects, and some of them were more beautiful than others. But bridges are beautiful. But everything is thought about. Everything is designed. It wasn't haphazard. It wasn't people just throw up a bridge. I mean, some people throw up a bridge and you want to throw-up.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But it used to be sort of a separate field. I think the blurring the boundaries, which is what you're saying.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's the difference between design and art.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Even the logo for Target is genius.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah, sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not so about Starbucks.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, well I'm not a big fan of Starbucks for other reasons.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I am. I love Starbucks.

LANNY SILVERMAN: See, you have the energy. I have it without the coffee. So I don't know.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I have energy with and without.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I figured as much because that's the way it is.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I could sell energy.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, likewise. You mentioned that about bottling it. I wanted to bring up something that was in *The New York Times* article on Friday and it came out on Sunday again.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I missed it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: This issue of—you want to probably look at the Sunday *Times*.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's on my desk.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, you're behind.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well I was in Michigan and I didn't get it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I love about retirement. I can read *The New York Times*. I'm ahead of the game.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm ahead of the game. I have a house in Michigan I can go swimming.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That sounds fine to me.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And I can come back on Monday and read the article.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, so that's what we said. You do take some time out from the business.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well the article was about this blurring of lines, speaking of blurring lines, between galleries and museums. It started perhaps—not—it didn't start, but one of the big things, events, was the Ad Reinhardt show. Where was that at?

RHONA HOFFMAN: David Zwirner.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Zwirner, yeah right.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was beautiful.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And now they've got Robert Storr. I noticed that you had Doug Dawson doing—the idea of taking outside curators from the museum and curatorial world [00:28:00] and also doing catalogues. This issue of like the museum kind of staff and sensibility blurring into the galleries where it becomes—a gallery becomes as much a service as it becomes a business.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well it always has been thus, and catalogues are very informative. They're also great sales tools for galleries.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And in some of the bigger galleries who can afford to make these very luxurious catalogues can use them in the future as a gift or to sell a painting or whatever. But it's also going back to what I said previously which was it's all about education.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well in terms of—I guess with the questions I have for you is it gets tricky. I guess there are sales made from these shows because I guess a lot of the collectors. It's the ability of getting a Robert Storr, or somebody with a name, helps you secure loans, but I guess some of what's going on then maybe is a little bit curious to me even is, how you manage to probably lose—or maybe you get loans that are saleable. How do you manage to make it be viable as a business operation as well as an educational tool?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well the shows that—Gagosian did those historic shows and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, they do.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —and now David Zwirner did the Reinhart thing. They are people whose clients buy from them and trust them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: They can borrow them back. Rob can maybe make it easier in some cases. You just need one or two paintings for sale.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well at the million-dollar level, if we're talking major paintings—

RHONA HOFFMAN: You don't need more than one or two.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that pays for a show.

RHONA HOFFMAN: The show that Gagosian did a couple years ago—that he got Celant to do on Manzoni—was genius.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was just an amazing exhibition and the John Russell show that Larry did on Picasso recently was just breathtaking.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah, there was that Picasso one.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So you just—you don't even need a whole painting. You could have a drawing. It's so expensive.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well at the blue-chip level, I guess yeah, it's about the same thing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Or maybe there's nothing for sale in that show but in the back of the gallery, there are plenty of things for sale.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. So you get people in. [00:30:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, I'm sure the people—I do. You amortize your profit or loss over the course of 12 months. You don't do it every month.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well yeah, you couldn't do that all the time because that's a specific market and yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But some of these dealers are making so much money that they have it to spend, and it becomes really like another museum in the city of New York which is—do you object to it?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I don't have any problem with it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No. I have no—I say thank you.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And I don't think the article was critical. I just wondered about how that happens and how it worked that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Because people want to get a Picasso for sale and they want to get and Ad Reinhardt for sale and you make up an exhibition around that and you go and you pry one loose.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's how you do it. It's not just auctions are secondary market but

it's also the connections—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No. Auctions are very confusing. Auctions is like cattle call.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right now, they're so—look, auctions have become a craps game and people want to play.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You don't. You put up—if it's a private sale, you put a number on it and someone takes it or doesn't. At an auction, you can get lucky or—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or you can be in a bidding war and then you can end up—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Or, but what they say is we sold 87 percent. Well, if you're not part of that 87 percent, that's 100 percent loss and people just don't seem to get that. So.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. So that's the part I think that really—that's what that Six Million Dollar Shark Tank book was about, trying to sort of penetrate that sort of world that people don't understand, the auction world.

RHONA HOFFMAN: They do but they do it with stocks, they do it with wines, they do it with jewels, jewelry.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh sure. Value is not—this issue that I'm getting at is—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's just that art has now been commodified.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Which I don't like either but it's officially commodified.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that happened with photography. Photography didn't use to have the cache of the collectable item.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, not in the '70s.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. There was a real shift that happened so now photography, so now we get into the issue of whether it's an original print, what's the edition, [00:32:00] and does that sort of—that sort of—that gets into that issue of value that we were talking about. It's a little hard to understand. I mean, if there's 100 of something printed, it's obviously going to be less valuable than if it's a unique print and its negatives destroyed. Those are the kinds of things that completely—I mean it gets away from the supply—it's partly supply and demand but it's partly a conscious choice. It's a marketing choice. Do you ever get involved with that kind of issue in terms of like editions or things like that?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Very rarely, but I do. I mean, number three could just as easily be a better print than number one.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That could well be, sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You know, it's not—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. It doesn't degrade—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No. Sometimes it gets better. I mean they're all individuated.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But the smaller the edition, the more valuable it can become.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There's always scarcity is a little bit a part of it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I probably tried to address this issue before. I guess you threw out a

number of movements and things that you're seeing. We talked about Pop, Conceptualism today, and Minimalism you talked about last time a little bit. What do you think makes for a trend? This is a little like the fashion world almost. What do you think makes for a trend in either the art world or in Chicago? Let's start with the art world internationally. What do you think makes something come to the forefront like those movements? Is it—

RHONA HOFFMAN: They're not movements. There hasn't been a movement in a long time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: A movement is a conscious group of people—it's a group of people consciously getting together to do something.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure. And that's even true of Chicago. The Imagists or Hairy Who people.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That was probably as close to a movement even though—

LANNY SILVERMAN: They knew each other but they weren't—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But that wasn't a movement.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No. I mean, they're all different.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There was no Gestalt.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, they're all very different. As a matter of fact—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It wasn't Blaue Reiter.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's not comparable. I agree in that regard.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think painting or sculpture, there's some kind of thing it follows. Mostly art follows itself in great measure. [00:34:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you don't think there's like a—I guess some sort of reason why a particular sort of trend, shall we call it rather than a movement, like some sort of Pop or Minimalism or Conceptualism, you don't think it's attached to things that are going on in society?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, of course it is. But not everything is. Not every part of the art world.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There isn't an easy correlation.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, there's no easy answer. There's a lot of art that responds to social and political prints [ph].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, you look at Earth art and things like that and there is a certain kind of environmental concerns in the '60s and '70s. You can see how that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: That also was also a conscious effort not to be collected.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's kind of also—

RHONA HOFFMAN: That was Michael Heizer—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Michael Heizer, sure. And that's part of what I was getting at with—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But that was short-lived and Smithson, Nancy Holt did things. What happened was that the artists said we can make art that doesn't fit in your gallery, that doesn't fit in the museum. It's not because we don't love you. We just want to make these bigger things.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And so the world accommodated to that. Now there's phenomenal art out in the prairie, all over the place.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There are some things I've got to go outside. I've yet to see some of the things in there.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Me too. I haven't seen *Double Negative*. I mean, I've been to the Roden Crater now.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh wow.

RHONA HOFFMAN: That was just simply amazing and I've been to lightning field.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I heard that was sort of a little bit disappointing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not at all. Just don't go—you need a moon. You can't go to a new moon, but we got no lightning but it's an extraordinary experience because the moon is there and the moon hitting those poles is—it's an amazing thing. You're out on the high desert also.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I've been to Marfa. I've been to, you know, almost every place.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You've been around, I know.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But I guess—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I want to go to *Double Negative*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that would be amazing and actually there is—isn't there—he's getting a show in—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, he's getting a big show. [00:36:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm trying to remember where. It's in New York. I'm trying to remember where. But yeah—but I've not seen them in situ and that's really what they're about. When you see that, it's kind of amazing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But even that's old. You know, public art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what we were talking about last—

RHONA HOFFMAN: When you're talking about public art, I mean, you have to go to every little teeny weenie city all over creation. There's a horse and rider standing there or something where they—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I won't mention—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The geezer that founded the community.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: The scale has changed.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And actually that's kind of what I was—we were talking about last time which was about the politics of taking art into the world which is also some of the Earth art and some of that is to try to get people to see it as part of their life, which is, I think, very different from—let's talk about that a little. When I visit other cultures like Indonesia, in particular, I'm astounded in Africa somewhat too how much art is part of people's lives. It's not about a museum experience or about wealth and the privilege. It's about—

RHONA HOFFMAN: All of Italy is about art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, well they also know how to live their lives. That's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, but the fountains aren't just water spilling out. They're Bernini.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They're functional. Yeah, they're functional and Bernini. Yeah, so I guess what I'm getting at—what I was looking at some of the changes in the art world and we touched on this in the first chat, which was that there has been a lot of attention to Africa, to India, to China. Art from other cultures where they look at art very differently. For me a lot of what happens is they start to mimic the Modernist art and it often is awkward when they—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Those are usually countries where the people can't get out and they're only looking at art through secondary journals, but a lot of the countries that we're talking about where the people, particularly Africa, what happened in Africa in the '50s and '60s was—because I knew a number of African people who, they said that the community would pick the smartest of [00:38:00] their clan and they would all chip in and send that person, male or female, to the west to go to school. So you start having a more—a completely well educated—at least one or two from each African community—and what happens is it doesn't get homogenized but the information gets spread around.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure. And I think it's really taken a leap forward from mimicking their art history lessons that they got in the west. Now there's work that's coming from these cultures that I think is more representing the cultures that may be a—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think the people who got out of China who are living in Paris and New York, the Japanese also who left Japan and making art, where's there some kind of composite of thinking and even what it looks like from their own culture and then ours. Ai Weiwei is an example.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He's a perfect example of someone using classical traditions and making social political statements. His show with the Botha Museum was astonishing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And taking it into the world and then some. I mean it risked too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It had a dragon on the ceiling made of children's backpacks.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I saw pictures of that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well but it was the children who were killed in the earthquake. So, where this was an astonishing sculpture, the repercussions, the intellectual and the emotional repercussions just tripled the experience.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I guess—and I'm not sure where I was going to go with that, but I guess, what do you make of some of the artists, I call it a heap of stuff, but some of the people—this relates more to, I think of like Tara Donovan, things where there in it relates somewhat to the Minimalists that you represented early on that you mentioned, but the sort of modular work [00:40:00] that's a lot of the same thing and a lot of times it's common materials. It could be like rows of paper cups. It can be very beautiful. There's a bunch of people doing that. That's sort of a—I don't know.

RHONA HOFFMAN: What about Michelangelo? He's using marble. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Nothing's new for you. You're going to come up with the precedent. Oh yeah, I think that's one of the things that is depressing to artists. Then when you tell artists well look at nature. I was in Antelope Canyon. I hadn't been out really by myself—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Where's that?

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's right by Grand Canyon and it's this place—unlike the Grand Canyon, you can walk—it's like the Grand Canyon but it's like a changing environment that it looks like installation. Everywhere you go, there's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Really? What's it called?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Check it out online.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I'll check it out in my car.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's called Antelope Canyon. No, I mean on Google. Antelope Canyon.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Because my daughter was in Santa Fe and they went and there was another canyon out near, just outside of Santa Fe which is like the Grand Canyon, she said, but just much smaller and more—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You walk through this.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, she can walk through it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's probably this.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There's a bridge and they did it on horseback.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, this is something else. This is the erosion. It takes place at the level that you walk through and the only way you get through the Grand Canyon is quite a walk down but this you walk through and it's been—there were German and Japanese photographers there when we were there. It's very famous for photographers.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Antelope Canyon.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Antelope Canyon.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm going to go.

LANNY SILVERMAN: What's amazing is you take this to somebody who is either a photographer or an installation artist and it's a little hard for them to even—how do you even compete with nature sometimes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You don't.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Forget about Michelangelo. Look at the stuff—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Just don't photograph the Grand Canyon unless you're a real horse's ass.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I know. It's kind of—well, there's—if you look, you'll see.

RHONA HOFFMAN: There's no way because you can't compete on the scale. I remember the first time I saw the Grand Canyon, my daughter was living in Santa Fe and we drove from Santa Fe to Flagstaff and then we said, "Where's the Grand Canyon," and we were staying a cheap—on Route 66, which is what we wanted to do, at this funny place where every room had the name of a star who had made a movie there. [00:42:00] And we were in our car and we were going up the highway and all of a sudden it says "Grand Canyon, turn left." We turn left and there it is. It was like *Thelma and Louise*. And part of it is the beauty of the color and the formation of the sedimentary—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And the light.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But basically the "oh my god" part of it is the scale of it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Scale. It's the same problem with Machu Pichu. My camera broke. I had a digital camera and it broke and I didn't even really care because you can't capture that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I haven't been but I want to go.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's one of those things you've got to do.

RHONA HOFFMAN: We went to Chichen Itza.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But it's a sense of scale and even with a wide-angle lens, it's not a technical issue, you can't take it all in in a camera. There's something about the experience.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well that, I think, too is also—that's like the—in the southwest or if you go to India or if you go to Venice or you go to Cairo, if you go to Egypt—how did these people do this? How did they achieve this with the most rudimentary tools? How did they put up those stones at Stone Hinge?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't care if you can tell me there was a catapult, but I still don't know how they dragged them. They schlepped those stones for 200 miles. There were no stones around there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there are some definite issues that are hard to resolve.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So if you want to know shock and awe, that's shock and awe.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Well I do recommend because I think—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Antelope Canyon.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Hopi, our Navajo guide, the young woman that was telling us this, said in terms of taking pictures, this is the opposite. If you put a camera on a dog's tail, she said, you'd get a great photo. Everywhere you go, it looks like there are these formations and the light and the dust comes through and it's this reddish sandstone, I think, and it's amazing. It's just spectacular. It actually awed me more than the Grand Canyon, right? It's a little like what happened in Italy. You know, you go to the Michelangelo's, of course, but I'm looking at a gift shop and there's a postcard from Fra Angelico, who I love, and it turns out that the monastery or whatever it's called is right nearby and it wasn't even in our guidebook and that was, to me, more—

RHONA HOFFMAN: [00:44:00] Really, Fra Angelico? Wow. Me too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I love the Fra Angelico.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Me too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's that one painting with a suspended head. I'm not sure what the iconography means. I've still not figured that out but it's so over the top and wonderful.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I love Fra Angelico.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I recommend that but I guess—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well they don't point out the Cimabue's either.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a lot of things that—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I went to Italy as a professor and I wanted to be Benozzo Gozzoli in Florence and the guy said, "You're kidding. No one wants to see Benozzo Gozzoli." I said, "I do." I want to see the *Medici Procession*. Where is that? The guy almost fell over.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. The Tinguely that's in that town, in that wonderful town outside of—in Indiana, they didn't have the—in my guide it didn't have that either and I've always wanted to see it. It was only by accident that I came upon it. Yeah, it's very frustrating.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I guess one of the things I wanted to ask you, you mentioned like painting walls and stuff and I guess this leads me into, you enjoy working with artists so I want to know how do you work with artists? Do you sometimes give them feedback? Do you help to develop their careers other than just finding the right places for their work? Do you critique their work? Do you give them support? How do you work with artists? Tell me a little bit more about that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I usually go to artists whose work I see and I like or someone's told me about it and I check it out before I go and call an artist. I'm very much involved with Spencer Finch's career. We've been working together since 2000 and I'll tell you how I met him. I was walking down 19th Street going from 9th to 10th and the postmaster's doors were open and I saw this really bizarre thing. It was like a raw statue of whatever elevated piece of wood [00:46:00] and then it had like a gallows and on the gallows were a row of red apples and on the floor was a big piece of, what do you call artificial grass?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Turf. Astroturf.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Astroturf and every so often an apple would fall and I went, "That is so weird." So I went in because I had never seen it before. Part of something new is you want to see something you've never seen before.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, and after seeing so much stuff, that's why I was asking about getting jaded or what excites you.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, jaded is a really stupid thing to be.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So I went out and it was like a Newtonian thing, but it was really well crafted and it was very amusing and so I met the artist and that's Spencer. Other times I've been to another gallery and seen something at another gallery, or a group show at an artist's space, or someone I know who I usually agree with says, "Hey, have you seen such and such?" I told you, Panza said, the first thing he said after he said hello was, what have you seen? That's what we all do. What have you seen that you like? You quickly—over time there's a group of people, large, small, whatever, where the consensus is very similar all the time, so if a guy or girls says to me you've got to see this and I've never seen anything that they like that I liked, I'm not going. But if Kaspar Kõnig says, which he did when we were in Germany, we were having breakfast, and he said, "dah, dah, dah, dah, dah," and I went, "Okay, give me the number."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that helps. It's a way to—you can't see everything.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You cannot see everything and so you form your own editing system.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure, I understand that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But then other artists say, "Hey, I've got a friend." Like the young man whose Spencer's assistant now, Ryan, he said, "Can you come to my studio please?"

LANNY SILVERMAN: I hear that a lot too. [00:48:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, but he's working with Spencer and Spencer said it's really cool. Now he's in a group show of Marianne Boesky, so my theory works.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there's a certain connection to talent.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah. Like likes like. It doesn't work in socialist systems.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Do you go out to school shows in town or other places? Do you ever look for young talent that's just like developing?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean, I look but I don't take.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You haven't found—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well I don't think—there are very few people who come right out of school who are themselves.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think the people—the galleries who jump on a brand new, fresh out of school artist—

LANNY SILVERMAN: What's the name of the guy, the Puerto Rican, Angel—he was speaking of anointed ones. He was fresh out of school when he got galleries in New York.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well, there's an exception to everything, the rule but—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And actually, I can't remember his last name but—

RHONA HOFFMAN: But most people have to get through there antecedents before they become themselves.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're more interested in an artist that's already got it developed—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mentored [some SAIC students –RH] a couple of years ago and I had three and two of them were real duds. One person I said, more or less give it up.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's not going to happen.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It ain't gonna happen.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's probably the best advice you can give them in a way.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And the other person was just going to be forever mediocre, but I'm not going to say that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But the third person who was from Puerto Rico, Ramon, was really talented and I gave each—it's so interesting, I gave each of them permission to come to my gallery, use all of my books. I have a vast library, and Ramon came. The other two never showed up.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's very telling right there.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well it's very telling right there, absolutely.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, because there's a level of commitment.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And now he's back. He's doing very well. He's sending me work, looking at it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's interesting. I guess what I was asking though was, I was interested in how you meet artists or how you—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Very often through other artists.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And also from this network of people.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And from curators and museum shows. Yes. [00:50:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: But I guess what I was also wondering is how you work—having firsthand experience of making art and being interested, you mentioned like changing the walls, I wondered how much you enjoy—I sometimes—there's the mentoring issue, but it's also like with a good friend, I remember really helping to sort of give them feedback on what directions I think were, you know, best because some artists don't have a clue. They think it's all wonderful. It's like they need an editor. Do you find yourself being in that role ever of developing an artist or helping them to edit?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I tell people whether I like one thing better than another, but it's not my job.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you don't feel that's—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The artists I pick happily are really good. Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I was talking about your role with artists and I guess, by and large, pick artists that have developed their voice and have a sense of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well I don't know about that. I mean, I don't say, "I think maybe it needs a little more green over there." That's not my decision.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, that's presumptuous. But I meant even just like or dislike.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Natalie Frank, she just sent me—she's working with Dieu Donné in New York and she's making these paper pulp paintings—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And she just sent me four. She said, "Which ones do you like?" I said, "I'm going to look at them and I'll let you know tomorrow." So that kind of thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I meant. It's giving some feedback.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because there are people that need that shaping of their work in a way—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's not about that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's not your role though, you're saying.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's not about needing my feedback. It's really about—it's like a funny kind of friendship. It's a funny kind of atelier—where the maker and the observer get together. You've joined together because you have a similar aesthetic anyway—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: —and then you sort of work together. If the artist says "dah, dah, dah," very often the artist doesn't want you to say anything and then you don't.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well there are people that don't want feedback and there are people [00:52:00] who don't want to even show you what they're doing until they're comfortable with it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, I don't know any of those.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well a lot of people don't want to show you their next work because they're most insecure about until they actually feel like—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well I don't want to show that artist.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's interesting. You want someone who is fairly confident of what they do.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't want an insecure person. Not insecure, but I mean timid I understand, quiet, soft-spoken. Richard Rezac is that, but he's not nervous about his talent.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, he's also quite accomplished so I don't think there's any doubt.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He's always been accomplished and now he's having a big breakthrough moment.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You mentioned that before.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, I did. It's really very rewarding.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's great.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So you're partners.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's actually the way you talked about it the first time, which I was really impressed by, is that you have ongoing relationships.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I was asking about that with artists.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh my god. I've known Vito Acconci since 1977.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's going back there.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And I've known Sol LeWitt and Don Judd and all those people. We don't—probably get older but we don't—and you do part company sometimes but it's not because—sometimes there's a breech and whatever or sometimes the artist just gets sick of showing at your gallery or you have an argument about something, but that's very rare. But, you know, shit happens and things change.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So who has been the most—what artist that you've represented has given you the most pleasure?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I'm not going to—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're not going to name names?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not because I won't. I don't have one. I don't have one.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You seem to have a number of them that you enjoy that process with.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes. We have dinner.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yes, that's what I'm getting at.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There seems to be a—

RHONA HOFFMAN: We have dinner. They come and visit. Spencer and I are trying to work out a day where I can spend a week and he finally got around to it. He has his weekend place too in Lakeville in upstate New York and we're trying to get together for a weekend. You become friends.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So this is pretty typical of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: He's become—very often, not always, but many of them become really intimate relationships. When we first opened, my kids grew up having breakfast [00:54:00] with Sol LeWitt and around the table are Vito or Richard Nonas and Richard Tuttle because in the beginning, who had enough money to put all these people up in a hotel, and I had a great big apartment.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know that feeling.

RHONA HOFFMAN: So for my 15th or 16th celebration of the gallery being open, my daughter, Laura, who at the time was a documentary filmmaker, went to New York and interviewed and made videos of everyone I knew in New York. The artists, the dealers, everyone. Made them talk about me.

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Hopefully they had good things to say.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Of course they did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The art world can also be very catty, too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, not when the camera is on you.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or when the mic's on.

RHONA HOFFMAN: And the daughter is asking you questions. I don't think so.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I guess it gets cleaned up.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But I guess the question leads me to you're saying it's about to be 40 years. What are you proudest of in terms of achievements in terms of either people you've represented or shows? What comes to mind even though these are sort of weird—

RHONA HOFFMAN: My daughter. She's in town now and she's staying with a friend but what am I proudest of? That I'm still here, I guess. I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Still standing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: What am I proudest of?

LANNY SILVERMAN: In terms of the art that you've either represented or maybe exposed to a wider audience, any of those kinds of things.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think all of that. I think that Sol LeWitt when we first started showing him—he's had 15 shows at the gallery and the largest number of shows. Every gallery I've ever been has gotten smaller from painting walls. Bob Ryman and Merril—I used to stay at their house in New York when I went to New York. I guess the proudest thing is to have known these great artists and to have been part of their lives. It's really an extraordinary—

LANNY SILVERMAN: This is part of history.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's really an extraordinary gift that I've had to really be intimate with really marvelous creativity.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Major forces. [00:56:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: At the top of their game. Like, you know, running around with Arnold Palmer on a golf course, or Jack Nicholson, or going to the theater always with who, you know, whatever.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well I have to say, some of that is true for me in terms of my career, but also it's sometimes very disappointing. Some of your heroes turn out to be sort of—you build them up in your head and they turn out they're just human like everyone else.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well of course they're human but the thing is that—there's one that I love but he's sometimes a horse's ass but you love them anyway. It's like having your kids. They're not always well behaved.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well that's what I'm getting at, sometimes like what you're saying with the horse's ass thing, sometimes the people that make the geniuses that make the beautiful work. Look at literary stuff, would you want to be friends? You mention Beckett or Kafka—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes, I would have loved to be friends with Beckett.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well I would but on the other hand, he probably would be a difficult person.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I don't care.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're attracted to difficult.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't care.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well same thing with Kafka. As much as that would be bizarre—they seem like tortured souls is what I'm getting at.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah. I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I agree with that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Tortured, I don't know. Questioning, I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Missed the opportunity to meet them, but on the other hand—then there's people like—I mean, there are people that are really good people that do—like Leon Golub who are extraordinary and he was amazing to work with as a curator because he was very giving. He would just let me—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I adored him. I saw him more than I saw my kids I think in New York.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. He's a hero that turned out to be a hero as a person.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He was a real hero.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He was a hero as a person as well but there are—I won't name names because I'm going to be good.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'll tell you but Leon's hero thing extended beyond the visual arts. I met John Berger around the kitchen table.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I met Hans Haacke. I met all these people who were friends. That's how I really got to know Rob, Rob Story was very close to Leon. [00:58:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But their lives, their social lives, their political lives, and their art lives were seamless and that's not true of everyone because sometimes their art is more reductive, more formal.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or you had the conversation with Judy Chicago. There's a contradiction sometimes.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, but I mean the thing is that all these people, when there's money to be raised for a disaster or for a health reason—

LANNY SILVERMAN: They're there.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Everyone goes to the artists. No one goes to businesspeople anymore,

although a lot of them are very generous too, but the art world is a place that everyone goes to. I mean the art world, the music world.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: How many live concerts for food, I mean Bono and Springsteen. It's the cultural world that seems to be interested in keeping the world going.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I had a project, I might end up meeting him. William Kentridge, I'm also very impressed by. I'm curious if I do meet him to see if he also lives up to it in terms of—he seems like an extraordinary—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Probably. I'm sure he's a sensitive emotional guy.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. I just think he's probably going to be an extraordinary person too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He probably has a hugely enormous ego.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's the thing I'm getting at. To be an artist, you have to be very—you have to have a strong ego to deal with all the rejection and to really have a—particularly in this culture—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not all artists get rejected.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, to be able to deal—well, there are success stories but the odds are well against you so you have to have a strong ego. There are a lot of people, and it tends to be a very male thing, but the people that are excessive egos that are beyond maybe their talents, there's a lot of that in the art world and there's a lot of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I don't see it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's interesting you say you don't see it because somewhere in there—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Without an ego you can't make work so you need an ego.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah but when you let slip into first conversation something about selfish—I don't remember what the rest of the adjective was attached to, but it basically was talking about artists as if some of them are—they can be selfish pigs, I guess, some of them you mentioned.

RHONA HOFFMAN: [01:00:00] I don't remember doing that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I got it on the record.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I'm sure I did. I just can't remember at the moment.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But there are examples of a lot of people that are over-aggressive or that are more grandiose because that's what—there's a fine line between visionary—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Some people I think get that way because they've been ignored and they're just so upset that they're being passed over that they get more aggressive about pushing their way forward.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, it's tricky business because—

RHONA HOFFMAN: We have a group of people. I'm not going to mention names on this but in the '70s, there was a group of artists and three of the five were being adored by galleries and being picked up and two weren't. It's very, very—

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's when it gets ugly.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It got ugly, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I know—that's kind of where I'm going. There's a lot— [. . . –RH] No, I know who you're talking about. I actually already kind of guessed who they are and I actually—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I cannot remember his name. Stephen? No, I don't remember what his name is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I was thinking more of David [inaudible] and those people. Now I'm going into—but yeah, anyways, there's a lot of that. We can go past that subject to go into something else.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah. Let's go in another one.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You've been in the business for a long time and I guess I've asked this of artists. How has it changed? Do you gain wisdom from age? Do you feel like—how is it different from when you started? Do you feel like a difference in—do you think you've gained?

RHONA HOFFMAN: I feel older.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You feel older? Well we all feel older.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I don't actually. That's really my nemesis. I don't feel older.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you still have the energy?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah, I don't feel older. I wish I did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But your body is telling you I'm older, I'm older. I guess what I'm asking you has wisdom replaced you—you still have the same enthusiasm which I love to see and actually that's very catching and you're still engaged in finding the next thing—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But has anything happened? Do you think that you've changed as a gallerist over the years?

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes. I've changed. I've gotten more used to not being as optimistic as I was, that there is no—not that there ever was or ever could be a level playing field, [01:02:00] but what really makes me quite sad is that people aren't going to the galleries anymore and people are buying online.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what we talked about a little bit.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yes. And that's very sad. That's sadder—it's sad for me because I don't make as much money if that happens, if people don't come to the gallery.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's sadder for the artist because a good artist will make a body of work that isn't identical but it has some kind of a—there's some connective tissue there and the goal is to communicate, so you have a body of work that you put in a gallery and if no one shows up to see it, and if it just all gets sent into the ether, it's not been a success. He or she has not done what they wanted it to be. It's very sad not to have a lot of people going to galleries. I go in in New York and I'm the only one there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Wow.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Because now art fairs—I think we touched upon art fairs.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Art fairs are replacing galleries.

LANNY SILVERMAN: One stop shopping. You can see a lot of stuff in one place.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well I understand that too because everyone doesn't know—

LANNY SILVERMAN: They're time pieces—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, there are just too many of them right now but not everyone has art on their mind 24/7 and not everyone has enough money or time, mostly time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's what I'm getting at.

RHONA HOFFMAN: You're raising kids, you have a job, you have relatives, you want to do this—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well I think one of the things that's happening—you're talking about audience but one of the things that I have to try to convince people of that it's very different to be in front of a piece of art than to be in front of a screen. It's not even just color correction or pixels versus—it's just—I'm sorry, there are certain things that you have to be in front of to—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, all art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'd say all but there probably are some—there's computer art and things that probably—video art that you can—

RHONA HOFFMAN: My first Art 105 course in Vassar, they would put something on the screen and one of the first things they would tell you is what the size was.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

RHONA HOFFMAN: [01:04:00] Not just this was by so and so, and it's 2x4, 3x6, so that you could start looking at the differences in size. Well when you're looking on a screen, unless you're looking at a miniature, you have no concept of its power or lack thereof.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's one problem. But there's even something—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And you can't see it in person.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And there's also—I as a curator—

RHONA HOFFMAN: The colors aren't even the same.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The colors aren't the same and—

RHONA HOFFMAN: And by the way, that's another subject, the fact that everything now is being photographed digitally is a problem because that color is not going to last. It fades. And the only thing that's going to last in the end will be the slides and transparencies that we took years ago.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, those slides will turn—the red goes away. We all know that. We've seen that.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh not mine. They're in books and light doesn't happen.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No. You probably have them encased in oxygen-free. But yeah, there's issues with slides too because those turn—they lose their red and all that stuff.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But the big thing is that people aren't going to galleries enough.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well they look at everything on their iPhones. I have trouble with the notion of looking at a film on your iPad because I don't think it's the same experience.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Plus it's not the same as not being in a darkened room. It's a different experience and that's where I'm going with this. It's not even just audience. It's not even just color or scale, but it's the tactility of it, the feel of it. How do you tell the difference whether it's a prime canvas—

RHONA HOFFMAN: There's one other thing, it's not the intention of the creator to be seen that way.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well that's a whole other thing.

RHONA HOFFMAN: I think that's the biggest thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's the biggest thing, yeah. The artist doesn't have any say in it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: The intention is for you to be standing in front of it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Although there are artists that make work for social media and for—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well that's different. Then we're not talking about them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Do you ever respond to that? I'm blanking out on the name of the one who did—Peter Miller used to show him. The guy that did—like he did a composite of all the paintings. He was sort of a computer geek and he—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Jason Salavon.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Jason Salavon.

RHONA HOFFMAN: He's doing very well.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, he's an interesting artist to me but what do you make of some of this stuff like that—thank you. I couldn't remember his name. [01:06:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, I like Jason's work. He's very good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I like his work too and actually—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I mean, I can't show everything. There's a lot of things I like that I can't show.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm trying to think, you don't show that much—you don't show that much that's digitally based. Maybe it's that sort of what I think you were talking about—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Digitally based or social media based or—

RHONA HOFFMAN: I show a lot of social media.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I mean social media like people doing art online—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No, no. I don't do that—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I mean that sense of. I don't mean social media. I mean like—you know what I'm talking about. There are people making art on that. I don't know what that is.

RHONA HOFFMAN: We have one artist who is all about algorithms, Siebren Versteeg.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah, we showed him at the cultural center and actually that was a wonderful show.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. He's a very interesting artist.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, so there are exceptions. I'm not meaning to characterize you, but that's not a direction that you're—

RHONA HOFFMAN: It's like French verbs. All French verbs are regular except those that are not.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Exactly. Well, where do you see—I guess that leads me to: Do you see yourself getting more involved with that kind of art?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're going to maintain—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No. I don't know what I'm going to be involved in when I go see something.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't know what's next. You'll know it when you see it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I knew that would be your response but you don't have any program of what you're looking for. There's no notion—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No. It's not a stamp collection.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Not hardly. How would—in terms of context, in terms of the future, how would you like to be seen in the future, as people look back on Rhona Hoffman Gallery and say—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Brilliant woman, brilliant, absolutely brilliant.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —showed amazing art.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Clairvoyant.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Saw it before anyone else could see it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Absolutely genius.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Great to work with, all those things.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: How about in terms of your—we talked about this divide between you being a person too. As a person too, you—I know you probably politically support, do a lot of—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No Republicans need apply.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, exactly. But you also put your—you probably put your support behind things that are heartfelt.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh, I do and you can use anyone who has a good cause can use the gallery for nothing. It's fine. But no Republicans.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Well we didn't have that—where'd we have the Obama rally at? It was at a gallery but I'm blanking out at which one it was. Yeah, there are galleries and there are people that really support that and I clearly know that you're—that's an important part too. [01:08:00]

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh yeah. We've had—but I let the gallery be used for lots of things. The Kronos Quartet when they were brand new did a concert at the gallery.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's lots of fun.

RHONA HOFFMAN: We raised—remember Harvey Gantt?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah, sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: We had a rally for him at the gallery. We have all kinds of things. But I don't agree with anything Republicans do so I can't support them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, tell me about it. I'm not even going to—that's an evil topic.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Lindsay Graham is going to denounce the flag. That's going to be amazing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, you mean denounce the Confederate flag.

RHONA HOFFMAN: The Confederate flag.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Make sure you say the Confederate flag.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right, I'm sorry.

LANNY SILVERMAN: If you get that, you're going to get Lindsey Graham—oh yeah, that's—that's amazing right there. But yeah, it's tricky. So you're happy with where—are you going to do a celebration, you said, in coming to your 40th?

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're just going to let it—you're like me you don't want a lot of fuss made about it.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh I love having a fuss about it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You like fuss but you're not going to do a fuss about that?

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I don't necessarily—I don't know what I'm going to do.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well I think that's an amazing—the fact that you've been in business for 40 years or whatever has got to be—there aren't that many other galleries who can say—

RHONA HOFFMAN: There are mistakes—I would consider a mistake not having gone to this—showing this artist or that artist or not keeping—

LANNY SILVERMAN: So there are ones that got away.

RHONA HOFFMAN: They didn't get away, I didn't think of doing it. But in retrospect, we're waiting a little too long to do it or whatever. Everyone has—they're not mistakes, they're just oversights.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or sometimes it just—it settles out to be what was right for you at the time and maybe—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Or you weren't on you're A game.

LANNY SILVERMAN: We've all had the ones that we think—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's artists that became world famous. I've been part of discovery of some world-famous artists but I've also let one or two go but one of them—oh god, what is his name. He came to Madison and he wanted to do a 24-hour naked performance which doesn't get—no one cares less in Madison A, and B, didn't want to charge you admission [01:10:00] so I had to deal with all those issues. Whatever it was, he, you know, without getting into the names and specifics, he ends up becoming world famous and he—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Who? Tell me who it is?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Jan—he's Dutch, I believe.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Not Jan Vo? No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, wait a second here. It'll come to me.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Jan Bader?

LANNY SILVERMAN: He's Jan Fabre.

RHONA HOFFMAN: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't know his work? He's been to Venice Biennale, he's been to all these places. You've seen the work. He's—I let a couple other ones get away—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Oh listen, people used to come and say, "Oh, I saw this artist. It was so great. It was in the Whitney"—it used to be annuals and I had all the catalogues and they'd say, "Oh, they were in the Whitney annual," and I'd get a Whitney Annual and I'd start reading a list of names and they'd go who, who, what, who and I hadn't heard of any of them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I tell people, if you look at an old Whitney Annual, rather than the stars from 30 years ago—

RHONA HOFFMAN: Well Dorothy Miller was the brilliant curator. She picked 10 artists and nine of them were correct.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. That's an art to really find the right ones.

RHONA HOFFMAN: But I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you feel good about what you've done in your career and about the gallery and you have no regrets.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Of course you have regrets.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But like you say—

RHONA HOFFMAN: That's a life unexamined if you don't have regrets.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. If you think everything you do is wonderful then you're not going to grow.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Everyone has missed opportunities or things that they should have done or they did it too late or they did it too early.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Things that you should have gone to that you decided not to go to. I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But I think as you said, I kind of like the way you were talking about it in the first conversation which is—but you do that thing for a reason. There's a choice that you made. You make that choice and that's where you were at that point in time.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. And sometimes you're just not—you're really not on your game sometimes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or it's not the right timing for you, just like in a relationship. Some things are—you know if you meet somebody at one point it would be awful but then later it's fine so it's just a matter of the right timing too.

RHONA HOFFMAN: Right. [01:12:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well I don't have any more particular questions that I've scripted. Do you have anything you wanted to—or other than—

RHONA HOFFMAN: No. Night Gracie.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Goodnight Gracie. Okay. Well thanks so much.

RHONA HOFFMAN: It was fun.

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LANNY SILVERMAN: This is Lanny Silverman for the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art. I'm at Rhona Hoffman's house and this is part two of an interview with her.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]