



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Peter and
Paula Lunder, 2017 October 19-20

Funding for this interview was provided by Barbara Fleischman.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Peter and Paula Lunder on October 19 and 20, 2017. The interview took place at Colby Art Museum in Waterville, ME, and was conducted by James McElhinney for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and the Frick Collection.

Peter Lunder, Paula Lunder, and James McElhinney have reviewed this transcript. Notations with the initials PL may be either Peter or Paula Lunder. 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

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Paula and Peter Lunder at Colby Art Museum [Waterville, ME], on October the 19th, 2017 [for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and the Frick Collection]. Good morning.

PETER LUNDER: Good morning.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Pleasure to see you again.

PAULA LUNDER: Thank you.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Thank you for the invitation to the dinner and the lecture. Wonderful, wonderful.

PETER LUNDER: Great.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Sylvia Earle is an amazing person and a wonderful inaugural speaker for this program. Were you involved at all in the formulation of that lecture series?

PAULA LUNDER: No, no. I was not. I'm a trustee, but no, I was not.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, the school is to be credited, I think, for its pioneering work in environmental studies.

So perhaps to begin, I'm sure that people are going to want to know how you began collecting art.

PETER LUNDER: It seemed to evolve. We lived up in Dexter, Maine, in the summertime because my place of employment, a company, was in Dexter, Maine. So we had a summer residence there, and evenings, I'd come home after work, and some days Paula had a—many days—had a trying day with the children and wanted an outlet. So we'd either walk or we'd go driving around in the area, and we'd come upon antique stores. [00:01:57] And we'd pop in there, and get an education, and look around, and see what was going on, and buy certain objects, and some of the objects were occasionally paintings and sculpture.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: And that went on for a few years, and then when we took a vacation up in Montreal, which was about a six-hour drive from Dexter, Maine. We checked in the hotel and went walking on the street. I think it was the famous Sherbrooke Avenue, or whatever—Road. And we had come upon this big sculpture, and Paula says, "Boy, that's interesting. I'd like to know a little more about it."

So we knocked on the door of the gallery, and it so happened—it was called the Dominion Gallery—and the owner of the gallery opened the door. And we told him, "We're just in the neighborhood and looking around." And he asked us if we knew anything about art, and we said no, but we were willing to learn. And he spent time with us, and it was so good, we bought one or two paintings that day, and didn't know the artist, didn't know anything. But he seemed like a very credible individual.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Do you recall his name?

PAULA LUNDER: Max Sternberg [Max Stern].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Max Sternberg? Thank you.

PAULA LUNDER: And he loved the fact that a young couple was beginning to collect art. We didn't know we were, but he thought we were at that time. [00:04:00]

PETER LUNDER: Was his name Sternberg? I know it was Max. Dominion Gallery.

PAULA LUNDER: Dominion Gallery.

PETER LUNDER: And then, we came to find out that he was a real authority on art in North America. This is back in probably the early '70s.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: And I think the first painting we bought was a Sir Luke Fildes, a British painter, and the second, that same day, we bought was a Fantin-Latour.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, really?

PETER LUNDER: It's upstairs in the gallery.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PETER LUNDER: We didn't know anything, but it looked nice to our eyes. We didn't know anything about quality. We didn't know anything about the artist. We didn't know anything about art. But he was very, very convincing and compelling, and that's how we got started. And after that, we went back the next year, and the next year, and bought a few more paintings, a Kees van Dongen and mostly European painters.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] [00:05:58]

PETER LUNDER: And it evolved from that—no plan, no agenda.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Just buying for pleasure and developing your own taste and your own eye.

PAULA LUNDER: And relating to what we thought was a very sincere, knowledgeable person. And that has been something that's followed us through our collecting. It began way back then. If the person was knowledgeable, we gravitated toward them, and if we felt they were sincere in what they were saying, we responded.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I'm also hearing, perhaps, that Sternberg's passion about art was also genuine.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That gave you confidence.

PETER LUNDER: Absolutely.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, yes. And we appreciated it. He was not only a gallery owner, but he was a scholar, and he went out of his way to really explain who the artist was, what the painting was about.

PAULA LUNDER: How to look at paintings, which is—there's an art to that as well.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Connoisseurship.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah. It was our initiation to, really, the art field.

We'd come back. Colby Museum was just up the hill from our real home, because Dexter was the summer place, and the real home was here in Waterville. And we would come up here, and the director of the museum was a friend, and we would speak with him and we'd ask him questions. It was similar to last night with Sylvia Earle. We asked questions and questions and questions, not only art field, but in the business field. That was what it was all about. Learning and—how do you learn? You ask a question, and whether you accept the

answer or believe in the answer or go with the answer or don't go with the answer, that's up to your individual judgment.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Do you remember the name of the director?

PAULA LUNDER: Hugh Gourley, how we could forget?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That is right. I did meet him ages ago. [00:07:59]

[. . . -PL]

PETER LUNDER: Thirty-seven years he was the director here.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow. I met him with the late Willard Cummings.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

PETER LUNDER: That's who brought him here.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: When I was spending a summer up the road as one of the students.

PETER LUNDER: Skowhegan?

PAULA LUNDER: Fabulous.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So it was an incredible experience, of course. It was sort of like a bacchanal in the woods, but everybody worked very, very hard.

PETER LUNDER: Willard Cummings was one of the founders of this museum.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: All right.

PETER LUNDER: And Hugh was a curator at the Rhode Island Museum of—

PAULA LUNDER: School of Design.

PETER LUNDER: School of Design, and he came up here in—oh, it was 1957, I think.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, the school is on the Cummings farm, if I remember correctly. Did you all know Bette Davis, who was heavily involved?

PETER LUNDER: The movie actress? Yeah. She was.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Had a place up there?

PETER LUNDER: Right, and she had something to do with Skowhegan School.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I think she was a major donor, regular angel, helped keep the place alive in its early days, and had a place.

PETER LUNDER: Exactly.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: She is originally from Lowell, Massachusetts, or someplace, but she had a place up near Skowhegan.

PETER LUNDER: And her husband was connected with Bowdoin College at one time.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: I forget the name.

PAULA LUNDER: And Daphne Cummings has been associated with our museum for many years, and her son Doug is now on the governing board.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yes. Wonderful.

PAULA LUNDER: So the connection continues. That's one thing about Colby that's so wonderful. You can continue those relationships, and Hugh was just marvelous at that. He did that with the Jettes [Edith and Ellerton Jette] as well, with Alida Camp.

PETER LUNDER: Right. [00:10:00]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So there's a long history here of local patronage. And there was another gentleman when I was at Skowhegan named Jack Eastman.

PETER LUNDER: I heard—from New York?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Maybe he was from New York.

PETER LUNDER: Paula, he's Jack Eastman. I remember the name. Colby board of governors first had a meeting in New York, and Eastman was the one that put it together for Bill Carter to have the group down for a yearly meeting in New York, which tradition still continues.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, Eastman is also a fairly common Down East name as well.

PETER LUNDER: Is that any relation to the Rochester, New York, Eastman Kodak?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, no. I'm not sure at all, but I'm thinking about the 19th-century artist Seth Eastman, who was an expeditionary artist, and he was from Maine

PETER LUNDER: Oh, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So anyway, but the point is that I think a lot of people, who may not know Maine, may not know how rich a state it is, in terms of cultural and artistic patronage, apart from Colby, of course. In, like, Rockland, you've got the Farnsworth and the Wyeth.

PAULA LUNDER: And Bowdoin. [00:11:56]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And the Bowdoin College.

PAULA LUNDER: Portland.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Portland.

PETER LUNDER: Ogunquit.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Ogunquit Museum of American Art, that just hired a new director.

PETER LUNDER: Right, from the Smithsonian. He was with SAAM down there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's right.

PETER LUNDER: Michael Mansfield.

PAULA LUNDER: And the Abbe Museum up north [Bar Harbor, ME]. Right. And who was the fellow from Dexter? We can't forget to mention his name. [. . . -PL]

PETER LUNDER: Oh, Jere Abbott. I think he was at Smith College, and I think he was originally one of the founders, or the directors, or board members, at MoMA in New York. But Jere Abbott spent time in New York, and he was a close friend of Hugh Gourley here. In fact, Jere Abbott was a Bowdoin graduate. When he passed away, his whole estate went to Colby instead of Bowdoin.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

PETER LUNDER: Because of the relationship with Hugh Gourley. And Abbott lived his remaining years, the last 20, 30 years of his life, up in Dexter, Maine, where we were in the summertime. So we'd meet him, and whenever Hugh came up, we would get together.

PAULA LUNDER: So, being in the small community, you develop relationships with people in depth, and it's just a pleasure. It really is.

PETER LUNDER: And that's why I say no plan.

PAULA LUNDER: You have a conversation.

PETER LUNDER: It just evolved.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It just evolved?

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: And you develop conversations and relationships that go back and forth over years that create great lives and great interests for us in art.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I think it's more challenging in an environment like New York, because you've got so many people. Everybody's calendar is packed, and few people entertain at home, so you're meeting either at clubs or at parties or whatever. And there's a certain point beyond which a conversation's never going to develop.

PETER LUNDER: And you have to watch your words. Here, you say what you think, let it all hang out. You don't have to guard yourself. [00:13:56] You don't have to watch your words. [They laugh.] You don't have to look over your shoulder. It is what it is, and it's a very casual, straightforward, simple path.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Kind of a Yankee candor involved.

PAULA LUNDER: That's right.

[They laugh.]

PETER LUNDER: Whatever you want to call it.

PAULA LUNDER: And within the confines of the museum and the college atmosphere, we had many advantages, because the art professors—we learned a great deal. The presidents were always supportive, going back to Seelye Bixler, who Peter knew. I did not. He was the first one who said art is an integral part of a liberal arts education, and we have stated that at every point of change at the museum and in our life. And the succeeding presidents have also believed that. "Bro" Adams [William D. Adams] was the president we worked with, giving our collection to Colby. And he didn't know anything about art when he came to Colby, but he learned a great deal, and he's now a patron of art, and loves Cezanne.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, wonderful.

PAULA LUNDER: So art gets into the lives of people in a wonderful way, and it enhances and enlightens us.

PETER LUNDER: Bro spent a lot of time with the art museum here at Colby, and the previous president [William R. Cotter -PL] was looking at our collection and wanted the collection for the college, and we—

PAULA LUNDER: We weren't quite ready.

PETER LUNDER: We weren't ready to tell him yes or no. But he announced that he was going to be retiring, and the last time we answered the question for him, we said, "Hey, we're going to wait to see who comes along." [00:16:12]

PAULA LUNDER: We were looking toward a new president and a new museum director in time, and we were—we weren't ready then.

But you might want to tell the story of how we decided to give it to Colby.

PETER LUNDER: So when President Cotter had gotten through, President Adams came on board.

PAULA LUNDER: The story about California.

PETER LUNDER: Oh, but I'll get to that in a minute. So anyways, when President Adams came on, the first two weeks, we sensed that Cotter passed on certain things that were

going on, and so he came up to Dexter and we had lunch. And we asked Bro what he knew about art, and he said, "Nothing," and we said, "Are you willing to learn?" And he said, "Absolutely." And we said, "Are you willing to let the director report to the president?" And he thought and thought, and then he said, "Yes." So I said—well, we said, "I think we can dance together. We can have a dance."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PETER LUNDER: Something like that.

PAULA LUNDER: And the process began.

PETER LUNDER: Then it evolved. And it started, and he carried through on everything magnificently, and he became a collector himself.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Excellent. [00:17:58]

PETER LUNDER: And he loved it. He loved meeting the people in the field. He loved meeting scholars. He loved all of that, and he then, after the presidency of Colby, became the—

PAULA LUNDER: —head of NEH.

PETER LUNDER: NEH, in Washington.

PAULA LUNDER: And is now a Mellon fellow, which is quite exciting.

PETER LUNDER: In New York. So he's absolutely thrilled with his career, not only academically, but in the art field.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Prior to this, to whom did the director of the museum answer?

PETER LUNDER: I think it was to the dean of students, or the dean of something.

PAULA LUNDER: Ed Yeterian, the dean of the college.

PETER LUNDER: The dean of the college? One of the deans at—I don't know.

PAULA LUNDER: He doesn't know about art and wasn't really into the art museum. So it worked, but it wasn't what we wanted to see going forward.

PETER LUNDER: But we knew from a business career, if the management is set up right, the management leads. And if it's good management, it has a chance of having good success. And the uninterrupted line of demarcation between the museum and the president's office is—like if the president or someone reports from the art history department, or from the science department, or the athletic department, why doesn't the museum have the same representation?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: But the point is that there—as you know, in a college or university, the art museum is a stand-alone. They are not tenured. Even the director isn't a tenured position. [00:20:01]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: And so we wanted them to have equal standing, and to do that, this was the best path. And it was Bro who said, "I am 100 percent for accepting a collection and furthering art at Colby, but I want it to be a collection to be fully integrated into the curriculum." That was his mantra. David Greene has believed that as well, and has made it an even stronger point, and now there are over 100 classes coming to the museum.

PETER LUNDER: In the study program.

PAULA LUNDER: And it's quite wonderful.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Not just using the Landay [Teaching] Gallery that we saw.

PAULA LUNDER: Ankeney Weitz, who is a professor of Asian Studies, takes her class into the

museum. And they're not giant classes, because it's Colby, so there's 10 or 12 at the most in a class. And one program she had was bookmaking. Remember that? It was just beautifully done. And so they worked off the Asian books that had been done, and how bookmaking is done, and worked out of—and she's had several classes, and that has been a real important part. And the way Sylvia Earle came last night. But before that, we heard the students talking about the environment.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Trying to explore narratives regarding environmental crises through the artwork in the collection?

PAULA LUNDER: Yes. Exactly. And if you have a varied collection, that's easy. And we have Lauren Lessing. Lauren Lessing, who is the educator-curator who's done a marvelous—hasn't she been marvelous in expanding the program? [00:22:00]

PETER LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, we'll hear more about that maybe later, when we talk about it in more depth.

PETER LUNDER: Good.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: About how you actually—how that program evolved. But just to do a little housekeeping, you've mentioned a number of times Dexter, Maine, but you were in the shoe business for a long time, and it's a very famous brand, you know, the Dexter Shoe factory was up there, right?

PETER LUNDER: Right. That's our company.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. Yeah. I've owned a number of them in my life.

PETER LUNDER: You must be a smart man.

[They laugh.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I'd always thought so.

[They laugh.]

PETER LUNDER: You've got to be brilliant.

[They laugh.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So I'm curious. I'll ask you first, Peter. As a kid, was there art in the house?

PETER LUNDER: There was some, but there was no focus on it.

PAULA LUNDER: But your aunts took you to museums.

PETER LUNDER: Museums, but my mother bought art.

PAULA LUNDER: Like Meissen, *The Tree of Life*.

PETER LUNDER: She had a big painting, a European painting in the living room and some of us—the paintings. But there was no focus on it. There was no conversation about it. It was more decoration, I would think.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, accessories of personal refinement.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And I think that was the way most people bought art. They figured that if they had reached a certain level of gentility, that art was a necessity.

PAULA LUNDER: Exactly.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You had a tea service, and you had, like, china for 12, and you had silver, and you had art, and you had, you know, all those things that were the trappings of,

you know, a genteel lifestyle. [00:23:59] So there was no great interest or passion in it? It was just like a part of the environment?

PETER LUNDER: It was just, it was there.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. Yeah. What museums did she take you to?

PETER LUNDER: In Boston—we grew up in Newton, Mass, and the Museum of Fine Arts was in Boston, and the Fogg Museum in Cambridge.

PAULA LUNDER: And they also—Grace took you to a lot of musical events.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: The arts were in his life.

PETER LUNDER: The opera, and the symphony, and the Pops—all part of the culture in Boston, and I always had some exposure to it and liked what the—what we did, and didn't dislike it. So it was part of just growing up. Paula grew up in Chicago.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In Chicago.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, you shared that with me last night. So on the north side of Chicago?

PAULA LUNDER: That's right, and my sister was an artist.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Really?

PAULA LUNDER: Is an artist, excuse me, is an artist. Yes. And so art was in our world definitely. My parents encouraged her to be an artist, and she went to school. And we once sat to make money during April vacation—we got \$25, each of us, to sit and be models for that one week of spring vacation.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah, at the Art Institute.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: At the Art Institute?

PAULA LUNDER: And then we were allowed to buy the paintings. My parents were allowed to buy paintings of us, which we still have.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wonderful. Do you remember, you know, the poses or the costumes?

PAULA LUNDER: Oh. Oh, I remember how hard it was to sit there, and your smile lasted five minutes and then that was over. [They laugh.] [00:26:00] And fully clothed, of course.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Of course.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes. But it was in the museum, and we were in the museum quite a bit, mainly the Art Institute.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's a great institution that's just kept evolving over the years. And so many more museums now in Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art—the Terra has closed, but they're still doing wonderful things.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

PETER LUNDER: We're on the board.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And you're on the board.

PETER LUNDER: Going off the board very soon. Great institution.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: Great foundation.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And doing a lot internationally. And so as a child, was there art in your house?

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, definitely. Definitely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And was it seen as—

PAULA LUNDER: It wasn't great art. It was what my parents liked, and a lot of my sister's work always.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Is she older or younger?

PAULA LUNDER: She's just a bit older, two years and 10 months. And we have her artwork in our home.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Excellent. She was trained at the Art Institute?

PAULA LUNDER: No, not at the Art Institute. She took courses there, but she graduated from another school. I don't remember the name of it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

PAULA LUNDER: But it was unfortunate. [. . . When she was in art school, she did not go on and get a four-year degree. -PL] So later on, she wasn't able to teach in college, and she's a great teacher. She's always taught people, but wasn't able to teach in a college because she didn't have that degree. She only had the art degree.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So she could do workshops, and things like that.

PAULA LUNDER: Which is what she does. [. . . -PL]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. Well, that's an honest way to make a living, and in a way, I think it's a little more—for an artist, it's a lot more fun than, at times, having to teach in a university, which has other distractions. [00:28:01]

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

[They laugh.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So you were raised in an environment where there was a consciousness of art being art, and having ideas?

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And any art historical training in college?

PAULA LUNDER: Well, I took courses, but I didn't major in that. But at Colby, I took the survey course four times, with four different professors. I just loved it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It was the Rashomon effect.

PAULA LUNDER: And it fit into my schedule with the children.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Four times, the same course?

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah, survey with four different professors [inaudible].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Four different courses, basically.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah. One was focused on mainly architecture, but it was what—and that's why Colby was so wonderful for us, because from the moment we came to Waterville, we were taken by his aunt and uncle, who were our mentors, up to Colby. And it was our entertainment; it was our learning; and it was a place to make friends. And it's just been wonderful in our lives.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, how did you meet?

PETER LUNDER: In Boston. Paula went to Lesley [University].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Okay.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: We met there.

PAULA LUNDER: His mother—we were at a function, and his mother introduced us.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And you're from Newton originally.

PETER LUNDER: Newton, yes. [And I moved away at about age 14 -PL] from Newton to Hebron Academy up here in Maine, then Colby, and then a working career at Dexter. So I've been in Maine probably now 80 percent of [my] life.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Your uncle was—

PETER LUNDER: Harold Alfond.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, yeah.

PETER LUNDER: Yes. [00:29:59]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Harold Alfond who owned the shoe company?

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

PETER LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And then, my father originally [. . . got -PL] him his first position in a shoe company in New Market, New Hampshire, when he was growing up. I was very close with him when I came to Colby, and after that, and he always wanted to make sure he gave me my first job. And that's how we were partners in Dexter Shoe.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh.

PAULA LUNDER: Forty-five years?

PETER LUNDER: Forty-five years.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: A long time.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Great time.

PETER LUNDER: And wonderful years, great business career.

PAULA LUNDER: And they were mentors to us as a couple.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], you were saying.

PAULA LUNDER: And to our children, and we're now very close with their children.

PETER LUNDER: And he always used to say he and I were the Glenn Davis/Doc Blanchard of the shoe business, "Mr. Inside" and "Mr. Outside." And we had a great relationship, and many years of fruitful enjoyment and success.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, and a great product.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, beautiful.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Really, really a great product, for years, the sort of gold standard, when a lot of things were being outsourced.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: And that's what Peter loved best.

PETER LUNDER: Right. I loved manufacturing, and running the company.

PAULA LUNDER: To have that shoe in his hand, meeting great people.

PETER LUNDER: As I always said, I had a great career in business, had a great career in sports. We were part owners of the Red Sox when it was sold in '77, and then we were with them for 25 years. [00:32:01] And then, great, great years in the sports world, and great years in the art world. So what more could you ask for?

PAULA LUNDER: Very full life, very lucky.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow, wow. So what was the first moment when you became aware that a painting that you had bought was really an important work of art?

PETER LUNDER: Well, as things went on, I don't know.

PAULA LUNDER: I can say.

PETER LUNDER: You—can you identify?

PAULA LUNDER: It's more when we realized that there was a collection in the making.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: It wasn't a particular painting. It was when Gerry Peters from Santa Fe invited us to join the Smithsonian forum travel group from the Smithsonian American Art Museum for lunch, and to meet the people. We did; we were invited to join; and we joined. And from that time on, it was kind of a new level.

PETER LUNDER: Discussion, and we were learning. We kept learning and learning, and asking questions, and as we did, our eyes seemed to get trained, because we really didn't buy anything on the spot like we did originally. We would check it out, and [in] a lot of cases, we found out how to get [to] the authority on the artist, or who wrote the catalogue raisonné or did scholarly work on it, and would pass it by them.

PAULA LUNDER: Several people.

PETER LUNDER: Then our eye kept getting better and better, and the collection would get better and better.

PAULA LUNDER: And we were exposed to more at a certain level. [00:33:59] Instead of doing it ourselves, we were directed to look at other artists.

PETER LUNDER: And fellow collectors.

PETER LUNDER: You'd learn from them as you traveled with them. The Smithsonian had a group that took two trips a year around America, and you saw some great collections. You heard how people collected, why they collected, and you learned from that. And that's why I say everything evolved, and it was—wasn't any plan to go that way.

PAULA LUNDER: No plan.

PETER LUNDER: And I think the first painting that we bought that had real significance was the John La Farge, that leap of faith that we took with that painting. I'm—I don't remember exactly if that was the one.

PAULA LUNDER: Well, that catapulted us into a new place, because that was a serious painting, and we hadn't gone that way. But didn't we buy the Whistler before that? Yes, we did. So I think it was with the major Whistler painting. But the La Farge took us—said to us, "You're in a new place now." So every few years, things would happen.

But to get back to the basics, Peter loves to do research. He's very thorough. So we would—he would do his reading, and he would research the person who was selling him the painting and the history of the painting. And so by the time we bought something, we had talked to many people. Hugh was a great resource. Betsy Broun was a great resource for us. By talking to them, we learned how to look at things. It was instrumental. [00:36:00]

PETER LUNDER: We saw a lot of people.

PAULA LUNDER: In the early '90s—1990—when we joined Betsy, wasn't that?

PETER LUNDER: Yes. Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Betsy Broun, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum?

PAULA LUNDER: Right.

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And Hugh Gourley at Colby, here at Colby. So not just the narrative behind the painting, or when the painting was made, or what the technique was, or what the subject was, but also the provenance and condition.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Exactly.

PETER LUNDER: Condition.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I interviewed a famous actor who is also a famous banjo player, who has in his library two or three books on varnishes—[laughs]—in a deep curiosity, I guess, at one point about really understanding—not being a practitioner, getting some kind of idea about knowing what you're looking at in terms of just reading the physical object and understanding what's there, what the pigments are doing, what the varnishes are doing, what the materials are doing. Because, I mean, if you're just looking at the image, you could be fooled.

PAULA LUNDER: Well, condition was another issue for us, major issue for us, but initially, if we didn't like the image, or we didn't think, "This is good for us. We'd like to have this in our home."

PETER LUNDER: "We could live with it."

PAULA LUNDER: Right. And we do have some things that are quite edgy, but if we together didn't like it, we wouldn't buy it. We have to really like something, the image or the sculpture, but we're pretty broad in what we like, and we like things together, not everything.

PETER LUNDER: Ninety-nine percent of the time we would agree this would be something we could live with and enjoy. [00:38:00]

PAULA LUNDER: Yes. If one person absolutely doesn't like it absolutely, then we don't do it, but we can accommodate, because through that we learn. And an example of that is, originally, I didn't like Southwestern, which you probably saw in the galleries.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: I wasn't keen on that. I wanted Homer, Sargent, all of that.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. You didn't want Maynard Dixon.

PAULA LUNDER: No. I didn't appreciate it, truthfully. Peter loved it from the very beginning, so he would buy his Southwestern, and we would also get a Homer or a Sargent. It was fair.

PETER LUNDER: To appease Paula.

PAULA LUNDER: And that's called marriage, right?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. [They laugh.]

[Side conversation.]

So it was, there was a lot of corporate agreement, but then if there was a disagreement and somebody really wanted a piece, then you would—

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, we would.

PETER LUNDER: Yield.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, yeah, definitely. Definitely. Peter, you didn't like the Sargent originally?

PETER LUNDER: No, but—right. The Sargent and the boy up there, it didn't—I didn't react to it the way Paula did. But she loved it, so we got it. [00:40:01]

PAULA LUNDER: And a lot of people object to that. [The image -PL] makes them uncomfortable. So that happens, you know?

PETER LUNDER: [We -PL] didn't have to have 100 percent agreement.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

PETER LUNDER: But as far as appeasement, we'd buy a Southwestern and also buy what—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But over the years, I'd imagine that that you would begin to develop an appreciation for things?

PAULA LUNDER: I absolutely love the Southwestern now.

PETER LUNDER: Thinking changed?

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] It's beautiful.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Because I do know of another couple, collector couple, who have completely different interests. The one spouse only is interested in modern, contemporary art, and the other one is only interested in 19th-century American.

PETER LUNDER: That's okay.

PAULA LUNDER: That's definitely not us.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's completely different. They've got their own agendas.

PAULA LUNDER: But if we were like that, I would miss that, because you can have conversations about things, and it's a side from your life, that you live with your work and your family, and it's—they're lovely conversations you can have about art.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So apart from Max Sternberg, and later Hugh Gourley and Betsy Broun, who had been really significant mentors for you?

PETER LUNDER: Well, in the Whistler collection, Margaret MacDonald from the Hunterian. We've been very friendly with Tom Colville, who was a dealer out of New York and Connecticut.

PAULA LUNDER: And with him, we've looked at an enormous amount of art, and have bought a significant amount from him as well. [00:42:00]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: And Susan Schulman, who is a dealer of Old Masters. She only deals with museums, but through the Freer originally.

PAULA LUNDER: Ken Myers introduced us.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, Ken Myers at the Freer, who was the Whistler scholar there, introduced her. And she has hitched up with us, and she does really all scouting and checking and—of quality of works on paper. And it's like that Cassatt that you just saw in the gallery there. She's been very instrumental in helping us build the works on paper collection, with Goya, and *Dürer*, and *Whistler*, and *Rembrandt*, and Picasso. The museum today enjoys five centuries of master artists that they can study and see, rather than read about it in books. They actually can see it, not touch it, but be with it and enjoy it.

PAULA LUNDER: What we admire are people with art historical knowledge.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: Betsy—it has been an absolute pleasure to learn from Betsy and to see with her eyes. She has a vision and a depth of knowledge.

PETER LUNDER: There's been occasion where there was something that would come up, and we'd get Martha Tedeschi, who was at Chicago, now at Harvard. We've been close friends with her for many years, and she would weigh in. Or Erica Hirshler at the MFA in Boston, or Barbara Weinberg.

PAULA LUNDER: At the Met.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In New York?

PAULA LUNDER: Nonnie Frelinghuysen.

PETER LUNDER: Nonnie down in New York—Tiffany. And we've had a wide field of people and acquaintances that we've met that would weigh in, and they loved doing that because they kept abreast of what was happening in the market and what was on the market. And it was a great partnership.

PAULA LUNDER: And Julian Raby helped us with the Consortium [Lunder Consortium for Whistler Studies].

PETER LUNDER: Julian Raby at the Freer Sackler.

PAULA LUNDER: We were open to meeting people.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: And they were open, and it made it great for both. It was win-win.

PAULA LUNDER: We learned a lot, and we were exposed to a lot, and now through Colby, we can't say enough about the director, Sharon Corwin, and all her curators. They're just marvelous. And what has happened in the last 10 years, I'd say, is they are teaching us, because of what they appreciate—more contemporary art.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: And that's a weird world.

PAULA LUNDER: And so it's like your mind gets broadened when you meet people like this who love art and are knowledgeable. So it's enhanced our lives dramatically, wouldn't you say, Peter?

PETER LUNDER: Absolutely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So the process of learning is something that clearly gives you great pleasure. [00:46:02]

PETER LUNDER: Absolutely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And the art gives you a kind of a vehicle for—apart from giving you pleasure to behold and be the steward of it—also gives you the opportunity to deepen your knowledge.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So I imagine you have a substantial library. [Laughs.]

PETER LUNDER: Yeah. [Laughs.] Couldn't possibly read it all.

PAULA LUNDER: Which we are offering to Colby if—to fill if they need it. What parts of it they need, they're welcome to it.

PETER LUNDER: And these institutions have benefited, because we try to support as many as we can. Different programs, and exhibitions, and catalogues, and curators, and whatever.

PAULA LUNDER: We love scholarship.

PETER LUNDER: It isn't a one-way street.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: It's two ways. And we've found the field is very inviting. They want to share their information; we want to share what we're doing; and it makes a good ball game.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You've got a—yeah, as it were.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Spoken like a true Red Sox fan.

PETER LUNDER: [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So you also have a place in Florida?

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And that's a very different kind of community, but do you find kindred spirits also there?

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, absolutely.

PAULA LUNDER: Absolutely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And how would you contrast that experience, that community, with this one?

PAULA LUNDER: Well, you're speaking of the town, or the art community?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, I think people know the town is very different. It's a different environment. It's a different climate. They've got different foliage, and— [00:47:59]

PETER LUNDER: And different people come to Florida. They're like us. They're there for three months, four months, five months, whatever it may be.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Snowbirds.

PETER LUNDER: Then they go back to their communities.

PAULA LUNDER: We've enjoyed the art experience there. We're associated with the Norton, and the Norton is just enlarging their program, not only their physical plant, dramatically, but their educational program. And we support that 100 percent, because it is not just a museum, but it's more of a cultural center. There aren't a lot. There's a performing arts—Kravis Center. But the museum can be so much in those communities, and they are going to be doing a great deal, and we've met some great people. One couple is Ann and Gil Maurer, and he is one of the Maurer descendants. And in speaking and being with them, we've learned a great deal.

PETER LUNDER: Right, and we admire and respect Gil and Ann very much, and other collectors down there, Leonard Lauder and Judy Glickman. Judy [is] from Maine, so we knew—and you learn so much from people that are knowledgeable.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah. Judy and Leonard were from Maine, not Florida though.

PETER LUNDER: No, no, but Gil is in New York.

PAULA LUNDER: But I'm talking about Florida, where we were in Florida. But if you want to, we can also go to connections we've made in Maine and other places.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I think that's sort of the goal of a conversation like this, too, is to sort of connect the dots, and to create a picture of the network that you're part of, and the network that you're the center of, and the networks you're connected to. [00:50:02]

And I think how—you know, at some point we can talk about how you see the museum culture in America changing, which clearly it is, and evolving, and how that in some ways is very positive, and in other ways might be concerning.

But so, you know, your peers in Florida, your fellow collectors—were they people you met there, or were they people you met through the Smithsonian, or both?

PAULA LUNDER: Both.

PETER LUNDER: Both.

PAULA LUNDER: Gil and Ann, we met there. Others, we met through New York. We were members of the Met group, Bryant Fellows. We met them there.

PETER LUNDER: We still are.

PAULA LUNDER: So in our travels at the Smithsonian—

PETER LUNDER: I mean, we've been members of the Whitney—

PAULA LUNDER: —right, for many years, probably 12, 15 years, and we've never had the opportunity to be with them because we've always had conflicts. But next week is going to be the first—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, great.

PETER LUNDER: —time we're going to connect with them. But Barbara Haskell has been a great friend for many years. She's weighed in.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah, she has.

PETER LUNDER: And loved doing it. And so as you bring up things, probably [it will] remind us of all the people that we've had involvement, and pleasant involvement, and great involvement. [00:51:44]

PAULA LUNDER: We'll remember.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I'm sure there's a lot of curiosity among younger collectors, people who are coming up, people who are perhaps like you were once, you know, people of interest, people of means, and people with a desire—attracted to art, and who want to be involved with it, but also want to find out who else is out there having, you know, similar experiences, so they could learn from them. They could learn from their mistakes, and their triumphs, and they—that you could share the same in return.

So what in your opinion would be the best way for an aspiring collector to kind of meet their community, meet their neighbors in the collecting world?

PAULA LUNDER: Do you want to take a break for lunch, and then we can begin again with that conversation, and in between we can talk to you a little about—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, we have—I have a general rule, which is I don't want to rehearse a question.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, okay.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And so maybe if we could address that question and then have lunch.

PETER LUNDER: No, no. Go ahead.

PAULA LUNDER: Okay. Well, Alice Walton is an example. We've been [. . . to Crystal Bridges -PL] three times, and each time we go, we meet new collectors. And we're absolutely so excited about what she has created there, because we believe art is for all people and not a select group, and Alice has done the most marvelous thing in Arkansas. She has built a

museum for her people, for the people of Arkansas. Well, that's what we're thinking here. Everybody should be able to appreciate it. She has the educational mission. We have the educational mission. And we meet collectors there and they always ask, "How did you start? Where are you going?" We don't know where we're going.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PAULA LUNDER: It's all an adventure, right?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's not an adventure if you know where you're going.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah, that's right. It's an adventure, and that's the good part about it. We're learning.

PETER LUNDER: That's why we said it's evolving. No game plan. [00:53:59] This art institute [Lunder Institute for American Art]—whoever dreamt that Colby would want to start an art institute? Perfect environment for it, but did we ever imagine it? Absolutely not.

PAULA LUNDER: No.

PETER LUNDER: When it was presented to us by Sharon—

PAULA LUNDER: —and the president—

PETER LUNDER: —David Greene, we were interested.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: But here again, we wanted to know who the leadership of this institute was going to report to, because it's all about management. It's all about good leadership, and when that was worked out, we said yes, we would support it.

PAULA LUNDER: And when you have good leadership, everything flourishes.

PETER LUNDER: We had faith. Now, they've got to be healthy and be able to do the job.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: They need the structure.

PAULA LUNDER: Leadership is important to develop a good mission and follow through. And we believe in Colby, that they will do that here.

PETER LUNDER: Who knew when we started collecting Whistler that it would evolve [into] a consortium between the Hunterian, and the Freer, and the Chicago Institute, and Colby, doing Whistler studies? When—we had no vision for that.

PAULA LUNDER: Was that Julian we sat with?

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, it was Julian Raby at the Freer that originally suggested it to us—that something should be done in the northeast part of the country, or the East Coast. You know, the Freer was down there. They have a fabulous collection of Whistler. [00:55:55] I'm sure there's other institutions that have great Whistlers, but do they show them? Do they promote them?

PAULA LUNDER: Is there scholarship on them?

PETER LUNDER: Do they do scholarship on them? I'm sure they've got things buried in the storage—[laughs]—that haven't seen the light of day for many years, but at Colby, here, we're trying to make it surface, and someone can enjoy them, and see them, and study them.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: And that is—Peter's just highlighted the purpose of giving our collection to Colby. Not only will it be viewed, it'll be researched. There'll be all kinds of academic pursuits around the collection, and it will be open not only to the students, the entire community at Colby, but the broader community.

PETER LUNDER: And, Jim, you asked the question and was—I glossed over. You said, "Why did you decide on Colby," or made reference to it. "Where did the idea come [from]?"

And it came when Paula and I were out in California, probably 15, 20 years ago. We were going through the de Young Museum with Jay Cantor, who was the [. . . -PL] Winterthur scholar, and at Adelson Galleries [. . . -PL], yes, in New York. And we're going through the museum, and after a while we said to him, "Jay, why are so many of these painting and sculptures from John Rockefeller Jr.?" And he said—his answer was, "So happens you're asking a question that other people have asked." [00:58:05]

John Rockefeller used to come out to California. His wife was sickly and used to spend six months a year out here. And one year, he brought out some paintings from his collection from New York, and he had some extras and called the director of the museum, the de Young. And he said that—he introduced himself and he said, "Would you like to hang some of my paintings now?" I don't know anybody that would turn [him -PL] down.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PAULA LUNDER: A Rockefeller.

PETER LUNDER: And he was alert, the director, and he said, "By all means, bring them in." And he did, and he hung them.

Every succeeding year, he brought more and more. Then after 10, 12 years, as the story went, John Jr. said to his wife one morning, "You know, I think we should give our collection to the"—yeah, he said to his wife, "Give the collection to the de Young." And she said, "How can you do that? New York will be upset. They belong in New York. We're New Yorkers." And he said, "In New York, this collection is going to go to storage. It will never be seen. Out here in California, it hangs on the wall, and people can see it and enjoy it." Well, from that answer, the bells started to ring.

PAULA LUNDER: We looked at one another and said, "Wow."

PETER LUNDER: And we said, "Maybe someday, if the collection is meaningful, it would be great for a regional museum." [01:00:00] We never thought of Colby, even though we lived here and it was here. And then as the collection built and evolved, we talked to Hugh about it, and regional museums were—have had a need for good collections, and we had it right in town and we didn't even know it—[they laugh]—until we had a chance to think about it and explore it.

And that's how we would answer your question "Why Colby?" It was a teaching institution, the president of the school wanted it, the head of the museum wanted it, and it was a natural. It was a no-brainer, and it all worked out. Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, thanks. Let's take a break.

PAULA LUNDER: Lunch.

[END OF lunder17_1of2_track02]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney again, take two, speaking with Peter and Paula Lunder at Colby College on a beautiful October 19, 2017. Great lunch, thanks.

Earlier, we touched on the question of when it was that you became mindful of the fact that you were collectors, that you were not just simply art buyers who were acquiring works that you liked, but that there was a critical mass of work that was a collection.

PAULA LUNDER: I believe when we began our association with the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and Betsy Broun and her traveling group. We met other collectors, and they always considered ours a collection. Peter and I did not, because Peter and I actually bought what we liked. There was no path. There was no agenda. What we saw and liked, and had verified that it was quality, we would buy. But others would think it was a collection. So it was a collection in formation. But with Betsy Broun, our vision changed a great deal, and became a little more educated and sophisticated about what we were looking at. And so we veered a little bit from just buying, to buying in depth, which is something that Peter always enjoyed doing, and thought had value.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So buying a particular artist's work— [00:02:00]

PAULA LUNDER: Or type of art.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —or type of art.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So for example?

PETER LUNDER: Thomas Moran.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Thomas Moran.

PETER LUNDER: Okay, we bought a Thomas Moran in an antique store around Dexter.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: A painting?

PETER LUNDER: A painting.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Unbelievable.

PETER LUNDER: Unbelievable, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PETER LUNDER: We found out later it was a fake.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh.

[They laugh.]

PAULA LUNDER: It was unbelievable.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It was too good to be true.

PETER LUNDER: Exactly, and—but we still loved the artist, and—four or five, we must have four or five of them in the collection today, evolved after the years. We liked them. Here again, we checked out, made sure we didn't buy a fake. I don't know where the fake is.

PAULA LUNDER: It's still with us.

PETER LUNDER: It's somewhere, but I don't know if we gave it—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In a powder room somewhere.

PETER LUNDER: No.

PAULA LUNDER: No, not being shown.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PETER LUNDER: It's, I don't know, in a closet or somewhere.

PAULA LUNDER: And we've had a couple, another painting that is questionable.

PETER LUNDER: But anyways, to get back to depth, as Morans turned up, and we liked them—there was a watercolor, one of his earliest ones he did at Yosemite. It's upstairs in the gallery.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: There's an oil on canvas that came up on the West Coast, and we were coming to New York. We came to the hotel just five minutes before the auction started, and we happened to be on the phone. If the plane was late, we never would have been on it. But we got it, and it was *Acoma*.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: *Acoma Pueblo*?

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah, it's a beautiful painting.

PETER LUNDER: And it's hanging in the gallery upstairs. [00:04:04]

And then that watercolor showed up, an 1860's of Susquehanna Valley. I remember that Christa Gaehde, we called her because she was—used the Fogg as her—she was an independent, and she knew about works on paper, and Moran work, and we exposed it to her, and over at the Harvard laboratories, they checked out the pigments and the condition, and we bought it. It was from a Philadelphia dealer, at the time, Schwarz.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: The dealer in Philly, and those are some of the Morans that we have in the collection. But if we saw something that we liked, if it added to what we already had, so what? It was a different medium, and it was beautifully done, and it represented a different period in the artist's career. We had no restrictions or any agenda that it had to be this or that. We lived with it.

PAULA LUNDER: Enjoyed.

PETER LUNDER: In fact, one of them is in Boston, and we—in the hallway—and we enjoy it very much.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: And others have said to us in those early—in the '90s, "You must focus. You're all over the place." And we said, "Yes, we like everything."

[They laugh.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But it does make sense that a collection that is going to be used by an educational institution have that kind of depth, because then you can construct different narratives for teaching. [00:06:02]

PAULA LUNDER: Exactly.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And not just say, "Well, this is an example of a famous artist; this is one example of a famous artist; this is another famous artist, one example," so that you've got depth in—

PETER LUNDER: Whistler started the same way.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: He started with the pastels. We didn't know even about Whistler, but it was presented to us. The dealer that had it, we had faith in him, and we had the quality checked out, and we bought it.

PAULA LUNDER: And the beauty of Whistler appealed to us, the technique, the mystery, and the use of his—

PETER LUNDER: Interiors.

PAULA LUNDER: —how he—use of material, and his study. He's so intense about how he does his art. We responded to that.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: We liked that. That's not for everyone.

PETER LUNDER: We started with one. And then we bought a few pastels. Then we found out, really, pastels were very fragile. [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Indeed.

PAULA LUNDER: And works on paper, and we said never again, and then we started.

PETER LUNDER: We bought watercolors that came up that we loved.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Etchings.

PETER LUNDER: And then we bought oils of Whistler's.

PAULA LUNDER: We said, "We're not doing any more works on paper. They're too fragile." And then the etchings began.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: And now there are how many? Peter's Project, we call it.

PETER LUNDER: Must be three hundred. Between the etchings and the lithos. Of Whistler, I think the collection has, I don't know, 350 Whistlers today, of his whole range, including his easel, and paintbrush, and books, and all that stuff. [00:08:04]

PAULA LUNDER: So it's typical of us. We knew works on paper were fragile. So we partnered it with oils, but we still continued to buy, because it's what we love. It's what we seek.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But Whistler was so heavily involved with works on paper.

PAULA LUNDER: We did it backwards. [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, got you. So, well, yeah, people will say that works on paper aren't as valuable; they're more fragile. But in a strange way I think that today we're back to a kind of emphasis on paper, and especially since everything is in digital form, a lot of things don't even have a physical form.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Then all of a sudden, like, a piece of paper is like a block of marble, you know. It's—at least it's physical. So this just happened intuitively.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So how do you keep track of your collection? What kind of registration protocols were developed?

PAULA LUNDER: I would preface it by saying Peter's always been a collector at heart. When he was young, he loved to collect things, and so it was a natural thing for Peter to be able to record everything in a very organized, very organized way.

PETER LUNDER: So to answer your question, my assistant in the office records everything when it comes in, and we make out an artist sheet. We have a file, and then we have a report that has all the paintings and all the objects in the collection. And we keep track of it that way. [00:10:10] We used to do it by hand; now it's on the computer.

PAULA LUNDER: But your files contained every report that we received, all the investigation that we did before selecting a piece.

PETER LUNDER: And after articles come out in publications, we'd cut them out of the magazines and put it in the file.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: On each piece?

PETER LUNDER: On each piece.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So almost like an appraiser's worksheet, you know.

PAULA LUNDER: Definitely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Or like a work file, yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: Definitely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You've got a work file on each piece.

PETER LUNDER: And then even works that we buy for Colby, we may put it on a master sheet, because it's in the collection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: But Colby keeps the file on that now.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And you said that those papers relating to your collection historically are now here in the archives at Colby?

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: When we originally made the gift in '07, we deeded 80 percent of it over in '13, I think, 2013. But they had full access to it. Most of those 500 at that time were up at Colby anyways, and they were on loan. But now they were deeded to them, so they take control of them and have all the paperwork in their files.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So a scholar, if they were to wish to delve into the history of your collection, how it evolved, what kind of research you undertook prior to purchasing, or post-purchase, they could come here, and they could examine all the primary materials.

PETER LUNDER: Whatever we had, right.

PAULA LUNDER: Dates, condition reports, everything.

PETER LUNDER: Transparencies, those were the rage.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right—oh, yeah. Yeah, that was the only way to go at one point.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Now, it's TIFF files.

PETER LUNDER: JPEGs today.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: JPEGs, TIFFs, yeah. Other, you know, the digital-image formats. So you began to register works of art right from the beginning?

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It wasn't like you had a person say to you, "You really need, you know, to put together a notebook of your collection."

PAULA LUNDER: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So it was right—

PETER LUNDER: Had files on it, and downstairs in the house in Scarborough [ME].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, so Paula just shared that you were, you know, a collector all your life. Did you collect coins, Red Sox memorabilia?

PETER LUNDER: No. During World War II, I collected generals' and admirals' letters. I used to—you know, I was 10 years old, 11 years old—used to write generals and admirals that were in the war, and told them that I had a couple of relatives in the service, and I'd like to get their insignia or patch that—what they represented. [00:14:00] They would all send back letters with their patches. The first letter I received was from Dwight Eisenhower.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow.

PETER LUNDER: And that's still hanging in my office in Portland. And from then it was Patton, Mark Clark, Nimitz, Chennault, you name them, and there was a couple of hundred of them at that time. And, you know, I was writing letters in longhand to them, and they were responding, and it was a great interest to do something during the war and have a memory

of it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So they would send you a letter, and—

PETER LUNDER: Their patches.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —and a patch?

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Like a shoulder patch?

PETER LUNDER: Of the—who was the fellow that—Bastogne, the general—McAuliffe.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: McAuliffe, "Nuts," yeah.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, "Nuts" to the Germans, and he sent his.

PAULA LUNDER: And that will possibly go to a special collection at Colby.

PETER LUNDER: Or a wartime museum, or something that can use it, benefit from it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Is there—I mean, I know of a number of World War II museums. But again, the question is, you don't want it to be filed next to the Lost Ark somewhere.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You don't want it to be—

PETER LUNDER: Not be in the cellar, and never be exposed.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And it should be on view, right, or at least accessible in some way.

PETER LUNDER: Right. So that's how I got started in collecting. [00:16:01] And then, after that—I never did stamps, or coins, or any of that. Then it was baseball. Never did cards, but it was bats and balls, and that stuff.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Game balls, like the signed balls, that kind of thing like that.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah. But nothing serious.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's an impulse. There's a natural impulse that some people have to acquire in an orderly way, and acquire with some kind of narrative, to tell a story with these objects.

PETER LUNDER: When we first got married, we collected plates. Remember that Bradford plate collection?

PAULA LUNDER: And Royal Copenhagen figures. Silver. [. . . -PL]

PETER LUNDER: So we try to, yeah, try to do different fields. Never really got involved in American furniture.

PAULA LUNDER: We looked at it and tried. We didn't have the feel for it that we do for sculpture and paintings, works on paper.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, one has to follow and trust one's own sensibilities and judgment.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: Judgment.

PAULA LUNDER: We appreciate it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is probably a good time to pause.

PAULA LUNDER: Good.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Since I can tell that you're eager to get over to this other event.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah, I don't want to not be in attendance, if it's important.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So we'll resume here tomorrow morning?

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: At eleven-thirty?

PAULA LUNDER: Is that all right?

PETER LUNDER: Is that good for you?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's fine; that's great. Thank you.

PETER LUNDER: Great.

[END OF lunder17_1of2_track04]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Paula and Peter Lunder at Colby College Art Museum on Friday, the 20th of October, 2017. What a beautiful day.

PETER LUNDER: Another great day in Maine.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Another great day in a great state.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So yesterday, between recording sessions, Paula, you told me about how you would sometimes buy art at auction. And you shared a particular story about attending an auction. I guess this was when you were still collecting European art?

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Could you share that again?

PAULA LUNDER: This particular occasion, Peter and I were together, and we went to the auction. It was a European art auction. And we sat there, and we saw things we were interested in, and as the auction proceeded—it was a full audience, and among the participants was a group of Japanese. And the minute the bidding began, they put their paddles up, never took them down. At the end of the auction Peter and I looked at one another and said, "I think we have to find a new field for ourselves."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PAULA LUNDER: And that's how we moved into American art, which we loved anyhow.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Had you collected anything American up until that point?

PAULA LUNDER: Yes, yes, but nothing of significance, just things in our travels around Maine that we saw and loved.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So just responding to the art? [00:01:59]

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Not trying to fill a gap in the narrative of your collection, or anything like that?

PAULA LUNDER: Not at all, no, no.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So what was the first piece of American art that you bought, that you can remember buying?

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, I remember it well. We still own it. It was a blue-and-white vase with yellow flowers.

PETER LUNDER: A Sanborn, was the Maine artist Sanborn.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, my gosh, what a memory.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Sanborn.

PETER LUNDER: S-A-N-B-O-R-N.

PAULA LUNDER: And it's a pastel.

PETER LUNDER: Pastel, right.

PAULA LUNDER: We still have it, and we love it today. And it wasn't a significant painting, but it was something that appealed to both of us.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So that was your entrée into American art?

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and that was very early, very early.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So the other thing you shared was that, at times, you would perhaps attend the auction if Peter was unable to be there.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And was this before the age of mobile phones?

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, definitely, definitely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So how were you able to make the judgment call of where to stop the bidding, or how far to go?

PAULA LUNDER: Well, we—Peter and I are very clear about what we want, and Peter has an idea of the marketplace.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: So it was very easy for us beforehand to have a discussion—where we were willing to move, to achieve a purchase.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: So I would go to an auction, and at the end go out and tell him if we were successful. When I couldn't reach him, and I saw something at the auction, which was a Hopper, got very excited about it, was there with a good friend and dealer, Thomas Colville. [00:03:58] With his encouragement, because he said it was a very great painting, I purchased it, even though I was not able to reach Peter on the phone to tell him about it. And then there was a funny occurrence, because he was in the factory, and our cousin Ted Alfond was in the factory, and one of Ted's friends called Ted from the auction house, and said, "Peter just bought a Hopper."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PAULA LUNDER: Ted goes into the meeting and says to Peter, "Congratulations," and Peter knows nothing about it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PETER LUNDER: That was true. He says, "Congratulations, you own a Hopper." I say, "I don't know anything about it."

PAULA LUNDER: Because we hadn't really identified it in the catalogue as something we were interested in.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Is it hanging upstairs, or is it—

PAULA LUNDER: It's not out.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's not out.

PAULA LUNDER: But it's in the collection here, yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: What's the subject?

PETER LUNDER: It's a Cape [Cod] house with a picket fence around it.

PAULA LUNDER: And a big [tree -PL].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Is it a watercolor or oil?

PETER LUNDER: Watercolor.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: Big evergreen, so there's that sense of distance.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: He's putting the fence in front of you.

PETER LUNDER: 1935, I think he did it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow, wow. Well, congratulations.

PETER LUNDER: And it was all verified in the Hopper book.

PAULA LUNDER: Right.

PETER LUNDER: Goodrich, and I think it was in the collection of someone at MoMA. It had great provenance, and they had checked it out before the auction.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You had said yesterday that you were diligent in doing all the, you know, research into authenticating pieces.

PETER LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: As much as you can. Of course, having a wonderful provenance like that is very helpful. [00:06:00]

PETER LUNDER: An added plus.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, right. Well, well done. A lot of the pieces I saw upstairs were 19th-century art, artists from the Hudson River School.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Luminist painters. I saw the Southwestern work, also the Victor Higgins.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He's a very interesting painter, I think, and not as well known as he should be.

PAULA LUNDER: We love him.

PETER LUNDER: He's one of the Taos Ten.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, yeah.

PETER LUNDER: And a great painter. There were some great painters in that original group.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, they're highly appreciated, selectively, in certain areas of the country I think especially.

PAULA LUNDER: In Western art, one of the fellows that advised us on that school was Steve Rose. Steve Rose originally came from the Biltmore Gallery in Los Angeles, and settled in Scottsdale, Arizona. And he was a great advocate of Western art, and an American patriot.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Served in the Second World War.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: Was injured, went back three times, back to the fray.

PETER LUNDER: With two or three Purple Hearts, Silver Stars.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah, wonderful person.

PETER LUNDER: But he was honest, sincere, and direct, and knew his Western art. He started the Charlie Russell Rough Riders group, and was president of it for many years. And when anything Western came up, I would touch base with him on it, and he knew exactly what was happening. And he helped build with the Western collection for Phil Anschutz.
[00:08:17]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wonderful collection.

PETER LUNDER: Right, Denver.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In that charming building, with a checkered past.

PETER LUNDER: Office, right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: They say there's a tunnel that goes under the street to the Brown Palace.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Because the building used to be a high-class "sporting club," I think was the polite word for it.

PAULA LUNDER: That's what you call it. But he was another of our treasured, our valued advisers.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: And we've had many along the way, many names. [Other people we have met, learned from, and consider our mentors are: Sam Lawrence, Greg Williams, William Truettner, Virginia Mecklenberg, Michael Rosenfeld, Adam Weinberg, Justin McCann, Elizabeth Finch, Lee Glazer, Liz Sterling, Liz Goldberg, and Marlene Booker, Administrative Assistant for the Lunder Foundation. With their guidance and vision for Colby College, and especially the Colby College Museum of Art, President William Adams and President David Greene have helped us to understand and join them in their belief in the importance of the arts within a liberal arts education. It has been a marvelous collaboration with knowledgeable people and friends with whom we have shared our love of art! -PL]

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So who did you rely on in collecting and learning about the art of the Hudson River School, the Luminist painters?

PETER LUNDER: Betsy Broun was very important. Tom Colville.

PAULA LUNDER: Vance Jordan we relied upon. Adelson Gallery.

PETER LUNDER: The American dealers at the time would weigh in with them, and they'd weigh in on the different paintings. And as we asked questions, we'd learn more and more.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So people like [Alexander] Acevedo, or Lou Salerno, did you work with them?

PAULA LUNDER: Not those two.

PETER LUNDER: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Ira] Spanierman?

PAULA LUNDER: Warren Adelson.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Warren Adelson. Spanierman?

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

PETER LUNDER: Occasionally.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Hirschl & Adler?

PETER LUNDER: Occasionally.

PAULA LUNDER: Occasionally.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Stuart Feld, yeah.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, and what's the name, with Stuart?

PAULA LUNDER: Eric.

PETER LUNDER: Baumgartner?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: In sculpture.

PETER LUNDER: And Baumgartner, and what's her name? [00:10:01] Menconi, that was with, what's her name—Susan Menconi. She was with Hirschl & Adler.

PAULA LUNDER: At the time.

PETER LUNDER: That now is today with Andy Schoelkopf and Menconi.

PAULA LUNDER: Who are dealers that we admire and appreciate.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I knew Bob Schoelkopf and Jane.

PETER LUNDER: That was his father.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, yeah, they had a very—for a long time he had a very influential gallery.

PETER LUNDER: And the son is this high-grade guy, and we've bought paintings through him.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I met him. I think—is Jane involved on some level?

PETER LUNDER: I don't know Jane.

PAULA LUNDER: We don't know Jane. We know Susan Menconi, and Andrew Schoelkopf.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Jane Schoelkopf, I think is her name.

PAULA LUNDER: One other name of a now-deceased dealer that we admired was Richard York.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: He was a wonderful person, and knew his field very well.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Were there any scholars that—who were especially helpful? You mentioned that you ran into John Wilmerding at the Homer Studio.

PETER LUNDER: Right, he's weighed in on a few different purchases. Eric Widing, Alice Duncan.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, in sculpture, absolutely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: George Gurney from SAAM, heavily involved with him on sculpture. Weighed in with Thayer Tolles at the Met.

PAULA LUNDER: Thayer Tolles. Karen Lemmey.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: Karen Lemmey, at the Smithsonian today.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How do you spell her name? [00:12:00]

PETER LUNDER: L-E-M-M-E-Y.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Lemmey.

PETER LUNDER: She took George Gurney's [place -PL].

PAULA LUNDER: Very knowledgeable.

PETER LUNDER: She was the assistant to Thayer Tolles at the Met.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: As you're talking, I'm just being struck by this—the passion for learning that you seem to have.

PETER LUNDER: Well, you don't learn unless you ask questions.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's what you said yesterday.

PETER LUNDER: Right, and I'll say it again and again and again and again.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But, you know, a lot of people—or, let's say, some collectors—might look at that activity as a way of sort of projecting their authority, or their ego, or whatever. But with you, I get the sense that you really have this fierce curiosity about things.

PETER LUNDER: Right, and what do they say about trompe-l'oeil paintings? Don't trust your eye, or trust your eye? We like reassurance that we're heading in the right direction.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: It isn't a field that we studied. We enjoy and love to live with the objects, but the scholars know more than us, so why not invite comments from them?

PAULA LUNDER: Conversation.

PETER LUNDER: And a lot of people are afraid to expose their questions, and think someone is going to crowd them out. We're not worried about that. We're worried about getting the right product, and the right quality, the right item, and not worried about losing out on it if someone else steps in ahead of us. We can't do anything else. [00:14:04]

PAULA LUNDER: We're not threatened by that.

PETER LUNDER: We'll go on to the next.

PAULA LUNDER: There's plenty of art out there, but there's another element that Peter and I share, I believe, and that is we love to meet people, and we love to have relationships with people and speak about art with others.

PETER LUNDER: And share it.

PAULA LUNDER: And through that we've met some wonderful people. We met collectors before us, the Fraads.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: The Horowitzes [Margaret and Raymond Horowitz].

PETER LUNDER: Potamkin.

PAULA LUNDER: And they spoke to us—yeah, Potamkin—they spoke to us about their collections, and their vision. And through that we formed our own, and with the help of art historians, and all kinds of people.

Peter would love to go to galleries and have a conversation, not just about the art that we're interested in, but about the art that they would have displayed. And it was the same at museums. We love to walk through museums with art historians. You're right, we love to get educated about art in general, and it's become the most marvelous part of our life, because those friendships and those relationships endure.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, every picture, every sculpture, every drawing tells a story.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And the thing is, that one person has said—many people, I guess, have said—that when life comes to an end, the best thing you leave behind is a good story. And obviously, kids, and other things, but it's, you know, a good story, or useful life, an inspiring life. [00:15:56] And I think that to approach art from that standpoint is very interesting, especially in an age where the art market has been kind of hijacked by, you know, the financialized economy, and people are using it for all sorts of reasons other than why you buy it.

PETER LUNDER: A lot of people look at it as an investment. And we've never considered it as an investment. We've always looked at it from an enjoyment point of view. If it happens to appreciate, so what? Where is it appreciated? It's only appreciating on the wall.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, there are all, as you know, now, art funds, and art-backed, bank-backed securities, right.

PETER LUNDER: Right, they're commercial. They treat it as a commodity.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Exactly. But the other thing, too, the flip side of this, if you will—is your commitment to education, and a desire that the artwork that you've assembled is going to be used, moving forward, as a teaching tool, as a way to form conversations. Like we saw the other night, Wednesday night, that class that was using the collection in the Lunder Gallery.

PETER LUNDER: Institute.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The Maya Lin piece, and the other pieces, that they're using these pieces to frame discussions about environmental issues, or what have you, in this sort of transdisciplinary liberal arts education. So useful to that endeavor. [00:17:59]

You were saying also yesterday that one of the presidents, Seelye—

PAULA LUNDER: —Bixler.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Bixler.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: How do you spell Seelye, S-E-A—

PAULA LUNDER: S-E-E-L-Y-E?

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, okay. Seelye Bixler said that art was an essential component of a liberal arts education.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: And he was president in the '40s to '50s, right?

PETER LUNDER: And probably to the early '60s. He was there 20-odd, 21 years.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, okay, yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That was about the same time as there was that movement to really reinvigorate liberal arts, and with the great books, because college had become in many cases vocational, too much involved with career prep, and not really involved with trying to develop the minds of young people. I'm afraid a lot of higher education is sort of heading that way again.

But Colby is a stronghold of this, of these values, and it's refreshing to see. This might be a good time, Paula, for you to unpack the expanded tale of why you took the same art appreciation course four times.

PAULA LUNDER: What I didn't say the first time was that when the children weren't in school all day, I had done various volunteer jobs, and through our relationship with Hugh Gourley, he invited me up to Colby, and—to work with them. [00:19:58] And at the time I became a docent in the galleries, which I just loved, for school children, and I also helped them catalogue the collection on a computer. At the time, there was Hugh Gourley and a secretary, Meg Griffith I think her name was.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That was at—there were no curators, or—

PAULA LUNDER: No, it was Hugh and a secretary. So I volunteered, through his invitation, to help them put the collection on the computer. They understood that I didn't know how to run a computer. So at Colby I was taught how to use a computer, which was simple in those days, and so I helped in that effort, and I say, every mistake in those records is mine.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So was this computer—I'm imagining something with punch cards, and —

PAULA LUNDER: No, no, no, it was after that.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It was an early—

PAULA LUNDER: It was an IBM.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: IBM, MS-DOS.

PAULA LUNDER: Early, yeah, right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: All these keystrokes.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes, exactly.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Okay, we remember. I remember.

PAULA LUNDER: Right, and so I learned how to run a computer, which has been invaluable. And I learned a lot because, every piece of art, I learned how they catalogue, what's important, and the conservation.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow.

PAULA LUNDER: The protection of the art, and that's invaluable.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Absolutely, and I think I might have shared that, in another interview I conducted with a collector whose late wife had been an assiduous registrar, and had created this marvelous system for cataloguing everything.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So what you're telling me is kind of astonishing, that you, in fact, you were the Bowdoin—pardon me, bite my tongue—the Colby— [00:22:02]

PAULA LUNDER: No, that's okay. We love Maine institutions.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —the Colby Art Museum's first registrar.

PAULA LUNDER: [Laughs.] Well, I wouldn't go that far.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, you were the closest thing to it.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes, but I was a volunteer.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: And it was an exciting moment for me, because it was—it really had value for the institution, and for Peter and I. So in the times I was in the museum doing that, there would be some free time. And I was encouraged by Colby and by Hugh Gourley, the director, to take courses. So the time frame worked for me. Surveys taught in the morning.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: My children came home in the afternoon, so it fit into that time slot. In addition, I was learning about the art history department, and the different professors, and that was also invaluable, how they valued art, what they looked for, and I was also able to learn about the Colby students. And I was very impressed with the Colby students then, as I am today. So it was—I took other courses as well, because as a group, the docents were encouraged to take courses.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So the thing you said yesterday, too, was that each time you took the course, the different faculty person would put a different spin on it.

PAULA LUNDER: Absolutely.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I mean, you would have to. I've taught, and I've actually—I actually taught a course years ago, art appreciation course. It was kind of, you know, like a punishment class, I guess, that it's the same book; there was the same template; there was the same slides, the same—

PAULA LUNDER: Janson?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: No, this was Rita Gilbert's *Living with Art*, which is even, like, not as lofty as Janson, which is [a] survey. [00:24:00] But every year I taught it, and I only taught it for a couple of years, but every time I taught it, I would try to put a different spin on it.

PAULA LUNDER: Sure.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Just to keep me interested, yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: To keep you relevant.

PETER LUNDER: Current.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, and of course, you know, the lectures are going to digress; they're going to add their own interpretation.

PETER LUNDER: Different spins.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, yeah, so what was the takeaway, having taken it four times? Would you take it a fifth time?

PAULA LUNDER: I would stay in class at Colby anytime.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PAULA LUNDER: And I wish today—there are so many classes that I'd like to be an observer, because education today is so fabulous.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yes, it can be.

PAULA LUNDER: They're going into subjects that are so interesting, and combining art with the other majors.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's so wonderful to see that.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: At the dinner, I sat next to one of the young men who spoke in the galleries. He was speaking about the Maya Lin piece.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I can't recall his name.

PAULA LUNDER: Jake, I think his name was.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Maybe, maybe it was Jake. But I was commenting to him that he might look into the writings of Dr. Robert Root-Bernstein, who, with his wife, I think, wrote a book about it called *Sparks of Genius*. And anyway, the gist is that he's a scientist. He's an AIDS researcher, a MacArthur fellow. And his point is, scientists who make art make better science than scientists who don't make art.

PAULA LUNDER: We would, of course, agree. [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Of course, and so they're trying to blend these subjects that in other schools would be studied in silos.

PETER LUNDER: Separately. [00:25:57]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah. So another question comes to mind, which is, at what point—well, you did speak about this a bit, that when you got involved with SAAM, and you started learning from Betsy Broun and other collectors you met through your involvement with the Smithsonian American Art Museum, that you became aware that you actually had a collection?

PETER LUNDER: We were starting to build one.

PAULA LUNDER: Beginning.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Starting to build one.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So, at that point, what did you think the narrative was? What was the sort of organizing logic? You know, like you decide you want to play, like, a musical instrument, and so you start out with a piano, and then you try the clarinet, and it takes awhile. And then you find out that you're actually a violinist. But sometimes it takes a little time. And I suspect the same is true for some collectors, that they discover that there's some kind of narrative, or they discover themselves, or their taste, through that process. Was there a point at which—

PAULA LUNDER: The Japanese helped us.

PETER LUNDER: I think we concentrated on picking the item that we loved, but we wanted to make sure that quality, quality, quality was there so that we could enjoy it even more. If it was a wreck, we wouldn't enjoy—if we knew what was going on underneath, it would discolor our opinion of what was there. But we wanted quality, and we knew quality would survive, and our enjoyment would survive. [00:28:11]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: If it was really top-drawer.

PAULA LUNDER: And I believe the Japanese helped us move toward American art, if that is what you're speaking about. And when we began buying American art, we loved it.

PETER LUNDER: And it was affordable at the time, too.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's getting that way again.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, and, oh yeah. Asians and Europeans were in the auction rooms, never put down their paddles, and it was impossible to compete against them, and that's when we switched to American art, because it was plentiful, it was available, and it was affordable.

PAULA LUNDER: And we were delighted to be collecting American art, and so then it came to us: yes, of course, that's a natural. That's what we should be doing. And, as Peter says, it was available, and all the people in our circle knew American art.

PETER LUNDER: Were collecting it.

PAULA LUNDER: Listening to the curators, and museum directors, it was—they use another vocabulary in speaking about art.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: They see different things, and we love to see that. An example is, Betsy Broun loves Albert Pinkham Ryder. I don't think we had ever looked at a Ryder before meeting her. And then we stood with her in front of a painting, and it was a revelation. We saw things we had never seen before. And with other curators we had the same experience, Peter, with George Gurney, looking at sculpture. [00:30:01] So we were educated by very knowledgeable people.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: People who were excited about what they were doing.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

PETER LUNDER: Yes, and they had the passion. I remember the first time, oh, years ago, we went into an apartment collection in Los Angeles. And they had European, and they had Degas sculptures, and the lady mentioned how sculptures and paintings interacted, and talked to each other. And we absorbed it, and sure enough, we could see what she was—the direction she was going in, and we said, "Yes, that makes a lot of sense." And that gave us another field to explore, and put together. That's when we started buying sculptures.

PAULA LUNDER: Which Peter absolutely loves.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: Has a real feel for sculpture.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Some stunners up there, that Manship.

PAULA LUNDER: *Undine*.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yes.

PETER LUNDER: The Mozier, and the Rogers, and the Ball, and there's others in storage.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: We loved marble sculptures. We knew that they were tough to handle, and couldn't move them. We never had them in our home, but always would send them up to the museums, so that they could use them and study them and enjoy them.

PAULA LUNDER: And there's been the same progression in sculpture that there has been in painting, because we began with those. And then you bought a David Smith, which was a step for us in the direction toward more contemporary sculpture, and then Sol LeWitt. [00:32:11]

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: So the same progression.

PETER LUNDER: Donald Judd, and Chamberlain.

PAULA LUNDER: That's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So what was the first sculpture you bought?

PAULA LUNDER: Had to be Southwestern, Peter.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You get those Remingtons.

PETER LUNDER: Maybe the Remington. *Bronco Buster*.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: And we found—we were told and advised that the [Henry-]Bonnard casts were the great Remington casts, and then morphed into Roman Bronze [Works]. But—so we looked for a Bonnard, and one came up, and it didn't sell at an auction in—must have been the Southwest, and we got a call, and we bought it because it came from Michael Greenbaum's collection.

PAULA LUNDER: Who was an authority.

PETER LUNDER: He wrote the book on Remington casts at the time, and everything.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: And we happened to have met him on one of our trips. So we called him and asked him, "Michael, what was going on?" And he said, "Well, I bought a lower-number Bonnard cast, which I have in my collection today. But that's a great cast." He said, "If you can get it, please do." And he says, "I've enjoyed it for many, many years." And you know, one thing, we didn't know Bonnard. We didn't know Roman. We didn't know much.

PAULA LUNDER: But we got great lessons.

PETER LUNDER: But here again, asked questions. Checked out, and found out things.
[00:34:01]

PAULA LUNDER: Relationships with great authorities in the field, like George Gurney.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: Who we spent a lot of time with, and he had built a beautiful collection at SAAM.

PETER LUNDER: And then found out he was a great Red Sox fan.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, that, of course, recommends him.

PAULA LUNDER: Made him a good man.

PETER LUNDER: So we'd get together socially, go to games together. And, you know, you learn when you meet people and ask questions.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So were there any artists with whom you formed relationships?

PAULA LUNDER: Alex Katz we know very well through our Colby connection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: And at the Art Institute we met quite a few, and we knew Twombly.

PETER LUNDER: Cy.

PAULA LUNDER: Who is a lovely, lovely man.

PETER LUNDER: One of the members of our board here at the museum was on Twombly's foundation, and Twombly came to Boston, for medical reasons, so he brought him to dinner. We had dinner at the hotel, and he came up to the apartment a couple of times. And a lovely gentleman.

PAULA LUNDER: And a comical story about that: at that time, we had young grandchildren, and all over our big windows were plastered their pictures. Cy Twombly looked at two pictures, one by our grandchild and one by our son, and said, "These two are giving me inspiration. May I borrow them?" We said, "You can keep them." But he did send them back,

and of course, I called my kids and said, "Do you know who admires your work?"

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, that's wonderful.

PAULA LUNDER: Isn't that a fun story?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It is.

PETER LUNDER: He took it right off the window and sent it to his studio in Italy. [00:36:01] And he kept them a couple of years, and used them for inspiration or whatever he could see through a child's mind, and—nice—he was a real gentleman. He wasn't interested in looking at Whistler paintings on the wall.

PAULA LUNDER: No.

PETER LUNDER: Or Prendergast, or Chase, or whoever. He went right to the windows, where the kids' things were hanging, and, "Tell me about your grandchildren. I want to know."

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: And he was just a lovely, lovely human being.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I've heard that. I never had the pleasure to meet him, but I know he was from Lexington, Virginia, originally.

PAULA LUNDER: Right.

PETER LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And he came up to the Colby Museum here.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes, he did.

PETER LUNDER: And walked through it, and he says, "You have something here. Go for it."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: "Keep moving."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well—so apart from Cy Twombly and Alex Katz, you said you—well, you said you knew Neil Welliver.

PETER LUNDER: Yes, we went to his studio.

PAULA LUNDER: Lois Dodd, we know.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yvonne Jacquette.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

PAULA LUNDER: Lovely woman.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: She's an amazing artist.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Just had a show at Bridget's [Donahue] not long—I guess last year.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But I was stunned when I interviewed her, and she showed me her travel pastel set. Have you seen that thing that she—she does these airplane drawings.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, yes, we have.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: We have seen those.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: She's got a box, a duct-tape-covered box with, you know, these little spaces for her pastel sticks that she can hold in her lap.

PAULA LUNDER: In the plane.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In the plane.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah. [00:38:00]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Amazing.

PETER LUNDER: The painting upstairs is an air view one, and the bottom right-hand corner is our factory in Skowhegan, Maine.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh.

PETER LUNDER: Was in the bottom right, and we saw it come up at auction in Maine, and tipped off the director of the museum, and they said they wanted that painting. So they went down to the auction and bought the painting.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, that's a nice painting. A lot of people, I think, are more acquainted with her urban scenes. But that aerial view of the dams, the dams, right—

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: That's the Central Maine Power dam.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Skowhegan.

PETER LUNDER: In Skowhegan.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, so it's a wonderful picture.

PAULA LUNDER: We also have met, through friends, Christo. [We met Christo through our friends, Barbara and David Slater. -PL]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Sure.

PAULA LUNDER: And we were in his studio.

PETER LUNDER: Spent an afternoon with him.

PAULA LUNDER: Stephen Hannock.

PETER LUNDER: Stephen.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: We were in his studio years ago. We know him.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He's in the Berkshires.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: We know him today.

PETER LUNDER: Stephen has given a couple of paintings to the museum. But we bought one or two of his paintings.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Is he—he's in North Adams [MA], or around there some—

PETER LUNDER: Williamstown [MA].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In Williamstown, yeah.

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So I know his—they got pictures from the Mount Greylock, or Holyoke, one of those.

PETER LUNDER: *Oxbow*.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: *Oxbow*, yeah, the Thomas Cole composition, wonderful. But I was wondering, in your acquisitions, do you ever seek the advice of artists?

PETER LUNDER: Well, most of them are deceased. [Laughs.] [00:40:01]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh.

PAULA LUNDER: In our group, the bulk of our collection is of deceased artists.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I mean, artists—would you call up Stephen Hannock and say, "What do you think of this Inness?"

PETER LUNDER: No.

PAULA LUNDER: No.

PETER LUNDER: The Inness paintings, we would call up Michael Quick, who wrote the catalogue raisonné, and Michael helped us buy a few of the Innesses that are in the collection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Stunning, they're beautiful.

PETER LUNDER: The one big one hanging in the gallery.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: I can't say that we had relationships of that type with artists. But we had so many authorities to work with.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: We haven't really done that much on contemporary, and really rely on the judgment of—here's Sharon Corwin, one of the curators, that their whole life they've been involved with.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: Or Pace Galleries, Doug Baxter has been a good friend of ours for many years, and steered us on to many great paintings that are in the gallery, the Pousette-Dart, the Agnes Martin.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: A lot of them.

PETER LUNDER: A lot of them.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, that's another question I have, which is, how does the opportunity to acquire a piece hit your radar? Do people call you, or do you—

PETER LUNDER: We get calls; we hear different things that are going on in the trade.

PAULA LUNDER: Catalogues.

PETER LUNDER: Catalogues.

PAULA LUNDER: Art newspaper articles. [00:42:00]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: People say, "Do you have a wish list?" And we say, "Not really," because you can wish your whole life and do nothing!

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PETER LUNDER: And we say it involves more opportunities. When they present themselves, you got to be ready to jump if an opportunity presents itself. And did we ever know we were going to buy 45, 50 Bellows lithographs?

PAULA LUNDER: Or the Picassos.

PETER LUNDER: Or the Picassos.

PAULA LUNDER: Never dreamt.

PETER LUNDER: No, but when someone called us that had them, that presented—

PAULA LUNDER: And were of the quality.

PETER LUNDER: We checked. We checked out, would the museum use it for study purposes?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: And would it have value for the collection? Would it be meaningful to the collection? When walking down a street in New York, a dealer said—Thomas Colville said one day, years ago, "I'm building a Japanese house, and I've been collecting Chinese art."

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PAULA LUNDER: Sculpture.

PETER LUNDER: "And this collection won't fit in the Japanese house." I said, "Why not? It's Asian art. Why doesn't it?" And he says, "Japanese house, got to have Japanese art." So I say, "Well, what are you going to do with it?" There was about 45, 50 pieces. And he said, "I'm thinking of putting it up at auction." [00:44:00] I said, "Why don't you give me a list of what's in the collection, and when you bought it, and what you paid for it, and let me see, up at the college with the Asian Department, if it would be a meaningful start of a collection."

And then they came down to New York to view it, and came back to us, and said, "Yes, it would be very valuable for a teaching collection," and that there's some great bronzes, and ceramics, whatever, in the collection.

PAULA LUNDER: We took a professor of Asian art, Ankeney Weitz, and the director, and we went to New York to view it, to see if the quality was there, if they would be items that she would be able to use in her teaching. She was delighted with the opportunity.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Wow.

PAULA LUNDER: And that's how some of our later collections have evolved, through opportunity.

PETER LUNDER: Right, the [Arthur Wesley] Dow estate came to us about a year ago, and the heirs to the estate, the children, needed to accumulate funds for college education for grandchildren or whatever, of Dow. And we presented it to the museum up here, and checked with a couple of people—who was Dow, what did Dow do, and the father of Modernism, and everything else. [00:45:58] And we got educated, but we found out more about Dow. So we bought the collection. And there was woodcuts, and watercolors, and memorabilia.

PAULA LUNDER: And the foundation, the Dow foundation, was delighted to see it going to a teaching institution.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: That's what they wanted.

PETER LUNDER: So that animated them.

PAULA LUNDER: And Picasso the same way.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: Although we didn't have to ask. We knew.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So I imagine that, once or twice, you must have acquired pieces from other collectors. I'm sure that somebody would be in your house, or [you] would say, "If you ever decide to put that on the market, let me know."

PAULA LUNDER: Just recently.

PETER LUNDER: Just happened.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, do tell.

PETER LUNDER: There was a Remington grisaille oil in this—one of the collectors—hanging on his wall in his home in Maryland. And he was collecting Miró and Picasso and contemporary artists, and everything. And we said to him years ago, "Where does this fit in, the Western, with those others? If you're ever thinking of selling it, please let us know. We have a Western collection we're trying to put together, and this would be a great painting for the collection." And lo and behold, in the last year or so we get a call, and it's here at Colby.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Is it the one hanging up now?

PETER LUNDER: No, it isn't hanging yet. We're having a period frame—it's in storage.
[00:48:05]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah, there isn't—I'm sorry, there isn't a grisaille up. There's another piece that has sort of reminded me a little bit of a Remington grisaille, of the *Escape from Wounded Knee*.

PETER LUNDER: That's the sculpture.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: Oh, this is a painting.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Painting.

PETER LUNDER: Yes, and then there was the Church painting that a collector in [the] Washington area had, and it didn't sell, because the estimate was out in moon—moon land.

PAULA LUNDER: The stratosphere.

PETER LUNDER: And didn't sell. And we put something together where we paid what we felt we could pay, but we wanted him to donate the rest of the purchase price to the museum, and he liked the idea. He liked that it was going to an institution. And it came together, and it's hanging up in the gallery now.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Is that the *Iceberg* sketch?

PETER LUNDER: No. That was the Mount Desert Island one.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah.

PETER LUNDER: Which is appropriate to be here.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: No, absolutely. A lot of people don't realize that he was out there.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And a wonderful—I used to go there as a kid on holidays, so, but a wonderful place.

PETER LUNDER: And you know, we liked it, but didn't feel that we wanted to make that leap.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: And so he—it was a combination of our purchasing and him gifting. But there's always ways things can come together. [00:50:04]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So he gets a deduction.

PETER LUNDER: Whatever it is, it's a donation for him, and it's a purchase for us, so it's win-win for us, a win for him, and a win for the college. How can you beat three winners?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Excellent.

PAULA LUNDER: And to benefit the students.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Businessman/art lover solution.

[They laugh.]

So at what point—did you ever hire a curator?

PAULA LUNDER: No.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I know you've got an endowed position here; you've got a named— Liz is the named Lunder curator, right?

PETER LUNDER: Right. We've got a Whistler curator here, and we've got an American curator here.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right, okay.

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But your personal collection, you never—

PETER LUNDER: No.

PAULA LUNDER: Peter's very organized.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, that's what you were saying yesterday.

PAULA LUNDER: Very organized.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And you, of course, were Colby Art Museum's first de facto registrar.

PAULA LUNDER: [Laughs.] Thank you for the title.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's a great ex-officio, registrar honorific, ex-officio. But it sounds like you were doing the heavy lifting, with or without the title anyway, entering all of that information.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah, but it was a pleasure.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And how about conservation issues?

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, major.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I mean, this is another thing. How does a collector, you know—well, you said up front that you try to avoid acquiring anything with any kind of conservation problems. Did you ever buy a surprise?

PAULA LUNDER: Well, the Moran with the fold in the paper we bought because it was great. But we knew it had been folded. [00:52:00]

PETER LUNDER: Is that the Whistler you're talking—the Whistler that came from Chicago?

Margaret MacDonald weighed in on it; it was the colored lithograph of a Whistler. And we knew that it had this crease from being folded. But she wasn't completely sure that it could be reversed, or eliminated. But she said it's a great, great example of his work. And yes, we

took a chance, and what's-her-name did an astonishing job.

We sent it to Marjorie Shelley at the Met. And she had it for about six months to a year. And she did a great job in reversing that situation, [so] that you can't even tell it was—have a crease.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: It's tough, because the fibers in the paper are going to be broken.

PETER LUNDER: Exactly.

PAULA LUNDER: That's right.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Some are going to be at least changed by being folded, so if she was able to get rid of that, that's pretty impressive.

PAULA LUNDER: But the Moran that you took, wasn't it Christa Gaehde? [. . . -PL]

PETER LUNDER: Oh, the watercolor. We were checking the pigments. There was an 1860s Moran watercolor, that's right, and it came from [a] Philadelphia gallery, and we—they sent it to us to check out, and this conservationist in Boston at the time came to look at it.
[00:54:03]

We took it over to the Harvard conservation lab, which she was close with, and put it under the lights, and found out some pigment—it was a yellow that was eliminated in the 1880s. We were looking for the quality, and how to identify when he did it, because it had "186," and couldn't get the last number of it. We knew it was the '60s, but by process of elimination and study, they found out it was done in 1863. They traced it back, and one of the things we learned was [that] color yellow was eliminated from watercoloring, the dye, or the ink, or whatever it was, in the 1880s. But that's what you learn by going through the process.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: And did it affect the painting? Absolutely not.

PAULA LUNDER: But conservation is something we've been very involved with at different institutions. And we were fortunate to be associated with SAAM, where we learned about conservation, and where we supported that lab. And we know how important that is.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Like Albert Pinkham Ryder is a conservator's nightmare.

PETER LUNDER: Oh, exactly.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: He's doing everything from shoe polish, to lamp oil, to—

PETER LUNDER: Just put—heavily laid it on. [00:55:57]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. A wonderful portrait of him by Hartley upstairs in the gallery.

PETER LUNDER: Yep.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Crazy hat.

PETER LUNDER: We got involved with conservation. We were in a taxi with Betsy one day, and we were having a conversation, and the conversation evolved, "Betsy, what is the most needed thing in a museum that is the hardest to raise funds for?"

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, that's a great question.

PETER LUNDER: And she came back and said, "We just had a focus group," I guess.

PAULA LUNDER: A survey.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, a survey-focus group, and we found out that conservation was the most needed, and that was the birth of the conservation center for SAAM and the Portrait Gallery, in Washington. And since then we've had involvement with conservation at the Whitney.

PAULA LUNDER: The Clark [Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA].

PETER LUNDER: With the Clark museum, and the Dead Sea Scroll Museum in Israel.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: So do we believe in conservation? Absolutely. Do we think it has a place in the future of art? Absolutely. You're not going to have art unless you make sure it lives on.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, especially art which today is often made with such fugitive materials.

PETER LUNDER: Oh.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And there is actually a new organization called Voices in Contemporary Art, which was started by Jill Sterrett at San Francisco MOCA [SFMOMA], I believe. And I think it's funded presently through the Mellon Foundation.

They've been traveling around delivering workshops to museums about how curators and how conservators can interview artists about their studio practices. [00:58:07] So that in the future, you know, conservators will be able to tell what would the wishes of the artist have been in terms of conservation, because there's a famous story about, like, Robert Rauschenberg's retrospective, where they wanted to change the yellow tape on the painting, and he said, "No, that's part of the process, leave it," you know. Or the Duchamp *Large Glass* in Philadelphia.

You just—how do you know what to conserve, or how to do it? And you mentioned before, Jay Cantor, who is involved with Winterthur, and you know, the University of Delaware has a very important conservation school that's sort of connected with that.

PETER LUNDER: Very important, we think.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: There could be more schools and more art museums that develop that kind of programming. There's an intersection of art and science, and chemistry.

PAULA LUNDER: But very costly to establish in today's world with the [. . . equipment -PL] that you need, and the educated staff that you need. It's hard.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right. So no immediate plans at Colby to build a conservation lab?

PETER LUNDER: No, just started to talk.

PAULA LUNDER: We have an association with the Clark.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: And they have a woman in Maine by the name of Nina Roth, who does a lot of the work here.

PETER LUNDER: And we support four Maine museums with an annual budget to do conservation through the Clark. [00:58:07]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So you're seeing the Clark as kind of the regional hub for conservation?

PETER LUNDER: Right, yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And how did you become involved with the Clark? Because I know you donated a building, right?

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And how did that—

PETER LUNDER: Through the director. [Laughs.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Put the arm on you, huh?

PAULA LUNDER: Michael Conforti was very convincing about the need for the conservation

studio to have a name connected with art, somebody who always observes the condition of the artwork in their museum, and their collection, and that it would be [. . . good in the future -PL].

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Okay, right.

PETER LUNDER: And we always considered the Clark one of the great small museums in America.

PAULA LUNDER: And conservation studio.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Without a doubt, without a doubt.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: And we liked his dedication and passion for the art, and the collection.

PAULA LUNDER: And it's Colby, Bowdoin, Portland, and Farnsworth, and if the state museums need something, they can apply for funds.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: To your foundation?

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That's wonderful.

PAULA LUNDER: Well, we love the state. We believe in art in Maine. There's a long tradition of art in Maine.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Absolutely.

PAULA LUNDER: And we want that to continue. We have a wonderful college in Portland, MECA, which is very important to the state, to the young people.

PETER LUNDER: Just talked about that this morning. The president of MECA, Maine College of Art, was—we were giving her a tour with one of her board members, just before this meeting, and talked that we had gotten a request from this conservation—a couple of people didn't know that much about them, and would it be of interest to them. [01:02:11] They're right down the street, and they had never heard of the name either.

PAULA LUNDER: They had not.

PETER LUNDER: No. So it must be a couple of solo people doing conservation.

PAULA LUNDER: Who want to establish a company.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, there are restorers, and there are conservators.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah.

PAULA LUNDER: That's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And I remember I interviewed the daughter of Abe Adler. Is it Abe Adler, that Hirschl & Adler—

PAULA LUNDER: Stewart's daughter?

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Not Stewart's daughter—or maybe it was not she, but another person was describing how they had learned how to restore paintings going down in the basement of the gallery, and he'd be touching them up, and you know.

PAULA LUNDER: That's frightening.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So—that's frightening. But you know, back in the bad old days of wax relining, and so forth.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And the bullet-proof painting, and—but it's really changed, like you said.

PAULA LUNDER: Oh, yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I mean, the science involved, the equipment involved.

PAULA LUNDER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And I guess you know a lot about that now, having been involved with the development of the labs at the Clark.

PAULA LUNDER: And it's all about the person using the machinery, and the chemicals. It's all about their talent, and how well versed they are in minimalism, doing as little as possible.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Only what's necessary.

PETER LUNDER: Exactly.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: When it's necessary.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: When it's necessary. Not, you know, to gussy it up, to sell it.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Which I think was commonly done. I have to confess that myself, when I was a young artist and seeking employment, I did work in a restoration studio associated with a gallery I will not name. [01:04:08] Then, they were doing all sorts of clever things to make damaged art look like new again, of course, for commercial reasons.

PETER LUNDER: And whereas we don't—we're not in the field, only involved as a buyer. We had one painting presented to us years ago by a famous artist. We think it was the famous artist, that was represented as a famous artist. And when we asked what's the condition of it—pristine. So we shared the information that we got on this artist, which we thought would make a great contribution to our collection, and spoke to someone who spoke to someone. And they said, "Stay away from that painting. It's a wreck. It's been around the circuit." And immediately we forgot about it, and laid off it.

PAULA LUNDER: Even though a beautiful image.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: But we just couldn't.

PETER LUNDER: Represented one way, but we didn't know all of the back talk around it.

PAULA LUNDER: And it did sell, quite well.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, it did sell.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: The hot potato, right, finally found a home. But there was another interview I conducted with a collector who, early in his career as a collector, acquired a piece. [01:05:58] And when he took it to his mentor, proudly, you know, to get an opinion, the mentor had a look at it. He said, "Oh," he said, "I haven't seen that in 10 years. Where did you find it?" It was one of these paintings that had been flogged around. It was always sort of—the starter collector ended up with it for a while.

PETER LUNDER: But had we not asked, we never would have known.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: We would have found out later, and we would have been badly disappointed that we had bought a real wreck.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: That goes to your mantra of, ask the question.

PETER LUNDER: Right, exactly.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Keep asking questions.

PETER LUNDER: You find out so many things when you ask questions. You've just got to be open-minded to do it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, I know we've alluded to it, referred to it, and sort of episodically jumped into the story of how you have contributed to the transformation of this establishment that we're now in. And you spoke about the moment when you decided to do it. But do you think you could just unpack the story from the beginning?

PAULA LUNDER: Well, the reason we didn't think it was a collection in the beginning is because our interests were so varied. And that's continued over time. But we bought in depth and were building little important collections. We have a lot of works on paper that support the oils that we bought, or the watercolors, or pastels. That's important to an institution, because it's a story to tell, as you say.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: And we understood what we were doing as we started to look at paintings. Like with the Whistler, the oil, we wanted it, but we didn't imagine that we would succeed. But we did, and we were thrilled. [01:08:11] And that put us into another mindset, because we felt that was part of a collection.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: And so we started buying in that way, and I think when we bought the La Farge, as you said, Peter, that was a moment when we knew for sure. This had value to an institution, or in the future.

And at Colby, we had appreciated their interpretation of what an art museum is all about, and the purpose of art in teaching future citizens of the world, the students, the community people. Our passion for art could be translated to other people. And the joy and pleasure we get from having art in our lives, we've shared this.

We don't always share the same opinion on what we should collect, but we will give each other time to see the art, and perhaps gain appreciation for it, even though it wasn't our first take; it wasn't that positive. And so that's part of the process. You get familiar with it. You get comfortable. You enjoy.

And so when we see students and young kids coming into the museum—imagine something you valued being appreciated in the future, being studied, new ideas about it being brought to light. That's just a wonderful concept. [01:10:00]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PAULA LUNDER: It's a wonderful thing. And it's a way for us to keep our collection intact, and share it, and know that it's appreciated. And at Colby, we believe that they will exhibit and study our art in depth, and we trust they will care for the collection. So belief and trust in the institution brought us to this point.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: But going back to the assertion of President Bixler that art is an essential component of a liberal arts education, you see the function of your collections, really, as not the Lunder Collection; it's the Lunder Collections, plural.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes, it is.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: As useful tools for learning, and for understanding culture, and also for personal development.

PETER LUNDER: Absolutely, for as far as we can see. But we don't know, a hundred years from now, if they'll feel the same way. We hope they will, and we expect they will, but nothing's forever, and nothing's for sure.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, tastes change and styles change.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

PETER LUNDER: But that cycles.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, it cycles.

PAULA LUNDER: And we're in that right now, with contemporary art. There's such a focus on contemporary art, but good, great paintings, good work, I think will be valued. Perhaps won't be appreciated as it is today, but there is a place for it in a museum.

PETER LUNDER: Well, look at European museums.

PAULA LUNDER: Yeah.

PETER LUNDER: And European collections, three, four hundred years old, it's still being valued.

PAULA LUNDER: Thriving, thriving. [01:12:01]

PETER LUNDER: By visitors.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, and I mean, ultimately, if you're in a place that teaches geology, you think about three hundred years as being nothing. That's breakfast. And then—and you're not yet at lunchtime.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And it's nothing; it's the wink of an eye; it's, you know, a blink of an eye, an instant.

So as you were talking earlier about how you were acquiring things, how people would reach out to you and offer you pieces, I was wondering what would you think, if you were a fly on the wall at one of your trusted dealers or fellow collectors and something comes in the door, what do you think it would be that would make them say, "I've got to call Peter and Paula up; this is something they're going to be interested in"?

PETER LUNDER: Good question.

PAULA LUNDER: Well, the major artists that we've already collected.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: But then with the Picasso, that was different because we had never collected Picasso. We never thought of it.

PETER LUNDER: And this collection out of Paris, from the estate of this gallery, became available. It was the *Vollard Suite* of Picasso, a hundred different objects in it.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: All signed by Picasso and only—I think he did 15 sets out of the hundred where he signed all of them, and then said to Vollard, "Hey, I'm not wasting my time signing all these sets." [01:14:06] So there's only 15 sets that he had signed, and they could only identify eight in the world at that time, and I haven't heard any more than that up to now. And we presented it to the director and his staff here, and it was like a tornado. How could you turn down a set like this for teaching purposes? And we ended up buying it, and they put part of them—hung them about a year or so ago, part of the set, and it attracted so much attention on campus.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: Because everybody had heard of Picasso, and gravitated to the museum. It was like magic.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Like King Tut, right.

PETER LUNDER: Yeah, exactly.

PAULA LUNDER: But imagine a couple from Waterville, Maine, and Dexter, Maine, a shoe manufacturer and a housewife, never dreamt, ever dreamt we'd own a Picasso. Of course, you know, if anybody had said that, we would have said no, never. So we are so delighted, and that was part of our education, enrichment of our lives, to know that this is possible. So it's brought us great pleasure.

And now with Whistler, we're traveling backward a little, and we bought Goya, Rembrandt, Durer, small works on paper, to inform what Whistler might have looked at. What was he seeing that informed his work? [01:16:04] And that's for the students.

PETER LUNDER: Picasso looking at Whistler.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Of course. Well, he was at the middle of that plein-air etching revival.

PAULA LUNDER: That's right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: You think about the Morans, too.

PAULA LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Thomas [and] Mary Nimmo Moran.

PAULA LUNDER: [. . . -PL]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: And all these Americans who were working *en plein-air* with etching plates. It was a moment there in the 1870s and '80s.

PETER LUNDER: So the students here have a chance to view Dürer—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PETER LUNDER: —1500s. Rembrandt, 1600s; Goya, 1700s; Whistler, 1800s.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

PETER LUNDER: And Picasso, 19—five centuries, and not look at them in a book, but have them in front of them.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Yeah, they're also prints, too, so they're interesting; it's an interesting art form because, as you probably know, before the 20th century, people seldom put prints on the wall.

PAULA LUNDER: Right, they were in books.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: They would put it under a McAllister glass, which was this big lens that was like television. You'd look at the print. So Turner with the *Liber Studiorum*, or these other printmakers, they—it was a popular art form. It was art for the people more than it was art for, like, one collector to have one piece.

But didn't we see one or two of the Picassos the other day?

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: In the Landay—Lunday? Is it Lunday Center?

PETER LUNDER: Landay. [01:18:00]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Landay Center.

PETER LUNDER: He was my first-year roommate at Colby.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, no kidding?

PAULA LUNDER: Roger Landay.

PETER LUNDER: Roger Landay.

PAULA LUNDER: Roger and Myrna Landay.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: L-A-N-D-A-Y?

PETER LUNDER: Yes.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So that was wonderful to see that, and that room where the classes could come, and you could hang pieces up.

PETER LUNDER: Right.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Or you could put them out.

Well, as you were talking, I had a memory of seeing the *Vollard Suite* also at the Clark. Don't they have a copy?

PETER LUNDER: I don't think they have the deluxe—

JAMES MCELHINNEY: I know they have the whole, but I don't know if they've got signed—

PETER LUNDER: No, there was another *Vollard Suite* of regular sized, and I don't know if they were signed or not. But this deluxe, oversized one that was—there was only 15 identified in the world that he signed them all of.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Amazing. So I guess to wrap up, I would like to ask you what would you hope young collectors and new philanthropists would take away from this conversation, or from learning about your activities over the years?

PETER LUNDER: My personal hope is that more people will be doing what we're doing, so [others] can see it and enjoy it during their lifetime, rather than when they're gone. They're not going to have that smile on their face when they come into a museum and see young children walking through and enjoying it, and adults walking through and enjoying it. [01:20:06] It's hard to duplicate a smile. And it's something that I personally enjoy seeing happening while we're still around.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Paula?

PAULA LUNDER: I would just echo it in little different words. Just hope they enjoy their collections as much as we do, and then find a way into the future for themselves.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: So whatever people are collecting, at whatever level they're collecting, first, I'm hearing you say, by all means collect things that—

PETER LUNDER: You enjoy.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: —are valuable culturally, and that you can afford, and that you can enjoy, and then find a way to share it with others.

PAULA LUNDER: I would say, collect things that you love and want to live with, and all the others fall into place.

PETER LUNDER: But not just to collect because you think it's going to be valuable. Hope it will be valuable and enjoyed, but collect what you can enjoy while you're around, and hopefully, other people can after.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Right.

PAULA LUNDER: Everyone has a different vision, and that's good, and in this country, we're allowed to have those different ideas, and pursue them.

PETER LUNDER: That makes horse racing.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

PAULA LUNDER: It's all a good thing.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Well, thanks so much.

PETER LUNDER: Thank you.

PAULA LUNDER: Nice meeting you.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Likewise, likewise.

PETER LUNDER: Thank you. Let's get a sandwich now.

PAULA LUNDER: Thank you.

PETER LUNDER: Great. [01:21:52]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]