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Oral history interview with Jon Shirley, 2018 August 7-8

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jon Shirley on August 7 and 8, 2018. The interview took place at the home of Jon Shirley in Medina, Washington, and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and the Frick Collection.

Jon Shirley and Mija Riedel have reviewed this transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Jon Shirley at his home in—Medina?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Medina, Washington, on August 7, 2018, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and the Frick Collection. This is card number one.

So, thank you for making time today and for showing me the extraordinary collection before we started. That was a real treat.

JON SHIRLEY: Well, you're welcome.

MIJA RIEDEL: So this house, as we were saying, was built in 2001 to house your collection.

JON SHIRLEY: That's right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Are the cars here as well?

JON SHIRLEY: No, the cars are in a warehouse—that's about 12 minutes away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So were the house and the grounds designed around particular pieces or groups of pieces?

JON SHIRLEY: What happened was that, in the '80s, we bought a house that's on half of this property—the part that goes from the front gate all the way to the lake. And we started collecting art, and we outgrew the house. And so we hired George Suyama as an architect, and we bought land next door to us. We essentially bought everything from the lake to the street next door. We tore down three old houses, but we kept the one on the end and later sold it, and the people who bought it still live there. We didn't want the whole frontage to just—I guess political reasons. And we moved out and of course tore down that house.

So for a period of five years we lived elsewhere in the area while this whole thing was in process and constructed. And the idea when we first talked to George was, "We have an art collection—and it's growing."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

JON SHIRLEY: [00:02:00] And it wasn't a matter of saying, "We're going to have this, this, and this, and you need to design a house around it." It was more a matter of, "Give us space that is appropriate for the kind of art we collect." And this probably would have [been] mandated by the city anyway, but, "Save those great big trees." Those trees divided the property we own from the neighbors. And they didn't go back into the part of the house that we walked through, but they split the entry and the main gallery. And so the house was wrapped around them, and part of the wonderful effect of that is there's no place you can go, except in a helicopter, and see how big this house is. If you stand in the backyard, it doesn't look that big. If you come up the front driveway, you can't see the gallery at all. You can see sort of an edge of it. And that, I think, was part of George's great sensitivity in designing the house.

A little bit about George: George had an art space in front of his architectural office, until they finally sold the building two years ago to build a high-rise apartment building. George had an office on Second Avenue, and the front of it was a nice-sized space, and he would give it to one artist for a show. He had a curator, and they'd have five or six shows a year. And so, just visit George's office as you walk through an art exhibit to go back to the offices.

And, you know, our idea when building and finding the architect was, "We'll talk to the local architects." We talked to Jim Olson, who did Barney Ebsworth's house and the Brotmans' house, and many houses in the area.

And Jim is into flat roofs, and they're just—he does great houses, but they just weren't our aesthetic. And we figured, "If we don't find one locally, we'll just head east and see what we can do." [00:04:00] And then we ran into George, and George had a great sensitivity to art.

It turns out he and Jim Olson were each other's best men at their weddings. They went to college together. So it was an easy decision as far as which one, because they both liked each other so much. They didn't really care who got the job. And George did exactly what we wanted. He designed a home that could hold an art collection but still be a home, and that was really important to us. We didn't want that main gallery to just not be a place that people wouldn't want to go and feel comfortable and go in and sit down and read a book, surrounded by wonderful things. So that's sort of the evolution of the house. It was a big building job.

MIJA RIEDEL: Isn't it 23,000 square feet? Something like that?

JON SHIRLEY: The floorplate of one of the main floors is about that, yes. And then there's an upstairs with a couple of bedrooms and a workout room and some art you haven't seen.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I'm sure, because there are 350 pieces. I know I haven't seen that many. I mean, the main gallery is magnificent, but nothing feels overwhelming. It does feel very welcoming and warm, and it has a wonderful meandering quality to it.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, that was very intentional. When [laughs] we cleared the site of those old homes and laid out on the ground where the boundaries of that part of the house would be, they used a spray can of, you know, very bright, fluorescent-colored paint, and my late wife stood at one end, and I stood at the other, and we said, "This is never going to work" [00:06:00]. [They laugh.]

We yelled down the—whatever number of feet that the gallery is. And then, when it was done, we were so amazed—and we couldn't see it for a long time, because while they were building the house, inside that room they put the big machines, huge things, that rolled out the zinc that is the roof. These big rolls came from Switzerland, and they ran through the machines, and the machines did the fold where the roof joins—the metal roof, because these overlaps adjoin. So that room was just full of equipment, and noisy, and, you know, we just never went in there. And it was only when they finished the roof and took everything out of there, we could start to get an idea of the scale.

But then the interior walls had to be put in, and that really helped a great deal, because before those went in, you could see further out. There's a hallway behind the far side, and then behind that there's a catering kitchen, and a swimming pool there and all, which is kind of hidden behind those walls. But those interior walls—what I like about them is they don't go all the way up. They go up high enough to be able to hang large pieces of art, but then you have all that space above them. And the other wonderful thing about the gallery is that, acoustically, it's wonderful. Musicians love it. We've had musical events in there, and it's been really, really good. I don't know why. You'd think it's a hard floor, hard—

MIJA RIEDEL: So it wasn't intentional. It just worked out that way.

JON SHIRLEY: Well, I think George must have thought that it would be a good reason to have the acoustics in there be good. But the acoustics in there are remarkable [00:08:00], either for a single speaker or for a small band or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, actually, when we were speaking in there, it had a nice sound to it. There was no sense of echoing—

JON SHIRLEY: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —but it was easy to hear, so I'm not surprised.

JON SHIRLEY: Well, it may be partly the slope of the roof, and everything up above is all acoustic tile. So the—

MIJA RIEDEL: That makes sense.

JON SHIRLEY: —material is—I mean, obviously, with all that hard floor and everything, we didn't want reverberating sound in there. But I had no idea it would be so good for music. And it turned out to be wonderful for that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wonderful. So, we were looking at the collection—there's currently about 350 pieces, is that right? In the art collection—

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, there was—

MIJA RIEDEL: —and we figured about half, maybe, were sculpture. Half sculpture, half painting, more or less.

JON SHIRLEY: I don't think there's that many pieces of sculpture, but there's maybe, in all, close to 100 pieces of work that would be sculpture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And Calder is a huge part of the collection, more than 10 percent. I think you've got over 40 of his pieces.

JON SHIRLEY: There's over 40 Calders, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. You also have multiple works by Italo Scanga and George Rickey and Mark di Suvero.

JON SHIRLEY: Chuck Close.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. A lot of Chuck Close.

JON SHIRLEY: There's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Joan Mitchell.

JON SHIRLEY: There's two Mitchells.

MIJA RIEDEL: David Smith.

JON SHIRLEY: There's three Rothkos.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So—

JON SHIRLEY: There's two de Koonings.

MIJA RIEDEL: —we will—oh, yeah, the de Koonings, absolutely. We will get to all of that [laughs]—

JON SHIRLEY: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: —over the next couple of days. Also, we'll talk about the Seattle Art Museum; we'll talk about the Olympic Sculpture Park.

JON SHIRLEY: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: We'll talk about Pilchuck Glass School.

JON SHIRLEY: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: Jon and Mary Shirley Foundation. I thought, though, we might take a couple minutes here at the beginning to just cover some early formative and biographical material.

JON SHIRLEY: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you were born April 12, 1938, in San Diego?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And your father, Joseph, he was with the U.S. Navy there?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes [00:10:00].

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Your mother, Mercedes, did she work at home, or did she—

JON SHIRLEY: No, my mother—

MIJA RIEDEL: —work outside the home?

JON SHIRLEY: My mother was a social worker. And she spoke Spanish, so she dealt with some of the Los Angeles barrio people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting. She was ahead of her time doing that back in the—

JON SHIRLEY: Well, you can think of—

MIJA RIEDEL: —'40s, '50s.

JON SHIRLEY: Here we are in the '30s, in the middle of the Depression, and my father was a sailor, and my mother was a social worker, so they had two incomes, so they were actually, compared to most people, doing very well. She'd gone to Occidental College. And one of the things she studied was art—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, well, there we go.

JON SHIRLEY: —not as a major, but she did study art.

MIJA RIEDEL: She did study art. Okay.

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. There's one work in the collection that she did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, I saw that. *Woman by the Lake* or—

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, it was—

MIJA RIEDEL: —something like that?

JON SHIRLEY: —this big when she made it [gestures for small size]. And we took it to one of those great Berkeley —

MIJA RIEDEL: Foundry?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, foundries, and they scaled it up. I'd been to Italy, and I knew that this was something that's commonly done. I saw works by—oh, who was the—Botero. You know, Botero made a small thing that turned out to be huge when the foundry was done with it. And so they blew it up, and it sits in the garden—I'll show you—that's outside of our offices. And it's not huge, but it's just—and so I grew up with—one of her major works was *Don Quixote by Picasso* by Mother. [They laugh.] That famous *Don Quixote* standing there. And he did, I think, a work on paper. There might even be multiples.

MIJA RIEDEL: And she did a copy of it?

JON SHIRLEY: She did a copy of it, really very good. [00:12:00] And I think we kids didn't even know until later that it was not real.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: So we lived there. We got transferred to Honolulu in early 1941. We got bombed, and we were sent home to Pasadena on the 23rd of December of 1941. My dad was in the war for—on board ships for a couple of years, maybe a year and a half, and then was given a wartime commission, came back, went to OCS, Officer Candidate School, and we were sent to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

And the war was still on. The way you go from one place to the other is you take a train, and you find someone on the other end being transferred to the West Coast; you swap cars, sight unseen, and that's how we had a car when we arrived, and the man coming to California had a car when he arrived. And that's just the way it was. I mean, you couldn't drive anywhere, you know. You had gas rationing, of course.

And we lived in Philadelphia in a variety of places, in an apartment building, and then rented a house, and then rented another house. And then the war ended, and everybody came back and wanted their houses back.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And we literally had no place to live. And the Navy, on the base that's an inland supply depot—I think it's in the process of being closed now—but it bought everything for the Navy aircraft, everything that they needed, from engines and parts to pilots' jackets and—anyway, they built a Quonset hut house there, and they put a little sign in front and called it Shirley's Temple, and it was just for us.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And we moved in there. My dad was the number-two officer on the base, and they really, you know, needed him there [00:14:00]. And then later they built base housing for a lot of families that had the same issue, at the opposite end of the base, but we stayed where we were.

And in that period of time, I went to—I'm one of these people who went to different schools so many times. I may have had-–three times in my life I went to the same school more than one year. And one of the schools I

went to was the Germantown Friends School, for the third grade, I think. I used to take the elevated train to and from.

Dad got—the Navy decided that he should get a master's degree, and they sent him to Harvard Business School. And my dad was someone that had completed high school, had no college whatsoever. And he and another man from the Army Air Corps were the first two people ever to graduate from Harvard Business School with no undergraduate education whatsoever. Dad wanted to go to Stanford, and he applied, and Stanford wouldn't take someone based on experience. So Harvard took the risk and actually took two of them, and they both graduated. And they were in a great class; I think it was the class of '49, and that included the man who went on to lead Xerox. McColough was a friend of Dad's, told him he should have bought some stock—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: —and offered it to him. It wasn't even called Xerox. It was called American Haloid at the point, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: American what?

JON SHIRLEY: Haloid. [Haloid Photographic Company (1906-58), Haloid Xerox (1958-61), Xerox Company (1961)]

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

JON SHIRLEY: And from there, we moved—two years there; two years in Washington, D.C. We lived in Virginia; two years in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness. How old were you then?

JON SHIRLEY: That was junior high school. And in San Juan, the admiral of the base—of the whole fleet down there—the fleet admiral's son was going to the Hill School [00:16:00] and he—as I have gotten––have got a request, find it was unusual to find us a student that could never afford to go to this school, because there's this incredible scholarship offering. We don't even know who's offering it, and it's something where they want to follow the student for some period of time, and it's all-inclusive. So it was room and board as well as tuition, which, of course, Hill then, and today, is a lot, certainly nothing a Navy lieutenant commander could afford. And so I met with his son, and sight unseen, I went off to the Hill School, and graduated in '56.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have to apply, Jon, to the Hill School?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, I had to apply.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: I had to apply.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then you were accepted.

JON SHIRLEY: And I was accepted. And I was told by the admiral's son that one of the most difficult classes at the school, that he had the most problem with, was English. And mine was never [laughs] bent towards that at all. I was math and sciences and so forth, and so I did well. The Hill also offered a class in the humanities, and it was a three-year class, and so I took that. I signed up for it, and it was amazing. We had a wonderful teacher, and we studied everything. We studied literature, poetry. We studied all forms of performing arts. We studied music, architecture, and of course, we studied the visual arts. And in the process of doing that, we went to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and discovered Calder. Later, went to the Museum of Modern Art and fell in love with *Starry Night*. And so the art education that I had that was in any way formalized was those three years. And then I went from there to MIT, where I—

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's just stay one minute, if you don't mind—

JON SHIRLEY: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: —with the Hill School. I just want to linger there for a minute. You said that you'd been interested primarily in math and science.

JON SHIRLEY: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: What about this class or this experience with these works that you saw was intriguing to you? Was Calder—was it as much the engineering as the art aspect? I'm just really curious.

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, well, I'm sure that—Calder, to me, has a very visceral feeling. It's something that you just see it at as an object that's, maybe to some people, very beautiful, but also, it's an object that has a wonderful feel to it in the sense that it's beautifully balanced, and it's delicate, and it can move. And a lot of them are whimsical. So you have this sense of, This is a really wonderful man making these things, and this is something that would be so much fun to live with. And I guess that also led me to—I just like sculpture, you know. I already liked some sculpture, I think. It's hard to try and, you know, put myself where my brain was in 1955, but Calder just had a really great appeal to me. And then seeing, over time, seeing the outdoor ones, and different scales, from the tiny to the gigantic. The range of his work really appealed to me, too [00:20:00].

And there were other aspects of taking the humanities. I got a great love of jazz—

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

JON SHIRLEY: —through that. We had a small jazz group, and we had a sound truck that you could go, and a little recording studio in it, and you'd run wires into the hall and set up mics and record the group. We actually, in those days, called it binaural, but we had the capability of doing stereo recording. And you could only hear it back on, at that point—well, we rigged a way to do it with speakers, but initially you heard it on headphones. And so that was, you know, you get exposed to that range of arts at that age, and you can sort of decide, This I like, and this I don't like. So, I mean, obviously, Verdi [laughs]—there's an awful lot of opera that has no appeal to me whatsoever; there's a lot of classical music I came to love through that course. But, really, I guess what stuck more than anything else was the visual arts.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you mentioned *Starry Night*. Was van Gogh in general an interest, or just that particular piece?

JON SHIRLEY: Well, no, it was just going to MoMA and seeing that. And it struck me. And then, over the years, I've had a chance—I lived in Belgium for five and a half years in the '70s, and going up to the Van Gogh Museum and Kröller-Müller Museum, and even going down to Paris and—that was, I guess, before they did the—what's the museum? The d'Orsay.

MIJA RIEDEL: The d'Orsay, right.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, before they did the d'Orsay. It was the l'Orangerie, I guess—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I think so.

JON SHIRLEY: —had those works in them. And they had wonderful van Goghs. I don't know how that led to—because at MoMA I also—it didn't take me very long to find Pollock either. And that was a very early love.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really? And Pollock, right away, you were interested in as well?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And were you struck by Brancusi or Giacometti back then, or did those come along later?

JON SHIRLEY: I would say Brancusi pretty early. That came along pretty early. Giacometti later. I may not have actually seen very many of them at that point.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, you were interested in fairly contemporary work as a high school—

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —student.

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What year did you graduate?

JON SHIRLEY: 1956.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And then, as you were saying, you went on to MIT.

JON SHIRLEY: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did your interest in art continue to develop while you were [in] Cambridge, or did you begin to focus much more on engineering?

JON SHIRLEY: Well, after being in a boys' school for three years—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: —you know, my focus was probably as much on girls as it was on [laughs] anything else. And just, all of a sudden, you're free, and you're in this great environment that's Cambridge now—colleges all over the place, and a lot of people to meet and parties to go to and things like that.

So I discovered I didn't want to be an engineer, although I went to work for a while for an engineering firm to have an income [00:24:00]. And then I got a job at Radio Shack, which was at that point a pretty small Boston-based company. I would say that, though, if I think back to the apartment that we lived in, we would have had museum posters on the walls, and we would have certainly visited the MFA in Boston and—yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And when you say "we," were you already married?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, I got married. My first wife and I were married a relatively short period of time. My oldest son came from that marriage. It was maybe five years, and then we got a divorce, and that's also when I moved to the West Coast. I actually moved to San Leandro, California.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was that still with Radio Shack?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you were with them a long time.

JON SHIRLEY: Twenty-five years.

MIJA RIEDEL: Twenty-five years?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. I was with Radio Shack for five years doing a variety of things, and then Charles Tandy, from Fort Worth, Texas, bought the company, and Charles Tandy went through a process of—in a period of three days he interviewed every employee and management of the company, and got rid of a third of them.

He really loved retail, and I kind of liked retail more than what I was doing, which was industrial, and I realized when I met him that he was going to get rid of the part of the company I worked for at some point. [00:26:00] And so I said, "Why don't you put me back on the retail side?" and he said, "I'll think about it," and called me a few months later and said, "You want to go to California and open up the first store west of the Mississippi that isn't in Texas?" And I said, "Sure."

And so I opened up the 23rd Radio Shack [laughs], in San Leandro, California; put my stuff in my little sports car and moved across the country and lived there for two and a half years, and that's when I met my wife, my late wife, Mary. We came close to having 50 years of marriage together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: Not quite. And she loved art, and so, when we could, we'd visit the museums. We moved to Los Angeles; I opened up stores there. I worked there for two years; then we went back to Boston. We were back there for two and a half years. Tandy decided to pick the whole thing up, move it to Fort Worth, Texas. So we moved to [laughs] Fort Worth, Texas. We were in Fort Worth a little over two years, and he asked me if I'd go to Europe and open up stores, which we called Tandy International Electronics stores. And so, in 1973, we moved to Brussels.

And we lived in Brussels for five and a half years. I'd say that was the period when we really began to have the time to spend really going to see museums. And it was so wonderful, because we could get in a car and drive to any one of five countries and, you know, in an hour and a half—in fact, one day, [00:28:00] we spent the entire day driving through all of the countries, did a loop, and went through France and Luxembourg and Germany and the Netherlands and back to Brussels. But we—you know, going to the Kröller-Müller Museum, which has a lot of sculpture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sorry, which?

JON SHIRLEY: Kröller-Müller in the eastern part of the Netherlands. It has a wonderful sculpture garden there. And probably the second-largest collection of van Gogh's work. And then the museums in Amsterdam, and, of course, all the museums in Paris. And so it was great because when we'd do one of our, you know, getaway trips, we'd go to either of those two cities. Amsterdam was a special favorite of ours. And get a hotel room there, and, you know, we'd bring the kids along. But they were pretty young, so we'd get someone to take them around and find things for them to go do, and then we'd go visit museums. So that was a period when, as I said, I think we had, you know, the ability to really absorb a lot of art. It was a great time.

MIJA RIEDEL: I imagine.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how did that begin to open your experience of art or your sense of what you were interested in from what you'd experienced as a younger person? Because it seems like it was the first time you really had a chance to look again since the Hill School, and now you're in Belgium and exposed to a whole different range and kind of work. Were you still looking at contemporary things? Were you getting more of a classical understanding? Both?

JON SHIRLEY: Well, we were getting—it was wonderful to get the classical understanding, but we certainly also were looking at contemporary art where we could, certainly in Paris [00:30:00]. It was easy to look at in Paris, and we visited galleries and, you know, just sort of were absorbing. We couldn't really afford to buy anything. [Laughs.] We bought a nice museum print of *The Potato Eaters* that, to this day, I think, it sits on my son's—in Texas—wall in his dining room.

But there were also other, more contemporary things that we had. I don't recall really what they were. At the end of five and a half years, we went back to Fort Worth, Texas, and I took over their computer business at that point, which I ran for five years. And my late wife Mary got very interested in art glass, doing flat glass, and she made a number of things, including a box I still have upstairs that's made of glass, with a hinged lid and everything, all done with leaded glass. And so it was a really—it gave her something to do that was very enjoyable and allowed her—she tried painting for a while and decided she really didn't think she could paint. I still have a painting she did of sailboats in San Francisco Bay that I don't think is too bad. But anyway, it's in our art storeroom. And when we, in 1983, moved here and she discovered what the glass art world was, it was like, "Good grief." [00:32:00] [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: "This is so amazing." And she did find a woman in Issaquah who had a studio where she was able to get some space and continue on making the glass. But she immediately started meeting people, and the next thing we know, we go to a Pilchuck auction, probably in '84—

MIJA RIEDEL: '84—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —or '94? '84, okay.

JON SHIRLEY: '84. Yeah. And probably—I'm sure—yeah, at that auction we bought a Dale Chihuly that's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness.

JON SHIRLEY: The Seattle Art Museum has it, a big, big, tall work. And the next thing I know, she'd met two or three more people, and she became a member of the Pilchuck board—the board of trustees of the Pilchuck Art School.

And, you know, the art school is an interesting thing. It only runs during the summer. It doesn't during the winter unless there's someone who wants to go up there and use the facilities and take care of themselves, which one artist used to do. It just sits empty, and it lasts during the summer months.

But the board—it was a very hand-to-mouth kind of a thing, and the board lived on the auction that they had in Seattle. They'd get Chihuly and Bill Morris and all the really good artists to give things, and a number of the not-so-well-known artists to give things. They'd have a silent auction, and they'd have a live auction. And I went with Mary to these, and I got kind of really critical of the way they were being run and the way they worked. And sometimes I can have a really big mouth, and so—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: —I'm at the board meeting as a guest [00:34:00]. It's a retreat up at Pilchuck. I'm a guest and I said, "You know, I hate to be really critical, but your auction has about a dozen things wrong with it that you could really do a lot better." And the next thing I know, we're co-chairs [they laugh] of the auction. But I said, "We have to wait until the year after the next auction."

And I went to that auction and I took notes about the entire thing—and we changed the day, the venue, the auctioneer, the whole way the evening works. You know, not as much time to sit outside and drink too much and eat too much—especially not give them very much food before they went inside to eat, so that when the doors opened, they came inside right away to eat. And when we read a little bit about it—anyway, we did it as co-

chairs, and we had a lot of a lot of fun, and we about doubled the year before, and then the next year they got the really brilliant idea of bringing in groups from outside this area, because you can only sell so many Chihulys to the—you know, people were getting them too cheap.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

JON SHIRLEY: But the year we did it, I think that we achieved higher-than-estimate price on about 80 percent of the things in the auction, and the year before, it was, like, 45 percent of the things in the auction. And none of the really expensive things went over, partly because they were doing it on a night that conflicted with other auctions. You can't conflict with the Boys and Girls Club auction, whatever it was. I don't even remember.

And then later—[00:36:00] probably a year or two later [laughs], they were talking about their need for money, and I realized the school had almost no endowment. And again, I'm a guest at the—[they laugh] I said, "Look, why don't you run a real capital campaign?" and they said, "Will you run it?" and I said, "Yeah, okay, I'll try." I'd never done it before in my life. And we set some, for them, gigantic goal of, like, $3.4 million or something like that.

And through that, I met a lot of interesting people in the Seattle area, some of the really interesting philanthropists here, one of whom was a great man named Sam Stroum. And he told me, "You should live your life with the goal of having given away every cent that you have by the time you die." And that's the goal. He talked philosophy with me for a while and then gave us a reasonably nice gift. And so that was sort of our introduction into the local art world.

And we collected glass. We collected a lot of glass art from everywhere, not just from here, but we had works from many European countries. We had works from Australia. And we would actually—we went to Australia. There are a couple of artists down there that were very well known, and we bought their works down there and brought them back with us. We had works from the U.K. And—

MIJA RIEDEL: This is all still in the early '80s?

JON SHIRLEY: This is all in the '80s—yeah, and into the early, early '90s. And I would say that we really stopped collecting glass probably around—[00:38:00] excluding the goblets—probably around '92 or—'92, something like that. But when we built this—let me think a minute. Yeah, because we really started to collect—the collection that you see now, the first work would have been that Calder, *Squarish*, that I showed you. We bought that in 1988.

So from '83 to '90 I was president of Microsoft, and during that period of time I did not have time to go to New York and go on art trips. But I was in New York on business, and I looked up who handled Calder. And Pace Gallery handled Calder, so I went to the Pace Gallery and I said, "Show me what you've got, and Calders that you have for sale." And they brought out some pieces, and there was *Squarish*, and I purchased it. And that was the beginning of this whole collection, really, was at that point.

MIJA RIEDEL: And, Jon, what inspired that, that transition from this focus on glass for, it sounds like, five or six years, to all of a sudden—

JON SHIRLEY: Well, the transition was the ability to do what I'd always wanted to do. Microsoft went public and I could afford to buy things like that. I didn't have much time to spend on it, but at least I could do it. You know, you just can't do this without resources. We now had resources, and so we started off very, very slowly in the beginning. [00:40:00] But in—I decided in about that same period of time that I did not want to be the full-time president [laughs] of Microsoft much longer. It was a very young company. The joke was when I was hired, I was to bring adult supervision to the kids.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: I was 45, and the average age at Microsoft was probably 27 or something like that. I mean, Bill wasn't that old then. And it was very intense and very hard work. We built the company from—you know, when I left, we'd reached $1 billion in sales and 5,000 employees. When I got there, it was maybe $50 million and 300-and-some-odd employees. The way the business was transitioning from retail to selling to corporations, I thought it would be a good transition—that wasn't something I really knew how to do.

And so I stayed on the board; I was a board member for 25 years. I was still very involved with the company, but it was sort of this opportunity to do other things, and there were other things that I really wanted to do. And so, in the middle of 1990, I stopped working full-time. And we really then started to go to New York and to do some collecting.

We bought another Calder—in 1990, we bought a Calder. In 1990, we contacted Pace, and at that point I think

the man we were dealing with was Renato Danese [00:42:00], who now has his own gallery. They did a wonderful flyer announcing the Chuck Close show, and the cover was *Lucas II*. And Mary really loved *Lucas II*. She took that little brochure, cut out the cover, and put it onto the refrigerator and said, "This is"—[laughs]. So, I got a hold of Danese, and he said Chuck decided he didn't want to sell that piece; he wanted to keep it. "He thinks it's one of his seminal works. But he will sell—*Janet* Fish is available." So we went to New York and bought *Janet*.

Late that same year, in late '90, there was an auction here called PONCHO. It was a big auction to raise money for the arts and—oh, no, for a variety of things, almost United Way-ish in its outreach. And they had all kinds of things that auctions have that the same people go to every year; the same people give things, so you get a ride on your friend's boat for 12, with a dinner included, or—you know. Well, there was an offer—it was a combination of American Airlines and Sotheby's to go to New York and to attend an auction. And so we bought it, and in 1991, we went to visit Sotheby's in New York, having never been to an auction, an art auction, in our lives.

We'd been to auctions, but nothing in New York [00:44:00]. And the person who met us was Anthony Grant, and Anthony—you know, we could have been anybody. And Anthony couldn't Google us, not in those days, so I don't know how he figured it out, because he had with him an assistant, and I figured we'd be turned over to the assistant in five minutes. Instead, the assistant was asked to leave, and Anthony stayed with us, took us through all of Sotheby's, all the back rooms, and all the things, and they had an auction the next day that was the auction we attended, and we bought an Andy Warhol.

Now, this, you have to realize, this is 1991. This was after the art market had crashed. I mean, that auction had five wonderful German paintings—Richter, Baselitz, and one other—and one of the Richters was the one of the fighter planes that ended up in Paul Allen's collection later and was sold at auction last year. Those five things sold on the phone instantly, and then nothing sold at all. And we bought the Warhol for about 40 percent of low estimate. I mean, it was a Mao. It was a nice, pretty painting; I don't have it anymore.

And we met Tobias Meyer, and it just—the relationship with Anthony Grant has continued on to this day, through Anthony being at Sotheby's and then going to Pace, which was the first gallery that we'd done business with, and then his own gallery, and then back to Sotheby's, and now he's—he was here last week for the dinner that we had. We used to have him; he'd come to Vail and ski with us, when we had a place in Vail for several years. [00:46:00] And in that same year—I was looking—we were at Pace, visiting with Renato, and I said, you know, "One of the things I'd really like to get is a nice Pollock." He said, "Let's walk across the street," and we walked across the street to a gallery, whose name I don't remember right now [Jason McCoy Gallery]. It was—

MIJA RIEDEL: We can add that.

JON SHIRLEY: —right across the street from Pace's there on 57th, and right across the street. There was a building there that used to have a lot of galleries in it. There are almost none left there now. But it was really a gallery building. And we went there, and—when we look it up—the gallery owner is an expert on Pollock, and I think he has some family relationship. And in the back room was the Pollock that you saw there. And we bought that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right then and there?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, right then and there. And the other thing that happened that year was someone at Pace told Chuck Close that the people who bought *Janet* lived in Seattle, and he didn't—he always liked to know who owned his work. He said, "Oh, wow." He said, "I didn't know that. I'd like to meet them. I'm from Washington. You should have told me right away." So we go out, and we get taken to his place, the same place that he still has, right on the edge of the Bowery and SoHo down there, York Avenue. No, that's not the right street. Anyway, we go in—Bond Street—and we go in, and he's very shy, and he looks at us and said, "Would you like a drink? I think I have some wine." [00:48:00] And my wife looks at him and says, "Got any Scotch?"

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And he just beamed, and he powered his wheelchair over and said, "Right up there. Grab one of those. Scotch," you know, "give me some." So we all sat around drinking Scotch. And I think it was really that same conversation that same day he said, "I know you guys wanted *Lucas II*. If you want *Lucas II*, I'll sell you *Lucas II*. But there's conditions."

I said, "Fine, what are the conditions?" He said, "You've got to give it to a museum in the Pacific Northwest as a bequest, and if I want to loan it, you have to agree to loan it."

And that was it, and I said, "Sure." It was never in writing. It was a handshake. There was never any writing, as much as you can shake hands with Chuck. It was never in writing, and it has been loaned every time he's asked

it to be loaned. And [laughs] in the course of dealing with Chuck and acquiring so many works, I've always asked him where he wanted things to go one day, because I don't think everything should be in the Seattle Art Museum. And the funny thing is [laughs] that he decided that he really wanted *Lucas II* to end up [in] the National Gallery.

So there are a lot of other things going to the Seattle, and *Lucas II* is going there, where that great, enormous painting that he did of his mother-in-law, the finger-painting—that's one of the greatest things he ever did—is located.

So by this time, we were visiting other galleries. We bought a Calder from a resale—well, you know, secondary—small secondary-market gallery, and we started to form relationships [00:50:00]. By this time, of course, Arne Glimcher was interested in knowing who these people were, so of course, we met Arne. Let me think when this would have been. I think in '92—I think it was '92. When Robert Mnuchin started his gallery, I'd met Bob at—when we did the IPO for Microsoft, Goldman was the lead on that IPO, and we met Bob Mnuchin, and I got a tour through Bob's house. Anthony Grant took us through the house that is now the gallery on 78th Street.

And when he decided to retire and start an art gallery, he called me up and told me that he was doing this, you know, which I thought was really a very—I knew he had a great collection of art; he also had art up in his house in Connecticut. That's where the big Rothkos and things were. But he called me up and said, "I'm starting this gallery, and I have a piece you should own. And it's really, really, really, really great, and it's one of a series that I own." He said, "It's a de Kooning, *Two Women* drawing." He said, "I have one," he said, "and this one's really, really a good one." He sent me an image, and we said okay, and he shipped it to us in a FedEx box, in the frame and everything that you see now [laughs] [00:52:00].

MIJA RIEDEL: No!

JON SHIRLEY: And miracle of miracles, it arrived okay, and we were—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: It was such a stunning work. And I called Bob, and I said, "Bob, there are art services all over New York that package art. Get one of them, and don't ever do that again." And, of course, he didn't.

But that was the start of a really great relationship, and there's a number of really good things we've gotten from Bob; there's a number we've gotten from Arne; and then there are numbers of things that we did—we were opportunistic auction buyers at that point—so we started going back, and we'd go to Christie's and Sotheby's, and we'd see what they had. The Richter came from an auction at Christie's. There's a second Richter that came from an auction in—that Christie's had in London that we bid on the phone and were written up in the paper in London as some crazy Americans who paid an absolutely ridiculous overprice to get this Richter.

MIJA RIEDEL: And this is the apple trees you're talking about.

JON SHIRLEY: This is the apple orchards, yeah [*Apfelbaume (Skizze),* 1987].

MIJA RIEDEL: Here, yeah. The other one is the *Abstraktes Bild*.

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. And we also—I don't remember what year. Let me think. Well, there were a number of pieces that came to us during this period of time through the '90s. The David Smith was auctioned in 1994.

MIJA RIEDEL: The *Cubi,* out front [*Cubi V*, 1963]?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. And the under-bidder on that, it turned out, we learned much later, was—has his own museum [00:54:00]. The Broad, Eli Broad.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And it was very funny, because Eli finally got one, but he said, you know, "You cost me $20 million—$25 million—because I had to pay that much more to get one when it became available."

One of the nice things that happens when you are collecting works of a single artist—it certainly happened with Calder—was that people learn that there's this person out there collecting Calder. Lucy Mitchell Innes, on a trade, got *Bougainvillier*. And she didn't handle—that's not what she does. She handles earlier work. She didn't know what to do with the Calder, and she called me up, and she said, "I hear you're buying Calders." I don't know who told her. And she said, "I have this piece," and I said, "Please send me an image. I'd be very interested." And I got it, and I was like, "Oh, my gosh. This is astonishing." And so, that was '95.

So there was this whole period of time when we were really deeply involved, going back to New York on a fairly

regular basis, but also, we were doing a fair amount of world traveling. One of the things that we always did was go to museums, and because of my love of sculpture, we'd go to sculpture parks. We'd been to Hakone, in Japan, for example, is one, and—just anyplace we found ourselves. [00:56:00]

The next major thing that we got from Mnuchin—in early '96, he sent us a transparency of that beautiful Rothko, the big one that's *Green over Blue*. And a transparency of that piece looks like mud—and we told Bob that. And he said, "Well, when are you coming to New York?" "Well, we're not coming to New York for five months or something," because we had a major trip planned. And he said, "Look, I'll pack it up and send it to you, and if you like it, keep it. If you don't, have your packers repack it, put it back in the box, ship it back to me. No expense." And so he shipped it out, and we opened it up and went, "Oh, my God." That was one of the Weisman collection works, so a well-documented, famous work. We'd already bought that Rothko you saw in—that's the light-colored one, and the gray-on-white one. But getting this one was just so special.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, that one's spectacular.

JON SHIRLEY: And then the third one, the red one [*Orange on Red*, 1956], came at an auction not too long after that one. And Rothko—you said I can move off on a tangent; let me go off on a little—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, please do, absolutely.

JON SHIRLEY: —a little tangent. Not all of the things that we own were artists whose work appealed to us when we started out. We started out buying the ones that we really did love. Like Richter—I took an immediate liking to Richter upon really getting exposed to his work. Rothko was not something that had come to me—either one of us, I think—right away. And the Rothko discovery was so interesting because it happened in a place, at a time—we were in the Phillips, and we went to the room with the bench in the middle, and there are four Rothkos, one on each wall, and you can look at any one at a time. We get in there, and we worked our way around the room [laughs] a couple of times, and I said, "You know, I really get it. I just really love what this man did." And then we started looking at more and more of them, and then we had the chance to get the *Green over Blue*, and then later we bought the other one, which I don't think has a name [*Untitled*, 1969].

And it was that, you know, having the time to really go look and go to galleries and shows and museums, really be able to spend time looking at things. It broadens, you know, completely broadens your outlook and what you like. And it also allows you to continue to say, I still don't really get the art of this person, so I don't think I'm going to buy any of that. And then there are things that you come to sort of too late, you know, like Ryman came a little too late. We should have picked up on Ryman earlier. That was a mistake.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JON SHIRLEY: So this went on during a period of time when we weren't living in a house that could—you know, we had the yard space. So the outdoor sculpture was fairly easy, but [01:00:00] the house that was here was very chopped up, and we were obviously outgrowing it, and that led to the creation of this house. We continued to buy art, even during the period of time when we were in the temporary house, and if we wanted anything large, we had an arrangement with the Seattle Art Museum that they would store it, but they could put it up whenever they wanted to. So the large Jasper Johns and the *Green over Blue* and things like that that would not fit in the house that we were in stayed at the museum, but luckily, the grounds of the house we went to had room for some sculptures. So as we added things, some of the outdoor sculpture could be there, and the others were left here surrounded by tapes, you know, that said, "Stay away from"—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: —"this area is"—when they actually started building this house.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you've been on this piece of land since the '90s or earlier.

JON SHIRLEY: '80s.

MIJA RIEDEL: Since the '80s.

JON SHIRLEY: '80s, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so, the sculpture—has some of the sculpture stayed where—

JON SHIRLEY: Some of the sculpture has been here a long time. There are pieces that we bought from Dorothy Goldeen when she had her gallery in Santa Monica—the Fletcher Benton, Charles Ginnever—those pieces outdate these other things. They're probably, well, '87—'86, even—in that time frame.

When we first moved here, we lived up on a hill above Bellevue. But it was a funny place to live because

[laughs] it actually was high enough that it snowed—

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JON SHIRLEY: up there, and it was a very steep hill, so I had to get a four-by-four just to manage to get home if the weather was bad. And we just loved the water, so stayed there a few years, packed up, and moved to the house that was here.

I think I should—maybe we should go back and talk about some of the—I talked about some of the galleries that influenced us. One of the people that helped us a lot in the early days was Patterson Sims. Patterson was curator here at Seattle Art Museum. We didn't have anything really to do with the museum at that time, but we visited. And someone introduced us to Patterson, and that was really wonderful because he had such an amazing—he was a great curator, but he had more outreach—more interest in talking to people and getting them involved and answering questions for them, really, than any curator I've known. Michael Darling was a lot like that, too, you know; went to Chicago and became chief curator at the contemporary art museum there.

Patterson was wonderful, and he helped us in a number of ways. When I really fell in love with David Smith's work, it was obvious to me that I wanted a stainless-steel piece, that I just thought that was—I mean, everything he did was wonderful, but I thought that was really what I would like to own. We'd looked at some of the ones that aren't in the Cubi series you know. [00:02:00] There's one in the Seattle Art Museum that Jinny Wright gave them. I think it's called *Fifteen Planes* or something like that. And none of them really appealed to us. And I was talking to Patterson about it, and he said, "You know," he said, "I have this"—I think it was an aunt [great aunt – JS]—"Lellie Gates Lloyd, who owns one. It's on a patio in her condo in Washington, D.C. And one of these days she's going to sell it, and it's going to go to auction, and it'll be either Sotheby's or Christie's." And I said, "Wonderful. I'll wait." And sure enough, in 1994, it went up for auction.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And we went there, and of course, because of Anthony, we got a really nice seat. We were in, like, the fifth row. And by that time, of course, we knew Tobias Meyer, and I bid on this thing by waving my pen at Tobias, and there was someone behind me—several people behind me bid, and then they all dropped out except for one, and that was the person who was bidding for Eli Broad. And it kept going up to prices that I just had not been willing to pay, and Mary kept going [demonstrates poking him in the ribs] like this.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: "Bid again." I bid again, and this time, this is it, and then there was no counterbid. And it was very funny, because there was nothing else were interested in, so we got up and walked out. And on the way out, two or three people asked, "Who are you?" [They laugh.] And of course, I wouldn't tell them.

And *The Wall Street Journal* figured it out. [00:04:00] A week later there was this little, tiny thing in *The Wall Street Journal* that said, "Microsoft—ex-Microsoft president Jon Shirley is the one who bought the David Smith for X amount of money at Sotheby's auction," which I think it was the star piece of that auction. Because even in '94 things were still—auction catalogues were not very thick—and auctions didn't have a lot of action. But that all came from Patterson.

There's a lovely Sam Francis work on paper that you passed going into that gallery, and that was another piece that we were offered, about five of those. We wanted to find one, and this one was somewhat more expensive than the others, and Patterson said, "That's clearly the best one" [laughs]. He never talked about prices. I guess good curators don't do that unless it's for the museum. But he helped a lot on that piece, and just generally sort of helping steer us, you know, sort of read what we were liking, and that's what gradually led to getting involved with the Seattle Art Museum.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

JON SHIRLEY: At that time, the director of the museum was Jay Gates—who then went to Dallas, and then went to the Phillips Collection. I was not—my involvement at that time would have only been with Patterson. And, too, Patterson—even though we didn't want him to be our social director; we met probably Jinny first.

MIJA RIEDEL: Jinny Wright?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. And Jinny is such an outgoing, wonderful person. If you meet Jinny, and you're interested in the arts, next thing you know, you meet everybody. [00:06:00] And within a couple years we started to know people like Faye Sarkowsky and Dick and Betty Hedreen and, you know, the real—people that are sort of the heart of the art museum family of that era. And we may want to return to that--to the whole museum thing. That's going to take a while, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right. You seem to be on a roll, so I'm just letting you run with that. I've got plenty of questions for later.

JON SHIRLEY: Okay. One of the other things that happened during this period in the '90s was that there was a man named Bill Bartman, and Bartman had a thing he called A.R.T. Press. He did books that were donated to schools. He did art books, generally small, but he wanted to do something different, something really special.

What he wanted to do was a book of interviews between Chuck Close and the people that he painted. And the book was called *The Portrait Speaks*. And we financed that book. Mary and I financed the book, and it was so much fun, and Bill was such an amazing—I mean, Bill was—poor guy. I think he was diabetic; he had AIDS; he was, you know, just—he had things cut off. I mean, the poor guy was just a wreck, but he was so enthusiastic and exciting and just, you know, it's too bad that, you know, drugs he needed came along too late to save him [00:08:00]. We have a Chuck Close photograph of Bill, a *daguerreotype*. So, you know, the sweater he's wearing reads backwards, because it's just like looking in the mirror.

MIJA RIEDEL: I wanted to ask about that book. So, yeah, if you could explain how that came about. I didn't know if it came about through Chuck Close and a request of his, but now it sounds like it came about a different way.

JON SHIRLEY: It came from Bill. We got this call from this crazy guy, and he said, "Look, the next time you're in Los Angeles, you've got to see me." So we actually had breakfast with him at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. I'll never forget it. We had no idea what he was like, and he was just so outgoing and so enthusiastic. He'd already done some level of interviews—and he said, "I can't afford to publish this thing without backing. And we need to get it finished."

And so we talked about a budget and came up with a budget, and we financed it. I have some copies of it left; it's quite thick. It's fascinating, and [laughs] the people really opened up and talked to him, and when it was published only one person got mad. Richard Serra was furious. He said, "I never said that stuff!" And Bill Bartman said, "I taped it."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: "I sat there while you two guys talked, and I taped it. That isn't some—that's a transcription of what you said."

And [for] the Chuck Close retrospective at MoMA in 1998, they attempted to get everybody that he'd painted to come to the reception. And it was fabulous; it was at Sette MoMA, and we were at a table that had Cindy Sherman [00:10:00]—oh, and sitting next to me was Charlie Rose, and all he wanted to talk about was an interview he was going to do with Bill Gates.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And scattered around the room—almost everybody came [laughs] except Richard Serra.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. And it was amazing. Afterwards, in the hallway outside, they got all of these people together, with Chuck sitting there in his wheelchair, and took of a photograph of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think I've seen that photo.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, it's a great photograph. I mean, there's Janet Fish. That's actually in the––that painting—that's in the book. All of the people—

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a beautiful Fish.

JON SHIRLEY: —were there. It was just—it was so much fun. And the book—he wanted to finish the rest of the people, because we didn't have everybody in there, and so there are some other interviews that never got published that were done, because Bill succumbed to his many illnesses. He had a place in Chelsea where they actually—up on the third or fourth floor—where A.R.T. Press was located, and there were some people who worked for him there. And afterwards, we tried to see if that part of the project could continue on, but there was really nobody there who was interested in pursuing it for some reason. And I don't even know what happened to —

MIJA RIEDEL: And, Jon, what inspired you to fund that project? What inspired you to get excited about it? Was it the overall interest in Close, and then Bill's, just, enthusiasm, and as far as he'd taken the project?

JON SHIRLEY: Well, and we read some of those interviews, and, you know—you listen to an artist—it's what

you're doing when you go and visit with the artist, listen to them really talk about what they were doing. And they all had interaction with Chuck, because he only painted people he knew [00:12:00], you know, and knew pretty well.

And so just the interplay was so fascinating because it wasn't like you interviewing them. It's like this old friend interviewing them, with Bill sort of just sitting on the sides as a little bit of a moderator but usually not interjecting very much. And so the conversations are great. There's illustrations of the paintings he did of each person and an example of what each person did, their own paintings, in the book, or whatever they did. I mean, one of the—I think one of the conversations is with—oh, my ability to remember names is terrible.

MIJA RIEDEL: If you remember anything about it, we can add the name later.

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, Philip Glass.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, Philip Glass, yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, Philip Glass. I think one of the conversations—either one of the ones that was published, or we saw that didn't get published, was with Philip Glass. So it was whoever he painted.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. And some of these were people he'd known for decades—

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —so they had that history—

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and that insight—

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I mean, these were people he went to school—they were in Yale together. Janet Fish.

MIJA RIEDEL: Janet Fish, right.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. In fact, there's a painting—

MIJA RIEDEL: And Philip Glass, too.

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. And the painting of Janet goes to the Yale Art Gallery, because they don't own a painting by Chuck Close.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. So he decided he'd like it to go there. Yeah, and it was just kind of this magical moment, and it wasn't a terribly expensive thing to do, although we ended up having to do multiple gifts to fund the thing to get it all finished.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yeah, I've seen that book. It looks like it's about a thousand pages [laughs] [00:14:00].

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, it's huge.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's huge.

JON SHIRLEY: It's huge. And what happened with Chuck was so great. You know, Arne doled––and still doles Chuck's works out. You know, no one's supposed to have more than two.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Well.

JON SHIRLEY: And so, when Arne opened the Pace Gallery in Los Angeles that didn't last all that long, they had a grand opening, and they had these—the two paintings that are at the end of the gallery of self-portraits. The profile portrait and the head-on portrait. And we wanted them both, but they'd only sell us the head-on portrait, so we bought that, and we reached a point at that point where getting another one through Arne required Chuck—Chuck would say, "I want the Shirleys to be offered this," and we'd get a call from Arne or whoever—Mark or someone. And they'd say, "Okay, Chuck wants you to buy this if you want. It's so much money," and so we

always took it, because, you know, we knew he wanted us to own it [laughs]. And then a number of those came from auction, though, so we did go to auctions and buy some of them.

And quite a few years later, when the person who owned the profile self-portrait had a divorce—how do things become available? You know, debt and divorce and death. Pace learned about it, and they wanted to resell it through Pace, and Chuck said, "You have to offer it to Jon." So, of course, we bought it, and that was how we got that piece. And then I think we bought the pulp-paper piece at auction.

MIJA RIEDEL: The pulp-paper piece of *Georgia*? [*Georgia/Collage,* 1982]

JON SHIRLEY: I believe—yeah—the *Georgia* pulp paper, which is actually the name of it, came at auction. And then one day—and I do not remember what the year was on this. It would probably have been around 2000. One day, I get a call from Chuck, and it's, like, 10:00 at night, so it's, like, 1:00 in the morning in Manhattan. And he said, "I've decided to sell *Big Nude*. Do you want to buy it?"

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

JON SHIRLEY: I had never seen *Big Nude*. I'd seen it in a book. It's about this big, and it's like—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Two inches.

JON SHIRLEY: —two inches wide. You know, the thing's 23 feet long; so in the book, it's tiny. And I said, "Sure." I said, "Why do you want to sell it?" I said, "I didn't know you"—first I said, "I didn't even know you had it." He said, "It's the only thing I kept, and it's been kept in a roll, and Pace stores it for me. And—but I decided that with my physical condition, something could happen to me at any time. I should have some money put away, so I decided to sell this, and Arne's going to take a minimal commission or something on it, and so I can get the money and put it away." And I said, "What do you want for it?" and he told me, and I said, "Okay, sure. You know, we've never seen it. We'd like to"—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: "We would like to see it, but, yes, I'll buy it, because, you know, I'm sure it's great." And so we were back in New York about, I don't know, three weeks later, and they unrolled it down it the basement of the Chelsea, I think, and put it up so we could see it, and it was just wonderful. [00:18:00]

And I said, "Okay," and I think we had them hold onto it until this house was finished so that—when we were walking through the house, you asked me was any of the house designed for a specific work. That wall was designed to hold that work. We knew that was going to go down there, and then we kind of worked our way around with the other works of Close that we owned at the time. So when we moved into the house, that piece came, and put it on a stretcher and hung, and it's an interesting work, because the paint on it is very thin, and it's rolled, and it comes in a roll.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was it airbrushed? Right?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, a lot of it was airbrushed. And some of the white part of it, like the hairs on her arm, I believe he just scratched the paint off the surface, so it's the canvas showing through. It's only ever been loaned once. It's never been on public exhibition in the United States except the one time. Pace did a show of Chuck's nudes in Chelsea, and he wanted it to go back to Chelsea. So it went back to Chelsea and came back here. So that was only—a typical show is up, you know, what, six, seven weeks. The only time it's ever been in a public show was twice in Germany. It traveled to Germany twice in the early days. And there was a show of his work at the Henry Art Gallery. They wanted to borrow it, and Chuck said, "Don't loan it. It's too fragile." Because I didn't want to loan it anymore—so I—

MIJA RIEDEL: I read also that it was important to him that painting stay in Washington. Is that true?

JON SHIRLEY: I think it's important to him that there is a body of his work that remains in the Washington area [00:20:00]. He came back; he was honored by the University of Washington quite a few years ago as one of the—you know, they have a program where they bring back graduates of the school who have achieved something important in their lives, and they brought him back.

He gave a talk in one of their halls, and I remember that despite everything that the ushers could do, they couldn't stop—all of the walkways were—all the chairs were full, and there were students sitting on every step of the way out of that place. If there had been a fire, it would have been horrible. And he was just so great and answered the questions from the students.

He has a terrific capability of sitting down in front of an audience and just being mesmerizing and telling these wonderful stories and talking about his life and talking about all the things he went through—the fact, you know,

he was dyslexic. When he applied to Yale, they thought his written material was such that he couldn't make it through college, so he sent them a bunch of drawings [laughs], and they accepted him based on his art. And just the whole—all through his life, the difficulties he's had to overcome, and then being in the prime of life and being—he was at the mayor's when he had the aneurysm, giving out awards at Gracie Mansion, and it was just—to have overcome everything and make it to that stage, and then have that happen to you, and then to come out of it and go right back to painting [00:22:00], just like he was doing, with a brush strapped to his wrist.

I really love the man. I just think he's such an amazing example of what the brain can be and how people can overcome really terrible personal tragedy and go on and thrive. I feel sorry for what's happened now, though. I'm really worried about him. I've got to get back to New York and spend some more time with him.

But putting that collection together and going out there and visiting with him every time and—there's a great little Italian restaurant right across the street that's fantastic, and we can motor across the street and have lunch together. It always bothered me because [laughs] he'd drink enough wine that he—he's not going to work this afternoon.

His output is pretty low. It's the fact that he does work with printmakers that produces a fairly huge body of print work, done in every possible print technique I think that there is. But painting is relatively slow. He lives in Miami in the winters now. I mean, lives there because he got pneumonia and almost died in New York, and the doctor said, "Don't live here during the winter." So he lives in a great place in Miami. He's got two condos in the building, lives in one, and he paints in the other.

MIJA RIEDEL: How great.

JON SHIRLEY: And he can't paint his largest-size painting, but he can paint a painting like the size of the most recent one you saw in there. So there's this room, and it's got a ramp, so he wheels the wheelchair up the ramp to do the upper portions of it [laughs] and then paints the rest down below. And he's got a little, tiny dog named Cinnamon [00:24:00].

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: Cinnamon, I think, is a very toy poodle, really just—looks like a stuffed animal. He's carrying him around, and people think he's got a stuffed animal.

And so putting his collection together was great fun, because when you deal with the artist, not in the sense of acquiring, but just in the sense of knowing him and having him say, "Something's coming up that—this is going to be at auction. Maybe you'd be interested." And there was certainly a time when Mary and I would go to New York, and the first thing we'd do, about two weeks before we got there, we'd call Chuck, and we'd say, "What should we go see?" And he'd tell us which shows he thought were the best shows, and that was great.

And he goes to everything. He's just this constant—any artist, decent artist, has an opening show, and there's Chuck, tooling through the show. There's an artist at Pace, a woman. She does—she did whole rooms of—one room would have little straws—Tara Donovan. And before Pace, she had a show in New York where she had five rooms; each room was totally different, and all absolutely amazing. I can remember Chuck telling us, "Just go see that show. It's the only good thing in New York." [Laughs.] And it was those—that kind of interaction that has made it so wonderful to collect his work [00:26:00].

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So it sounds as if a large part of the pleasure of collecting his work has also been knowing him over years.

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. Absolutely.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you have that relationship with any of the other artists that you have collected? You mentioned that you'd gone to see George Rickey at his studio. I mean, I'm sure there aren't—one, I mean, you have almost 30 Closes. I'm sure that that is a special relationship.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, that's a special relationship. We had, certainly, a relationship like that with many of the glass artists. And we still have a very good, close relationship—my current wife and I—Kim and I have a great relationship with Dale and—let's see.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, and you mentioned Italo Scanga, that you would spend—

JON SHIRLEY: Well, Italo, yes—Italo was a great friend. My—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mark di Suvero, perhaps?

JON SHIRLEY: —drawings—

MIJA RIEDEL: Or—I'm trying to think of who else you've collected in depth.

JON SHIRLEY: When we—the piece in the front yard—we went to New York and met Mark. Went to his big factory. I can remember him taking Mary out and having her run this giant overhead crane back and forth—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Was this—

JON SHIRLEY: —you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: —out at Socrates—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —at the Sculpture Park?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

JON SHIRLEY: Right there where his factory is next door—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

JON SHIRLEY: —where his big, the ex-steel facility is there. And she's running this gigantic crane back and forth.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And we go into his office, and he has this whole wall of photographs of different works for us to see [00:28:00]. And there was one we saw that we really liked; it's the one in the front yard. He said, "Come back tomorrow at 11 o'clock." So we come back at 11 o'clock, and he's actually operating this crane to put the last piece together, and he's got someone there to put the bolts in. But he put it together almost by himself. And there's actually a photograph of it when you look across the East River toward Manhattan and this piece is in the foreground. And that's when we found it, and we purchased that piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's a beautiful, classic—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —di Suvero in that wonderful red.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. More recently, we met Mark Bradford, spent quite a bit of time with him. And we recently—we have a Mark Bradford on the way. We met Melvin Edwards. We don't have a work by Kerry James Marshall, but we had a great time. We had a dinner for him here at the house. And we also went to see his opening at Bob Rennie's in Vancouver this year. The relationship like the one with Chuck is—other than back in the early days with the glass artists, I can't think of any where there's that same long-term kind of relationship.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. When I look at your glass, I think of Howard Ben Tré as being the person you've collected most in depth, and maybe John Lewis [00:30:00].

JON SHIRLEY: Well, these are people that we knew and worked with. We bought the first Ben Tré, the one in the main gallery, from Dorothy Goldeen, and then met him on a visit up to RISD, went to his studio, and talked to him about our idea of having him do something outdoors for the sculpture garden. And he studied that for a while and called us up and said, "I've found a way to do cast glass that would survive outdoors and will take the temperature changes, and would even take the temperature changes here, you know, in Providence; it would certainly take the temperature changes in Seattle area." And he came out and spent some time with us and created that *Totem for Seattle*, I think he calls it.

And, yeah, so I have to think about who are the ones that we worked with. The Oldenburg—that was done as a personal thing. We went to New York, and we met with him.

MIJA RIEDEL: The clothespin?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. And he was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Or diaper pin. Whatever that pin is.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, it's a safety pin. And we went to his studio and we showed him photographs of what the art would look like and what we were thinking about, and he said, "You know, I worked with a man to do this thing

that was going to go over his driveway, and then he decided he didn't want to do it, [00:32:00] but come with me." And we get in the freight elevator; we go downstairs; and these cabinets with, you know, drawers with lots of large, flat drawings. And there was a drawing he pulled out, which I still have, of a safety pin and a person standing next to it, so he could see the size of it. And I said, "How tall is that thing?" He said, "It's about 30 feet." And so we decided, "Okay." I knew that the city of Medina would require a building permit, which they would not give me for anything higher than 30 feet. So that thing was installed, and there was a man with a transept to make sure that thing is 29 feet, 11 inches [laughs]—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right.

JON SHIRLEY: —and five eighths or so high, you know, that the city could not give me any—it's funny because after he did that for us—it was made in his California studio and shipped up on a very special truck where the—it was in two pieces. And the truck was long, and it sat on it. And when they brought it here, they took the part—it comes up, and after the loop, the long pin part of it was cut. And the truck was such that that other piece could be lifted up; that part of the truck lifted up. They put it back down, they tented it, and they joined it together on the ground, welded it, painted it, and then installed it. We had a crane come in and pick it up and install it.

Of course, we did that while the house was still very much under construction, so we worked with our builder to come up with, you know, "When can we do this that it's going to work, you know. It's going to be a mess to do, but we won't do it when it would interfere [00:34:00]—where it would be in the way of anything you're doing." So we planned that out and had that installed.

I'm trying to think of what other works that we—I mean, there are a lot of artists that we've met, you know, gone and seen. Fletcher Benton; Joel Shapiro; John Chamberlain, not in the process of buying anything, but at a party that Arne did when he opened his gallery when we sat next to him and were able to talk to him for a while, and John was by far the best-dressed artist there—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: —in a coat and a tie, and was very formal. Everybody else was, you know—all the artists were being very, very casual.

MIJA RIEDEL: It sounds like Close, though, is by far and away—

JON SHIRLEY: By far. Yeah, Close has been by far the relationship that's been for a very long time—and continues on. And, you know, he and Kim get along super well. He really, really liked Kim, and of course, he and Mary had been friends for so long, ever since that [laughs] first glass of Scotch.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: That was the bond right there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did the thoroughness of your Close collection affect your thoughts about collecting in any way?

JON SHIRLEY: Interesting question. It probably did, but I'm not sure I know how to describe how it did. We certainly wanted to meet other artists and to work with other artists, and we did, but we didn't establish sort of these long-term, ongoing relationships with them that we did with Chuck.

MIJA RIEDEL: And Chuck—your collection of his work spans 50 years almost.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: *Big Nude* is '67, and the last—

JON SHIRLEY: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —one was 2015.

JON SHIRLEY: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's almost 50 years

JON SHIRLEY: I know. It's almost 50 years, yeah. Now, that's—I mean, I have the same span with Calder, you know. And one of the things that we haven't talked about is sort of the way that you find things, or you do a collection where it's not just opportunistic buying. Obviously, with Calder, there was a great deal of looking, and, you know, I've certainly not bought a lot more Calders than I have bought. And one of the ways that we've come to find things has been going on museum trips to other cities where you visit collectors.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

JON SHIRLEY: And if I'm asked to do a collectors' visit by the museum, I make everybody go through the museum. If we're here, we never say no. Because we love to do this. We've been to the cities in the United States and a little in Europe, and people have opened their homes, and it's just been fantastic. I mean, we've done [it] with the Seattle Art Museum; we've done it with the National Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art international council; and we've done it with the Tate [00:38:00].

We had a Seattle Art Museum trip to Washington, D.C., a long time ago, and we visited a collector who had a wonderful house right—it was in the old Embassy Row part, a tall, rather narrow, beautiful home. He had some wonderful things, and I complimented him on a Mondrian that he had, and said I thought it was just the perfect piece, perfectly placed. It was over the head of his bed. And apparently, I picked his favorite piece, because we became friends, and he asked me later in that day, "If you could own any piece of art, what would you own?" And I said, "I'd own a *Bird in Space*." And he looked at me, and he smiled, and he said, "This may be your lucky day." And he told me of Hester Diamond's piece and that she wanted to sell it and that she was going to sell all of her works, and gave me her number. And I called up Hester Diamond, and two weeks later we flew back to New York and bought the *Bird in Space*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Amazing.

JON SHIRLEY: And that's how it came to be.

And actually, we got two things out of that trip. Another person had some wonderful Diego Giacometti tables, unusual size, you know—he made all those small tables. And we were in their home and I said—or my wife said, "We're building a home, but we need something of scale that—did he do anything large?" [00:40:00] And the lady said, "There's a gallery in Manhattan on Madison Avenue. It's a furniture place, very high-end. They have one." And she said, "I think it's as big as he did." And that's the table that's in there. And he only made three of that size, because, I mean, you can imagine, you know, working in Paris in those days that that size table is pretty big. I mean, there aren't any tables of that scale in the Museu Picasso. And he did all the—everything in there. He did the door handles and the lights and the furniture. But I don't think there are any quite of that scale.

And so this has been a constant thing of ours in going into houses. And sometimes it's just seeing work by an artist and just kind of really falling in love with it, seeing it in a setting that's not a museum.

The same people that had the Giacometti had one of the most beautiful Clyfford Stills I've ever seen on their wall. Unfortunately, that was just—I probably should have gone for the one that sold at auction when the foundation sold three pieces. The one that went for the highest price was a really beautiful piece. But I never saw any for sale that were really of the—to me, being the best of the things that he did.

So some of the collection was also—other than Close and Calder—were works that we wanted to own. I already talked about the David Smith. The Marini was one. We took a great love of Marini after seeing him in Venice and other places in Italy and at the Hirshhorn. And there was an art broker who kept offering us things for sale that we didn't like, but then he'd say, "Okay, what would you really like to get?" Almost to get rid of him, I said, "A Marini," and he said, "Okay, let me look around." Quite a bit later—a few months—he said, "I found one. It's in Switzerland; it's in a field. It's never been touched. It's just been there, along with some other sculptures." And I said, "Okay, but I want to have it inspected."

And so we hired a German expert to go to Switzerland and examine the piece, and he wrote up a report, and he said, "I can't be 100-percent sure, because it's sitting out in the open, but I believe that if you cleaned it, and maybe, you know, just waxed it, it'd probably be fine. It looks to me"—he said, "I did find one thing where there's evidence of, like, a piece of metal in one of the legs, but I'm sure it was in the casting." Because, you know, he was working right after the war, and I'm sure the bronze was, you know, not great stuff. A lot of leftover World War II shells were melted down and God knows what else is in that thing.

And so we bought it, and we shipped it over here, and we had an art conservator take it, and it was actually done in a—[00:44:00] Art Tech had a—there was an alley behind them, and they pushed it out in the alley, and they washed it off [laughs] with a power washer, and it came out just fine. I mean, it was in wonderful shape, which says, "Don't mess with them" [laughs] sometimes. So that's one that we got that was a very specific one.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how did you become familiar with Marini's work? Was this through a—

JON SHIRLEY: Through seeing it in—

MIJA RIEDEL: Through seeing it in Venice?

JON SHIRLEY: And in other museums. And—

MIJA RIEDEL: That wasn't a house tour. That was—

JON SHIRLEY: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: —just seeing it every time—

JON SHIRLEY: No, I'm talking more now about things that we decided were something that we'd really like to own. The big white Calder mobile that was done through the same dealer.

MIJA RIEDEL: You should tell that story, because that's very similar, too.

JON SHIRLEY: Well, yeah, it is. It's the same dealer. There are three things that came from this dealer. The Marini. The second thing took him three years, I think, or four years, and that was the *Dog*, the Giacometti *Dog*. And I told him I really would love to have the Giacometti *Dog*. He said, "You know, I know someone who has one, and I'm sure he's going to sell it someday, because he's really—he's an art dealer. I'm not sure when he'll sell it, but I'll make sure we're top of the list." And it was Jeffrey Loria, and he sold it to buy his way into Major League Baseball, to buy a team. And that's why he sold it, or he told us that at the time. He was almost in tears when we went to see it. It was boxed up in an art storage facility because his condo was being redone, or his gallery was being redone, or something. And so that's how we got that. [00:46:00]

And then the third time he called—and I thought I'd give him something to take him another few years or never—and I said, "I need a big Calder, because we've got this house, and there's this wonderful place to hang a Calder, and there's nothing else we would hang there. But it's just begging for that." And he called me back in, like, two days—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: —and said, "I found it, and it's in Switzerland." It's the second thing in Switzerland. "It's owned by the Beyeler museum, and they'd love to sell it." And so it was very easy to put that deal together.

And I can still remember our art handlers—we had built the gallery with little hooks on all the main beams so that we could hang something that was heavy if we needed to. And they ran a rope through it, and they put it on the Calder, and they pulled it up, and it was just like magic. It was just like, "Oh, this is perfect." Then they got the wire and, you know, the correct hardware to hang it, and they hung it the same day.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that piece is massive. Do you know the dimensions of that piece? Does that have a title, or is it just untitled?

JON SHIRLEY: [Laughs.] It has a title, and it's on your list.

MIJA RIEDEL: I'll look it up.

JON SHIRLEY: It's *The Spider Web*, but in French, so I can't pronounce it. It's *Toile d'Araignee*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that sounds familiar.

JON SHIRLEY: —or something like that. It's close enough, but I'm sure I'm not pronouncing it correctly.

MIJA RIEDEL: I had no idea from that little two-inch photo what that—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —[laughs] what that piece looks like.

JON SHIRLEY: That's what that is.

MIJA RIEDEL: What is that? Is it 15 feet across?

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, no, it's 20-something—

MIJA RIEDEL: Twenty?

JON SHIRLEY: —feet across, yeah. The Renzo Piano galleries, I think, were 22 at the Beyeler or something like that, and our gallery is wider, and it's the difference between our width and their width that allows it to go in there [00:48:00].

MIJA RIEDEL: Because they couldn't fit it.

JON SHIRLEY: No. There are less than 25 Calders—mobiles—of that scale, and a lot of them, of course, are extremely well known, like the National Gallery, which I think is not a very good one, and the one that was in—I guess it was the old TWA terminal, and one of the terminals at Kennedy had one in it. That got sold, but it—I think it sold and went to a public place. There's a big one in Neiman Marcus in Dallas when Sidney Marcus was putting his art collection together and putting it in his stores.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you set out to put together such a thorough documentation of Calder's work? I mean, they're—each of the turning points—so many of these pieces seem to document either a very certain aspect of his work or a real turning point in the work.

JON SHIRLEY: I didn't start out—I started out to hang some Calders in my home.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: The more time I spent, and the more I looked, I came to the realization that there were these wonderful, different periods of his career and that they were very different and that I wanted to get representation of as many of the periods as I could, and especially the early work. But also to get things that he did during the war, when he couldn't get aluminum. So, the *Constellation* and the *Fish* were both done during World War II. [00:50:00]

If you'd asked me, you know, 10 years ago or 15 years ago, "What Calders would you like to own?" I would have said, "A *Fish*," and I'd like to—and I would have said the acrobat that the Whitney has that's the strong man holding up all the people, and in his arm it says, "Calder." And a *Fish* became available about six or seven years ago. Agnes Gund sold her *Fish* to the Samsung Museum in Seoul, and a friend of hers found out about how much a *Fish* was worth [laughs] and decided she'd sell her *Fish*, and Mark Glimcher offered it to us. And luckily, back in those days you could still do tax-free exchanges on art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: How great.

JON SHIRLEY: So some stuff went over here, and some over there, and the *Fish* came here. And it was a complicated deal. But the new tax laws stopped giving out 1301 tax-free exchanges.

There have been other areas as we've gone along where there were works that we really, really wanted to find. The Joan Mitchells were one, and those were—you know, we really admired the work, and we were patient, and we waited until really good works came along. So there's this mix in doing this of very targeted—you know, there's an artist we want to own, but [00:52:00] it's got to be either a specific work or a work of a specific period. And there also was the opportunistic buying. And then there were people who'd bring things to us—you know, that would—like Mnuchin. He would say, "I found something really wonderful you should own."

But it kind of has morphed now into where we go to galleries in Manhattan, we go to Art Basel, and we look at the auction catalogues—and that's—Basel and Basel. And that's pretty much what we do.

But we do go on these wonderful trips. A Tate trip to Los Angeles included visits to artist studios, so we went to Bradford, and we went to Thomas Demand, and we went to—let's see. I ended up buying a piece, and now I can't [laughs]—I should have a list of my art in front of me. We went to about seven different studios down there, and of those, we now own works by two of the seven and may end up getting a third one. And—oh, no, we own three. We have a Walead Beshty. That also came when we visited him. We went to his studio, and then we went to—his dealer held the dinner for us and we bought it from her. [00:54:00] So that's another—you know, without sort of going on buying trips, just the interaction of going on museum trips and Art Basel—you know, we're not acquiring a lot right now. We're pretty selective.

There is one artist whose work I'd like to own, Julie Mehretu. I would love to get a Julie Mehretu. I know exactly what period I want, of 2001 to 2003—maybe '04—and what size and style, and so people are looking and, you know, I'm patient. It might take a year or two for one to come on the market that's—it's not too big; it's not too small; it's not too dark. I'm not as much in love with what she's doing right now, although what she did for the San Francisco Art Museum, that at SFMOMA, that's fabulous. Those big pieces are just wonderful, I thought.

MIJA RIEDEL: Where do you put new art? The walls look pretty full. Do you rotate things through?

JON SHIRLEY: Well, now we're starting to reach the point where we're going to have to do some rotation, yeah. And over time, we've found we had things that we didn't feel were as important to the collection, and some things we've given away, and some things we've sold. There's a couple of bedrooms upstairs, and so there's the

opportunity to put things up there that have been down here, and they'll go up there. And then there's loans, of course [00:56:00]. Things get loaned for something––

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't see much glass left. So, is much of the glass gone?

JON SHIRLEY: We gave the glass collection to SAM in 2005. There were 105 works of art that SAM took—the art museum—and there were maybe another—I don't know, 30 or so—that we gave to other people, other institutions. We figured that we would only keep a work where we'd already given a work by that same artist to the museum, and that it was something that we loved so much that we just didn't want to part with it.

So, we'd already given a Jon Kuhn; we'd already given a work by Flora Mace and Joey Kirkpatrick, so we kept the bowl of fruit; and we'd already given a Libenský. So those—there's a Deborah Moore on the wall outside, the flowers. We didn't keep much else. There's a bowl by Seth Randal that's very beautiful. We gave a wonderful Seth Randal piece to the museum. And that's sort of the way we did it.

But at that time, as I said, we'd already pretty much stopped collecting glass for some time. And we really wanted—we just felt that room would be so ideal for, you know, works on paper and photography. There we have enough—I mean, I had—there are several other Closes that are in storage—and storing them. That room will probably—[00:58:00] it's due for a rotation now, and we'll probably change it quite a bit sometime in the next month or so. We've got our art handlers coming out for that. See, I got diverted because you were—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sorry [laughs].

JON SHIRLEY: No, I did it, but—oh, we were talking about Calder.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, as time went on, and I started think about especially *Bougainvillier,* and I then made an effort to look at his career and at the different times in his career. And it was clear that after the war ended, there was this sudden outburst of these amazingly lyrical pieces unlike anything he'd really made before.

They tend to have lots of elements, some of them very, very fine. The ones that sit on the floor tend to have very elaborate bases, often where the counterweight is—the base goes through the counterweight at the bottom. The mobiles are very delicate, and it seemed that—you know, I discussed it with his grandson, Sandy Rower, who runs the foundation, the Calder Foundation. Nobody's really clear, but so many things happened. You know, the war ended; aluminum became available again; he could travel to Paris and reopen his studio there. And so he must have been in just this amazingly upbeat, wonderful state of mind and he just started doing this amazing work.

So it was this period of time in the '40s, in the late '40s, when this terrific work was done. And then, [01:00:00] it's hard to say, but sometime in the '50s, he started getting, I think, commissions, and he started to do outdoor pieces, and he started to become extremely well known. And I don't want to say that the pieces got commercial, because that's not the right word. They became not as delicate, not as intense in some ways. But he did wonderful things after that. He did the Gongs, that are wonderful pieces with whimsical cut-outs, different shapes.

MIJA RIEDEL: You have one of the Gongs, don't you?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, right in the dining room. And so I own things that he did right on through, and they're all wonderful. It's just that that one period of time—so I put an effort into getting more pieces. So we have *Gamma*, the hanging piece, and we have a table piece from that year. We have another one from 1948; that's in the main gallery. And then I love the period in Paris when he was just starting out after the circus and doing the wire-form pieces like the *Cow*, and his early starts in doing mobiles, like the yellow panel one that's on the wall—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, *Wall Mobile With Small Yellow Panel.*

JON SHIRLEY: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: We were looking at that, from '36. Yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: Right. And then there's a tabletop mobile from 1938 that's in the entry gallery that sits on the Giacometti table. And that's the one where the pieces intermingle with each other, so nothing really hangs free [01:02:00]. Everything that moves so far will hit another armature.

[END OF TRACK shirle18_sd_track02.]

JON SHIRLEY: And those are wonderful, because he was using—he didn't go to the primary base colors that he

used after—this was not just, everything's in red, black, yellow, and some blue; these were shades of gray, you know, all kinds of different colors that he used. The 1938 one—some of the elements were thicker than the others, so he, at that point, was not—you know, just sort of mentally balancing things in his brain, where everything used exactly the same thin sheet of aluminum. It was wonderful to own things from that sort of experimental period.

And then the war came, and he couldn't get any metal at all, and so he worked in wood. And we have the *Constellation*, and he did things like the *Fish*. That *Fish* is either the first or second *Fish* that he made. We're not—we know it's one or two, but there's no way, Sandy says, to know which one is which.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the *Constellation* was the *Constellation with Red Knife*? Is that the one you're talking—

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —about? Yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, it's all wood—metal joining. What was I going to say? Wow. I got diverted for some—

MIJA RIEDEL: Different periods—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —balances of different wires. That period of time where it was all very lyrical—you were talking about the older pieces, and you weren't going to say they were more commercial, but they weren't as—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, but I mean—

MIJA RIEDEL: —animated.

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, I was thinking about, you know, the—oh, the story on the *Fish*. There's a wonderful story associated with the *Fish*. [00:02:00] The *Fish* was in the window, or inside where you could see through the window, of the Buchholz Gallery in New York. The *Fish* was not sold. I mean, it was hanging there, and I believe it was after the war that this woman saw it and wrote a letter to Calder, saying that she really would love to buy it, but she couldn't afford the asking price, and would he take—I believe it was $600, with $200 down and the rest paid every six months and—because her husband was an artist and he wasn't really making any money. [They laugh.]

And so I have copies of this correspondence that I got from Sandy Rower, and of course, Calder never did any correspondence without drawing a mobile on it, or something on it, you know. It was always illustrated. So there are these back-and-forth letters, and he sold it to her. And that's how the *Fish* actually got sold, three or four years after he made it.

MIJA RIEDEL: And this is the *Fish* in your collection?

JON SHIRLEY: That's that *Fish*, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's extraordinary.

JON SHIRLEY: That's that *Fish*. I have copies of those letters that went back and forth. It was—how do you imagine yourself actually doing that, being in a position—and, of course, then you don't keep it [laughs].

And as I was saying, when we were walking through, that one of my quests was to find ones, to find miniature ones. [00:04:00] He did one that was owned by a lady in New York who had quite a large Calder collection, and I believe the connection was that her husband was his dentist. But they bought them, and they got some gifts. And he passed away some time ago; she passed away a couple of years ago; and Christie's sold off her collection. And there was one thing she had in there which was––he made a mobile that fit in the size of a box of little wooden matches that people would carry. Instead of carrying the paper matches, they'd carry the little wooden matches that strike on the side. And he signed the top of it, "Calder, C.A.," and inside there was a base and a single little element.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: So, it was your Calder to go; your traveling Calder.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And I'm assuming one of the kids kept it, because it was not in the auction. Everything else was in

the auction except that, and that was the prize to me.

And then, of course, there's the gift to Louisa that he did in the '40s, and it's a cigar box with elements dividing it, and I think there are five little mobiles in there that you take out and you put together and you display. That was on display at the Calder show that was in Manhattan that the great gallerist Dominique Lévy had, an amazing show. It was two floors, and they hired Calatrava to do the interior, and the floors were white, and you had to take your shoes off. So, that box was there. One other piece in the collection came from that show [00:06:00]. So then my quest was to find the little ones, and over time, I finally did, but it sure [laughs] took a long time.

MIJA RIEDEL: You have almost a dozen now, don't you?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. And the first time we loaned *Bougainvillier* was when the National Gallery did the great Calder retrospective that then traveled to San Francisco.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, that was great.

JON SHIRLEY: And up to that point, if you sort of looked at the market for Calders, it'd been kind of flat. They weren't affected much by the crash, because they weren't high enough [laughs] to really go down all that much. And then that show happened, and then it just—like this hockey stick effect occurred, and every so often people say that Calder prices haven't gone anywhere, but there haven't been any really great Calders sold publicly over the past few years. The private sales are the ones that continue to go up.

His work has appreciated a great deal, which, you know, I should feel happy about that, but I don't feel happy about that because––for two reasons. One, it makes it harder to buy them because I would still, you know, find something I like. And secondly, my insurance bill keeps going up. [They laugh.] You know? It's like my car collection. I own cars that people say, "How can you possibly go drive that on the street?" And I say, "It's a car."

I can't think of what else would be interesting about Calder [00:08:00]. Oh, there's one other interesting, very interesting, work. The work that hangs when you come in the front door, that big piece that's hanging in there. That space—when the house was being built, we didn't know what was going to go there, and it was full of scaffolding, so we didn't even know what size room—we kind of thought that we'd put something on the floor that would come up.

And while the house was in its last year of construction, an art dealer in California sent me the image of that work that's there, and we sort of tried to measure what the space was, and got a picture of it with a man standing next to it, and decided that it would work there if it fit. So we bought it, and if it didn't fit, we would just sell it, you know. We'd have no choice.

And we got it, and it fit, and then we started to—and this was a rare case where we didn't really investigate too much what it was. We knew it was real, but we didn't know. It turns out that that is the only adjustable Calder. It actually has thumbscrews that allow you to slide the armatures between the elements up and down, so you can make it more vertical or horizontal. He made it for a ballet in Paris, and it was designed so they could adjust it if they had a different venue that it wouldn't fit in.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness.

JON SHIRLEY: And so, we've never touched the thumbscrews.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: They were painted over at some point and we don't want to mess with it. And again, that's one of the things Sandy got me the documentation so we know what it is [00:10:00]. That's part of the wonderful adventure of just finding things like that and stumbling through Art Basel and seeing the *Rat*. And, you know, how did that get here? It's—

MIJA RIEDEL: And that's the *Rat*—you were telling me this is the she-rat—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, this is the she-rat.

MIJA RIEDEL: —or the female rat—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and the male rat—

JON SHIRLEY: And the male rat—

MIJA RIEDEL: —is where?

JON SHIRLEY: —is at the National Gallery—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

JON SHIRLEY: —but it's actually owned by the Calder Foundation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

JON SHIRLEY: The scope of his work is so phenomenal. I just—Sandy sent me a book, the autobiography of Calder that's going to be—it's just the early part; I mean, there's going to be another big—the volume is quite thick. I haven't started it yet. Kim has; my wife's reading it. And I'm waiting for the right point [they laugh] to attack it.

I've read a great deal on him, and when I look at the body of work, and I think about what I don't own, what I don't own is one of the masks. You know, I would love to own a mask. They just don't come up.

There was a show at the Whitney and the Pompidou. It was called *Calder: The Paris Years,* and we went to the opening with a group—with Adam and a group from the Whitney—to the opening at the Pompidou. There were many of those masks in there, and it was such a magical show, because it was all work that he'd done in Paris, so it was all work from the late '20s and the '30s, and it's just this amazing body of work that [00:12:00] you don't get a chance to see very much of, because a lot of those are owned by people in Europe. They were sold, and they stayed over there. In fact, Adam Weinberg was a little upset that the Pompidou had some works on display that hadn't been offered to him [laughs] when he opened the show at the Whitney.

That was a wonderful exhibit. There were many things in there. Even though I've been to, you know, lots of different Calder exhibitions, there were many things that I'd never seen before.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's saying a lot.

JON SHIRLEY: There were many. Yeah, I think there were some that had maybe never been out—40, 50 years and they'd never been displayed, or maybe they'd never been displayed outside of Europe, or maybe outside of Paris. And when we were on that same trip, we went to have lunch with the daughter—actually, two of the daughters—of the man that was the great art dealer—I don't know his first name. Was it Maeght? Fondation Maeght in Paris. And there's a wonderful museum that they put together the works that's in—it's in the south of France.

MIJA RIEDEL: Maeght?

JON SHIRLEY: That's it, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: What was it?

MIJA RIEDEL: Maeght, I think.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: M-A-E-G-H-T.

JON SHIRLEY: M-A-E-G-H-T—

MIJA RIEDEL: We were just at that—

JON SHIRLEY: —Maeght.

MIJA RIEDEL: —little museum. It's so beautiful.

JON SHIRLEY: The museum's terrific, isn't it?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, fantastic.

JON SHIRLEY: They have a dog [00:14:00].

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: They have a lot of nice junk in there. He was a great collector. Well, his daughters live in Paris and they hosted us for lunch. And you walk in her little apartment, and there are Calders everywhere [laughs], you know, little ones, hanging ones, standing ones. Just—it was—and other artists that the family represented. And actually, the white hanging mobile came through them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

JON SHIRLEY: They sold it to the Beyeler [Foundation] and that's how that piece went on. So, they handled Calder in Paris.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely, yeah, they were his primary dealer—

JON SHIRLEY: They were his—

MIJA RIEDEL: —in Paris, right?

JON SHIRLEY: They were his dealer, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: How are we doing?

JON SHIRLEY: I think maybe we should call it quits for today.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. One last question about Calder, and then we'll—

JON SHIRLEY: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: We can call him pretty much done. You haven't said anything about *Red Curly Tail*, and I wonder if you just want to mention that at all in passing. And if not, then that's fine, too.

JON SHIRLEY: No, no. Actually, there's a little bit of a story there. We bought a Calder, an outdoor work, from a dealer, and it was called *Two White Dots*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yes.

JON SHIRLEY: And we have a maquette—we have a small mobile. It's not a maquette; it's a small mobile called *Two White Dots*. It turns out that after Calder passed away, the foundry in Connecticut—his son had been given *Two White Dots*—they just made a big version of it, and a dealer sold it to us. And Sandy Rower objected, saying "That's not real." There was nothing made after his death except one piece that's in Washington, D.C., that he designed and had commissioned, and everything was going, and then he passed away [00:16:00]. And so the dealer was very honorable, a great man, took it back.

And now we're looking for an outdoor Calder, and I believe *Red Curly Tail* came available through Pace. That piece was owned by a woman who lived in Monaco, and she actually had it on her penthouse, outside of her penthouse, up on top of one of the Monaco buildings. And she—Monaco holds an outdoor sculpture show every year. She loaned it one year, and there's a first day of issue envelope and stamp of Monaco of that piece.

And to make this story even more complicated—more interesting, I guess—I'm trying to remember her name. She was married to an Italian violinist who was very talented, and she owned a Stradivarius. And so he played a Stradivarius, and like all of them, it has a name, which I don't recall. A good friend of my best friend—and maybe my best friend ever—lives in New York, and he became friends with the violinist. He loves music of all kinds. [00:18:00] And at one point, when he lived in California, I was at a party at his house, and the man was there. And he had this double violin case, and the other one was a Guarneri [laughs]. And he needed a ride back to his hotel that was near the airport, and I was thinking, "Oh, my God, I'm going to drive this man and my wife back to the airport. He's sitting in the back seat with I don't know how many millions of dollars of violins." So, we got him back safely, and then they later got divorced, and she kept the violin [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Both of them?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, dear.

JON SHIRLEY: So—

MIJA RIEDEL: Fair is fair, I guess.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, Jon, thank you so much. We made a great dent on this today—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, we did.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and we'll finish up tomorrow.

[END OF TRACK shirle18_sd_track03.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Mija Riedel with Jon Shirley on August 8th [2018], day two, and we're going to start today before our questions with any thoughts that came up overnight.

JON SHIRLEY: Well, we were discussing artists with whom we had relationships and worked with, and I realized that we talked about Jesús Moroles before we actually started the interview, and we worked with him. He was a wonderful man. We saw him on several different occasions. I'm not sure exactly how the introduction to him happened, but when we had our—oh, I know. It was through the International Sculpture Center. We met him through them and saw some of his work, really liked it, and got together with him and showed him the plans for what we were doing in the house and created, really, two spaces for him to do, in both cases, water feature works.

So, there are the two columns of—I believe they're granite—that are on the walkway you see through an opening in the walkway as you go towards the front door. And he did those, and then he did a large installation next to—there's a second garage we call G-2, and there's a fountain that springs from a gigantic rock that's been shaped and then spills over, and there's a low, very low level of water pond there and pieces of stone within it that make it look as though it's sort of like a lava flow coming off. And there's a very, very large stone that was placed there that has two spots where you can sit [00:02:00]. So they've been smoothed out to produce a seating area. And this was all done with him, and he was here with it.

And then I think I mentioned that at one point he had—one of his works was exhibited at the garden that Hillary Clinton had done when they were in the White House, and it was this lovely sculpture garden there. And we visited that with a small group, and he was part of the group and talked about his art that was there and so forth. So it was a really—he was a very fun man, just full of life.

And we also saw him—he had an exhibition in the Dallas Art Museum, and then, at the same time, in another location [at] a gallery in Dallas. We went down to see it. I remember it well because the pieces that he did for Dallas were designed for people to get on and make them move, and they were balanced stones and things that were quite amazing. There was a big sign up said, "Please sit on the art." [They laugh.]

And what was funny about it was across the hall there was one of those Felix Gonzalez-Torres works of the candies, you know, [laughs] and the kids were going over and looking, and the guards were saying, "You may take a candy; one to a person." [They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That's the perfect show for children.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: How did you become aware of Moroles's work? Was it when you were in Texas, or—how did you become aware of it?

JON SHIRLEY: I wasn't in Texas—I'm sure it was through—the International Sculpture Center is an organization that we became members of a long time ago when we came up here. We did a trip with them that went to Italy, went to Rome, went to Florence. [00:04:00] We went to Carrara; we went to Niki de Saint Phalle's Tarot Garden, which is a huge installation that she did.

And through them, they have a park in New Jersey; it's down near Newark. And you have to drive through some not-great neighborhoods to get to it, but there's a sculpture park down there, and there's a facility where people can work. A lot of it was funded by J. Seward Johnson, the very wealthy but somewhat interesting artist who does very, very realistic sculptures that are painted and look exactly like a person, and they're all over the country. And through them, at some point, we met Jesús and saw some of his work and talked to him. And then, later, when we decided to do the house, then we got back in touch with him, and he was a good contact.

MIJA RIEDEL: So he did the pieces up front; did he have anything to do with the pond outside your office window?

JON SHIRLEY: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: I know I've seen him do a number of fountain pieces.

JON SHIRLEY: We probably should have had him do the pond, because we had to completely replace the pond. Initially, it was not a real stone that was there. It was made up, and it kind of fell apart.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Any other thoughts from yesterday?

JON SHIRLEY: There was one other, in that same area where—between the house and the garage, there's an area that we started out to make a sort of generic sculpture area [00:06:00]. We used black river rock, and it was quite unsuccessful because too many of the sculptures just kind of disappeared into it. We took it out, and we changed it to the garden that it is now, with the path and the grass. And we wanted someone to do an installation for that, so it'd be dedicated to a single artist. And my wife had the occasion—Mary—to go to San Francisco and have dinner with Magdalena—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, Abakanowicz. Right.

JON SHIRLEY: —[laughs] Abakanowicz—and they hit it off quite well. And when we got to talking about the garden, she said, "Well, I think she'd be perfect to do it." And I agreed. We'd seen her work a lot in museums and the big collections like—I think the Rubells have several of them in Miami. And so I got up on the roof and took photos, and we got drawings made, and we sent them to her, and that resulted in that piece that's out there now—with the backs, and then the two pieces on either side. You may not have seen the whole thing, but it's sort of two watchers looking towards all of these backs that are there.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was it your idea? Because there are three separate pieces, right? Was it your idea to install them as watchers?

JON SHIRLEY: No, it was her idea—

MIJA RIEDEL: It was her idea?

JON SHIRLEY: —to do it, yeah. It was her idea. She said—and these were already things that she'd made, but she said, "I think that if we put this one here and this one here and these in the middle"—and we were dealing with Anthony Grant in dealing with her, and Anthony came up and personally put every single piece right where she wanted it. So he had instructions and—

MIJA RIEDEL: It's striking. I did glimpse that from the main gallery.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, it's a very striking piece. You know, she's a Holocaust survivor [00:08:00], and people always can look at it that way. But when it first came, it struck me it could equally as well be monks in some order, where these are all the neophytes, and they've got to be down on their knees, and they can't say a word. And there are two—they're being watched very carefully to make sure that they're doing what they should do. And so there's a lot of interpretations of her work, and people always ask, "What does it mean?" [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. But it's so interesting that you worked with her and that she installed these three separate pieces in this particular—

JON SHIRLEY: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —formation.

JON SHIRLEY: Right. Yeah. And that's what—it came back as a proposal for the entire thing. Even though they were three things that she had made separately, the proposal that came back was, "Let's do this whole thing, and these are here, and these two are over here." So we thought that was really quite wonderful.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was there a lot of back-and-forth with her? Did you cultivate a relationship with her as well?

JON SHIRLEY: My wife did. I never met her. There wasn't a lot of back-and-forth other than sending drawings and answering questions that she had. The relationship was with Mary.

MIJA RIEDEL: Anything else?

JON SHIRLEY: I might mention one other artist that we've had a special relationship with for many, many years, and it's a local artist who works mostly in glass, although she's done a lot of other things, named Ginny Ruffner.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yes.

JON SHIRLEY: And Ginny is an amazing force of nature. She had a wonderful show at the Renwick when the Renwick featured—each artist got a whole room. [00:10:00] They do this frequently. She got a room and

installed a marvelous metal thing coming out of the ceiling that came down to the floor like a tornado, and some paintings and some—not much of her glass. And the tornado ended up in a nightclub that my son opened. [They laugh.]

And Ginny ended up as a good friend. And then Ginny had—was down—I believe her home is in South Carolina, and she had a horrific car accident. I mean, it was just horrific. She was very close to death. In fact, the doctors thought she had died, brain-dead, and she pulled out of it. She went with her boyfriend at the time to a rehabilitation clinic in New York; she came back here in a wheelchair.

One day, we went to see her—and my late wife and I were very close friends with her—and she had bruises on her, and she had a cane—yeah, a cane—and she said, "The wheelchair is no more." And I caught her [laughs]. I said, "Ginny, are you sure you're ready for this?" She said, "Oh, yes, it's the only way I'm going to do it." And at first, you couldn't understand her. You had to put your ear next to her, and she talked very softly. And now, if it's not too loud, you can carry on a normal conversation with her. She has a great will.

And part of the reason I bring it up is that she played matchmaker between the woman I'm now married to, Kim, and myself. Kim was a board member—trustee—at the art museum, and we'd known each other for a long time. Actually, I think Mary knew her first. And it was Ginny who said, you know, "Let's have lunch," without telling either one of us that [laughs] she was bringing the other one. And she sort of acted to—"You guys ought to be together." So we did.

MIJA RIEDEL: What an extraordinary friend. I was fortunate to interview her a number of years ago.

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, did you?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, and what an extraordinary house.

[00:12:00] That actually leads to another question I had, which is—there is a piece she did for the Olympic Sculpture Park, and I think it's called *Mary's Invitation* or something like that.

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, it's *Mary's Bench*, I think. After Mary passed away, there was a feeling that SAM wanted to do—the art museum wanted to do something to honor her. And they came up with the idea of having Ginny create something for the sculpture park. So Ginny created this wonderful bench, and many of the trustees chipped in to pay for the bench. And that was dedicated—we had a little dedication ceremony, and then they did a major event at the park as its anniversary, 10th anniversary, honoring Mary and myself for the work that we did in creating the sculpture park.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, we're definitely going to get to that. I have a couple of follow-up questions about the collection—

JON SHIRLEY: Sure, go ahead.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and then we'll go—get right into the sculpture park and SAM. And actually, one of these questions is related to both SAM and the collection. How much of your collection—the Calder collection—was shown at SAM's Calder exhibition in 2009, 2010?

JON SHIRLEY: All of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: All of it? Okay.

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, but it's grown since then. So there's the *Fish*; the *Constellation*; the one with the glass; and the *Buttons*; three—four of the small ones; the *Rat*. All those are acquisitions since that show, so there are probably—and you know, arguably, the *Fish* is one of the greatest objects that he did. So there were some really major pieces that have come in since then. But they took the entire collection, and we loaned them everything.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great. They had one—let's see, they had two other objects. They had one from Barney Ebsworth, who had a carved—what was it? A duck, or a rooster? It was a rooster. And one collector in Seattle that had a small Calder; and that was it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you have plans for the collection to stay together, or do you have plans for it in the future? I'm thinking specifically of Calder, but I'd like to ask about the whole collection in general at some point.

JON SHIRLEY: Well, Calder—I would definitely like the Calder collection to stay together. We basically have felt that the Seattle Art Museum would get the collection, and it's one of the things on my to-do list, is to discuss with them sort of parameters of how that would work. It's—other parts of the collection have been with them; we have progressed much further, but I've just not brought it up and really sat down and talked to them about it. There are so many works that it sort of deserves some area that would permanently have some of the collection

on display. To do the whole collection takes a lot of room. And, you know, there's a point at which the museum can start taking down the floors above it. So we can add additional space, because we own those floors. We sort of have to think of it as, What's going to happen then, and so that's why I need to work it out. It's on my list [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative] [laughs]. I have one of those lists. You and I were originally scheduled to meet in June, but we had to reschedule due to something Calder-related, and—is that something that we can discuss [00:16:00]?

JON SHIRLEY: What happened in June?

MIJA RIEDEL: You went to Washington, D.C. There were a couple of senators—

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, yes, yes, yes. Yes, yes. Yeah, yeah, we can discuss that. The last Calder ever made was a piece called *Mountain and Clouds* that is in the Hart Senate Office Building. It is gigantic. There is a large, black stabile that rises from the floor at least 30-some-odd feet, and above it was a large hanging. It's all black, big hanging. The cloud is also black—big, round discs. I mean, huge, hanging from the atrium. And this filled the atrium of the building.

And the skylight above the clouds developed a water leak, and so we took the clouds down, and in the process they did a thorough inspection of them, and they discovered that they hadn't [laughs] been made very well and that they actually represented some danger of falling apart at some point, which would have been disastrous for anybody walking down below. And so, they took them down and cut them up and got rid of them. Which reminds me, I have a piece of one of them. I have to figure out what I did with it. Then they refurbished, and, I think, repainted possibly, the mountain. It had been a favorite of mine, and I didn't know all this had happened.

I took Kim to the Hart Office Building, which she had worked in the year before they did the Calder [laughs] [00:18:00]. She'd worked there for Senator Johnston, and she'd been there a couple years or something. And so we go in, and there's scaffolding, and there's this—there's no clouds anymore, and there's covering over the mountain. And we went back and got the whole story, and so we started talking to some members of the Senate, like Senator Angus King of Maine. And he said, "Well, you need to talk to the architects of the Capitol, and—but you also ought to talk to Senator Murphy," because Murphy is—he's from Connecticut. "He might have a special interest since Calder was from Connecticut."

And we said, "Look, we'd be willing to volunteer to do fundraising to rebuild the clouds, reinstall them, if we can get enough, you know—if we know that it can be done, that the architect of the Capitol would be happy with it."

And so in June we went back, and we met with Senator Murphy, who came to the meeting; Sandy Rower—of course, the Foundation had to be involved—and two of his people; and the architect of the Capitol, who's a wonderful man and very enthusiastic. And in the course of last year's budget, we got the money approved to do the study that he has to do about doing a reinstallation. So, making sure what the parameters would be, what the weight—you couldn't go more than a certain amount of weight, and just the approval that would be needed to put it back. And that money was raised, and that study is in process right now. We hope to hear about it sometime at the end of the year or early next year.

And at the same time, parallel, we have the foundation looking into how it should be made and who could make it, so that we kind of not start that process after we get the information from the architect about what can be done. And as soon as we do that, and we know what his limitations are, and we know how we want to make it, then we can price it.

It's an interesting project because the reinstallation cost alone is going to be hundreds of thousands of dollars, because you've got this finished building, and you've got to get these great, huge pieces up in the air. And they know how to do it; they got them down, so they know how to put them back up again, but to do all that is quite a process in a building that's, you know, in use. I mean, really in use. There are a lot of senators in there, and as it happens, Murphy is in there; King is in there. The leaders have offices right in the Capitol, but all the other senators are in these various Senate office buildings.

And the way the piece actually happened was it was—golly, I don't know, '83 or something. Calder was asked to do this. I believe it was mostly financed by the Mellon family. And he designed it and did a maquette and was in D.C. talking about it, showing it to them, and he went back to New York, and he passed away. [00:22:00] So this is the only real Calder that was made posthumously. It's the only one made after his death, but because he totally designed it and the actual maquette for it, which is a mobile suspended in a model, cutaway model, of the building, sits on the floor of the Hart Senate Office Building, with an explanation about it. And, you know, you can walk around it and see it, so it's kind of a nice thing. So it kind of grated on us [laughs] that it was going to be nothing there. I mean, you know, half of the work he designed, the last thing he did. It ought to be finished again.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, it sounds like a fascinating project. Is there a general sense of when that might be installed?

JON SHIRLEY: No, I think the most we could hope for would be to get it done in very late 2019, but I have a feeling it'd be more likely in 2020 sometime. And there's probably some time of the year when it's better for them to, you know, do the installation and bring the pieces in and put them together and not be so terribly disruptive to the work that's going on there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yours must be the primary private collection of Calders, no? Outside of the Foundation.

JON SHIRLEY: Well, if you'd asked Sandy that [laughs] two years ago, he would have said, "Well, there are two that I consider really, really great," and the other one is Don Fisher's. So, that's part of San Francisco museum. So now, if you ask Sandy, and you caught him in the right mood, he'd say that ours is probably the best collection. I don't know if it's the largest or not [00:24:00], but—

MIJA RIEDEL: But the best.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: I wanted to ask about the collection in general. Some of the collectors you've worked with at SAM have built very specific collections. Virginia Wright set out specifically to build a collection for SAM; Barney Ebsworth wanted to build, you know, American modernism—

JON SHIRLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —A-level pieces. Is there a philosophy that's guided your collection?

JON SHIRLEY: Just very broadly that we wanted to collect abstract sculpture, and there was no sort of date limit on that. Hence, we have Brancusi, and we have, you know, early work. But in paintings, two-dimensional work, we really decided that we would concentrate on post-World War II, that we would start with Abstract Expressionism and go forward from that. And that's sort of been the—just—those were the boundaries of the collection. Other than that, it was, Who were the artists that we liked? We—when Mary and I put this together—and Kim and I work the same way—it was always mutual agreement. We always both wanted to get the work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Were there many disagreements, or you found you just had really similar tastes?

JON SHIRLEY: There were some. Yeah, there were some.

MIJA RIEDEL: What did you do in that case?

JON SHIRLEY: Passed.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: I passed.

MIJA RIEDEL: So those are the primary, sort of overriding principles or order to it, is the abstract sculpture and the postwar painting.

JON SHIRLEY: [00:26:00] Yes, and if we could have afforded to, we probably would have kept on expanding the ownership of works from the '50s. If I have any regret about what we did, it was that back in the '90s we didn't, you know, buy maybe a couple more [laughs] Rothkos or, you know, get a great Clyfford Still or some other artist that would have been available at the time. But the cost of these things went up very rapidly when the end of the hangover from that crash kind of ended, and we also were finding lots of work by contemporary artists that we really liked—like Richter. There were things coming—work coming that was wonderful, and we liked a great deal and yet still fit within sort of the overall feeling of what we collected.

We didn't collect very much in works on paper. We didn't collect very much in the way of—especially photography. But we did look for things that we felt really fit well, like Nam June Paik, for example. We looked for a good one. I loved his work for a long time, and we looked for a good one for a very long time before we found *Attila the Hun*. We wanted one that stood out more, that was, you know, special. Not just a stack of television sets, because, you know, he did numerous ones of those. [00:28:00] They're all—some of them are really unique, but most of the things we saw just, we didn't think they were at the level that we wanted to collect.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a wonderful piece, and it is so central in that main gallery.

JON SHIRLEY: [Laughs.] Yeah, it's fun. And we have practiced a culling effect, too, you know, where there were older things that we purchased that just were lesser artists or people that we thought might make it and didn't,

and we've given those away to—some of them—Seattle University. We gave them a piece by Linda Stojak, and they loved it. I mean, they were just so happy to get it, and it hangs in a major place.

So there's always—if it doesn't go to a museum, there are hospitals here that just really love to get art to put on the walls, and we had a sort of photorealistic but—a painting done of a storefront that had mirror images of it, and it was really hard for you to see exactly what you were seeing. And we offered that to the University of Washington Ophthalmology Research Lab that's run by a man who's a friend of ours, and he was thrilled to get it. They put it in a really prominent spot because—they said, "This is just perfect for us," you know. It reminds you that it's all about what you see. And this thing is—you have to really stand and look at it and kind of walk this way and walk that way to realize what exactly you're seeing in the reflections that occur in real life. I mean, what he painted was very photorealistic but probably very hard to take an actual photograph of. I think it would have been difficult. [00:30:00]

And Kim and I continue to do the same thing. In fact, we were [laughs] talking about—there must be collectors that operate like venture capitalists, and they buy works from young artists that they think might be up-and-comers and might hit it. And if you think about it, if you'd bought at, say, $35,000 apiece, works from 30 artists, but one of them was Mark Bradford, you know, and the other 29 never did anything, and you kept it 10 years, it would have been a big win, which is exactly what venture capitalists do. They hope for a higher success rate than that. And—because we were wondering—we just bought a Mark Bradford. We bought it through Mnuchin, and it's a—I want to say 2001 or 2002. And you kind of wonder, Why is it for sale? You know, Why did the people [who] bought it—is it that the price is simply—said, "Okay, we should sell this now because we've made so much money on it"? That's not the way I like to think about buying art at all. I'm always disappointed if we [laughs] think someone's going to be really important and then turn out not to be, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: How do you like to think about buying it? You said, "That's not like how I like to think about buying."

JON SHIRLEY: Well, we don't like to think about it from a financial standpoint at all other than, Can we afford it?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: You know, is it something that we can afford? But I think we've been very—[00:32:00] we're certainly very lucky that, by sheer coincidence, that I had time and resources at the time when the art market crashed, and that's exactly when we started buying. And do I regret anything? No, I only regret that we didn't buy even more back then [laughs]. But there were some things we bought that really kind of stretched what we could do. Certainly, the Brancusi, and to some extent, the David Smith and Giacometti *Dog*. Those were major, major purchases for us, and that certainly tempered what we could get at the time. We certainly were not operating with an unlimited budget. I'm not [laughs] Eli Broad, or Paul Allen, for that matter. So we've tried to be—tried to, you know, live with an art budget, shall we say, and especially now that we're going on.

MIJA RIEDEL: Jon, your collection has been described as one of the best and one of the most eclectic in this state, and I think it was Greg Kucera [who] said that there's a spirit of curiosity about the collection, about the way you collect, and that's come back to me as I've looked at the collection over time, I think, because of the breadth of the work included.

JON SHIRLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Does it feel that way to you? It feels very dynamic and curious.

JON SHIRLEY: [Laughs.] Dynamic and curious? I'm not sure where that would come from. Maybe dynamic, yes. I don't know. [00:34:00] We love to find new avenues of collection, and I think one of the most wonderful ones that we've found over the last three years is Dansaekhwa, finding really wonderful works by these Korean artists that I think work really well with the rest of the collection, and I'm not the first to that in this area.

Jeff Greenstein definitely has a large Dansaekhwa collection, and introduced us to it. We were in the Venice Biennale all together—not the last one, but the one before—when there was a whole building that I think Tina Kim put together. It was a wonderful old building right off the Grand Canal with maybe four floors, and it was all wonderful Korean art. I mean, all of the people you've seen here, plus Lee Ufan and a couple others. And that was a revelation to us to see that many of them all in one place, and that really helped us understand and broaden out and go look at that. But that's part of the way we collect.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I think of your collection as having different foundations, and certainly, I think of Dansaekhwa as being one of them, but I also think that there's a minimalist vein that runs a little bit through the collection. I'm thinking of the Agnes Martin; maybe the McArthur Binion. Do you think of the collection in terms of foundational elements, kinetic sculpture, and Minimalism, and—

JON SHIRLEY: No, not—

MIJA RIEDEL: Not really?

JON SHIRLEY: [00:36:00] No, not really. I mean, to some extent, I mean, there's a lot of Minimalist art that we don't collect and we don't have, although I certainly—I mean, I love going to Marfa [TX]. I like the works of Donald Judd, and I do not own a Donald Judd. We are certainly attracted, both Mary and now Kim, to some Minimalist art. As I mentioned yesterday, I think if there's one that we don't own, it would be Ryman that was someone that we should have purchased back when we could have. There are a couple of wonderful Rymans in the Seattle area, and, you know, Jinny Wright is a relative of Ryman's, and they have family get-togethers, and they all get together, and he comes out here. Incidentally, we own a work by his son, Will, which is one of those big roses. He did *The Roses*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right. Pink, isn't it?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. Well, it's rose. It's a big pink rose, and it sits in front of our property on Maui. And it was a commission that we had him do. The ones that were down Park Avenue in New York all were sold, the ones that were of a scale we could talk our neighborhood [laughs], our gated community, into allowing us to put in the front yard. And so he made one, and we had that installed.

And you mentioned kinetic sculpture. I'm not a fan of overly kinetic sculptures. A lot of people make kinetic sculpture that's supposed to be moving all the time, and that—even with the Rickeys, I think the movement tends to be more subtle and controlled. [00:38:00] And I just think they're part of—I think there's a lot of kinetic artists that are making stuff that's awful. My love of Calder, and to some extent Rickey—I don't describe it as kinetic sculpture. To me, the whole feel, the whole way the sculpture works as a piece, the balance of it—and the movement becomes more secondary. I think with Rickey it was important to him that his pieces move, but they're usually, you know, soft movement and soft air would move them, so it didn't take a lot to make them work. There's a very pretty piece that sits outside where we have breakfast I can show you, the only outside Rickey that we have.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And his movement is very precise.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, Calder's very random and his is very precise.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Exactly. So you don't think about—there's a little bit of political and social commentary in a few pieces, not a whole lot, but I'm thinking of Kendall Geers, Melvin Edwards, maybe Oliphant.

JON SHIRLEY: [Laughs.] That was just fun, that's *Jesse Helms*. We ran into that in a gallery in Washington, D.C., and just couldn't—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: —resist it. And I've not tried to buy art for social commentary. If you want social commentary, then the best is James Rosenquist, *Military Intelligence*, you know, an oxymoron painting which I believe harkens comes back to Kristallnacht, and [00:40:00] the burning of books of the books of the Jews in Nazi Germany, and the smashing of the glasses of the Jewish intellectuals. But—and that's kind of a rare exception. We certainly have not attempted to get art that's political commentary—even though we have very strong political beliefs, and even though President Obama has spoken in this house twice, and Biden's been here, and I mean, they've all been here. That's not, you know, it's not part of the art collection [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Okay. Have you commissioned any works?

JON SHIRLEY: Sure. I mean, the Moroleses were commissioned; the safety pin by Oldenburg was a commission; the Howard Ben Tré in the front yard was a commission. The John Buck in the front yard was a commission. Let's see. The Chihuly was a commission. I think that would be the—the *Water Wall*, that's—

MIJA RIEDEL: The Ted Jonnson? Is that—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, the Ted Jonnson *Water Wall* was a commission.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, all site-specific, or for the most part?

JON SHIRLEY: All—

MIJA RIEDEL: Site-specific?

JON SHIRLEY: All site-specific. Yeah, all of them were site-specific. We gave them a spot and asked them to work

within that spot, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did that come about—for example, something like the John Buck—when you were interested in having his work and didn't see a piece in particular that was what you wanted to put on the site [00:42:00]?

JON SHIRLEY: Well, John Buck is married to Deborah Butterfield. We bought the horse, and then we kind of talked her into coming out and being an artist in residence at Pilchuck one year. And she came, and she's been to the house. And we just liked what John did and talked to him about maybe doing one on a scale that would fit in correctly in the front yard. So we didn't really—most of the work that we'd seen of his was small. And he did a piece exactly of that small one that's maybe two and a half feet high, which we gave to my daughter in Florida.

And he said, "You like"—he wanted us to tell him what we wanted, and we told him, "We don't want to tell an artist what to create. We want you to create something that you think will fit within the art." And it was kind of a lot of back-and-forth. It was kind of fun. And then, finally, he said, "How about this?" and he drew it, and we said, "Yeah, that's good," you know. He was worried he was going to create something we didn't like, and that's not how we work when we work with artists. So anyway, that was one of the commissions.

MIJA RIEDEL: All right, on to SAM.

JON SHIRLEY: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so once you retired from Microsoft in '90, you and Mary became very actively involved with SAM. Had you been involved with it before, or there had just been no time?

JON SHIRLEY: Well, we were only involved a little bit. And, I mean, when they did the new building, they needed—that being the Venturi building, the prior new building—they wanted to buy a German glass for the display cases, and they asked me if I'd donate money to help them do that. And I think that's back when Patterson was there, and that was the first time I ever really gave them anything.

[00:44:00] We did not really get involved very much until we started talking about the idea of a place for a sculpture to go in '95. We were probably just out wandering in the yard and realized that we were continuing to buy outdoor sculpture, and where would it go, and who—where would this end up? SAM had no place. And we thought about—well, we had a talk about this with someone, and we knew Jinny Wright by that time, and Jinny had founded a sculpture park that's up at the [Western Washington] University up in Bellingham. It's a nice park, and she has Serra there, and a huge Mark di Suvero, and some nice pieces.

And so we went to Jinny with this germ of an idea, and we sat down, and we talked to her, and she said, "Oh, we need to talk to Mimi." At this point, I'd met Mimi Gates, but I didn't really know her. And Jinny put a lunch together with the four of us, and Mimi was just super-enthusiastic about the idea of doing a sculpture park. And we actually started doing a little looking and not finding much of anything, and then there was this famous story about the ladies' fishing trip in Mongolia and the Russian helicopter that almost—it crashed a little bit and almost—could have killed them all had it fallen any further. And Martha Wyckoff and her mother, Ann, were on that flight—

MIJA RIEDEL: [00:46:00] Martha Wyckoff and her mother?

JON SHIRLEY: Wyckoff—and Ann Wyckoff. I want to say Martha was—Ann was on it. I'm not sure about Martha.

But Ann told Mimi—Martha works for the Trust for Public Lands, and maybe if they got involved, they could help us find space. And so, we got TPL involved, and they had a man named Chris Rogers, and he and Martha sort of took the point on this and were running around. And they dragged us to a few sites that we looked at that were kind of interesting, and I have to—

There's sort of a timing thing that happens here, in that my involvement with SAM started to get a bit closer, and in 1997 I was asked to become a trustee. And, also in 1997, Chris Rogers called me up and said, "You've got to come and look at this site that 's become—just now can be on the market, and we have to act very quickly because it's going to get bought by a man who wants to build a bunch of condo buildings." And it's the site where the park is, and it was a Unocal that had been an oil-unloading storage depot, and they'd brought ships in and loaded the oil onto big tanks. It was a huge clean-up site. It was under federal and state inspection. They'd cleared a ton of dirt out of the site, and they'd sunk wells, and they had monitoring stations [00:48:00]. And it finally reached the point where they were given permission to sell it.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, it'd be a brownfield site. I mean, right? It was—

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, it was—

MIJA RIEDEL: —really polluted.

JON SHIRLEY: Oh, it was terrible. It was very polluted, yeah. It was very polluted. And so there were these two blocks, two city blocks, except on the end of one of them there was a—it wasn't part of the Unocal property. There was a billiard parlor, bar/billiard parlor. And we thought it was really great.

Unocal gave us six months to raise the money to buy it, and we went to the board with, you know, no design, no nothing, just two pieces [laughs] of brownfield, and said, "We ought to buy this to create a sculpture park." And Mimi was very enthusiastic about it, as I had said, and the board said, "Okay." I mean, just, like, out of the blue. It was pretty amazing, and I give the board incredible marks, the people that were there then, for the vision and the intestinal fortitude to say, "Spend the money," not knowing what the whole thing was going to end up costing. I mean, we had an idea, but we were—we hired a consultant to help us, but we had no idea really what we were getting into.

And so we did the normal things and formed a committee, to raise the money, and I was on that. And we formed a committee to sort of manage the thing, and that was mine. And then we formed a committee to find an architect—

MIJA RIEDEL: You were the chair of the whole committee, weren't you?

JON SHIRLEY: I was the chair of the Olympic Sculpture Park—

MIJA RIEDEL: Of the building—yeah.

JON SHIRLEY: —committee, yes. [00:50:00] And I was on all the committees, even if I wasn't a chair or had anything to do with it. And—give me—I'm just looking at this to get the dates straight. I haven't looked at this for a long time. But in—we went about raising money, and we went about putting together what we'd need for—we didn't buy until the end of '97. I guess that's when we actually—

MIJA RIEDEL: I think that's right—or '99 maybe even.

JON SHIRLEY: —raised the funds. Let's see. Yeah, yeah, that's right. We expressed interest, but Unocal didn't get environmental approval to sell it until '99. And then they did the deal. And they gave us a wonderful deal. I mean, in return for stating in the deed that it's a park in perpetuity, they gave us a big discount on the price of it. And as it turns out, I ended up knowing pretty well the developer who was going to get it and put up all the condos, and we're still friends. [They laugh.] He went up and found a deal up in Everett and did extremely well up there, too.

So when it came up for a vote, we knew that there had to be something that the trustees could see that would make them vote yes, and what we did was we offered to endow the park. And the only condition on the endowment was that the park had to be free. We wanted the park to be sort of fenceless and free. We'd been to Washington [DC], and we contrasted the National Gallery park to the Hirshhorn park. [00:52:00] And the National Gallery park has got gates and, you know, a fence and everything, and we just didn't like that. It's still only open during, you know, sunrise to sunset, dawn to dusk, basically. But we wanted, when it was open, people to be able to enter and leave and wander through it, because of the way it's contoured.

MIJA RIEDEL: And when you say "we," this was you and Mary.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, Mary and I. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the two of you gave the initial gift of, as I understand it, $5 million to buy the land.

JON SHIRLEY: To buy the land, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then also an additional $20 million more to endow it—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, we said we'd endow it, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —if the rest of the money could be raised.

JON SHIRLEY: Right. And before we'd even found an architect, in 2000 I got a call from, of all places, an art dealer in London who said, "I've got this gigantic Calder you might like," and it was the *Eagle*. Now, the funny story about the *Eagle* was that the *Eagle* had lived in front of a bank in Fort Worth, Texas, so I used to drive by the *Eagle* on occasions when I lived there. And the bank building was sold to, I believe, a Canadian company, and when they got it, they didn't even know that they were getting—the Calder went with the building, not with the bank.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And so now they own this Calder. And the building turned out to need some remediation for all kinds of bad things, and so they decided to sell the Calder. And they knew this would not be very popular, so early one Sunday morning—I mean, like 1:00 a.m. or something—trucks show up. Guys show up; they take the thing apart, they put it on a truck, and they take it out of town, and the next morning, it's empty. [00:54:00] And there's a wonderful cartoon that was in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* of these people standing there, and there's this empty lot, and there's a policeman. He's shaking his head, and one of the comments is, "The *Eagle* has flown." [They laugh.]

A group of three local businessmen—three or four—decided they could make a lot of money by doing this, and the market really wasn't that strong for gigantic Calders. They had it refurbished, and they stuck it on the steps, you know, where Rocky ran up the steps of the Philadelphia Art Museum, and that's where it was when I got the call.

The Philadelphia Art Museum was supposed to raise the money to buy it. They had just gone through a major campaign to buy, I believe, a piece of Impressionist art, and there wasn't any will at all to raise money. In fact, it looked awful on the steps out there. It would have looked fine somewhere else that was not front of a rather Baroque-looking building. It didn't work at all. So we decided we'd buy it for the park, and we did.

And we had it come out here, and we put it in front of the Asian Art Museum [Volunteer Park], which took a lot of negotiation with the Friends of Olympic Park—the Volunteer Park and Olympic Park. And—but they allowed it, and we finally put it in place.

And in 2001—again, the date sequences between the various things here—okay, [00:56:00] I was asked in 2000 to become to become chairman of the board of the museum, but I think I was asked when I still had commitments to a lot of things that I couldn't do, and I said I'd do it in 2001. In 2001—our board leadership changes, basically, in September, and so from September on for several years, I became chairman of the board of the Seattle Art Museum. Also, in 2001, we had an architectural selection committee put together. That I remember extremely well, because in Christmastime of 2000, I was skiing—first time, and only time—in Sun Valley, and I tore my ACL [laughs] and was operated on when I got back here. And it was totally torn, and it was totally gone, and it was replaced.

And in the spring, we were ready to start visiting architects. We had submissions from a large number of firms. We'd narrowed that down, and then we narrowed it down again, and then we finally got to—I think it was six or seven firms that we actually wanted to go see. And I have a plane, and we put together a trip: we went to Washington, D.C., to Rotterdam, to New York, and then back here as a committee, and I was on a crutch at the time. [Laughs.] That's why I remember it so well. And then later we took a flight down to Los Angeles to visit two architects down there who had submitted proposals.

[00:58:00] And Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi just came out so far ahead that there really wasn't anyone else. They produced this magnificent design from a very simple cutting of a piece of paper into three pieces, and tapering, moving those three pieces so that they formed the three parts of the park.

And of course, we had two pieces of park. They wanted the third piece, which was the waterfront, which was owned by the City of Seattle. And so our next job was to go to the City of Seattle and get a long-term lease for no money on this piece of land that was a—had a trolley run on it to maintain a free waterfront trolley that ran back and forth. So we became a bit of a villain, because they had to tear down the trolley barn. And it was a King County-Seattle thing, and they couldn't agree on a place to relocate it to, even though it was an excellent way to relocate it, and it wouldn't have cost a lot of money.

But there was just this—I don't know—complete inaction. They just froze up on this thing. And at the last minute, we were literally having to say, you know, "We're going to start construction in a few days. You've got to get this thing out of here so we can go on." And they did, and they took it down. And then we were villainized for taking away the trolley, which is unfortunate. But having that third piece of it really made the park, and then getting the city to do the overpasses the way we wanted them done, and working with the railroad—I mean, it was a hugely complex project. [01:00:00]

And of course, I became board chairman in 2001; the first thing I learned about is that Washington Mutual likes the land that we owned that was adjacent to the Venturi museum building downtown, which was an old office building with low ceilings, bad ventilation. It had been occupied by a lot of Nordstrom offices, but they didn't like it anymore, and they were moving out on us. So this was a revenue source that kept the museum going, and it was very important. If that building became empty, we would be in serious financial trouble. Washington Mutual wanted to build a tower, and so they were willing to do this amazing deal where they would build on one side of our building, which would attach and become seamless to the original building, and on the other half, two thirds of the property, they'd build their tower. So on the side we're on, there are 12 floors, of which all but the top—

well, there's more than 12. There's—we're on two now. I guess it's 14.

The top floors are not ours; the rest of them all belong to us. So, there's what we have, and eight more floors above that are leased out. They were leased to Washington Mutual, and they were leased at a good rate, and right from the beginning there was no empty space. And so we built the building; we did that; and we built the sculpture park [laughs]; and we raised $235 million to do all of this, all at the same time. And my president through all of this, and co-chair of the major gifts committee, was Susan Brotman, who I mentioned earlier [01:02:00]. And Susan is still—

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JON SHIRLEY: —a force at the museum and was there this morning when we had an officers meeting. And it was really kind of amazing just to see all this come together and work like that.

But, you know, I thought I was retiring from Microsoft to have some free time, but there was that period of seven years where [laughs] I was at the museum almost as much as Mimi Gates was as director. We were there all the time because we had building committee meetings and just—it was on and on and on. And doing fundraisers, of course; visiting people and asking for money, something I had never done before in my life except for the little thing at Pilchuck. It was all a very interesting time.

When my seven years were up, I found a man named Stan Savage, who was president of one of the banks in Seattle, a commercial bank, and had been a board member for some time. And in addition to the other things I do, I'm in charge of what we call "succession," which is a committee to determine future presidents and chairmen. And so, we—and I lead it. And I thought Stan might make a really good chairman, and I promoted that idea, and everybody said, "Yeah, that's fine." No one had thought about him because he's not a major art collector or something like that, but he's a really great man. And poor Stan gets the job in the fall of 2008, and the next day, Washington Mutual was put into bankruptcy by the federal government.

[00:02:00] For reasons that are so hard to understand and involve so much insider stuff that it's a very, very bitter subject, they gave the bank to Jamie Diamond. I mean, they just gave it to him. They bankrupted it, and it was bankrupt for a minute, and then, "Oh, here, it's Chase's." And of course, in that process, it gave Washington Mutual the right to break every lease they had—Chase, as the purchaser—to break every lease Washington Mutual had in America, every single one of them. They just walk away from them, and no problem.

And of course, in some cases, they wanted the location. So they go to the owner, and they say, "We're going to walk, or you give us a better deal." I mean, it was just—it was robbery. And so we lost our tenant on eight floors of our building that was—we needed the income to pay the bonds that were used to build the building. And so, poor Stan, [laughs] first thing he has to do is go talk to Jamie Diamond, who—they did give us money out of their foundation, but it was nowhere near—I think it was $10 million. The loss to us was about $23 million. We got—over time, with the cost of both lost revenue, rental revenue, and the cost of having to redo some of the space—we got Nordstrom to take the space, and they eventually took all of the eight floors. But it took awhile to do that, and that's where we had this big gap in revenue. And it also moved out the date that we could eventually get those floors back to expand the museum. [00:04:00]

So, it was a sad end to what had been a really well thought out and very well done deal, and to this day, I don't understand what happened in 2008 at all. But the prior time there was a banking crisis—this is kind of off the theme here—they put together the Resolution Trust Company. They did go after a bunch of banks. They prosecuted a bunch of people. Nothing happened in 2008. The government bankrupted one bank who arguably was not bankrupt. I mean, the board members I know don't think they were bankrupt at the time, but the government could step in and do whatever they wanted to and cost a lot of people around the country a lot of money in that whole thing. I think it was just—anyway, a terrible disaster.

My relationship with SAM has continued on. I'm on the officers committee; I'm still running the Olympic Sculpture Park committee, which we meet twice a year—all kinds of things that need to be done or ideas that people have, how we can increase attendance. We get great summer attendance there. It's a very popular place.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. It shows up regularly on the list of, you know, one of the most beautiful and best sculpture parks in the U.S. for sure. I wanted to ask you a little bit more about that, because Mimi Gates was really complimentary in saying that you had a vision for that particular parcel of land that a lot of people didn't, and that you were really instrumental in seeing what it could be. You've said that you've been fortunate to travel to a lot of sculpture parks around the world, so I—

JON SHIRLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —just wanted to hear a little bit more from you about what you saw early on, and what may have

surprised you, exceeded your expectations, or disappointed you—and where you'd like to see it go [00:06:04]. But a little bit more on that would be wonderful.

JON SHIRLEY: Okay. Well, when I first saw those two lots of land, I certainly had no conception of what Weiss/Manfredi would come up with. But to be able to rescue two blocks in the densest part of Seattle, turn them into parks—Seattle does not have a lot of green space parks—be by the water and have the views that it had, and the fact that it's tiered up—you know, it's a part that goes up, so the upper portion is quite a bit higher; the next portion is quite a bit higher than the third and the water itself. It just seemed to me that it could be made into something really, really special, and that it was at a location in town where it would be well used, where people would really like. And the fact that we'd make it just another park with the normal access of a city park, with all that population density there—kind of what I envisioned what you go see today. I envisioned people walking their dogs— [laughs] you know, and coming to the park every day.

And—but I think that what was so thrilling about the whole thing was when we hired Michael and Marion, and I—the first building I saw that they did was the building in Washington, D.C., of the memorial to women in war. It has a long, complex, unfortunate name. It's right across the Memorial Bridge from D.C., and it butts up onto Arlington National Cemetery. [00:08:00] And, in fact, they had to dig part of the land out, and they dug within eight feet of Civil War graves, and put the park between an existing retaining wall and what had been dirt behind it. And they put this museum in there.

I saw that, and I realized what they had to go through to do that in D.C., and all the committees, and, you know, all of the bureaucracy. And to deal with that and come up with such a brilliant idea and win the competition and then build it, and that was the first architect we visited. And after that, it was—sort of in my mind was, You have to sell me that you're better than what they've done, and no one came close.

So from the first time I met them and talked with them and saw that building, I was decided that they'd be the right people, and I never told anybody that at the time except, of course, Mary, because she felt the same way. But I was happy that the rest of the people were very enthusiastic about Michael and Marion, and I have to say that what they did was greatly ahead of anything I thought that—you know, I just couldn't envision something that worked so well, where you have a park that you can wander around the park, not even realize that you've crossed a road, a major road. You do get some sense that you're crossing the railroad tracks, unless you're, you know, just kind of really looking at the art and not paying attention, and then come down to the waterfront. To me, the whole thing works so well. And there are a number of pieces in my yard that are all consigned to go to the sculpture park as a bequest.

MIJA RIEDEL: I was going to ask. Could you tell us which ones?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, sure. The Marini—the Smith—the Wilmarth—the safety pin—Henry Moore—Barbara Hepworth. I'm not—yeah, the Hepworth. Oh, and I think the di Suvero. I think those are the ones. I know not the Pomodoro, because they just couldn't find a place for it. Well, I had mentioned the Calder.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, no, *Red Curly Tail* is—

JON SHIRLEY: *Red Curly Tail*.

MIJA RIEDEL: —going as well?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, *Red Curly Tail* goes as well. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: How great. That's quite an addition. I think there's about 20 pieces there now, aren't there? Twenty-one?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So that's a significant addition.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, there are spots that have been drawn on a map as places to put something, and it was wonderful that when Barney gave us *Echo* from Jaume Plensa that we could find a place for that without disrupting this other plan. That's [laughs] an interesting story. Did Barney tell you about that?

MIJA RIEDEL: I'd love to hear your version of it.

JON SHIRLEY: Barney called me up one day and said, "I bought a Plensa." And I said, "Oh, what kind of one?" and he said, "Well, it's this really tall, big thing, and look on—you know how to use a computer. Go and look it up."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: So I looked up *Echo*, and there's this picture of it in this park in Manhattan, and the people around it look like ants. I said, "That's pretty interesting, Barney. What are you going to do with it?" He said, "I'm going to put it up in my yard." [They laugh.] And I said, "Barney, I think you'd better talk to the Hunts Point authorities about what they allow you to put up, because they aren't going to allow you to put that up in a million years [00:12:00]." And he said, "Well, I'll check on that."

And then I hear back from him a couple of weeks later, and he said, "You think the sculpture park might like"—[they laugh]—"to have the Plensa I bought?" He'd already bought it. I couldn't believe it. And we said—I said, "Yes, but, Barney, you have to understand that"—and I'm the guilty party that we put up—normally, if you give a piece of art to the museum, to our museum, it goes through a collection committee, and they approve or disapprove. If you give a piece of art—if you want to give a piece of art to the sculpture park, it goes through our committee, then it goes to the committee on the collection. So we have the right to set parameters, and one of the parameters—the city requires that an architect be involved in the placement and the foundation, because this is a seismic area.

And the permits—and I said, "Barney, we'd love to get it, but you're going to also have to pay for all of this ancillary stuff, because we don't have the money to do it. We just don't have that kind of money." And, you know, "It has to be given installed. And we also would like, you know, some small endowment for ongoing maintenance, because that's also expensive." I've been doing the Calder, which has to be repainted. The *Eagle* has to be repainted every so many years. And Barney agreed to do all that. You know, I'm sure it cost more than he thought it was going to, but he did.

And he and Plensa—they wanted to put it up on that bridge by the railroad tracks. [00:14:00] And I knew that couldn't happen because I knew the city wouldn't let them do it, and the railroad wouldn't let them do it. But I hated the idea myself. And I said, "You know, if it was down on the waterfront, people coming in on the ferry and on boats—it'd be just like Easter Island. I mean, it'd be this amazing thing to see down there." And luckily, Plensa agreed. And I remember after it was installed, we had a party, and there was a restaurant that you can look back on the park on that pier right there, and we had a little event there. And Plensa really liked it; he thought it really came out great, and we were all very pleased about it. Unfortunately, we've had to put a little, low fence around it because people want to write on it or something—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that's too bad.

JON SHIRLEY: —and it's kind of problematic.

MIJA RIEDEL: I saw that before the fence, I think.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. And—

MIJA RIEDEL: It's beautifully sited.

JON SHIRLEY: So, there haven't been a lot of additions to the park. Marty Margulies gave us a George Rickey that's in the park, two of those square pieces that rotate. And that's nice. But I think even with the pieces we want to give, there would still be opportunities for a couple of other things to go in there if they come up over time. But at some point, it becomes, you know—it's enough. Let's see, we loaned them a work. [00:16:00] There's one piece we have on loan, and there are two other pieces we gave. We gave two Louise Nevelsons—no, we loaned a Louise Nevelson; we gave two Beverly Peppers. One Beverly Pepper looks sort of like a trunk of a tree— and the other one is a very—I can't remember the name of the series, but it's polished steel with blue paint on the inside. It's a multi-tiered piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: *Persephone Unbound*, maybe, or—

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —*Seattle Cloud Cover*?

JON SHIRLEY: *Persephone Unbound* is that piece. *Seattle Cloud Cover* is the name of—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right, the Teresita Fernandez—

JON SHIRLEY: —the Teresita Fernandez bridge.

MIJA RIEDEL: *Perre's Ventaglio* [*III*]? Yeah—

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, actually—

MIJA RIEDEL: —three. I think that's right.

JON SHIRLEY: —that's one of the Beverly Peppers. Yes, those are the names of the two Beverly Peppers. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you and the Wrights contributed to buying one of the di Suveros, the *Schubert Sonata*. Isn't that right, too?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, that was a piece that was already in town that was sitting over by Benaroya Hall, the symphony hall.

MIJA RIEDEL: Are there additional long-term plans for the park? Is there someplace you'd like to see it go, or does it fill up pretty much at 30, 35 pieces, and then it's considered complete?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, I think it fills up. I think the thing we'd all like to see is more use of the pavilion. [00:18:00] The pavilion is used in off-months a lot for private parties and wedding receptions and things like that. I wish we could find some way to have ongoing, at least during the summer, food service there. We've had it, and then we've had trouble keeping it. It would be nice in the winter if you could stop in there and get a cup of coffee, which unfortunately, there just isn't enough traffic in that area to make that happen. That's one of the things I'd like to see. But I think from an art standpoint, with the things promised, it starts to get to a concentration level. I mean, you look at various parks, and you say—the Hirshhorn manages to have quite a bit in a very small space without being crowded, but Hakone, in Japan, to me, looked crowded. There's too much, too many things.

MIJA RIEDEL: You and Mary also endowed a curator's position at SAM, didn't you—

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, in—

MIJA RIEDEL: —back in '94?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. The contemporary art curator's position.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, we've talked about––well, you're looking to keep the Calder together—your Calder collection together—

JON SHIRLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —perhaps moving in the direction of SAM. Do you have plans for the overall collection?

JON SHIRLEY: The majority of the collection, except for some selected items, is destined to go to the Seattle Art Museum. That's sort of the plan. We have placed some specific things of Chuck's in other museums—National Gallery and Yale, the Henry Art Gallery, and the Tacoma Art Museum. And I think to the extent that there would be any things that SAM didn't want, then the provision is that those museums get the first opportunity to go for other objects.

MIJA RIEDEL: The Tacoma Art Museum and the Henry Art Gallery?

JON SHIRLEY: And the Henry Art Gallery, yeah. So everything's sort of kept locally. Yeah. There are a few things, very few, but sometimes when you buy a work of art, a dealer wants to have knowledge that it's going to go someplace specific. So our Carol Bove will go to the Tate Americas Foundation, so it'll go to the Tate in London, because they really want a Bove. I don't know if we've done any other—in most cases, the galleries were really happy that it'll go to the Pacific Northwest. They feel that a lot of artists are underrepresented and in our collection, so it'd be nice to have them go there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

JON SHIRLEY: But in general, we've thought about SAM, and, you know, the time at which the museum can expand is probably far enough off that I'm not going to have much of a role to play in it. I'd hope that I can.

[00:22:00] But I really would love to see the museum, when that opportunity arises, which is in the late '20s, take down four floors of the eight, just however they decide to do it. I don't know whether the other four should be kept or sold or what. But those—adding four floors to the museum. And I don't know that you could add all four floors, even as exhibition space. But you could certainly add three, which would come close to doubling the size of the exhibition space, the museum, in one fell swoop, and would allow you to really do a great deal. It's a very interesting museum. I mean, it's a three-site museum. It's complicated to run.

It'll be great when we finish redoing the Asian Art Museum so that it becomes something that will last for a very long time. The building is 80 years old, and it's owned by the city. It had no air conditioning or humidity control [laughs]. So it's a miracle that it hasn't fallen apart. And that's under total renovation, and with the small expansion, and I think it's going to come out really, really well, and on time and on budget, it looks like. The money's been raised.

That's one I've not had a lot to do with, although [laughs] I was in charge of the committee that had to make an appraisal of the building, and we crawled all through that place and met with engineers and architects and came back and said to the board, "You have two choices. One choice is totally renovate it and with no improvements, just getting it air-conditioned and repaired and all—this 80-year-old heating system replaced [00:24:09]. That's going to cost a little over $20 million. You can either do that, or you can walk away. But you can't stay there. You just can't stay there. It's not going to be a place that you can—no one will loan you after some point, because you don't have humidity control, and some of the works that you would like to show there are fabric, and you can't put them in those conditions."

When Kim Rorschach came on board, she really tackled that project and decided, "Look, if we're going to renovate it, we've got to more than that. We've got to really fix it up and get more space," and came up with really a lovely plan, which is well along in the process right now. I have to go over and take a hard-hat tour. I haven't done that yet. Apparently, it's progressing really very well and should open up in the fall of next year—reopen; rehung. And of course, Dr. Fuller's original—sort of the base collection that the museum got started with was Asian art.

MIJA RIEDEL: You also sit or sat on the chairman's council at MoMA in New York. Is that right?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, I can explain my other art museum [laughs] involvement. Well, MoMA has a thing called the chairman's council, and it is absolutely nothing but a way to give money to the museum. You get invited to two special events a year that are just for the members [00:26:00]. And Ronald [Lauder] was very active when this happened, and we went back a lot in those early days, and I've just stayed with that. And the Whitney—of course, Leonard [Lauder] [laughs]; you know, brothers—came up with the same idea, and through that I got to meet Adam Weinberg and became a supporter of the Whitney.

And then not many years ago, I joined the international council at the Museum of Modern Art, so I'm on that also. So, that's trips, and we have taken some of those trips. We had a wonderful trip to Munich and Berlin. That was really great.

And then I'm on the collectors committee of the National Gallery of Art in Washington. And that's a committee that takes the money from the members and gives you a vote each year on three or four pieces of art that the curators pick. That's been very rewarding, and it's nice to have that relationship with the museum so that—we went back after they've done the new space, and we got a—before the museum was open—tour with Harry Cooper, and went through all of the new floors. And I just love what he did with those floors, and I love what he did with the Calder. You know, they're all just—that worked out really well [00:28:00].

And then Kim was on the North American acquisitions committee of the Tate Museum, and I went to a couple meetings with her, and then they invited me to get on it, too, so we're both on it. And then, most recently, they invited us to become members of their international council, so we're on the Tate international council. We've done Tate trips to Los Angeles, and we did an international one to Japan. That was a year ago March. It was one of the—I've been to Japan many times. It was one of the most rewarding trips to Japan I'd ever done. It was really extremely well done. And they have a number of members of their international council who are great Japanese collectors, and—they have the museum—her husband built this office tower. It's a very tall building in Tokyo, and the top two floors of it are a museum, and she's on the committee. She was just charming; had dinner for us up there and—anyway, that's all the museums that we have sort of a direct, ongoing involvement with, which is more than enough.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I wanted to ask also about the Jon and Mary Shirley Foundation—

JON SHIRLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —when that started. And I know it supports nonprofit arts education and human service organizations. Is that the general mission?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, okay. And you supported, over time, the Bellevue Art Museum; Pilchuck Glass School, to be sure; a number of schools—Pratt, Cornish College for the Arts—

JON SHIRLEY: Right [00:30:00].

MIJA RIEDEL: Is that ongoing, and is there a renewed focus, or is it fairly constant? Are there new groups that you look at each year? How does that work?

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, we founded it in '93, and it supports the visual arts, and it—most of the human services things that it does is through United Way, but we also supported Americares and Doctors Without Borders,

especially when there have been specific disaster relief needs. We also supported a couple of groups after the Puerto Rican disaster. I lived in Puerto Rico for two years, and I felt that they were just treated, and continue to be treated, terribly by our government, which acts like they're not Americans, and of course, they are. And it also has done some support for the Hill School, where I went. We get requests for grants all the time, and we process those, and we have supported all kinds of different arts things around the country. Specific shows, maybe for an artist who's in our collection, but a show in Birmingham, Alabama, or, you know Huntsville or, you know, all kinds of different places. [00:32:00] And we look at each one of them and then make a decision and try and spread the support in a way that would do the most good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Are applications received on a rolling basis, or do you have deadlines, or—

JON SHIRLEY: No, it's not run—we don't ask for requests. It's not run in that formal sort of Bill Gates Foundation sense. Someday, my children will manage it, and it'll get a lot bigger, and then I think it will become much more—it'll have to become more formalized at some point, as Kim keeps reminding me. I need to do an education with my kids. It does not have an employee, so at some point, I've got to get someone to direct it.

And then, very recently, Kim and I have started another foundation called the Kim and Jon Shirley Foundation, and it's quite small. It'll grow over time, and it'll be a way for Kim to support the arts when I'm gone. It won't be the size of the other one by a long shot, but it still—it will, too, exist. I don't know if we've got a federal number yet or not. It takes forever to get the government to give you the final approval on it, although we are operational in a provisional way. So we've been able to make a couple gifts already, small gifts.

[00:34:00] And the Pratt art school gets a gift every year for scholarships. So there are two scholarships every year, and that's been great fun, because we've seen some of the people, you know—some of them actually become quite well-known [laughs] glass artists, which is—or other artists—which is great. Sabrina Knowles and Jenny Pohlman are two that went—they're a pair, and they've been quite successful.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sorry, I didn't hear those names. Sabrina—

JON SHIRLEY: Sabrina Knowles and Jenny Pohlman. I'm going to have to look them up. They operate, though—you find them, because they operate together. And they've done a lot of work in glass, some in glass and metal. They were almost the earliest people to get the scholarship, so it's been fun. It's been many years now that they've—and we see them every so often, run into them. So it can be pretty broad in the range of things that we support. It's not a terribly large foundation, but over this many years, it's given away a pretty fair amount of money.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I think that we've done a good job of covering the SAM material, the Olympic Sculpture Park. I had a couple final questions about the collection, and then, if you have—

JON SHIRLEY: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: —any final thoughts. When you look back now, after the couple decades now of such intense collecting—

JON SHIRLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —are there specific, significant influences you feel that have helped shape the collection? Anything that we haven't mentioned? I mean, we've talked about some of the dealers, the private dealers, the people at auction houses [00:36:04]. We've also talked about Calder and his grandson, and Close. But when you think about how the collection has been shaped, anything other than that? Was there a lot of dialogue between you and Mary?

JON SHIRLEY: There was a lot of dialogue between the two of us, and we did a lot of traveling. We went to a lot of museum shows. We often used our connections to visit shows outside of hours if they were extremely popular. So when the Met did the de Kooning show, we went to that. And some of the people that we have dealt with that have been very helpful—I mean, Robert Storr—we first got involved with him at MoMA when we did the Close retrospective, and I remember meeting in his office, which was so small that one of us had to sit halfway in the hall.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And there was just Mary and I, so—it was piled high with everything. And then, later, he took us through the Pollock retrospective on the day MoMA was closed, and it was just—there were very few people in there, but all the lights were on because there were some visitors, and it was just so amazing to go through it with him and hear the story of, like, *Blue Poles* that came up from Australia and some of the other really remarkable works that they had there.

[00:38:00] Those experiences really resonate and stay with you. And I get the major art magazines, and we read them, and, you know, you try and get a feel for what's happening. I find that there are people who write about art that, to me, are just—you almost can't read them. I mean, it's like, "We're going to use every word we—you know, [laughs] we've got this thesaurus of art terms here." It's like over-describing a wine, which drives me crazy. I love wine; I don't like reading about all the scents that somebody managed to come out of a glass of wine.

But there are some people, and I think Storr is one of them, that—and in his way, Tobias Meyer—have a way of talking about an artist, or talking about a body of work, that is very understandable, very clear, and very compelling, that, you know, it's not—"I'm not being a critic about the show; I'm trying to explain what this person was doing at that time." And I think that those have been influences on us.

I'd say Mary probably read more than I did, and Kim is going back—she took art history, and she's going back to try and find a way for both us to spend some time with University of Washington [00:40:07]. I think her goal is she'd like to understand sort of how Abstract Expressionism came to be, you know, and—which is kind of interesting.

I've not tried to read something specifically about that, but I have read biographies, you know, of Pollock and de Kooning and people of that era. I'm not sure that that makes it any easier to understand how this all happened, you know. How does any art movement happen? Expressionism, at least, has been well documented and well understood and well written about, and movies about. I think that's a lot clearer in my head than what happened after World War II.

But I've often—you know, I talked about the fact we really love van Gogh, and there was a point in our early collecting when we were offered a van Gogh that was in Japan. It was absolutely legitimate, authentic, written about in his writings to Theo. It was quite beautiful and had never been photographed in color before until the owner of it, realizing that they had to sell it because of the crash, had it photographed, and we were shown a photograph of it. And it's kind of a turning point; it's like, do you want to own two [laughs] or three, and that would be it, you know [00:42:05]? And live in a small house and have those. And I have to say, we had to give it serious thought for a while, because if there was one, there had to be maybe the chance for another one someplace. Although almost every one that I've seen for sale, the ones that have come to auction, have not been as good as this piece. This was an extraordinary piece, and I'm sure it was sold privately for—

MIJA RIEDEL: What was the image?

JON SHIRLEY: The image was a cottage with these wonderful, you know, shaped trees—you know, the tortured trees, van Gogh–tortured trees, and it had wonderful color, and it was just—it was a wonderful piece. I have no idea where it ended up.

MIJA RIEDEL: A later piece, do you think?

JON SHIRLEY: Hmm?

MIJA RIEDEL: One of his later pieces?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, absolutely. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It was a late piece. He wrote about it, so it was well documented. It was very interesting to—you wonder what else is still over there. I mean, the Japanese also bought a lot of cars—because that's another collection of mine—the cars they bought were terrible. They did not have good advice; they did not have good dealers. And I don't know about the art that went over there, but this piece was a really a good piece. And the odds of finding another one were probably, you know, pretty low, that would be of, let's say, museum quality—one that a museum would be happy to hang. I'm sure there are ones that have been sold that some museum would hang because of its, you know, name value alone [00:44:00].

I know what Barney always talked about, and everything he bought he wanted to buy so they could go in a museum. We've never really followed that thought process, except perhaps as we developed the Calder collection and became really selective about what I bought. We'd been lucky early on, gotten some really wonderful works, and then really tried very hard to only get pieces that would altogether, as a collection—that you'd want to keep as a collection, that you'd want to—could form a museum room.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you ever think about doing a private museum?

JON SHIRLEY: No. No. My hat's off to Eli Broad, because to do a museum of that success is terrific, and they've done a wonderful job, and it continues to be extremely popular. I mean, look at the Clyfford Still Museum. You know, they did what the artist wanted, but keeping that thing going is going to be difficult. I think it's going to be very difficult, and I don't know what the endowment is. I know they sold the work early on through pieces to raise money for endowment, so hopefully that's enough. But Denver is a little bit off the beaten path to have a

museum that specialized. You know, I mean, he wasn't van Gogh [00:46:00].

MIJA RIEDEL: So why did you ultimately decide against the van Gogh?

JON SHIRLEY: Because we wanted to do what we were doing. We decided that it was really enjoyable doing what we were doing and finding these wonderful things, and as I said, some of it was luck or opportunistic or whatever.

I mean, the wonderful Franz Klein—or Yves Klein—in there: that was hanging in the office of the aforementioned Renato Danese when he'd gone into his own gallery business. And Mary went down to see him—I wasn't around—said, "I just found the most amazing work." So the next day, I went down with her, because he was in Chelsea, and we got that piece. And that wasn't something that was on our radar. He was not on our radar. And then, in retrospect, I realize that we probably had a chance to buy a couple other pieces of his that would have been really nice additions to the collection. But in a way, it's fun to have just one really great work, and that is—to me, that's a really fine piece because if you—even when you go to museums, and you look at them, a lot of times the thick paper that he rolled the model on will have become dirty, will have been smudged. And that one is just pristine; it's really—was very well kept and preserved over the years.

And I'm also lucky that the Rothkos seem quite stable [00:48:04], although I won't loan *Green over Blue* except to SAM. I was advised a long time ago—you probably know Rothkos are famously unstable. And I was at the National Gallery, I think, up in their art conservation area, and they had a Rothko that the entire edge—you know, he painted over them—the entire edge had sort of fallen off, and they had what they could assemble there. I said, "Golly, what do you do with that?"

I think, to some extent, in the parts of the collection that are the most important parts to us, the things that we prize the most, we sort of followed that. But we'd find other things that we liked, and we'd go ahead and we'd get those, too, just to mix it in. So when you're talking about sort of the general aspect of it being a little bit—I don't know what the word was that you used.

MIJA RIEDEL: "Curious."

JON SHIRLEY: Curious? Okay. Funky.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I didn't think "funky," but—

JON SHIRLEY: That's where that comes from. It comes from our seeing something that we like, and not necessarily mainstream or what's being collected at the time, but saying "Okay, that's nice, and we'll add that to the collection."

I think that since Kim and I have been doing this, we've gotten more focused on what we want. I mean, we wanted to find a Sam Gilliam, but we were patient about it. We wanted to get a Mark Bradford, and we probably could have eventually gotten one through Hauser & Wirth, a new one, but getting an old one is so much better [laughs]. We just like what he was doing back then better. And I think ever since he got the Venice Biennale American Pavilion, Trump was elected, and he got very upset, and his work got dark, and he's still coming out of that, I think. I think the last show in LA at Hauser & Wirth was—some of the pieces were still pretty dark, and not representative of the work he was doing 10 years ago. But that's probably—we've brought more focus to it now.

MIJA RIEDEL: You and Kim?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes. The Dansaekhwa, that became a very focused thing of—and the Park Seo-Bo in the main gallery, *Ecriture,* that was a deliberate hunt to find the right piece. We had a number of people that we told what we wanted, and that actually was acquired through Sotheby's private sale department. Their affiliate, or themselves, in Korea [00:52:01] found that piece in a Korean collection. And we actually had to agree on a price, if we wanted it, before they'd ship it to America for us to see.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness.

JON SHIRLEY: So, based on what we knew of the market and what they were asking, we made an offer, and they said they would accept that offer. We said, "Fine, send it over." And it was really terrific.

So we're more focused, and we're not going to much—to many things now. We don't hit New York very often. We do look at the auction catalogues; haven't bought anything for a while—well, a little thing. And other than going to Art Basel, it's much more a matter of focusing on things we'd like to have and then trying to find them and just taking the time. I mean, we were quite surprised when we saw the Bradford at Mnuchin in Basel, because we'd already seen an image of the Sam Gilliam, and we told her to hold it for us till we got there and saw it, and then, in the same booth, here's this amazing Mark Bradford work for sale, which was not in the—it

was in the long-term plan to find one, but we found it really quickly. Other things might take a year or two, but we're not buying enough now that that makes any difference. As you said, where do you put them? I mean, things have to be rearranged. Right behind you, in that little compartment there, that flower— that's a Julio González that he did when he was very young—that came up at auction at Christie's in London.

MIJA RIEDEL: That looks fantastic there.

JON SHIRLEY: It does, doesn't it?

MIJA RIEDEL: I'm glad you pointed it out, because I've been looking in the other direction.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah. And in the shelf above it are just some objects. One of them is—the glass bird was done by William Morris, I believe, but the strange-looking—it's a silver bird—was something we found in Spain probably 35 years ago. Those are the kinds of things—and Jeff Koons was looking at when he came here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And are those netsuke, little netsuke up there?

JON SHIRLEY: Yes, little netsuke. Behind them now would be banned ivory carving that I bought the first time I ever went to the Orient, which was a very long time ago.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, well, I've been thinking about the fact that you have decided where to install the pieces, for the most part, yourself, especially inside the house. And last night and this morning, I was just thinking about the pieces that you set side by side or next to each other. You know, the Martin, the Agnes Martin, next to the Calder *Bougainvillier*, and then the Pollock in between the two—

JON SHIRLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —Giacomettis; the Jasper Johns next to the Brancusi. Have you been surprised, or have you learned things that you didn't expect by the way that you installed the collection? It seems that you have an extraordinary opportunity that not many people have and that we don't often see in museums.

JON SHIRLEY: I really enjoy doing it, and I find that, to some extent, it's a matter of playing with things [00:56:00], leaning things up against the wall. When we moved into the house, we simply had our art handlers unpack everything and lean it up against the walls, and we moved things around for two weeks, except for the *Big Nude* and the other Closes around there. We moved things, and we had the Richter in a place that Mary said, "I don't even like the painting anymore," and I said, "Well, we're not getting rid of the painting, because I love it."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

JON SHIRLEY: And we took it over and hung it in the main gallery, and she said, "Oh, wow, that's fantastic. Now I love it."

And so, you know, I feel that what a curator does when they do a special exhibition—they have to do it right the first time. You know, you open the doors, and people come in, and then you really don't change [laughs] anything, rarely. And we don't have that constriction. We're able to change things. The red Rothko next to the *Green over Blue* Rothko—that Rothko was not there, the red one. It was around the corner, on the way into the works-on-paper gallery. And it really bothered Kim, and she said, "They should be together." And so we really thought about that whole wall and realized that you could go from the most recent Chuck Close to that Rothko to then *Green over Blue*, then to the Mitchells, and then back to the Richter, and that would really work.

And so that's the process [00:58:00]. So, we're lucky. We can be iterative. We can challenge ourselves and hang things in different places and in different ways. And if we make a mistake, well, a few months later, we take it down, move something else and fix it. The entry gallery has evolved over time. The Brancusi was always there; the Giacomettis were there. The Calder area kind of really evolved and became just its own specific space. When the Agnes Martin first came to us, I think we hung it in the main gallery, which was not successful at all. And finding it its own space there, I think, worked out really well. That was—want some more?

MIJA RIEDEL: I think so. Thanks.

JON SHIRLEY: That one worked out really well.

MIJA RIEDEL: Perfect, thank you.

[Audio break.]

Okay, we're back.

JON SHIRLEY: All right?

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you were talking about the Agnes Martin.

JON SHIRLEY: Well, yes, the Agnes Martin—we tried it in a different part of the house, and then I think that wall had had nothing on it, and realized that it was a piece that would work well with *Bougainvillier* and be a nice addition to that room. [01:00:00] So that room, over the years, has gotten somewhat more special.

But it's been great fun trying to make one area as perfect as you can, and then say that, you know, we're really not going to change things in here unless we loan—and then sometimes somebody wants to borrow something, and then it's—then what do you do? And we're okay if somebody wants to borrow one of the Calders. It's more difficult if somebody wants a Giacometti, which, luckily—I don't know that we've ever had to loan the *Dog* except to SAM, the art museum. I don't think we've ever loaned it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's funny the way you describe the main gallery, because I thought about that. I thought about the Close to the Rothkos to the Mitchells to the Richter, and there is just something about that that I'd never seen those paintings, those artists, installed in that proximity to each other, and something about those particular pieces just captures the imagination, I think, and holds your attention in a way that's hard to even put into words.

JON SHIRLEY: Yeah, it's a very fun flow, those works, through there. And next week we have the Gilliam and the Bradford arriving, and it's going to be an interesting challenge on the other wall across from that, too, because that's where—we intend to redo that wall. Oh, I'm not sure that the Gilliam will end up there, but the Bradford certainly will, because of its scale [01:02:02]. And it's a side––you know, how—

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JON SHIRLEY: —does Park Seo-Bo play with Mark Bradford, you know? It's going to be an interesting challenge. Oscar Murillo is there. So things will definitely get moved around.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you have favorites at this point that we haven't mentioned?

JON SHIRLEY: Favorites? Well, somebody put me through the "Your house is burning down" drill. What do you do? I say, you know, hopefully I get my wife out, and then I get my dog out, and then I go get the Giacometti *Dog* [laughs]. Because you couldn't get the Brancusi out. Yeah.

No, is it a question of, if you were going to go sit in front of one work, what would you go sit in front of? I don't know. I like everything, and it gets more a matter of, is there a work that you don't like to sit in front of anymore? You know, is there something that's not speaking to you anymore? There are some pieces that I just think are so essential to what we did, the Richter being one. I love that piece, and I've never seen one of his abstractions I like better. There's nothing I've ever seen that I'd say, "Well, I'd trade this for that." No, I wouldn't. I just think that's—that one is really—is exceptional. And I love—the *Green over Blue* Rothko I think is a really just an amazing piece of work of the man at the peak of his powers [00:02:06].

No, I don't have favorites. I love to walk in the entry gallery when the light's just right and see the reflection of the shadow of the *Fish* on the wall, because we worked very hard with our lighting guy to make sure that that happened, that when the *Fish* was parallel to the wall, you actually saw a wonderful shadow of the *Fish* on the wall. There's just all—you know, walk down the hall here and see the Dansaekhwas, just the—you know, it's sort of—when we wake up in the morning, we wake up—there's a Calder mobile that's not seen that has a wood element and different—it's large. Hopefully, it will fit in the living room when *Gamma* goes out on loan, which we'll find out. That's also next week. They're going to pack those up. And that's a favorite too, you know, for different reasons. It's a wonderful piece. I mean, it's a really, really, really great mobile.

But it's fun to be able to live with things at that proximity and have them sort of just a part of your everyday life, so that we're always with some of the collection, even when we—we don't have to walk down there. We can be anywhere and there's works [00:04:00]. And I think that's what we really love, is just living with all of it. You know? If we're in the dining room, we see Alex Katz, we see Park Seo-Bo, or we see the Calder, or we see the beautiful Seattle skyline.

I feel very lucky to be able to have all this, and I think there's a sense that comes, a responsibility that comes from being their caretakers. You don't own it; you have it on a transitory basis. It's going to go from you someplace else. You know, I would never even think about giving my art collection to my children. I mean, it would make no sense whatsoever. They should go get what they love. My daughter has a number of things that we used to own that were from earlier days of collecting which were just perfect for her and her house, things that we bought, like, on a trip to Santa Fe, and you know, some artists that—they're still working; they're still around; but they're never going to be famous.

And I think that goes to our sense of working with the museum, working with other museums, and it bothers us that schools don't teach art anymore, or they don't teach music anymore. [Laughs.] There are schools in this area that are in, you know [00:06:00], mediumly affluent neighborhoods that the people get together and raise money to hire someone to come in and teach arts so that they have some chance at getting that as part of their education, and that's one of the things that I really like about the Seattle Art Museum, is we essentially take as many schoolchildren as we can physically handle.

I remember, years ago, there was a traveling show called *Mexican Modernism*, and it included a number of works by Frida Kahlo. And we bussed in some Hispanic kids, probably from eastern Washington. There's a large community around Yakima, and of course, they're here to work as migrant workers. And they pick grapes, and they pick apples and so forth. And some of these—there was a kid talking to his teacher, looking at this Frida Kahlo, just—his mouth was open. And I asked her, "What is he saying?" and she said, "He's amazed that a Mexican artist is hanging in this museum which is, you know, not a Mexican museum." And I was very moved by that. I thought that was a wonderful thing that we were able to do, to bridge that gap.

And there are so many things going on in the world; there are so many causes that you could give to [00:08:03]. There are so many needs, and just to try and zero in on something and—but I think the arts are what make humans human and not apes, you know [laughs], at the most fundamental level, not our capability to make weapons, but our capability of communicating and recording and having a history and having a sense of that and having a sense of future. All of that is so important.

MIJA RIEDEL: Thank you.

JON SHIRLEY: [Laughs.] Okay. You're welcome [00:08:57].

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]