GIVING IS PART OF THE CONCEPT

Robert Rowan

Interviewed by George M. Goodwin

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INTRODUCTION

It was perhaps a self-fulfilling prophecy: even before I telephoned I was certain that asking Robert Rowan for the name of a friend or colleague to write a brief introduction to this oral history would not, in fact, yield a name. Indeed, I was correct. Rowan, speaking in that tone that makes all seem reasonable, surmised that an obligatory introduction must have originated as the brainchild of a professor or bureaucrat passing an idle moment or justifying his post. (It could, however, have been far more, and some of our introductions are actually quite good.) Nevertheless, I got no name from Rowan but the suggestion that, if a few flattering notes were required, that I write those notes myself.

Rowan was born March 13, 1910. He entered R. A. Rowan and Company, the family real estate and insurance firm, during the Depression and changed it from a "city company"--it had built many of the buildings along Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles--to an agricultural company, first, in the Imperial, then, in the San Joaquin Valley. Alternating with his brothers, Louis R. Rowan and George D. Rowan, he has been president and chairman of that company; he remains a trustee. He was formerly a director of Pacific Northwest Airlines as well.

It was as a prominent collector of twentieth-century American art and as an active officer of museums dedicated to the art of our century, particularly the Pasadena Art Museum, that Rowan became the subject of a UCLA oral history. He was a president of the Pasadena Art Museum, a trustee of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and a board member of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He is presently a member of the board of the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; works from his collection were included in the museum's first show.

I have had the opportunity of visiting the homes of several major collectors in Los Angeles. Of these Rowan's was the most impressive. The house, a classic Monterey-style structure in Pasadena, has the walls to hang large paintings (though only a small proportion of the collection hangs there; far more work is on loan to museums or in storage). A visitor sees those paintings and feels he knows why each was included: the taste revealed is consistently lyrical, and almost entirely for abstraction. Rowan himself is affable and generous, plainspoken and reasonable.

--Mitch Tuchman
Principal Editor
Oral History Program
October 1983

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: George M. Goodwin, freelance consultant, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., Art History, Lake Forest College; M.A., Art History, Columbia University; Ph.D, Art Education, Stanford University.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Rowan's home in Pasadena, California.

Dates: January 8, 10, 29, February 7, 1980.

Time of day, length of sessions, total number of recording hours: Each session, lasting approximately two hours, took place in the morning. A total of six hours of conversation was recorded.

Persons present during interviews: Rowan and Goodwin.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

Goodwin had interviewed Rowan while conducting research for his doctoral dissertation (on the educational functions of museums) in 1973. This earlier interview was not discussed during the present series.

Rowan had been a key figure at the Pasadena Art Museum; Goodwin was familiar with the role he had played there. An exhibition of works from the Rowan collection was mounted at the Art Center College of Design, where Goodwin was teaching, just weeks before this series of interviews began. Goodwin believes that Rowan, in granting these interviews, was being accommodating because of that exhibition.

During the course of the interviews, Goodwin accidentally erased the first portion of the first tape (material concerning Rowan's childhood). Goodwin informed Rowan of the mishap at the end of the series, and Rowan consented to repeat that portion of the interview at the end of the fourth session.

Rowan requested that access to his oral history be restricted until his death.

EDITING:

Editing was done by Rebecca Andrade, assistant editor. She checked the verbatim transcript prepared by staff typists, editing for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling and verification of proper nouns.

The edited transcript was presented to Rowan for review and approval. It was returned some time later with a covering letter (August 31, 1981) from Jean Shriner, his secretary, noting that Rowan had not answered all queries submitted to him.

Mitch Tuchman, principal editor reviewed the edited manuscript, restoring some phrases deleted in the initial editing and generating a new list of queries. Rowan answered all of these during a visit paid by Tuchman in July 1983.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings and edited transcript of the interview are in the University Archives and are available under the regulations governing use of permanent noncurrent records of the University.

Records relating to this interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: ONE, SIDE ONE

JANUARY 8, 1980

ROWAN: One was forced to speak French in classes [at L'Ecole les fleuris]. But the way the British are, they found a way of not learning the language, speaking English as much as they could on the side.

GOODWIN: Did you have any special interest as a student?

ROWAN: No. I was interested in sports and skiing. There was good skiing in the winter there [in Switzerland]. I didn't have any particular interest. I was always much stronger at English or languages or history than at math.

GOODWIN: Did you have any particular interest in art at that time?

ROWAN: No, I didn't.

GOODWIN: Were you dragged through the various cultural landmarks?

ROWAN: No. The Swiss school was age--was it 1921?--was age eleven and twelve. At this time my interest was skiing and this kind of thing.

GOODWIN: Then you went to school in England?

ROWAN: Yes. Then the next school was in the south of England, a school called Down House, a very pleasant school. [It was a] well-organized, relatively small school but having very fine teachers. The headmaster was a really good guy, and everybody loved the staff and the headmaster. It was a small

school. I must have been there three years--two, three years. This time the interest was in things like racing--they had a pack of hounds at the school--beagling, football, that kind of thing, bicycling.

GOODWIN: Were you planning to return to America or to stay indefinitely in Europe?

ROWAN: We used to come back to Pasadena on holidays. We made several [visits] back to our house here. So we made two or three trips to America during the years that we were at school in Switzerland, maybe one or two trips. So, we all decided somehow-- Our parents said we'd go to school in America. After leaving the English school, we went to an Arizona desert school called the Evans School [near] Tucson, Arizona, which, again, was horse oriented. Cowboy life. A very pleasant school. I mean, fairly rigorous life: everybody lived in small cabins. It was an interesting school. One year over there in Arizona: it was a lot of fun. Then we went back to England again to try to get into the university. So, the effort there was to get past the entrance examination, get into Oxford, get into a college.

GOODWIN: Why did you want to study in Britain, at Oxford?

ROWAN: Well, I'm not sure why I chose Oxford instead of some-- I think we wanted to be near our family and see our family a little bit more that lived in Europe. We didn't have any objection. We liked England. Oxford and Cambridge

were the ones, I suppose, to try to get into. So that's what we did.

GOODWIN: Did your brothers go to Oxford as well?

ROWAN: Yes, both brothers [a twin, George D. Rowan, and a younger brother, Louis R. Rowan].

GOODWIN: What did you study there?

ROWAN: Actually what I studied was history and economics. At that university you have to get by the first year's examination. It was a fixed examination. Students take it at the end of first year. I was only really there a year and a half. I did pass my first year's examination my first term. In my particular college, Merton College, it sounds a little conceited, but I was the first fellow that had done it in fifty-two years. Most students never take an examination, but since I was waiting to get into the college, I had studied while I was waiting to get into Merton College. I had studied the first year's examinations; so I worked hard my first term and passed it. On the strength of that, I got my brother [Louis] into the same college. So, now I had two years and two terms with no examination until my finals. I was in a good position to do anything I wanted to do.

GOODWIN: Did you have a lot of fun?

ROWAN: Yes. I spent the remaining part of that first year celebrating. My tutors and the professors at Merton College wanted me to take philosophy. This time I should have taken

it, and I had a real interest in it, but I thought it was too tough for me. So, I opted for easy things: economics and history. But looking back-- I mean, my interest since then has been in philosophy. It was an opportunity that I made the wrong decision on at that time in my opinion.

GOODWIN: What were your professional ambitions as a young man?

ROWAN: I didn't really have any, but I had a firm [R. A. Rowan and Company] that I could return to, an existing firm with about a hundred employees, that at the time I came back was losing about [$]150,000 a month during the big Depresssion. I came back thinking that I could save the situation. Of course, I bombed in the Depression. I couldn't add or detract anything--sweat it out--but the firm was strong enough to survive. I did think of going back to the university but then decided not to.

GOODWIN: You spent your professional life with the firm?

ROWAN: Yes. Once in the firm, I diversified it, starting in about '34. It was downtown real estate, and I was always interested in agriculture. So, I started the firm into really becoming a large agriculture operation, starting in the Imperial Valley. I had the feeling that, in the long run, producing food would be one of those things that was necessary. I had studied Malthus while at college, I knew the human population would be way up and the agricultural

production would lag; so I got our firm early--got the management--and got us into agriculture. We expanded, even though prices were very low. From '34, '44, all the way through into the early seventies, we were able to slowly expand, change the operation from the Imperial Valley to the San Joaquin Valley. Presently, the firm operates about eleven square miles irrigated, about seventy-two hundred acres irrigated: so we produce a lot of food and fiber and have a profitable operation as well as the old real estate operation.

GOODWIN: What is your relationship with the firm today?

ROWAN: I'm chairman of the board of the firm. I was president for a long time and then rotated with my two brothers: first the twin brother, and then the younger brother, who is now president.

GOODWIN: And you lived in Pasadena--

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: --all those years.

ROWAN: Yes. I've always had a house in Santa Barbara for the summer. Of course, I made many trips to Europe during the first years my family lived there.

GOODWIN: What became of your sister [Lorraine Rowan Cooper]?

ROWAN: She lives in Washington, D.C., and has been married for twenty years to John Sherman Cooper, who's the senior senator from Kentucky on the Senate Committee on Foreign

Relations. He then later became U.S. ambassador to East Germany, the first U.S. ambassador to East Germany. Now he's retired, works for a big law firm in retirement. They both live in D.C.

GOODWIN: You had a family here?

ROWAN: I've been married twice: fifteen years the first time [to Carolyn Peck], twenty-one years the second time, [to Vivian Kauffman]. I have four children: two girls [Gwendolyn and Laura] from the first marriage, and two [Carol and Pamela] from the second. The youngest girls are ages nineteen and twenty-three. One is at Sarah Lawrence, and the other one at San Francisco State right now.

GOODWIN: When did your interest in art come about?

ROWAN: Maybe when I was sixteen or seventeen. I was in Paris, and my sister thought-- I just accompanied her, looking at French painting in the Louvre and just became interested from just looking. I became interested in impressionist and postimpressionist French painting. This is the painting I looked at first. Then, of course, when I was in Italy, I always looked at early Italian painting. I liked the early Italian painting that I'd see in Rome and Florence.

GOODWIN: Not Renaissance painting?

ROWAN: Yes, Renaissance painting. But my real interest was in French [painting]. I got interested in painting, not first through Renaissance painting, but French painting. Then I

began to look back. When I was in Florence, I'd take a look at Renaissance painting. But what really I looked at and studied rather carefully was French painting.

GOODWIN: Did you do any collecting at this time?

ROWAN: I did have some small things. I could only afford one hundred dollars or three hundred dollars for a painting. I did have ten Raoul Dufys and one [Georges] Rouault called Les Bagneuses. The Dufys were three oil paintings, and the rest were watercolors, like Ascot and typical Dufy.

See, when I started collecting American paintings, say, in '56 or '57, I was able to sell the Dufys to start collecting the things that I did like. My first painting was Franz Kline, for example, which I bought from Paul Kantor's gallery. I was able to sell a watercolor Dufy for enough to pay for the Kline; and likewise the Rouault. So, I used the proceeds from selling the French painting.

I looked at American paintings through the fifties. I really was pretty stuck on the look of French painting and just kept looking at American painting and finally became interested, more interested in American painting. At that time, I could afford to collect a little.

GOODWIN: Were there certain factors that led to this new interest in American painting, any particular people who influenced you?

ROWAN: No. I was often in New York City, and I would just

and I would just look at the Modern [Museum of Modern Art]. I spent a lot of time just looking, and little by little I became-- I first rejected-- I was thinking of French painting, and when I first saw [Jackson] Pollock, '52, and other painting, I wasn't too interested. In fact, the tendency was to reject it. Then, about '56, I just kept looking at American painting. Gradually, from just looking--and maybe reading a little bit, but mostly looking, because I didn't know any dealer, but I'd looked in museums, particularly the Modern--I got to like the power of American painting. You know, the radical change from what I liked to what was unknown: I was slow to shift. [It took] maybe five years of looking before I collected American painting, but essentially looking. Of course, I knew a few people that collected, like Mrs. [Burton] Tremaine. I had some friends, a few friends, that collected American painting.

GOODWIN: Did you attend the exhibitions, say, at the Los Angeles County Museum?

ROWAN: I've looked at a good many of the exhibitions, even the "Paint Young" show ["Artists of Los Angeles and Vicinity"]. They used to have an exhibition of a lot of young painters. In fact, I don't know when, but I bought a Larry Bell, called [L.] Bell's House in a show of maybe two hundred paintings at the old museum downtown [1960]. But once I began to like American painting, I got to know dealers--and an occasional curator--dealers like Paul Kantor. And then

Nick Wilder helped me a lot. Once I started collecting a little bit, I got to know quite a few dealers.

GOODWIN: Did you have any plans as a collector?

ROWAN: No, I didn't have any plans at all. I just liked the painting.

GOODWIN: You did specialize though in the mid-fifties?

ROWAN: Yes, I bought American painting.

GOODWIN: Right. I mean, you totally transformed your interest.

ROWAN: Because the French painters: you know, at this time the price was getting up there. There was no time that I could have afforded to collect, let's say, Matisse, one of my favorite French painters. I'm just saying the American price-- These were obviously very important, strong paintings, and the price was very low. It was quite easy to collect them. Then, once I started collecting, I gained some momentum. I mean, for example, [Richard] Diebenkorn I bought in '57 or '58; and maybe I bought seven or eight Diebenkorns. I liked Diebenkorn. Then gradually I began to buy other American painters.

GOODWIN: Did you first see Diebenkorn at Paul Kantor's gallery?

ROWAN: Yes, right. The whole show was-- I mean, almost nothing was purchased out of that. I think Gifford Phillips--

Yes, Gifford Phillips I knew early. He influenced me.

He helped me look at painting. For example, I have a Hassel Smith that he told me to go look at, I can remember. At that time the Blum gallery, the Ferus Gallery, was going. I knew these people--Walter Hopps and Irving [Blum]--and I'd look at everything in their gallery.

GOODWIN: What were some of the other painters that you were interested in at this time?

ROWAN: I looked at, let's see, [Robert] Motherwell, a few Eastern painters. Then maybe a little later, by the time we got into the museum--I became interested in the Pasadena [Art] Museum--I got to know Walter better. As a matter of fact, I got him his job. I persuaded [Tom Leavitt], suggested to [Leavitt], "Hire him," because he was leaving the Ferus Gallery at that time. I suggested him, and [Leavitt] liked him, and he became a curator at the Pasadena Museum; but I think that that was a little later.

Once I became involved with the Pasadena Museum, I talked to a lot more people through the museum: museum people and other dealers and other collectors.

At this time you had the painting of the sixties. This was the sixties, and there were a lot of things going on. I wasn't too interested in the pop movement, but I bought some of those paintings. I was interested in color field paintings. But, again, there was an opportunity to look at a lot of things. I was often East. So, I just collected what I liked.

GOODWIN: What is the nature of your collection today?

ROWAN: Well, it's just American painting.

GOODWIN: What is the scope of it?

ROWAN: The scope of the painting?

GOODWIN: Yes, the size, the style?

ROWAN: I've never hesitated because a painting was big. So, if I liked a painting, like Morris Louis, and I was able to buy Morris Louis, often it was a very big painting that I got. I always had museum in mind that I could see the painting; I could never get these big paintings in my house. A lot of the best painting was big-size painting, and I would lend these paintings to the Pasadena Museum or other museums, but the Pasadena Museum particularly to fill in between shows. I always liked Morris Louis, I always liked [Jules] Olitski, I always liked [Frank] Stella, and I collected these in some depth.

GOODWIN: Could you give me some examples of the depth?

ROWAN: Well, for example, in Stella. I think I have a black Stella, silver Stellas--I never liked the copper Stellas--and then the shaped canvases, maybe three, three or four. Then I had one big protractor series, which I gave the Pasadena Museum. It was the only protractor I had. Since then, very recently, I've purchased a painting of the metallic painting of Stella's, both '77 and '78. In the past I have sold a big silver painting. During this collecting, here and

there I had to sell things to buy other things. I've given or sometimes sold painting and bought other painting. I've shifted around a bit in Stella. For example, in this collection of, say, ten Stellas-- San Francisco [Museum of Modern Art] didn't have a silver Stella, and I had three at that time. They wanted to buy one--the trustees were friends; this was long ago--I sold them a beautiful silver London series Stella. Also at that time, an Olitski. I had maybe fourteen Olitskis. They didn't have a good spray painting; I sold them one. Likewise, to balance my purchases, because I often borrow money to pay for a new painting, I did sell [to] the Des Moines [Art Center] museum--that was just maybe five years ago--a silver Stella, a big silver Stella called Union Pacific. But I still have a strong Stella collection. Also I've never sold an Olitski, except the one to San Francisco.

Incidentally, in both cases it helped the artist: to have an important collection, like San Francisco, a museum without a Stella or an Olitski was painful for the museum and not too good for the artist. So, here and there I've shifted around.

Now, [Kenneth] Noland as well: I collected Nolands early. So, I like the color field painting. I sold most of my pop painting and used the proceeds to collect color field painting and other painting.

GOODWIN: Well, obviously you only display a tiny portion of your collection in this home. I know you've loaned paintings to Art Center College [of Design] and you have a home in Santa Barbara, but there must be many other works that you're not able to display.

ROWAN: I've lent paintings to other museums. I've always lent. For example, I put a big Noland at Cornell, no, a big Morris Louis. I've lent for years at a time to University of California. Big Morris Louises I've lent to the National Gallery [of Art]. I usually have about seventeen paintings on loan to other museums or to shows. So, I just try to keep-- Even though I don't really lend anymore, except to important shows, but I hardly ever refuse a loan to a major retrospective or an important show.

Like Diebenkorn, for example, I had in some depth, and I gave, let's see, two of his paintings, maybe three, to the old Pasadena Museum. Now that the price structure is up on Diebenkorn, I've only got one painting [Ocean Park #37], and I'd like to, if I can get ahead a little bit, improve my collection. I've got early paintings, maybe three still, but I'd like to improve it in the later Diebenkorn series.

GOODWIN: But you also must have some things in storage.

ROWAN: Oh, yes. I have a lot of painting in storage. I keep two areas-- For example, now I've got a lot of the Stellas in storage. Most of my big painting just at this

moment is in storage, with a few lent, like Ron Davis-- I have Ron Davis in some depth, maybe ten paintings.

GOODWIN: Some huge ones.

ROWAN: Yes, big ones. Most of the big ones, big Ron Davises, are in storage, except one [List] that I've still got on loan to Art Center College, a big dodecahedron. I have another big dodecahedron [Inside Light] on loan to the Stanford [School of] Law building, at Stanford; it's a five-year loan. I have a big Stella [New Caledonian Lorikeet] on loan to La Jolla Museum, for example; it's a big '77 metallic. So, wherever I can get a good home for a painting, pending a new museum in L.A., I lend the painting if it's a good spot and has some security and has a low risk of being damaged.

GOODWIN: How do you explain your love for the huge, mural-sized paintings?

ROWAN: Well, I like the big paintings. I mean, it's the way the painting was in the sixties, a lot of the big painting. The color field painting is almost always big; its scale works for this kind of big painting. Like the Stellas are almost all big. Nolands are almost all big. Olitskis are almost all big. Hard to find a small one. Morris Louises are all big. I've got one Morris Louis out of seven that I can fit in my house for example. Oh, I had another one, a single stack that belongs to my wife. In the divorce, she got that particular Morris Louis.

GOODWIN: There must be some other reason though.

ROWAN: For big paintings?

GOODWIN: Yeah, yeah.

ROWAN: Well, I like small painting too if it works. It just depends on the painting. I have some small painting, I mean, relatively small, say, five feet, four feet. See, the big painting is scale, of course. Color and scale make the painting. I just like the power of the big-scale painting, the big paintings of the fifties. Also, I don't have any Pollock, but I like the big painting, like Autumn Rhythum in the Met. I like [Barnett Newman's] Onement in the Modern. The big painting works better for Pollock. For example, Lavender Mist, just recently acquired by the Mellons, is a relatively small painting. It's just as good. Usually the greatest painting is big--of the American painters of the mid-part of the century.

GOODWIN: How do you explain your keen interest in abstraction?

ROWAN: I just don't know. I just always liked it. You know, I've looked at Kandinskys. I've seen the [Wassily] Kandinsky museum in Munich. I always liked Kandinsky's important paintings, you know, the early Kandinskys of '14, '15, '16.

I like objective painting, too--with objects. It seems to me that there's more freedom and spiritual force in the nonobjective painting--for me, at least.

GOODWIN: Is it possible to describe how you relate to a

particular work on a--well, not a daily basis?

ROWAN: On the big painting, the big American painting, it's instant; I mean, I don't try to look at little parts of it. It's an instant, overall painting, like Barnett Newman's painting or any of these paintings. Pollock: you look at the whole, and the whole is what has the power. In illusionistic painting-- And I might add, I like the other painting: French painting. There's nothing the matter with a great Matisse painting, or any other painting. I like it all.

But just the painting of our part of the century that we can collect, it's usually abstract, as it changes. For example, Diebenkorn wasn't always abstract. A lot of painters have gone from one to the other. I'm just open on the subject. Even a painting like this one, [Paul] Wonner, is full of little objects, but the feeling of it is modernistic.

There really is a trend at the present moment towards--I don't know what you'd call it--romantic painting. I mean, it's the hard edge. For example, I like the best [Ellsworth] Kellys. I had a really good one [Red, Blue, Green], which is now given to La Jolla; it belonged in part to my ex-wife, part to me. But I love the important Kellys for that. But I like all kinds of other painting too. I think the real minimal-- I mean, there are a good many Kellys that I just don't go for, that are very difficult for me.

GOODWIN: What would one of those be?

ROWAN: I mean, instead of more for less, it's sometimes just less.

GOODWIN: Less is less.

ROWAN: There's almost nothing there. I can think of a lot of painters, I can think of quite a few that are just very difficult for me.

GOODWIN: Who are some of those painters?

ROWAN: Well, I'm thinking there are painters like [Robert] Ryman, [Dorothea] Rockburne. I thinking of a kind of second-generation New York painters. Some of them are very--I mean, others love them, but I have never collected them. I mean, Kelly is my favorite painter. And I've been looking at Polk Smith; I have one of his paintings--Leon Polk Smith--but it was a '59 painting. I just have the feeling that those paintings, earlier paintings, are stronger for me, like the Kellys. I had one called Red, Blue, Green, the one at La Jolla. And I like the earlier, '65, '66 Kellys more than the late ones. That's true of Leon Polk Smith as well. And true of Olitski; I like the early, spray paintings more than the current work of Jules Olitski, though I have a painting of '72 of Olitski's called Other Flesh 8, which I like.

But the earlier painting: there's just something, some power loss for the current painting. Now, that may be regained. Like Jules has had rather a tough, let's say, five or six

years; so has Noland; but so did Stella have a tough six or seven years, and look how he came out if it. But any time those that are having maybe a tough time can come out of it: people like Noland or Jules Olitski, and, less, second-generation painters like [Dan] Christiansen (I have three or four [of his] paintings). Current painting doesn't seem to interest me. [Edward] Avedisian. You can think of New York painters, where maybe I had three or four [of their works], that I haven't continued with.

GOODWIN: Do you feel that you don't know an artist until you have more than a few examples of his work?

ROWAN: No. I just-- If I like the artist-- Yes, I just like to take a look at the guy's work for a few years, to really be able to look at it.

And California painters for example-- I just have the feeling personally that the movement is more westerly, from the East. If we look at the people that I'm collecting, it would be [William] Wiley in the west, Diebenkorn in the west, Ron Davis in the west. In the East: Stella. And we could continue with all the younger painters that I'm interested in, many of them.

GOODWIN: Is this at all related to your travels? Are you spending more time--

ROWAN: No, I think I'm looking at what's in the museums. I just haven't seen what interested me much. This is always a personal thing. Of the people painting in New York right

now, the only one that I've acquired really, the only one I'm staying with right now, is Stella. There used to be about seven. I'm not interested in current Motherwell.

GOODWIN: Why not?

ROWAN: Well, I just don't know. I keep looking at the painting. I just don't see one that appeals to me. Collecting is just a personal thing: one guy's looking, what he feels, thinks. See, as soon as you start analyzing-- There's no way to analyze. You just do it. You buy the painting if you like it; if you don't, you don't. Now, if you've got a museum that's pleading with you to fill a position in something--the curator--and really need it, you might not like it so much, but you might buy it and then later give it to the museum. Certainly, these people--curators and directors--they're awfully good; and that's another way of looking. If it was the San Francisco museum, while I'd been a director and [Henry] Hopkins had really pleaded with something, some young painter, and I'd liked the guy, I probably would have collected him with the thought of giving it to that museum to maybe fill a slot that they didn't have with that painter.

I mean, for example, Ron Davis. It has one big, late, beautiful one, and it has another earlier dodecahedron that he gave them. But maybe it should have a stronger position than this and probably is interested.

GOODWIN: There's great consistency in your collecting. It seems very well defined.

ROWAN: It's essentially what I like. But, again, I've made probably all kinds of mistakes in not collecting.

GOODWIN: What are some of the mistakes?

ROWAN: Well, let's take [Roy] Lichtenstein, for example. I had one big Lichtenstein, let's say, two Lichtensteins, which I sold. All right, now, the same thing with pop painters. Lichtenstein might be, of all the pop painters--

Oh, let's take another one: an early one, for example, would be Jasper Johns. I liked the prints but couldn't understand the painting, though I did try very hard to buy the big flag painting during the first show at Pasadena. I liked that painting. This painting is the one that has been hanging in the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art]. [inaudible] valuable now. But I can remember at that time I offered him fifteen thousand [dollars] for the painting. He said it was double what he'd ever sold a painting for, but he still loved the painting himself and was going to keep it. He later lent it to the Met, and the Met did offer him a million for it, I guess, three years ago, but he didn't take it.

So, thinking of the mistakes. I mean, think of the flags. I did try to buy Orange Flag from Leo Castelli, but it belonged to Ileana [Sonnabend Castelli] in the divorce, and she wouldn't sell it. But I made a good bid for it. So I came close to acquiring one or two Jasper Johns.

GOODWIN: I don't see how you interpret these situations as mistakes.

ROWAN: Well, I mean from the point of view of a museum.

GOODWIN: Right, right.

ROWAN: Yes. I'm thinking in terms of leaving painting to a museum.

All right, now. "So, you've got a collection of the sixties. All right, now, where are the Johnses?"

Oh, well, I didn't like them.

I mean, from the point of view of the museum--

GOODWIN: But what point did your--

ROWAN: Well, from my point of view, I didn't-- Look, I've looked at Johns since-- And there are certain Johns paintings that I'm looking at quite differently from the way I used to look in the sixties. I like them a lot more. I mean, I'm thinking of gray paintings: Tennyson was offered to me for five thousand [dollars], and it looked like almost nothing--gray--to me.

So, I'm just saying, my looking changes. I mean, I have to just use it: I think it is a "mistake" that I didn't look a little better then, or a little differently. I mean Johns would be an example.

[Robert] Rauchenberg I didn't like and still don't like. Even the important ones of '59, '60, '61, I don't feel. I haven't changed a bit towards Rauschenberg. But my eye has

changed to where I look at Johns quite differently from 1965.

GOODWIN: What was your experience with Lichtenstein? You sold--

ROWAN: Yes. I bought a painting called Temple of Apollo. It's a good painting, and I sold it for a big sum of money. I used that money in part for acquiring another painting. Yeah, I thought it was way overpriced. I needed to sell-- It was a little bit more complicated: I had an important Morris Louis that I'd given one of my daughters. All right. Now, the daughter was involved in a divorce and needed desperately to sell the big Morris Louis; it was a big unfurled [Nu]. So, I much preferred that unfurled to the Lichtenstein Temple of Apollo. It was a good painting, and the Temple of Apollo appeared to me way overpriced. I was able to sell the Temple and use half of the proceeds to acquire other paintings, including the big Morris Louis. (I can't remember what the other two paintings were, but there were two other important paintings.) I'm just saying, the way I felt about Lichtenstein: Temple was an important painting, but it wasn't worth the [$]250,000. His current painting I thought was better, and the very best of his current painting was selling at [$]85,000. So, I just felt that we'd got out of balance on the price of this one. I needed the money, both to balance the whole and to acquire the three other paintings in trade; so I did it.

GOODWIN: Who acquired the Lichtenstein?

ROWAN: I sold it to the BlumHelman Gallery, who in turn sold it to [Joseph] Pulitzer, [Jr.], in St. Louis. I'm confident he'll give it to the museum [City Art Museum of St. Louis]. He's given a lot of things to the museum.

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GOODWIN: I'd like for us to continue discussing your collecting, Mr. Rowan. Tell me about your interest in pre-Columbian art.

ROWAN: Yes. Well, here way back [Albert] Earl Stendahl had a gallery opposite the Townhouse on Wilshire Boulevard. He was trying to sell little French paintings. He had some little French paintings. What helped him was selling little pre-Columbian objects, or big ones, and candy at Christmastime. He had a candy factory at the back of his--where his brother worked. So, he used to make trips to Mexico, and he always had interesting things. So, for a long time I looked at them. [Walter] Arensberg collected them, but they didn't look good to me. I didn't have much interest in them, but I always observed them.

So, finally, maybe five years after I'd looked at some really good ones and rejected them--the same kind of pattern as in American painting--I began to like pre-Columbian things, began to see it, very slowly. (So, this is a slow learner, George.) In any event, I began to buy little pre-Columbian things. They were very cheap.

GOODWIN: When was this approximately?

ROWAN: This was the time I bought Raoul Dufys from him, must have been '33, '34, '38, I mean, through that period I

bought a few Dufys and some other things. Curiously enough, as a dealer, he didn't seem to be able to differentiate between, for example, his own watercolor painting and Dufy. [laughter] He always tried to sell me little landscapes that this amateur painter made, always at a little higher price then the Dufys, which were a hundred dollars each.

It was the same pattern: in looking at pre-Columbian things, he never really knew whether it was a good one. He bought them. He bought them from the best people down there. And some of them-- For example, he sold Yale University a good-- Some of them were kind of great--and Arensberg--and some of them were really exactly nothing. He often liked the lesser pieces most, like the West Coast pieces. For example, I bought in one package the Teotihuacán mask and the Jaina Island figurine--Mayan figurine--and a beautiful dog, Veracruz dog, which is in my ex-wife's collection. I mean, a really good one, one that, for example, Ben Heller has always tried to buy from me.

GOODWIN: I know some of your pieces are reproduced in the Abrams book on pre-Columbian art [Pre-Columbian Art of Mexico and Central America; text and notes by Hasso Von Winning, plate selection by Albert Earl Stendahl].

ROWAN: Right, in Stendahl's own book; he created a book for himself. I had some good pieces, like the mask in question.

GOODWIN: But you didn't continue with the pre-Columbian art?

ROWAN: No. As the price went up, the rate of forgery went up. There were just any number of bad pieces. And the really great piece has always been pretty hard to find. For example, all the time I dealt with Stendahl, I have probably three pretty good pieces from him: the little Maya piece you can see on the left, my ex-wife's dog, which is an extraordinary gray one, about twenty-five inches--

GOODWIN: That's big.

ROWAN: That's big. It's gray color with black. It's just an extraordinary one. And then the Teotihuacán mask, that has since sold for a big sum.

GOODWIN: To a private collector?

ROWAN: I sold it to a dealer for [$]75,000 and the dealer, I know, sold it somewhat later for [$]150,000. There was no question it was a good mask. I sold it to help defray the cost of my divorce. So, here again, since maybe the middle forties, I haven't purchased any pre-Columbian object.

GOODWIN: Well, I like the relationship between the pre-Columbian and contemporary style.

ROWAN: I like pre-Columbian things. I've looked at them a lot, at [Robert Wood] Bliss's collection in Washington, D.C. Wherever I am, I always look at pre-Columbian art. The best of pre-Columbian, the best of Maya I feel is as good as anything.

GOODWIN: I agree.

ROWAN: Sometimes amazing pieces are found in European museums.

GOODWIN: I know of some collectors of contemporary art who also have an interest in tribal art. But sometimes that interest follows the interest in, say, abstract art.

ROWAN: Yes. I've always been slightly interested in African art. But you could never have the opportunity-- The gateway was New York or Europe or Paris. See, whereas here it was easy for Mr. Stendahl to go down to Mexico; I mean Los Angeles and Texas would be the two gateways for those pieces. I mean in California we never had a chance to look at the-- I don't think we had much chance to look at the great African pieces early, a lot less chance than pre-Columbian or Pacific pieces or Northwest Indian. See, the gateway [is] through Vancouver or Seattle. I've always liked Northwestern Indian but never acquired it.

GOODWIN: Let's talk now about contemporary artists and your relationship with them. Do you enjoy maintaining friendships with the artist whose work you collect?

ROWAN: Yes. The ones that I really know best [are] Frank Stella and Ken Noland and Jules Olitski. I don't really know them that well. I see them whenever they're here. I see Frank Stella; we have a common interest in thoroughbred racehorses, and he's often stayed at our farm. I just feel that I know Frank better, a lot better than I know the other two.

GOODWIN: Where is your farm?

ROWAN: It's in the San Joaquin Valley, halfway to San Francisco, in an area where you can grow almost everything from cotton to grain to safflower, all the basic crops.

GOODWIN: What kind of a person is Stella?

ROWAN: He's just very bright, very quick, really interesting, and easy to relate to, for me at least. He gets along fine with everybody. He gets along fine with my brother [Louis]. They have a common interest in horses. He does fine with people. He's fun to be with, fun to talk to. When I'm in New York I always see him, but not for long, I mean, maybe for, you know, a morning or have lunch, go down to his studio. I just feel I know him. Also I communicate over the telephone with him. He calls me. He discusses new work. Like the '77 work: he really asked me to come back and look at the big '77 paintings. I had the chance to look at the ten of them--eight or ten--but didn't take it. I haven't been interested in his work since the protractor series, haven't been interested in the Polish [Village series]. So I didn't go back, ignored the thought, and regretted it. Later I had to buy a piece from a dealer that did go back, from [Tony] Kasmin. He came over from London and bought the piece that I ended up with.

GOODWIN: That was the--

ROWAN: New Caledonian Lorikeet. It's the first version of that big painting, about fifteen feet. There are two versions:

a slightly smaller version, one foot smaller, that he produced later, and it conformed to his factors on size. The factory that made the metallic work came up with a slight mistake in the factor; and so my painting is about one foot longer horizontally than the [version bought by] Philip Johnson maybe a year later. So, even when I ignored his plea to look at his work, he didn't pressure me or anything. Then, the next year, I did get back there on the '78 work. When he told me to come back and look at them, I got there very fast. This was the painting called Bulal Chasm, that I was fortunate in seeing. Of the first six I had my choice. So, he always has just been easy to work with for me, cooperative.

GOODWIN: What role does he play in the making--

ROWAN: I might just mention, while I'm thinking about it, that the Pasadena Museum--he didn't like the article that [John] Coplans wrote in Artforum. Some Canadian friend of Coplans wrote an article that the space was no good. So, he came out somewhat prejudiced and told me he didn't think he'd like the new museum. Then, when it was up and open and he could come in and really look at the walls-- He said he didn't think he'd send his show here--didn't like the space--the big Stella retrospective. Then, when he came out and looked at the space, when it was lighted and open, he told me that he loved the space and liked the way his paintings looked. He went from hating the space to putting up with the space

and thinking it was quite interesting and not so bad. So, here again, he came out with his mind made up that it was no good, and before his show, he was very happy to have the show at Pasadena.

GOODWIN: I remember when he recently had his show at Newport [Harbor Art Museum], he had some nasty things to say.

ROWAN: He had some pretty sour comments for the press. [laughter] It didn't exactly make a big hit with the trustees. So, he is difficult to please on space. It's pretty hard to please Frank Stella. But nevertheless he seems to get along. He had the show at Newport. I saw it there and thought it looked pretty darned good. As a matter of fact, it was after looking at that show and really looking at these big '77 paintings that I realized what I'd missed. And then I went about trying to find one, and I found it in London.

GOODWIN: Do you know what role he actually plays in making the large metallic paintings?

ROWAN: I think he does everything. He tells the manufacturer precisely what to manufacture. All right. Then he puts the piece together, or it comes somewhat put together. He, I think, paints the parts. For example, the '78 piece, has twenty-eight parts when it's shipped. There are a lot of small curves that fit onto it. I believe that he paints them separately and then fits them together and then repaints them. For example, he repainted one part of Bulal Chasm after I

purchased it. He asked permission to, and I told him certainly. So, I think he fits the thing together, often painting the individual parts. But that's just my guess. He hasn't told me. The metal pieces, I mean, the '78 pieces, I don't think it's possible to paint them when they are fixed to the structure behind it, the grid. I think a great many features of it are painted, and then others are painted and added, in my opinion.

GOODWIN: Well, the piece [Bulal Chasm] that was on display at Art Center seems to me as much a sculpture as a painting.

ROWAN: Right. See, what this painting does for me is-- The power is obvious as soon as anyone looks at it. It does mediate between sculpture and painting. It could be called sculpture just as easily as it could be called painting. And in addition, what kind of amazed me when I saw it in the studio: looking straight ahead is one look, and looking from an angle to the left or right, if you move over much closer to the wall, it's quite a different-looking painting.

GOODWIN: Right, you want to get behind it.

ROWAN: Behind or even with the wall, it's still different; and actually behind it, it's still another painting. If you put your head around, it's all painted behind differently. So, there's a lot of ways of looking around it, like painted sculpture, or in the round. You look at all-- It changes from the main look. But if it didn't work from straight ahead,

or near straight ahead, left, and right, it wouldn't work. It's got a terrific power from straight ahead or, let's say, from somewhat over to the left or somewhat over to the right.

GOODWIN: Were you involved in planning the layout of the exhibition of Art Center? Or did someone there take care of it?

ROWAN: Yes, someone there first put the paintings along the wall, and then I looked it over. Let's see, before they put them on the wall, I made a few suggestions. Then I came back a day or two later, and once on the wall, I made a few other suggestions. Like they had the [Nathan] Oliveira [untitled] adjoining the veil, Morris Louis, and this simply didn't work. So, by moving it over, just a little bit to the right, and putting the [Larry] Poons [Fli] closer to-- I just changed a few things, not very many, maybe two or three.

GOODWIN: It was necessary to have the Stellas [Bulal Chasm and Tomlinson Court Park] face one another, and the Ron Davis paintings [List and Bent Vents and Octangular].

ROWAN: The Stella I didn't change the position of at all; they had it in what I thought was the correct position.

GOODWIN: Right. That seemed to make sense.

ROWAN: Yes. That wall I didn't alter. The [Cy] Twombly [untitled] didn't look too well where it was--it had a [John] Altoon [untitled] on the right, and on the left it had a

Wiley [Modern Limits]--but, nevertheless, it was the only place for it. Then, when I got to looking at it, it looked pretty well. Curiously enough, the way I'd remembered the painting, they told me that I had it upside down. You could make a case. You could make a case either way. Curiously enough, the way I've always seen it was the way it was hung there except when I bought it way back at Nick Wilder's gallery. And there Nick Wilder, who was present, said it was hung differently, with the curves on the blackboard going downward instead of lifting upward, the lighter segments. But it works beautifully both ways.

GOODWIN: You mentioned you're friendly also with Noland.

ROWAN: Yes. Ken Noland's a good friend. I just don't see him that often. When he comes to California, he always calls me. When I'm in New York, I often see him. My daughter [Carol] went to Bennington, where he lived and worked and had a house for a long time, the one that he sold to Norman Lear finally. He's asked me to stay with him often. I had a lot of his early work but none of his late work.

GOODWIN: Are you hoping to acquire an example?

ROWAN: I'm just observing it. I mean, the work as I see it now doesn't appeal to me. The work [inaudible] the past, let's say, since '72-- I can't remember the last work--I think it was around '70, '71, or '72--that I purchased.

GOODWIN: You must be close to Olitski.

ROWAN: Yes. I like him and get along easily with Olitski, but I hardly ever see him. He's in California very seldom. In the East, he's often not living in the city. He's often in the country. I don't see him often in New York City, but I always communicate with him when he's out here. I helped him-- Let's see, I lent some painting to Gallaudet College, in Washington, D.C. I lent some late Jasper Johns prints, and they inquired about Olitski. They were thinking of purchasing, letting a contract for purchasing a major piece of sculpture and discussed Olitski with me and asked me about him. I told them that I liked his sculpture, that I had one of the very early pieces of painted sculpture. In any event, they gave him the contract, and they have a major work of his. So, I communicated with Jules over that. He was delighted. He went to Washington, and they said that it was a pleasure for them at Gallaudet to work with him. They have a major work which incidentally their trustees had seen-- At the [Joseph H.] Hirshhorn Museum [and Sculpture Garden] they had seen another big piece of sculpture of Jules's. I know I helped get that commission.

GOODWIN: Do you have difficulty getting along with any artists?

ROWAN: I can't say that I really do. I don't know them too well. I mean, Ron Davis I had a good relationship with until the last few years. The last year or two he's been somewhat distant. I haven't seen him for about two years, but I used

to have a good relationship with him. I might add that he's the only artist that I can remember that gave five hundred dollars to the old Pasadena Museum, just sent in a check.

GOODWIN: Cash?

ROWAN: Yes. He mailed it in and said he'd like to help the museum--it had done a lot for mid-century art--and he just was sending in a contribution. I had a good relationship with Ron Davis but haven't seen him for a couple of years. Used to have.

Now, Wiley, again, I see when I'm in San Francisco and like him very much. I communicate with him now and then over the telephone. He sends me books that interest him. Unfortunately, I was unable to go to the opening of his retrospective in Minneapolis at the Walker [Art Center], which opened some two weeks or three weeks ago, but I'm hoping to get there before they-- I've lent, let's see, two big paintings and a drawing. I hope to get there. I hear it's well lighted and very well organized. I hope to get there before the show moves to Texas.

Wiley's dealer, incidentally, is Wanda Hansen, who is, in a way, in charge of [his] other three or four dealers. I mean he has her in between the dealer in New York and the dealer here and the dealer in Texas, who struggle a little bit, I suppose, over the major work. So, Wanda's a close

friend of mine and a dealer that's helped me a lot and helped me acquire Wileys. I mean, I have a good opportunity if something comes along or if she hears of something, of acquiring additional Wileys.

GOODWIN: How influential have dealers been in helping you collect?

ROWAN: They've been influential because they often control the best piece. The dealer is with the artist. All right? When a piece comes along that looks really great to them, the dealer can call any one of his clients, and he sometimes calls me. For example, if I'm collecting in depth, he's very apt to call me instead of somebody else. [tape recorder turned off]

GOODWIN: You were explaining how a dealer controls the best work of an artist.

ROWAN: Yes. Often he will offer the best work to someone that he knows is collecting that painter in some depth and that he knows is museum oriented and also someone that lends instead of not lending. The dealer also probably would consider the relationship of the collector to the artist if it was really an important work. If the collector has a good relationship with the artist and the dealer, it's certainly helpful that he should maybe be the first, or maybe the second even, that would be offered the opportunity of acquiring the work, because it can often be offered and you

have no money or are committed to some other painting or struggling to pay off something else. To give you the opportunity is important: you just might find a way to acquire it. So, it's important for any collector to have a good relationship with people like Andre Emmerich in New York or Leo [Castelli] and dealers here like Nick Wilder, [James] Corcoran, Wanda Hansen [in San Francisco], or [John] Berggruen. It's just as easy to treat the dealer fairly and be honest with the dealer. It's just as easy to have a good relationship as a bad relationship.

GOODWIN: Have some of these dealers actually helped shape your vision?

ROWAN: I'd say that when I first started collecting, one that was very helpful was Nick Wilder. He helped me acquire. For example, I wouldn't have acquired Twombly. An example, blackboard painting: pretty depressing, I mean, not at that point, as I was looking at Twombly, not that impressive. He had a show of six blackboards. All right. I had the chance, and I probably would have just not-- I wasn't against the painting. I didn't have either the feeling of a lot of power in the painting, any upliftment. I felt neutral about the painting.

Now, at this point, Nick Wilder said, "Now, please! I'm telling you! You just will feel fine in eight or ten years if you damn well buy the painting. You'll be able to see what I can see now. Just to please me, buy the painting.

And furthermore, you'll be making every museum happy. You'll be making--whoever it was: Demetrion or Walter Hopps or whoever--you'd be making the people at the Pasadena--"

Remember, there's another thing: there's some support. I mean the dealer has got his struggles, in L.A., particularly early. When nothing is sold in a show, it's just helpful to have the first one actually sold. So, to help yourself, you help the dealer--and I made the decision almost maybe the day before the show opened--and you help your museum, the museum you're related to, often. So, a dealer like Nick Wilder is very helpful to me. I mean I can remember this case, the [Helen] Frankenthaler, a major Frankenthaler.

GOODWIN: Does he actually discuss an artist's work with you?

ROWAN: The dealer?

GOODWIN: Yes.

ROWAN: He gets you down to look and then doesn't really express himself unless he's asked, see. The babbling dealer that tries to sell you really is hardly effective. But if you ask him, "Now, what do you really think, Nick, of Twombly, Twombly's future?" I mean we're looking at the painting; I feel neutral about it. When a dealer like Wilder with the insight that Wilder has says that he's absolutely confident of Twombly--he knows Twombly, knows he's a brilliant person, knows he's an unrecognized person--it helps. If you really

like the painting, you don't have to say anything. It's when you're in the neutral position, don't really care--you're buying other things--whether you add it or not where the dealer can help me. If you really are wild about the painting and can't live without it, that's quite a different thing. The dealer can sense that instantly and doesn't have to say anything. Doesn't say anything, I've found. Andre never did or Castelli or any of the good dealers; they just let you look at it.

GOODWIN: Why do dealers have a somewhat bad reputation in the public mind?

ROWAN: I guess that anyone with dealer--real estate dealer, automobile dealer, the guy that sells you the icebox, fixture dealer, just the fellow that hustles you and sells you--doesn't seem to have-- I mean people don't really consider him in the same class with the great architect. [laughter] He's a hustling salesman. So, really there are dealers and dealers. Some dealers have marvelous reputations on all the levels that I've mentioned. Others don't. There are just a lot of dealers that have the other, hustling reputation. They often make every error they can in their choice of the-- I mean they make lots of mistakes in the painters that they choose and that they think will be successful.

It's just that when you really think of the dealer system, as opposed to some other system-- Think of the system in

Russia: some commissar tells the artist that you're the one that we're going to-- Let's say, the political system, be nice to our commissar. The system that we have, the system that the British have, the system that the French have, the Germans, the Japanese, the dealer system: it's way more advanced. These dealers don't survive unless they are successful. It's their purpose--let's say, in America, with a couple of hundred thousand people painting--it's their purpose-- No collector can see even the tiniest fraction in his own town; so the dealer's function is to see-- Between the dealers--[each has] maybe eight to ten artists, and they've looked at a lot--so now the thing is narrowed down to fifty dealers or twenty. You can have a chance of looking at the artists of those dealers. So, the system works pretty well. So, the dealer is successful if he has the insight or the ability to choose a successful artist. A dealer has relationships with museum personnel and with collectors and with the media. Some of these people that write--the whole media is important too; we haven't discussed it--these people, the critic, is certainly a factor. So, now the dealer and the collector and the artist: they all communicate. The best chance is, not to try to see, let's say, twelve thousand artists in L.A.; better to deal with, let's say, five or six or ten dealers to look what they-- They spend all day long trying to find the important artist--and all night long.

GOODWIN: Do you feel, though, that the dealers' power has sometimes been exaggerated and the dealer is artifically manipulating or even creating a market?

ROWAN: I don't think a dealer can. I think that the will or the wish could be-- A dealer could attach himself to the wish that he's making, creating an important artist. What it takes to make the great artist, I've always felt, is certainly the dealer has the collector--the dealer, all right--the media, the museum, including the university museum, and let's not forget the really important one: the public. So, if it's a really great artist, often the public is back. But when you get down the line there, it often takes all of them. This is just my opinion. I mean, look at the classic work of the, let's say, last century or the first part of this one. I mean, the great, let's say, [Claude] Monet water lily: it's just not the dealer or the critic or the collector that made that artist great. The public was there too.

GOODWIN: Well--

ROWAN: All right. Well, we could debate the point, but I'm just saying, in the longer run, I feel-- It's like fixing a horse race: there's no way with twelve horses running and twelve jockeys and twelve agents and twelve owners for someone to fix a race. Someone could try to, but it takes a lot of things.

GOODWIN: I tend to agree that, by the end of the race, the winner is revealed.

ROWAN: Or halfway down the race.

GOODWIN: We obviously have to refer to some examples.

ROWAN: Well, let's take Pollock, for example. Ben Heller purchased Pollock for five thousand, One, and the big painting [Blue Poles], that he sold to Australia, for twenty-five thousand. You know the Met paid thirty-five thousand for Autumn Rhythm. I'm just saying, it wasn't that long before-- The public loves those paintings.

GOODWIN: It seems to me that the public is the least important factor in establishing the validity or the importance of a contemporary.

ROWAN: Let's just say, I don't exclude them. I think that they are a factor.

GOODWIN: Are you defining the public as the people who visit museums?

ROWAN: Yes, that's right.

GOODWIN: I don't accept that argument.

ROWAN: All right. Well, it's fun to take a look at the piece. I mean, you'd agree with me in the longer run.

GOODWIN: Oh, absolutely.

ROWAN: All right.

GOODWIN: That Pollock is a winner.

ROWAN: All right. Let's say, in the shorter run-- I'm not going to debate the point. The public in our Pasadena case is usually about a decade back, but remember that the public

are looking at the media too.

GOODWIN: Right.

ROWAN: And the public look at-- I'm just saying, I used to exclude them, but I just don't anymore. I'm much less apt to exclude them than I used to be. Let's take the best novel. OK? Let's change the subject a little bit. Best music? The public seem to have a way of-- They could be wrong. For example, Stravinsky had a little bit of trouble, [Le] Sacre du printemps, in 1910, but I'm just saying, it wasn't long, a year or two later. Let's think of the music. There's no question: the public don't take too long to support--

GOODWIN: All right, but music is a public art form.

ROWAN: Let's think about the best play. OK? Is it just a critic?

GOODWIN: No.

ROWAN: No. Just the other playwrights?

GOODWIN: No.

ROWAN: All right, it's the public.

Now, let's think of a great novel.

GOODWIN: But those are all public art forms.

ROWAN: Yes, but I'm just saying, it's not too bad an idea to spend a minute or two thinking about the public and its relationship to it all.

Now, let's look at painting.

GOODWIN: OK, let's look at painting. The public's heroes in the field of painting are artists like [Andrew] Wyeth, [Norman] Rockwell, basically old fashioned, non-avant-garde--

ROWAN: Yes, and Stella and Pollock and Motherwell and-- Just keep "anding." Sure.

GOODWIN: Pollock now but not Pollock during his lifetime.

ROWAN: Yes. Well, during his lifetime he was becoming important. The French used to claim that he was French.

GOODWIN: Pollock?

ROWAN: I heard one French dealer kidding, "He comes from Vee-yomink [Wyoming]." I don't want to really press the point, but I'm just saying, it isn't a bad idea to look at music, the novel, and the theater. It's easy for us to say they don't have anything to do with it. Now, if they really hate it, it's a factor; and they usually don't. If it's really great, I maintain that the public are there before we give them credit. So, I include them. I don't exclude them the way I used to.

GOODWIN: Well, it seems to me that today more than ever the dealer is the crucial factor in promoting an artist's career, more important than the museum curator or the critic.

ROWAN: Or the collector?

GOODWIN: Well, no. I'd say the collector follows the dealer.

ROWAN: I'm not getting an order, hierarchy here.

GOODWIN: That's what I was trying to do.

ROWAN: No. Yes, but I don't think it can be done. No dealer can really make an artist unless a lot of other things are going with him, and one of those other things is the collector, another one is the critic, and another one, I say, in the museum or the art [gallery] is the public taking a look. I'm just saying, we can't eliminate all of them. I say it takes all factors. And let's add one more: he'd better be in a communication center. It isn't a bad idea to have the gallery-- I don't think it would do in Winnemucca, Nevada, that a first-class gallery-- I think it's a little better, yes, to be in New York, or a big communication center--let's not forget it--where people come and go, or L.A. Let's add that other factor.

GOODWIN: But my concern is that contemporary art becomes kind of a spectator sport, or a sporting event, where it's a public spectacle and not a situation that celebrates authentic artistic achievement.

ROWAN: What do you mean, public spectacle? I'm trying to find out what you mean.

GOODWIN: Well, I'm thinking about magazine articles, television shows--

ROWAN: Now we're dealing with a critic, right? A magazine article. So, Barbara Rose or somebody-- So, there's a picture in Vogue or in Time or I'm thinking of a full page

[in] Life-- But it was, let's say, the Stella that I'm thinking of.

GOODWIN: But to me that's not the forum to discuss issues. It's basically a--

ROWAN: If you have a big photograph, you're looking. Full page in Time? You're looking.

GOODWIN: Yes. But usually by the time it gets to Time, the process has kind of run its course. It's part of the public domain.

ROWAN: Well, I'm just stating my position. It takes four factors to make that one individual. Let's take that museum director, the museum curator, that thinks he's found a great artist. So, he screams and yells and has a show, tells everybody he's great. He screams at every other museum curator. It doesn't work. I mean, sure, it's provided the collector agrees and the critics agree and the public, as they walk through his museum, don't think it's terrible. I'm just saying, if there's enthusiasm--and there could be for all of them--no one factor can do it. No collector.

GOODWIN: Right. But can you think of any major artist who has been discovered by a museum director as opposed to a dealer? It seems to me that the museum directors and curators are following the lead of the dealers.

ROWAN: In England a guy can't look at forty thousand painters in the same sense the collector can't in America a good many

more--and in Europe. I'm just saying that's the function: to narrow the hundred thousand--

GOODWIN: Right.

ROWAN: All right. So, now, he doesn't make the guy. He makes it available for others to look at. Now, who looks? The critic looks, and the collector looks. And the media comes along.

GOODWIN: Yes, I agree. But it seems that the tastemaker is the dealer and not the director, the curator, who has traditionally held that place.

ROWAN: Let's take the dealer that has got an illusion that he's found a great painting, a big breakthrough. He has a show. A few people come and look at it--I mean, people from museums and collectors--and they tell the dealer that he's nuts. The dealer goes on yelling and screaming about his guy. He doesn't get anywhere. It takes the enthusiasm on the part of the collector. And the intelligent critic looks; a guy like [John] Russell looks. I'm just saying, as soon as you begin to get consensus here--don't forget people go in and out of this place--I'm just saying, it takes all the factors. (I won't go over that again.) No one element can do it. So, the idea that a dealer can make or break an artist is not right. He can help bring the guy to the attention of the other people.

GOODWIN: Let's look at this from a different perspective.

ROWAN: Let's say, there are fifty dealers in New York, and they've each got eight [artists]; so you have two or three hundred painters that people are looking at. I'm not counting the other ten thousand, let's say, that are in town or in New York State or the West. So, the first step is a dealer step. If you say, "Yeah, he has to make the first step. He spends ten hours a day going to people's studios," I'm in agreement.

GOODWIN: Well, how do you account for the tremendous change in art styles over, say, the last thirty years? How come we've shifted so quickly from, say, abstract expressionism to pop to op to performance, and so on?

ROWAN: It's just what happened. I'm not going to try to explain it. I mean, we made the breakthrough. Right? Everything came from France in 1947. All right. And then in a very short period, you had one, two, three, almost four breakthroughs. Alan Solomon tells me it happened once before, in the Renaissance, in the sixteenth century. So, we had the abstract expressionist painters. OK, and before too long, as they were going strong, along came the parents of pop: Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg are right there, '58, '59. So, there was a second one coming right there during the first-- Now, the first breakthrough was a miracle enough. So, after two hundred years in France, it was across here, and it was there. Now, there was a second one coming right up while

the first one was going, five years later. And then right with it--you can hardly wait a minute--there's another one: color field painters, '57, '59, the third [breakthrough]. Then it wasn't very long before we heard about people like Lichtenstein and Warhol. It was kind of three years later. Two years? So, all of it in a tiny period, twelve years, it could be said that you had three breakthroughs, one following the other one. It just happened. There's no accounting.

GOODWIN: Do you think it happened naturally?

ROWAN: Yes. The thing had shifted. Europe had been in ashes twice in two wars. America was prosperous and could support the artists. They'd crossed the Atlantic 2,600 miles, they'd come west 2,600, and there it was. It happened. It happened after two hundred years of dominance in France.

GOODWIN: Well, I'm not necessarily disagreeing with you, but I'm not--

ROWAN: It's just my opinion, I might add. And let's think geographically for one-half minute. We've got two hundred years in France. So, 1750? [Jean Honoré] Fragonard, [Francois] Boucher: it was in France. It wasn't in Holland. Now, why did it change after living 150 years, 98 percent of the action in Holland? I'm not saying why. I don't know why. But it moved. It moved from Holland to France. And then just as we finish the thought, why did it move from Italy to Holland after 200 years in Italy? So, the

geographical move: I don't think you've got the whys other than that the place that it moved to was prosperous.

GOODWIN: Well, I think there are various factors that help explain the shift but cannot predict a shift. But what puzzles me is why a movement like pop was so short.

ROWAN: Let's think a little bit why. Maybe it deserved to be a little bit short. I don't think there's any why. Furthermore, how damn short really was it? There's still a lot of, let's say, photographic realism that could be called pop images. Look at the Wonner there. That is to say, here we are in '79. It's not pop, but there's some spirit of pop somewhere. So, the spirit of pop has a way of lingering on.

GOODWIN: That's true. Except generally pop seems to be old hat.

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: It doesn't generate the excitement or the glamor that it used to.

ROWAN: Did it really?

GOODWIN: Yeah. Well, from my observation point. It seemed to be much more of a public event than any of the related movements. It seemed to be kind of a carnival because the artists themselves loved the limelight so much.

ROWAN: Let's look at Roy Lichtenstein now. He's very important.

GOODWIN: Right.

ROWAN: He's painting now and well.

GOODWIN: I agree.

ROWAN: Jasper? I mean, a parent of pop? Doing fine. He made prints a lot of years. If he'd kept going--I mean, I don't know-- I'm just saying that there was a lot of his time he didn't paint. He made prints.

GOODWIN: Oh, yeah. That's a point I'm leaning to. Right. Many of the artists are probably doing superior work to the work they did when they were first recognized.

ROWAN: Two of them get high prices. Right? Very high.

GOODWIN: Yeah, except people don't think of these artists as representing a movement anymore. So, the best artists have probably survived the movement, and the weaker artists have succumbed to the movement.

ROWAN: And some of them are in between.

GOODWIN: Right.

ROWAN: And they're maybe doing better, I mean, like Rosenquist. He's got a position, James Rosenquist.

GOODWIN: Right. I'm not even aware of his current work.

ROWAN: Pretty good. I'm just saying we don't hear that much [from] the other, say, ten thousand of them. Just a lot of people painting with the pop spirit that we don't hear that much [from] the other, say, ten thousand of them. Just a lot of people painting with the pop spirit that we don't hear of. So, in every decade, it's another way of looking at the art. But in the pop movement in the decade, there are certainly three or four of them that are very strong still. Let's look at

each decade in France: it's hard to find more than five or six in each decade.

GOODWIN: Yes, I think that's true.

ROWAN: So, maybe it's not-- I mean, maybe what's happening is pretty normal. But the blossoming, the flowering, in America was fantastic. Some people even add photorealism: [Richard] Estes. I'm just saying, it hasn't interested me, but there are a few people that still do this.

GOODWIN: Yeah. But you said [in our first session] at the moment you're not particularly interested--

ROWAN: No, I'm not.

GOODWIN: --in the contemporary scene. There's not as much that interests you now as in the past.

ROWAN: No, I didn't say-- I hope I didn't say that.

GOODWIN: Well, not literally.

ROWAN: I said I was interested in quite a few painters that, I said, happen to be just located in the West that I'm collecting in depth. And I named them. All right. So, I didn't say that I was trying to buy Estes.

GOODWIN: Oh, no, no, no. I wasn't making that point at all. I understood that. [tape ends; following material, while continuing this discussion, was recorded by error over material earlier recorded on side one.]

ROWAN: We were talking about dealers. All right. My position was that they're the people that find the painters. They bring them to the attention of three groups, three or four groups. That's a huge service. I haven't changed my position that no dealer can really make the artist without-- I mean just promote and make him. It takes the other factors. That's all. And when they're all going, what happens is just that, provided the artist doesn't change and go to pot. If the guy is creative and keeps going, everything works. But if he suddenly takes five years off to learn how to play the harmonica, things might change. [laughter]. I'm thinking of one--

GOODWIN: Is that true?

ROWAN: Yes, one rather promising painter in the fifties. I'm trying to think of his name. I have one of his works. [He's] a friend of Walter Hopps. That's what he did. I'll think of it in a minute. [Philip] Hefferton. He was a pretty good painter. I've got a big painting of his called The White House.

He said, "I'm not going to paint anymore. I play the harmonica."

So, things can change with the artist. [He can] stop painting, like a playwright writing a play.

GOODWIN: Do you tend to look everywhere for art that interests you, or are you inclined to patronize--

ROWAN: I try to stay open and look everywhere. And I'm not rigid, even on geographical. I mean, it's obvious to anybody that 98 percent of the action's in America. But I sure look at English artists or German. I just try to keep open. Look at English artists. There are quite a few of them well worth looking at now. I mean, I don't know why. I think I've mentioned earlier that you have to remember that in the-- I mean, [Francis] Bacon certainly isn't American. He's in Britain or Ireland. All right. [David] Hockney is English. All right.

Now, there are others where a show is right in town now where we can see them, like [Frank] Auerbach and [Euan] Uglow and others that have a lot of talent and are worth constantly looking at. There's a big show coming up in '80, in the fall of '80, at Yale that the curator at Yale is organizing. It's going to show all these painters in depth, the English painting. I'm just saying, it's well worth not just saying, "They're in Britain, and everything's here." It's well worth looking, looking hard. I don't know that many German painters. I mean, the ones I know, I have almost no interest in, but it might be worth observing what's happening in Germany.

GOODWIN: Well, you mention that you think that there's been a shift geographically in artistic centers, where New York seemed to dominate the action in this country, the western part of the United States is becoming even more important.

ROWAN: This is how it looks to me. But that doesn't--

GOODWIN: I would agree.

ROWAN: Yes, all right. But let's say that 98 percent or 95 percent of the action is still there. I mean, it was in France for a long time, but that didn't mean there weren't some awfully good painters [other places]. I can think of some from Spain, and you can too.

GOODWIN: Right.

ROWAN: So, I'm just saying it was never 100 percent. Anyone collecting in a given area in the last quarter of this century ought to be taking a look for the 5 percent that aren't American. Or 3 percent. Where are they, and who are they? Certainly, Bacon will be in any important collection of mid-century probably. Probably Hockney. All right, that's two people that aren't American. All right. Now, let's think a little bit. Maybe some of these younger painters in England will earn their way up there. At least, I said, it's worth observing what's happening there. None of us know what's happening. We all think we know what's happening in Japan. Just nothing. But we might be fooled. It's worth observing.

GOODWIN: But I want to make the point that you're just as interested in knowing the California scene as the New York scene.

ROWAN: Oh, yes, more. More interest because I know that this-- I mean, here I say, "I know": I'm convinced that the

shift has occurred. All right? So, you look where it is hard, harder. In New York you should continue to look at all those dealers, what's happening there. Maybe now and then even look at Chicago. Remember? Someday something's going to happen in the middle part of it. I mean, maybe, but I'm just saying.

GOODWIN: Well, actually I think it has happened: the roots of pop art seem to have come from the Midwest.

ROWAN: Right, OK. Then, let's not forget that [H. C.] Westermann, the sculptor, came from there. So, it's very possible. See, I've never been that interested in pop art, but I'm just saying, I've been somewhat interested in pop art. But, there again, we're still looking at America. I gather that you feel what I feel: that there's been a shift from east to west. There's a shifting emphasis on the three or four or five dominant painters in the given-- Here we are in the eighties now. We can already look at the seventies. Not too unclear what's happened.

TAPE NUMBER: TWO, SIDE ONE

JANUARY 10, 1980

GOODWIN: Again, we're discussing the shift in artistic activity in this country. It seems to me that the western United States deserves a great deal of credit for the abstract expressionist movement, [which] isn't acknowledged. Many of the leaders of abstract painting were either born here or worked here at one time.

ROWAN: You're thinking of people that worked at the University of California, like [Clyfford] Still?

GOODWIN: Right, but even--

ROWAN: Rothko?

GOODWIN: Yeah, Pollock grew up in the West; [Sam] Francis, [Robert] Motherwell, [Richard] Diebenkorn--

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: --and [Hans] Hofmann visiting San Francisco, Rothko--

ROWAN: Yes, we tend to forget that a lot of them grew up here or were here.

GOODWIN: Right, right. It seems to me that--well, I don't want to exaggerate this thought, but the scale of freedom of the large pictures owes something to life in the West.

ROWAN: Right, that big, open space.

GOODWIN: Right, and almost a lack of highly established artistic tradition. You know, the opportunity to innovate.

ROWAN: Right. I'm trying to think of a few others.

GOODWIN: Right, right.

ROWAN: [Wayne] Thiebaud. Thiebaud came from the West.

GOODWIN: Right, right.

ROWAN: Francis certainly spent time in Europe.

GOODWIN: Well, I think the European influence is almost the catalyst that converts the energy to style.

ROWAN: Yes, right. The best Francis, I mean, the most interesting painting to me, was '56, '7, '8, '54, '5, '7, or even as far back as '52. European influence was there. There was also some Eastern influence in the army. In the military he was in the Pacific.

GOODWIN: Right. I was trying to draw a parallel between your early interest in French art and your, I think more profound, interest in contemporary American art. It seems to me that there's a corollary. That is, many of the abstract artists you like have a kind of French or cosmopolitan or a stylish element that is not necessarily found in the work of other abstract painters. I don't know if you follow that.

ROWAN: Yes, I do. I mean, there's something about pure Western-- I mean, I'm thinking really a bit it's the wrong thing to think about probably--but pre-Colombian Western art. Look at the rough, tough-- I mean compare it to the central part of Mexico, sophisticated, where the Gulf-- The West was strong and emotional.

I was thinking of some of the Western painters that we

think about. I mean, they were painting with Hassel Smith early: [Frank] Lobdell, for example. I mean, I have never been interested in Lobdell, for example. I don't know what there was missing, but there was something for me.

For example, Matisse. Let's look at the Matisse work and the influence on all American painting.

GOODWIN: Right. And you seem particularly responsive to that strain of abstract painting.

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: And less interested in somebody like, oh, Rothko.

ROWAN: Yes. Rothko I was interested in. I've always been interested. Again, I never-- I thought a one-image painter would stick at the low-- I always felt I could do other things and that Rothko wouldn't go up in value, but I was quite wrong.

GOODWIN: But it seems to me that Rothko's sentiment is a lot different.

ROWAN: Yes. But the spiritual power of Rothko is right there. And in the painting of the fifties, it can be incredibly elegant in its-- Well, elegance may be the wrong word, but the great Rothkos that I like, like the one in the Modern, have got something in them which isn't just power and energy. They've got a lot of things. I'm just saying I am interested in Rothko.

Where I'm not so interested is with Still. I mean, I'm not that interested. I look at a massive Still, and a lot of

them, most of them bore me except the early work that has a lot of energy in it. I mean, I don't say I'm not interested--

GOODWIN: Yeah, I follow that.

ROWAN: Whereas with Rothko, across the board, I can't say that. It's seldom that you see a late, not the early painting, but I mean, the best period of Rothko that's that dull except the blacks at the end. The depressed bottom of the birdcage, I mean, the really bottom one: they've never done anything for me.

GOODWIN: Right. But it seems that you do prefer the-- Well, there's a combination of interests. On the one hand, you say you like the freedom, the power, the spirituality of abstract painting. On the other hand, it seems you like the elegance, the color of abstract painting.

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: I can see why an artist like Stella appeals to you, but I have some trouble with other artists.

ROWAN: Yes.

GOODWIN: I don't know where Ron Davis fits.

ROWAN: I just love the major work of Davis, particularly once he went back to the canvas again: The Arch, for example, that I own, and [Bent Vents and Octangular]. These late, big paintings, the one that San Francisco owns, the big one, and even the-- I don't know why, but I like the dodecahedrons. The much earlier work: I've got it, but I'm not that fond of it.

GOODWIN: Well, to me Davis seems to be a very decorative-type artist. I don't know if that's a put-down or not.

ROWAN: No.

GOODWIN: He's not as spiritual as, say, Morris Louis.

ROWAN: No, not "as," but different spitiually. There's something about the late painting. I mean, really it's a look; it's an illusion. It's the illusion that fascinates me about it, plus there's a lot of power and spirit in them. Let's take a Kelly or the late Polk Smith: this kind of painting. See, Davis has got something different that appeals to me a lot more than-- If you look at fifty Kellys, I might be interested in one or two. (See, now, he's an important painter.) Whereas Davis, I'm interested in I don't know what. I mean, I'm interested in most of the important work of Davis. I can relate to it, but, again, I don't know why I can relate to it.

GOODWIN: Do you think he's a "deep" artist?

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: You do?

ROWAN: Yes. [It's] really a three-point, Renaissance painting, the late work, which is a different type of illusion. It's a different [inaudible] there; and yet the illusion has got three-point perspective in it. God only knows how, but it's there. And this always appeals to humans.

GOODWIN: Well, I was referring to depth in a philosophical sense.

ROWAN: Yes. But I'm just saying, you've got to look at the whole painting. There's no way to analyze this or that or the other thing. It's what the whole painting does for you. See, Davis: really I could keep looking at Ron Davis painting and not get bored with it. I keep seeing other things. For me it has a peculiar power--the really great works of Davis. I mean the late works, including all the dodecahedrons, not all, but a lot. So, now, there it is.

This is true, I suppose, of every guy that collects. You can't analyze just why. As soon as you start to apply a scientific method to it, it's got to be more the other thing. It's more related to something else than analysis. Any spiritual thing doesn't bear analysis. Pretty hard to analyze that. So, if we try to apply the method of analysis to looking at a painting, we can do it a little bit, but we begin to get into trouble. The guy can't explain why because it's like poetry. You start to analyze why you like a poem, and you start to get into trouble. So, there are just a lot of things that don't bear analysis, including most spiritual things, a lot of philosophical things.

When you get a philosophical analyst, a philosopher that analyzes everything, you get into a different kind of trouble, whereas there are a lot of philosophers that don't. Remember the British philosophers always said "the poor guy" about any guy on the Continent? The poor fellow hadn't read logic.

They didn't even have the Continental philosophers in their libraries because the poor devil hadn't read logic. See, but there are a lot of good philosphers, like [Edmund] Husserl, that keep going. They couldn't apply it though. They're really in painting. For me it's: What does the thing do to the viewer? And each viewer probably has a bit different.

GOODWIN: You've been much more interested, though, in painting than sculpture.

ROWAN: Right. In our time, I mean, in the time that I've been collecting, painting has always, in my opinion, dominated sculpture. I just think it has. I mean, the sculpture I see often comes out of painting.

GOODWIN: I agree.

ROWAN: Right, so. And it might be about to turn; it might be almost sculpture's turn. A collector ought to be pretty aware of this. Maybe. I mean, I keep looking at sculpture. It seems to still be painting's turn to me. There aren't too many sculptures that interest me that much, but I always look.

I mean, I look at Stella. When he starts mediating between the two, he instantly appeals to me. Maybe that's just what's happening with the late work.

If you look at, let's say, [Mark] di Suvero: those big pieces are interesting but not enough for me. I have one

small piece or two, but I'm just saying, I'm not going to die just because I can't collect two or three big de Suveros. I've always been interested in them. I know he's an important sculptor, but I'm not that interested.

GOODWIN: Well, what about David Smith?

ROWAN: Yes, David Smith: I like the early pieces, like Australia. But when we get to the Cubi, see, to me it's a hard way to do cubism. I like them, but I'm not that nuts about them. Hard way. I'm just not that mad about them.

GOODWIN: I thought there might be kind of a carry-over from your interest in pre-Columbian sculpture into contemporary American sculpture.

ROWAN: I'm kind of interested. I look, but not-- For example cubist things: I had the chance to purchase some way back at French and Company. There was a show of the first Cubi things. I'm not too interested in [Anthony] Caro either. I've looked at his work. I have one.

GOODWIN: [Louise] Nevelson?

ROWAN: No, not a bit.

I'm interested enough-- I have a-- I'm interested in Caro. I mean, there's no question that I'd like to be in a position where I could acquire some major work of the sculptors like Caro or di Suvero. I'd like to collect here if I can ever afford it. I'd like to balance a little bit here. When it comes to a limited budget, I am much more interested in

the painting.

GOODWIN: Let's talk about museums directly for a while. When did your association with the Pasadena Museum begin?

ROWAN: I just can't remember exactly what year, but I think it was sometime in the sixties, early sixties. I became a trustee of the museum. It was the old museum. It had the [Galka] Scheyer collection. I've always been interested in Klee--I mean, fairly interested--so I began to just look at what they had. I've always had some interest in the German painters of the twenties, like [Ernst] Kirchner, [Alexei von] Jawlensky. The people that they had working for the museum were knowledgeable in the German field, like Demetrion; so I began to take a little bit more interest than I had in German. And of course, I started to increase my interest in collecting American.

GOODWIN: Could you characterize the Pasadena Museum when you became involved with it?

ROWAN: Yes. When I became involved, [the museum] was interested in a lot of little things. What made the decision there was the bequest of Galka Scheyer. All right. So, that made it obviously a museum that was a twentieth-century museum. So, all I did was to urge the specialization in the twentieth century. We couldn't make it in the first part of [the century]--no money--so concentrate on the mid-century and try to be a first-class museum instead of a little bit

of this, a little of that like the museums in Phoenix (you could keep going in the West) and try to really take this museum and do something fairly important. I could see that-- You asked what had happened. It had come across the Atlantic; so why not try to be good at where the whole action was anyway? So, I worked towards that end: specialize it, not try to be a nineteenth-century museum. I just worked towards that end on the board, and gradually-- Without the Scheyer collection, I just don't know what would have happened. This made the museum a twentieth-century museum. All we had to do was to extend that, and that's exactly what we did with some success. We moved it rather rapidly forward from a "nothing museum" to one that was really doing rather a creditable job, bringing important Eastern things out West. There was nobody else doing it. Maybe a little bit in San Francisco. Nothing in Oregon or Washington or Southern California or Arizona or, when you really think of it, from the Mississippi west at that time. There wasn't much going on in Texas then. What we were trying to do was to see if we could at least bring to the consciousness of the people here what was really happening in American art and, in the meantime, acquire something. We were able to do it reasonably well in maybe nine years, eight years, moved it way forward. And then the desire to build a new museum--

It's pretty simple: to compete with the County [Los Angeles County Museum of Art], the professional staff, like

Tom Leavitt, felt that we had to have a new museum, and so did the then-president of the museum, Eudorah Moore; she felt we had to have one too. The emphasis as soon as I got there was on building--land and building--just [as it was when] I was a trustee of the Cate School or Claremont Men's College. You build. So, now the whole energy, or most of it, goes into acquiring land and bricks and mortar.

My position I can remember, when the decision was made, was: Why don't we reverse it? Try to collect the painting and then have the barn follow if we really had the painting? But no one was interested.

GOODWIN: Is that because there were so few collectors on the board?

ROWAN: There weren't many collectors on the board. I mean, what there were of them followed the idea that you couldn't have a first-class twentieth-century museum in competition with the county's new museum [in terms of] space. You wouldn't have the space for the big shows that have to come: the Stellas and the Motherwells and the Jasper Johnses. Without room, the County would get the show, and this museum would be relegated, shot back just where it was: a small city, a Pomona- or Pasadena- or Whittier-type of museum. So, the professional staff, with two people there (Tom Leavitt: he's a very able fellow who's necessary to have a new museum)-- So, the board--it's what they wanted anyway--went along with the

professional staff.

And of course, I didn't object. I mean, once you have twenty people, or nineteen, in accord, it's-- I made about a fifteen-minute talk on the idea of have the painting and have the barn follow, but nobody listened.

So, then what I did was to stay on the board and do my best to make a successful museum out of it. I mean, I didn't know I was right. I was a bit tired of trying to raise money for schools and colleges. I'd been the general chairman of raising money for Claremont Men's College. It was hard work. Of course, it involved expanding the college from [four hundred] to one thousand [students], and then real work on raising money for buildings. So, a little bit of my reluctance to go on with one more-- I could see for the next four years it would be nothing but meetings on how to raise money to build a building.

Of course, that's what it was. The building, of course, was built, and then there was no money for an endowment; so it changed centuries.

GOODWIN: Why was it so difficult to raise funds in this community?

ROWAN: It gets back to what you said earlier: that this museum was anywhere from twelve to fifteen years ahead of the public at that time, '62 or '3 or '4. There's been a lot of catching up. Right now there'll probably be two new museums

built, and I think rather easily. I mean, it's now 1980. It isn't '65. Catching up has occurred. A lot of it's occurred. There's real support now for a mid-century museum. There's a lot more understanding of the importance of the American painting. So, let's say that the timing might have been-- In any real estate or any other transaction, usually timing is important. The timing of the Pasadena Museum was a little early, just in my opinion. But despite that, it was a near miss, very close. If the County Museum had seen fit to put up a little money, just a quarter of a million a year for two years, I think we would have been over the top because I think we could have continued to raise the [$]250,000. But they elected not to.

GOODWIN: Well, some people would say that, although the timing may not have been precise, Pasadena was the wrong place--

ROWAN: Yeah.

GOODWIN: --for a museum of modern art.

ROWAN: Of course, a lot of people--I'm thinking of people like Marcia Weisman and Freddie--felt that. And they had a pretty valid case. I mean, you could make a pretty good case for it.

The other case was that this community--is the case that won, and what I think is true--that we have 450 square miles in [Los Angeles] (there's no city or no country around L.A.) and that it's linked together rather nicely with the freeway

net. It doesn't really matter whether the new museum is at the Civic Center or whether it's at the county site or if Norton Simon built a modern museum to the east of his present museum on the five acres that he purchased. I think the freeway net is pretty effective. It gets you there in twenty-eight minutes from almost anywhere: from Long Beach or Pomona; then you go the other way from Santa Monica, sure, thirty-five minutes. We do it.

So, the idea "It's got to be in Beverly [Hills]" I don't think is too valid. I think the downtown site where all the freeways meet, is a good idea except that you can't get in there peak hours. In the morning you don't want to be bucking the 380,000 cars coming downtown; in the evening you don't want to be going out at four-thirty with them. So, it's got a big disadvantage in the traffic pressure. I mean, here at least you've got an alternative freeway.

GOODWIN: I still don't fully understand why there wasn't support locally for a museum of modern art in Pasadena.

ROWAN: Let's look at it a different way. We happen to have in Pasadena the [Henry E.] Huntington Library and its collection, and that's what the people in San Marino are related to. It's there. Now, what's the other institution? Remember: think of 2 square miles, or maybe 3, out of the 450 square miles in L.A. basin.

Let's look at Beverly. Does it have Caltech? No. Does it have the Huntington Library? No.

All right. So, I'm just saying, the case that the Pasadenian can make--and I'm not saying it's right--is that it's a little area which is fairly advanced. It has a great science university, it's got an important library with a painting collection, and it's got the Pasadena Museum too. All right. It had three things going for it.

GOODWIN: But--

ROWAN: Why wasn't it supported?

GOODWIN: Well, see, the Huntington was well endowed and living on its income.

ROWAN: That's right.

GOODWIN: And Caltech didn't have the financial problems.

ROWAN: All right. Now, there's no question that there could have been a bit more support had it been located in Beverly. But whenever our friends the Weismans, and particularly Freddie, used to bring it up--"It can't make it in Pasadena"--I always would tell him, "Now, Freddie, don't be too sure. Remember the freeway net. We're just as near as any--"

But remember, whenever a museum project started in Beverly: "Freddie"--now follow me--"was it or wasn't it short-lived?"

All right. Let's start with Beverly's own motion-picture museum. Right? Every guy lived in Beverly. We know each one of them: Jack Warner-- All right. Now, listen: a little bit of money, three or four big egos, and nowhere! After twenty years of effort: nothing!

All right. Now, let's take Mr. [Joseph] Hirshhorn. He came to town. He had an important collection. He was determined to be in Beverly.

GOODWIN: Why?

ROWAN: He liked to stay at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. He had friends there. Boy, was he rejected fast when he got an option, or thought he had, on Greystone [mansion].

All right? Who rejected what? You keep saying the museum should be in Beverly. Now, show me a little bit of the record. No film museum after all the years of talk. And rejection? Just "Out, Hirshhorn," when he tries to come there with six thousand paintings.

What about that interest? Isn't it just as hard to get from, let's say, Long Beach or Alhambra or Whittier or the harbor or Orange County? Does it make any difference? I mean we're applying to the whole western states.

"It doesn't matter, Freddie, where it is."

So, Freddie would always say, "It has to be in Beverly."

I'm just saying, you could make a very fine case that it was beautifully located.

Now, why wasn't it supported? Because the people, the business people, the theater people: you could make a good case where the support would have been stronger. And yet, when you look at the record, and they can't have their own film [museum], it discourages you, when it was run by people

like Jack Warner, Louis B. [Mayer], and Sam Goldwyn. They got their shoulders back of it, got to feudin' and fightin'. Nothing happened.

Now, I'm just saying, you could make an even case either way. It might not have been that well supported had it been in Beverly.

Remember, the County at that time was making a fair effort to be in the mid-century field. It was just enough of an effort. They had shows like Pollock [July 18-September 3, 1967]. They were making their effort. It wasn't unified. We had a divided place with troubles. I think you could make a good argument on both sides.

For support, I would have rather been in Beverly despite the record, if we didn't have the land; that's [$]5 million more even at that time, and this was a huge factor. Our construction would have cost just a lot of money to have the land and the garage space in Beverly. We didn't have it, and we had it here. You can get the freeway net here; they don't have a freeway in Beverly. You can make a pretty good case. It's quite a ways south of Beverly to get to the Santa Monica Freeway, and it's over the mountain to get to the Ventura.

Actually the case favored us, all except the support. They were quite a few years, I mean, substantially ahead of us in supporting the mid-century painting. It's an interesting balance.

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GOODWIN: Maybe we should pick up with the Pasadena Museum.

ROWAN: Yes, let's get back to it, the old Pasadena Museum.

GOODWIN: Last session we were discussing some of its financial problems. Why don't we shift to a happier topic? What for you, Mr. Rowan, were the best moments of the old Pasadena Museum?

ROWAN: There were so many best moments. We got the old museum, maybe largely due to the luck of picking a staff--I mean, the trustees were lucky to start right off with Tom Leavitt. All right. Then, before long Tom Leavitt had an assistant, Walter Hopps. [Hopps] was having trouble with his partner, Irving Blum, in the old Ferus Gallery. Walter was as usual having trouble. He was unable to write things. He'd have blocks about writing. In this case, it was about four or five lines that he couldn't write. And he delayed the little program to the point where there was the usual tensions. Finally, Irving had told me, "We're coming to a parting of the ways," and they just couldn't make it together anymore, and maybe Pasadena could use the talent of Walter.

So, we got hold of Walter. We all knew how able he was. So, we had a good moment: we had Leavitt early and Walter, and we were right off into the things that really made the old museum important.

For example, Walter wanted to do a [Marcel] Duchamp show [October 8-November 3, 1963], and Leavitt said, "Fine." Leavitt was there to control Walter, keep him working, keep him present, keep him working at it, giving him support. But in this case, Walter just didn't disappear to New York for a month or two or three; he was right there.

So, all those things that Walter and Leavitt could do, we were able to-- We had one exhibition after another: the [Joseph] Cornell show [December 27, 1966-February 11, 1967]-- All those things gave pleasure to the people, not only the trustees, staff, but to all the people that could see these things for the first time in the L.A. area, L.A. basin, which as we all know is very advanced in other fields. I mean, film. A lot of able people at last were able to see things here. You mentioned: What makes you happy? Well, the fact that the museum was going well, was successful. Somehow we were able to meet the budget; somehow it kept going, getting better, just that simple.

GOODWIN: Did anybody, either on the board or the staff, have a plan or a dream?

ROWAN: Yes. Well, the early museum was really lots of little things, like any small museum; it could have been Phoenix or any place: Tempe, Arizona. But what happened, when Scheyer's collection was left to the museum, it was quite obvious to the trustees that the museum was now launched on a career which would be modern. It would be this century.

Anyone on the board could observe what was happening at the County [Museum], a generalist museum. So, it was determined, with a little help from, let's say, Dudley Wright and me and a few others just the obvious thing, that we couldn't be good by being a little general museum. Only one way we could be an important museum. There the opportunity was opened. Nobody else was doing it west of the Mississippi. So, what we did was to just fill the vacuum. And we did it ourselves not knowing that much, the trustees; we did it by getting really bright people on our staff and supporting them and, I might add, not interfering with them, if the thing was feasible within any kind of a budget limit.

GOODWIN: Well, do you remember any proposals that had to be turned down?

ROWAN: Yes. Here and there problems would occur, sometimes budgetary.

GOODWIN: Such as?

ROWAN: Well, for example, even in an exhibition showing funk art, a favorite of Walter Hopps, we had a little incident that irritated the American Legion. We had an American flag tacked, or part of it torn and tacked, onto a painting. It wouldn't mean anything nowadays, but way back then the American Legion approached him, and we "had to take it down." The city and the police department said they didn't want the Legion marching on Pasadena Museum; so we must remove that.

But of course, the director of the museum, I mean, Walter, no one wanted to remove one painting. The other artists said that they would take theirs down if it was removed. So, we said, no, the Legion shouldn't interfere. We got legal advice that it was perfectly OK. The main lawyer for the museum was out of the city. When he came back, he said what he saw was illegal. The first lawyer had said it was legal. But in the meantime, during those ten days, it being legal, we told the Legion to just fry off. [laughter] We called for the Pasadena police force to defend the museum--that's what they were for--against outsiders. The Legion said they were going to march. We were coming right up to a weekend. We were sticking to our position, the trustees.

What happened? Some Legionnaire crawled into the museum at night, upstairs, crawled through the roof, and ripped the flag off the painting. It wasn't very nice, but it did solve the problem for the police force, the museum. In the meantime, we'd been told by the regular museum attorney that what we were doing was not legal, that the Legion had some case, legal case, here.

So, this is the kind of little problem that we had. The staff might have felt that the trustees were weakening under pressure of the Legion and said that they were thirteen thousand strong.

"We're going to march; tear down the museum."

All right. So, the trustees were a little concerned. But the trustees stood firm until their own attorney-- Now, had the fellow not climbed into the museum, we would have had to remove the painting on orders of our attorney, and that would have been going against that. It's an example of what could have happened.

GOODWIN: Right. Any others that come to mind?

ROWAN: Yes. Another one I can think [of] was Larry Rivers. This is a case of Larry Rivers having in an exhibition [August 10-September 5, 1965]-- A typical Rivers: two male figures were in it, and one of them was called "Napoleon" (from memory) "The World's Greatest Homosexual." Well, I was a trustee or maybe the president of the museum, and I got a call from the French consul general. This was in the middle of our fund-raising program. We were way short, trying to raise $5 million, with $2 million to go. The French consul said that he would sue the museum if the national hero of France, Napoleon was called "the world's second greatest homosexual," which was the title of the painting.*

So, what I suggested to the staff--and it didn't go over too well; we loved the painting: good old Larry Rivers--"Let's just remove the title." It's a little, tiny piece of paper.

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* Two works depicting Napoleon--The Greatest Homosexual and The Second Greatest Homosexual--were included in the show. It is tempting to surmise that it was to the latter that the French consul general objected.--Ed.

Nobody will really know the difference. And it won't be in the newspaper that the French consul general was suing Pasadena museum for offending France's national hero. So, while it didn't go over too well, the staff did remove the title to that painting, and nobody seemed to know the difference.

There's another example of which is most important: surviving or-- I mean, where there's real trouble-- Just an example: I did mention it to the staff, and they did remove the tiny, one-inch piece of paper. There was no title on that particular Larry Rivers painting. Others did have titles.

GOODWIN: Were there any potential exhibitions that the board considered too extreme from an artistic point of view?

ROWAN: No, I cannot think of a single one. If there was a chance of getting it into the budget-- Of course, there were always two or three alternatives, but a good example would be the Warhol show [May 12-June 21, 1970], where, in considering several, this looked like an expensive one. By this time, the staff had changed. John Coplans was involved, and he came in with the budget (from memory) of $75,000 for the show. I believe that he ran way over budget. Part of the reason was the insurance values of Warhol had increased a lot. But I'm just saying we went ahead with the show and ran, I think, a fifty-, sixty-, seventy thousand dollar deficit. He priced the show incorrectly to four or five other museums. The show did

move from Pasadena at much too low prices.

This is just a major mistake on the part of John Coplans, in my opinion, in just misguessing the cost of the show, presenting a budget that was way low. I think, had he presented the correct budget, the trustees probably wouldn't have gone for the show, couldn't have. This did happen now and then, [but] very seldom. This is one that was way over budget. I can't remember too many other shows that were much over budget.

GOODWIN: What was the approximate budget for exhibitions?

ROWAN: I think it was around [$]250,000 a year (from memory), from [$]200[000] to 250[000] towards the end. It started on a much more modest [scale] and increased rather rapidly.

GOODWIN: Well, exhibitions were the major activity of the museum.

ROWAN: Right. This is right. By reason of the exhibitions' reputation, the museum became important. Its importance didn't hurt the staff at all. In fact, when the U.S. asked the museum to organize the show at Sao Paulo, the Biennale [1965], it was a real credit to the museum and the staff.

GOODWIN: Indeed. Do you think greater consideration should have been given to collecting?

ROWAN: I feel that, due to the exhibition program, the collecting had become feasible--and collecting from the artists. The artists were appreciative. The first show of

almost anybody--it didn't matter whether it was Motherwell or Kline or what--the artists, recognizing this, did give painting. People like Lichtenstein, Sam Francis, others gave paintings; so the permanent collection did start to occur. That encouraged collectors to give. So, the momentum really came from the able staff and the successful shows. This began to build, and out of it came a collection, which might have an $8-10 million value today, which is now in the basement of the Norton Simon Museum, hidden in the basement of the Norton Simon Museum.

GOODWIN: Can you think of any exhibitions that were disappointing or unsuccessful?

ROWAN: Yes. I think that in the new building, we had three in a row of minimal [art], things that could be classified as minimal shows.

GOODWIN: Which were those?

ROWAN: I'll have to remember. I know Agnes Martin [April 3-May 27, 1973] was a marvelous and a successful one, but we followed it by--

GOODWIN: Kelly?

ROWAN: No, Kelly was a very successful show [January 15-March 3, 1974]. It's hard for me to remember. I'm trying to think of the name of the person that wrote little things on the wall of the museum [Allen Ruppersberg]. He had twenty-five girls writing tiny slogans [names and addresses] along all

the walls of the museum. Then we had [Carl] Andre on the floor. Maybe there were two or three minimal artists involved. So there were a few floor pieces, a few minimal pieces. This was followed by another one almost the same. I mean, some minimal things, some Bob Morris. I'm trying to think. I should remember the name of the person. Barbara Haskell was the curator at that time.

I can remember it pretty well because they borrowed a lot of my painting, and it had almost filled the museum; I'd had to leave out quite a few paintings because there was a promise to Ruppersberg for two rooms. So, in one room, Ruppersberg had telephone numbers of his friends around the wall--in you know, kind of one-foot circles. And then in the room downstairs, we had a card table and two little stones, in the large room down at the bottom of the stairway. I can remember this was almost the start of it. Then we were followed by either two or three shows. I mean, the attendance was kind of fifteen hundred a day to two thousand looking at my show. And then we were down to about fifty people a day at the end of the third show. This affected us a little bit because often the museum was almost totally empty. The public just couldn't take it. The trustees were miserable. Instead of more for less, it was just less for less. It kept getting that way. But in each case, there was quite a bit of publicity in, let's say, Artforum and this kind of

thing. I'm sure Barbara did OK, the curator; she did fine, but the museum did have a rough time. There weren't too many people there, almost nobody by the end of the third. I wish I could remember the name of the artist; he's well known.

GOODWIN: Do you think the Galka Scheyer collection was adequately exhibited over the years?

ROWAN: Yes. I think that we did--I mean adequate's a difficult word--but in view of the terrific activity of big shows. Probably we could have done a better job on showing Scheyer things than we did.

I know that there was an obligation in her will to provide a catalog for her whole-- It said: nothing in writing--Please don't have people babble. Just provide a catalog with photographs of my major work, all of it.

We could never get the staff to follow that simple instruction.

GOODWIN: Why not?

ROWAN: Because they wanted to have a little part of the Scheyer collection and have a catalog about it. Let's say, Jawlensky. All right. So, instead of following the instructions of both the board-- I mean, the staff members constantly-- They thought they could do it by having several catalogs of several phases of her work, and each time there was a nice place for the staff to write some things, several pages. All right. So, the expensive catalog, whether it

be [Lyonel] Feininger, Jawlensky: we did it all; each place the staff had the chance to show off a bit. I mean, they're human too. But all the time we weren't doing what we should have done, what she wanted us to do: just show photographs of her work in one big catalog. Since that time, Norton Simon, of course, has done it. But we had maybe compiled and maybe not compiled with our, let's say, four-phase show. It's hard to say. I mean, in this case it was almost a fixation of different curators to do a part of it. We had little parts of it, all of them well done and each time attractive writing.

GOODWIN: It seems to me that even today the Scheyer collection isn't as well known as it should be.

ROWAN: Right. We did have the Klees. Remember, we did the big show in the middle sixties with the Guggenheim. [February 20-April 2, 1967]. I'm just saying, we probably didn't do as good a job as we could have done. We did a pretty good job on showing Scheyer's things. They were always there in the museum.

GOODWIN: Right. Were there requests from other museums to borrow the material?

ROWAN: Yes, over the years. But I think it was a little awkward to lend. There was a request from German museums to [borrow], but we couldn't risk lending the Klees to Europe because we conceivably could have been-- There were still

members of the Klee family over there that may not have agreed totally with the bequest. I'm confident that we didn't lend, we seldom lent, except to the Guggenheim, Paul Klees. Our job was to show them here. We did a pretty good job of it. In fact, we acquired several more. I can think of one Kandinsky in particular that was part of the collection and had been stolen from the collection early, during the time she was ill. It was recovered, found, and one of the trustees at Pasadena Museum purchased it for ten thousand and brought it back to the collection.

GOODWIN: How do you account for the turnover in staff? On the one hand, you have brilliant people; on the other hand, they didn't last very long.

ROWAN: If we look at the life of directors and curators in other museums, we're going to find, I believe, that there's a turnover, particularly in a museum that's growing rapidly. It has all the aches and pains of growth. It's not too often that a museum goes for twenty-five years--

GOODWIN: True.

ROWAN: --with one director. If the fellow is really successful, or the girl, they get other nice offers. There's two sides to it. Then, when they're successful, they can become pretty hard to live with in the museum. They can get that arrogance that sometimes goes with success and demand things that aren't too possible. I wish that we'd been able to carry on longer.

The other thing about a growing museum is, usually the good professional wants to stay with his field: painting and shows. In our case, always under the gun financially, whoever the director was had to help with the finance end. So, in the case of Tom Leavitt, I'm sure he got tired of trying to raise money. You've got maybe five volunteer organizations at work, one of them, the Art Alliance, raising maybe from fifty [thousand] to eighty thousand a year. All the meetings that are involved, the projects that are involved. Before long the professional just gets tired of the constant strain of money raising, both to operate and to build. We had that strain on our staff all the time: a good many volunteer organizations at work. So, this was another factor. There's a pretty good strain on a director or curator when they just have the shows to perform, and they have to get them in budget. Then, when they're called upon for other meetings and other things constantly and to meet prospective donors, when all of that's going on, it's fairly tough on them. I might add, it's tough on the trustees, too, and on the officers.

GOODWIN: What is the ideal role of a trustee in a museum like this?

ROWAN: It's too really expand it. If you don't have anything but a little bit of dust: nothing. He has to provide a museum, acquire the land, all the things that are involved in getting the building up, and above all, get a first-class

staff, and then provide some structure in which the staff can work. There's always a budget. The budget is made up by the staff, but a lot of things just don't get into the budget that the staff would like. And then, of course, the staff itself loves to expand, and before long you've got to have a print department. You have a very nice lady who's curator of prints, with a salary and office, a secretary and mailing. It isn't very long, before-- Of course, photographs: you need a first-class [photography department]. And we had one, with all the things that go with it, and exhibitions. We didn't have one of ceramic, but I mean, film is the next one.

You see how the Museum of Modern Art started fairly small in '29, and it had 345 people on its staff when it found it was running a $2 million deficit. A staff will always feel that they're overworked and always try to expand. In our case, we watched it. Here's where a trustee-- I mean, particularly when you aren't funded, you have to-- We had a curator of photographs, a curator of prints. On film we had to say no, but I'm just saying, there it was: a director, curators, big office space. I mean, this is built in. Now, the trustee's function is to meet all those bills while trying to keep the growth in some kind of balance, and the shows.

GOODWIN: Well, how would you evaluate the Pasadena board?

ROWAN: Pretty good. The record is there. From nothing

in eleven years, or ten years, it was the leading museum this side of Chicago in its field. Just no question. Maybe ten years.

GOODWIN: You were the--

ROWAN: No, we had--

GOODWIN: --the driving force.

ROWAN: Well, we had others. We had people like Dudley Wright early. We had a lot of people. I would try to keep the thing one-pointed, for example, not go back into the [nineteenth] century and try to have a big, let's say, Cézanne. We did have a Cézanne watercolor show. I can remember Norton Simon refused to lend his three [laughter]--it's funny, you know, when you think of it--but it was still a good show. The tendency to go back and expand into what led into the twentieth century: "How about a great Matisse show?" Well, obviously we couldn't afford it. So, considering the confines of the limits of our budget and our ability, we made a lot of progress.

It wasn't just me. It was quite a few people. It's essentially the staff and having a group of trustees that supported the staff. This is the key. [We] tried really hard not to interfere with them. There's no way of not commenting, for example, if the staff come up with three minimal shows consecutively and attendance goes from two thousand to forty. At the committee meetings, there's going to be: "Why did we have to have three in a row?

Why couldn't we keep the thing in balance a little better?" It's bound to happen. And the person that was reasponsible would feel it was trustee interference. I mean, trustees should interfere or should just point out that balance is necessary in anything.

GOODWIN: So, you think it is appropriate for the professional staff to present proposals to a board?

ROWAN: Yes.

GOODWIN: As far as exhibitions, acquisitions?

ROWAN: Oh, yes. They have to work inside a budget. There's going to be an art committee in any museum, to which the professional staff come up with suggestions, let's say, for calendar 1981 maybe. The art committee--in our case it was Gifford Phillips and me and a couple of other collectors--would just take a look. If we thought it was feasible, I mean, we'd discuss this with them. I can't remember fighting with them. I can remember, in the case of [William] Agee, we had to tell him no because he wanted around eighty thousand dollars [for an] exhibition of the Tournament of Roses. All right. It's an interesting enough thing. There was a boy at UCLA that did a thesis on the features to it; we couldn't afford it. No way at that point in the museum. I remember there was fairly hard feeling on part of the director, Bill Agee--I'm sure he was director--the art committee not being supportive of his eighty thousand budget that would have consisted of large

photographs (obviously [there was] no way of going way back [to the history] of the tournament) and a big written tract on the whole idea of this assembly of a million people, or half a million: the history of the thing. I mean, not a bad idea. Just no way in our budget against other things that could have been done. We have a lot of painters in America that the art committee would much rather discuss. What about a show for someobdy else, right? Maybe Bacon. Maybe a European painter. So, the whole idea of a Tournament of Roses working into the budget for eighty thousand [dollars] didn't fit with people like Gifford or me or anybody. Then it was impossible budget-wise as well. But I could see how the staff felt interfered with.

GOODWIN: Well, I'm trying to compare the museum system of governance to a university. Certainly, the professors don't ask the regents what they should teach.

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: It's assumed that the professors are the experts--

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: --and that they'll do what's best--

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: --within the budget.

ROWAN: This is right. We're talking about a university which is handsomely financed from the taxpayer and expanding rather smoothly. I'm just saying, the university system is quite

different from, as it were, an experimental museum in the mid-part of a century.

For two hundred years everything had been in France, and we were the third-rate cousins. The attitude of the whole community was French-oriented. When the thing crossed the Atlantic in '50, you're out there; you don't have too much support. You're eight to ten years ahead really. That doesn't mean that the catching-up period can't be very fast, but at this point it's hard to-- You see, you cannot compare it to teaching Latin and Greek at a university.

GOODWIN: Yes. Except a message here seems to be that the staff is immature or is just unreasonable, can't be trusted to work within the guidelines.

ROWAN: A better way of putting it, I think, [is that] the staff are absolutely competent. They're just in a narrow, specialized field. In our case, it was the field of painting and sculpture mid-century; and it's a new field. They were mostly young people that had zero experience at any level. Let's take someone that's worked, say, for fifteen years as a trustee of a college or a school, gets to have the feeling of always growth if it's out here. So, they just haven't had any experience that possibly other members of the trustees who are on the art committee do of how an institution grows, no matter what institution. They're marvelous [but] what they need is an art committee with some experience.

Otherwise, what happens is we had the case-- You know, I love Walter [Hopps], but we finally couldn't provide the structure, both above and below and on both sides. When Walter left, he went to the little museum in Washington, D.C., [Washington Gallery of Modern Art] and didn't last very long, I think, about twenty--I can't remember the number of months; but it was bankrupt. Then it was taken over by a big museum, the Corcoran [Gallery]. It wasn't too many months, about two and a half years later, from a strong financial institution, it was in a disastrous state.

What I'm just saying is, I'm sure that Walter, through his own experience, which is very, very costly to two museums, I'm sure now that he has got a more balanced look. If he were involved in a new museum, he'd know there's something besides expensive exhibitions, I'm sure. That doesn't mean that he isn't a genius at what he's doing, but it does present the example of-- There are rounded directors of museums that have had some experience with growth, like Martin Friedman, for example, at the Walker. I mean, the thing did grow, it's still there. He was mostly the curator himself. All right.

GOODWIN: I'd like to talk about Hopps a little longer. Actually, he was invited to participate in one of these series of interviews. He was so elusive that he never even acknowledged his invitation; so he hasn't been interviewed.

Maybe he will eventually. But I'd like to know more about him. How do you explain his foresight?

ROWAN: Just there! His eye, his imagination, his brain all work to see what's going to happen. Not so much what's happened, it's what's happening. It's not only now, but it's the person that's going to keep going. He projected that Barnett Newman would keep going, not only [that he] was brilliant. You see, he [Hopps] just had that faculty tuned way up. This is why he's so useful to a museum like Pasadena. He could see where the thing was, before a lot of other people. And he'd stick to what he thought. He was confident. He didn't waver around, sob all around. Of course, he made mistakes, but I'm just saying, on the big things he could see clearly what was happening now, when a lot of other people couldn't see anything. Now, that's the faculty Walter's just got in him; it's there. Now, how it got there, that's harder.

GOODWIN: Yeah. It's puzzling to me to figure out how many of the staff members of the Pasadena Museum without going through the traditional channels of becoming art historians or art experts suddenly became experts in their own right and made observations, decisions, that were ingenious, that were far ahead of their time--

ROWAN: Walter was one of them.

GOODWIN: --and bypassed the normal channels.

ROWAN: Right. But remember, they were doing it when he was an art dealer. He was in the Ferus Gallery. He was doing. And there were people around his gallery early. I suppose: [Edward] Kienholz and people like [John] Altoon, Craig Kauffman, early, all these people. I mean he found those, and then he knew what was happening in the East. He just did. The trustees of the Pasadena Museum knew Walter. We got him because he was so good at Ferus. All right. So, Gifford knew him. I knew him. Hassel Smith. He was early interested in Diebenkorn, in Smith, in Lobdell, in all these people. So, I'm just saying, we thought what a break we're having. Something's happening to the gallery. All right. So, here's a fellow that we have a chance of getting. I mean, he didn't have any degrees or anything. Boy, he was doing it, had done it. They were doing it. He had a record that we knew and Leavitt knew. Leavitt knew that Walter would be good. He said he'd just love to have Walter as a curator. I mean, Leavitt said so instantly when I mentioned it. We're growing, and here's this guy who we can get.

He said, "Good heavens, yes."

I did say that he was a bit eccentric, a little bit hard to, you know, remember to be at the museum, or where it was and how to get there, and that kind of thing.

But Leavitt did fine; they got along fine. He really worked at his best under Leavitt. I'm just saying, no one can

define why Walter-- I don't know whether the touch that he had--this is ten years or twelve years later--whether he's got any part of it.

GOODWIN: You mean today?

ROWAN: Yes. I just don't have a clue. I was disappointed in the show, ["Painting and Sculpture in California: The Modern Era"] that he did with the California artists. It was a big mess.

GOODWIN: In San Francisco?

ROWAN: Yes, [the show] that he did with Hopkins. I mean, it hurt California. The examples weren't too good. So, he came back eight or nine years afterwards, and what he wanted to do-- I mean, they weren't the best examples of even Hassel Smith in the show. So, I'm just saying I have no idea, after these years in the East and all that he's been through, whether the touch is there or absent now. But it certainly was there, no question about it.

Furthermore, people like Coplans, see, with all his shortcomings, all his problems in dealing with other people he was really good as a curator, and he was very sensitive to what was happening. The Kelly show-- I mean, a lot of things. There's no question that Coplans in his own field-- Again, [it was] almost impossible for him to live with people, either trustees or city officials or other collectors or other curators or--

GOODWIN: What do you mean by that? I've never met him; so I don't know.

ROWAN: Yes. There's just something about John that makes it very difficult for him to get along with anybody for very long. I don't know what that thing is, but before too long, where he works, trouble appears, trouble. We can look at the trouble when we first knew about it: he had trouble in San Francisco. People called and said that he was a disastrous person. He went to Irvine, and trouble at Irvine. Then he came to work for Demetrion; trouble occurred almost immediately between Demetrion-- Trouble. For example, Demetrion's a very able person, but Coplans kept telling me that he [Demetrion] didn't know anything, that he only knew a little German, wasn't educated, and that he, Coplans, was the only one that could write. I mean, just the immediate thought that he, Coplans should be the director--predictable, always happening, and did occur.

In our case he had trouble with the five volunteer organizations. They thoroughly disliked him. The chairman of each one told me, just before he left, that they would not work with him any longer. There's no trustee that I knew about that wanted to work with him. So, I'm just saying, trouble. You know, he went to Artforum, and after a few years there is a big lawsuit, trouble. Wrote an attack on the Pasadena Museum, which I've always felt was therapy for

for him, but it amazed me that it was ever published.

GOODWIN: What was the nature of the lawsuit?

ROWAN: The architect was attacked on a lot of levels. The architect thought that there were either fifteen or seventeen errors of fact, and that his reputation as an architect was hurt. So, he sued and won the suit, or won the settlement. The suit was settled before it went to trial, but a substantial sum was paid.

GOODWIN: By Artforum?

ROWAN: Yes, Artforum. I believe Walter Hopps--I mean, I've just heard this--also had to pay, and I'm sure there was an apology from Artforum. This should be checked. Yes, I've talked to one of the architects, and I'm sure that there was an apology involved in that.

But what I'm just saying is that trouble seems to follow John around. But that doesn't mean that he hasn't got ability. In certain areas he's absolutely brilliant: writes well. But here's another person that helped the museum along its way. At the time he was working for it, he persuaded certain artists to make substantial gifts of art to the museum. He wasn't unmindful that it needed a permanent collection. He was the one who was mindful of helping artists, persuading them to give something to the museum as it went along.

GOODWIN: What was the situation with Demetrion?

ROWAN: Demetrion was German expert in German area, and

learning American things very fast. In fact, he insisted on having Coplans as a curator. No one interfered. Then he had this troublesome relationship with Coplans. He didn't feel that he was consulted sufficiently in the new museum that was under construction, that is to say, in things like lighting and many other things that a good director felt-- He didn't realize, I don't think, that we were so far in the hole we couldn't make alterations then. The slightest alteration costs a lot of money once we were set and going.

First, he probably didn't feel that he was sufficiently consulted in the early stages. This possibly was true. This was in the hands of the building committee, and Harold Jurgensen was responsible for raising the money, getting the building built. It was their responsibility. All right. So, I think that there was a feeling that he wasn't properly consulted. It could have been quite true. But I know that Jurgensen told me that there was no way to alter things. It was too late. We were terribly lucky if we could come home at budget, and we did. All right. So, I think that there was that feeling that the trustees didn't spend enough time on his views on the kind of building. For example, I didn't spend much time on it. I could see a three or four hundred thousand dollar mistake in lighting.

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ROWAN: So, Demetrion told me that he was not happy--but I couldn't make him happy, nothing I could do to make him happy--and that he'd stay with us until the new museum was up and going, through the opening, and then he was going to take a job elsewhere. We told him good luck. He did get a good job at Des Moines. He's done very well since that time there. Also I believe Demetrion could see the problem of the expanded costs in the new museum with the failure of the board to raise sufficient money too operate.

GOODWIN: Let's talk for a moment about the building program. What was the plan for a new plant?

ROWAN: The plan for a new building?

GOODWIN: Yeah.

ROWAN: The original board thought that the County Museum was going ahead with a big new building. (I think I've been over this once before with you.)

GOODWIN: Right. But at one time wasn't there some thought to building an arts complex embracing more than an art museum?

ROWAN: Oh, yes. Eudorah Moore, who was president of the museum [board of trustees] for about five years--then [Harold] Jurgensen was president for maybe one or two, and then I was president for about seven--her idea of selling it and selling

the city and getting the land was always based on Carmelita Center. But I never really knew what anyone meant.

I'd say to Mrs. Moore, "What do you mean Carmelita Center?"

"Well, we'll have a center, an art center."

Well, she was involved with ceramics. I forget what it was called, but there was some show that would occupy the--

GOODWIN: "California Design."

ROWAN: Yes, "California Design." This was fine, [but] it just didn't interest me. I wasn't really interested in "California Design," though she was. And I think all the time it was her program she was really thinking of. I was thinking of being the best museum in the mid-century in painting and sculpture, and I think she was thinking of also having a substantial part of it for a substantial part of the year given over to design. I always went along with one month; it was an expensive month to lose. "California Design" was an original, successful program at the museum, and pragmatically we went along with it. All the art went out, and in went the design.

Carmelita Center, I don't know: before too long it was forgotton. It was called the Pasadena Art Museum, but to begin with there used to be talk about Carmelita Center, "the new project at Carmelita [Center]." This was, I think, her word, her name, and it just kind of disappeared.

GOODWIN: Well, she had a very strange role in the museum, as far as being an officer of the board and also a staff member.

ROWAN: Right. This is right. But we lived with it for as long as we could.

GOODWIN: It was always a point of irritation for the staff.

ROWAN: Yes. And it was a problem for the board. But here she was, knowing everybody in town. The then Art Alliance and supportive groups were close to her. I'm just saying, it was one of those situations which we gradually worked out; we didn't do anything. The staff never liked it: a board member [being a member of the staff]. I don't blame them. I mean it's a little bit unusual. (We did have one, Tom Terbell, who was a board member.) I mean, it's a little unusual, but it seemed to me that we were able to live-- It was a constant irritation because at staff meetings they weren't all equal; she probably threw her weight around. The truth was, I suppose, at one time she did literally control the board with her friends.

That gradually changed. Gifford Phillips and I had comfortable control of the board with people who were interested in what we were doing. I don't know what was happening early, but she was around that museum forever. A competent person, very keen on her own program. It seemed to me that we just lived through it. It all worked out. [We] lived with it.

GOODWIN: How were the architects selected for the new museum?

ROWAN: They were selected. She [Eudorah Moore] chose, I think, when she was president--or the board did or the committee--another architect. And everything he did didn't seem to appeal to anybody. An Eastern architect. He's no longer living, but I remember he built the building for General Motors. [Edward Durell] Stone. All right. So, the museum paid Stone for his plans and then selected Thornton Ladd, a very talented fellow in our own town, that we could get to and be with and be near. I mean, that was the thought. He was selected by the board. We had had the experience of an Eastern architect that could never be here and didn't give much of a damn, couldn't contact. We didn't want to get the man [William Pereira] that build the County Museum, who's a logical selection. Also, Thornton Ladd was close to the city of Pasadena, who owned the land that we were acquiring. It all worked kind of well. It was a logical selection.

GOODWIN: The board must have been pleased with his plans.

ROWAN: Yes. We didn't tell him what kind of a museum. We told him to examine all other museums and really take a good look at all contemporary museums before he incorporated [inaudible] ideas in his plans. He did well. The discouraging thing was the money he spent on the lighting that didn't function, in our opinion. So, this was a big bill that

didn't work. We all told him we didn't think it would work. But in this case, he built a mock-up and added it to the old museum, and Walter didn't object.

GOODWIN: I think you stated earlier that you were pleased with the finished building of the new Pasadena Museum.

ROWAN: I liked it. When I first saw the model, Walter was there. It looked good to me. Walter didn't say anything. We looked at the model. We talked a little bit with the architects. I felt that Walter could say anything he wanted.

I did notice that the passageways between the big rooms, or the galleries, as I thought about it that night, I thought they were too narrow. I could just see openings, people trying to get in--not usable. So, what I did was to call the architect back and ask him how wide they were. I remembered [Leo] Castelli's gallery was twenty feet wide, and I wanted to be sure that we could use that space, not as going to a room, but as wall space.

Walter saw that immediately. I discussed it with Walter, I talked with Leo, and we told the architects, "Get 'em wider." I mean, I did. I'm sure Walter did. So, this was one little change that everybody could see.

Then the curved walls: Walter said that they wouldn't work. Curved corners are fine, but he had the walls curved. It took us a little longer to change that.

Then the lighting: he insisted that would work. This is the point I came to a minute ago: he made a mock-up and had paintings there. It was maybe a twenty-foot section with his kind of lighting in it. Walter didn't ever object to me. I'm the one that kept saying we need track lighting, and then [Thornton Ladd], the architect, would always argue, "Why don't you wait and see?"

All right. So, he persuaded me. What could we do? It was under construction, and if we needed additional lighting we could put it in.

So, I'm just saying this was a big bone of irritation for Coplans. Coplans knew it wouldn't work, I knew it wouldn't work, but we had to wait and see. As soon as we could see it didn't work, then we insisted on the other lighting and had a big bill to pay, but did it--a last-minute bill.

GOODWIN: Wasn't there a problem with security?

ROWAN: Yes. We had a report night with a good guy from the Modern. Security was OK; it was just pretty expensive.

GOODWIN: Too many entrances.

ROWAN: Yes, a few more people than theoretically you'd have to have if you had one big square room. But I liked the H-formation, and I think everybody else did. The penalty was a little bit more security. I knew even then that security is a pretty flexible thing. I mean, if the fellow's going to destroy the painting, the guard could be four feet

away. So, I'm just saying, it didn't worry me that much, the fact that we were going to have-- I knew that one man could keep moving. You've got to have four guys [in a museum] with four wings. But I didn't want to change. The board didn't want to change, and I don't think the curators or directors did.

Now, later on, Walter made these statements, which came as a surprise to me, that were in the Artforum article. And, of course, poor Walter had to pay a sum of money; it cost him money. What he did was, in my view, irresponsibly write some letters egged on by "Bad John" (which is a nickname we had for Coplans around the museum). OK. Well, whatever it was, Walter certainly then didn't seem to make a fuss about the museum at all; he went right along with it.

As I said later, I'm sure Demetrion would have liked to have done things.

The spiral staircase going down is expensive. None of us could persuade the architect to take it out. The ceilings, those false skylights, are what cost us money and were useless from each point of view. So, the architect had his own little things that he wanted to do, but everybody does.

Basically, we got an incredibly good museum at a very low price. It was most suitable, or damn suitable, for modernist paintings. As it turned out, it is suitable for the work of other people. It suits Norton Simon's work. Our architect needs commendation, not scolding or blaming, which

is what Coplans did in his article, in his attack on him.

GOODWIN: Let's talk about the transition from the Pasadena Museum to the [Norton] Simon Museum.

ROWAN: All right. It's really pretty simple.

GOODWIN: What happened?

ROWAN: It's really pretty simple. We had maybe, let's say, ten months, eight months, and we could see we had to do something because we were not being supported at the four hundred thousand [dollar]-a-year rate, which we had to have in the new building, with all the expenses of the new building, to do the things that we had to do: the shows, et cetera.

So, the alternatives were pretty simple. One, try to work something out with the County. Obviously, they needed the space, and they needed a museum of modern art; so we were unable-- [One alternative] would be to try to work something out with the County. So, working with Franklin Murphy, meeting after meeting, both the time I was president and then Alfie Esberg and Gifford Phillips all tried to work-- The County simply defaulted, were not interested. This would be for 250,000 a year. With us raising 250[000] we can do it; we can solve the problem; and we're going to deliver you the land, the building, and the Scheyer collection in a $20 million package.

"How lucky can you be that we're offering it to you right now?"

Deaf ears. Couldn't see it. I don't know what the reasons were, but the one that was used on us was that [Los Angeles County] Supervisor [Ernest] Debs was going to retire in about a year, year and a half, maybe two years, had threatened the museum that, if they go outside his district and acquire a new museum, he would cause trouble with the other supervisors, attempt to chop off the $3 million a year roughly that they were then getting. I mean, this is what [Joe] Koepfli and Murphy and others feared.

All right. Now, our argument was: "Don't worry. Debs is going; he'll be gone soon. Why don't you, trustees, just get around there and cut the mustard, help us? Then, when Debs is gone, you will have solved your problem."

The answer was no. No particular reason, just couldn't do it.

The second alternative was to sell [to] the Museum of Modern Art, to see if we could interest them in it. We did interest them in it. We did interest them, but it would be a long project two years with the kind of board they had. To leave New York City and go national was just too much for them, even though we showed them that it was in their interest and they'd have to in the longer run and that they had this mass of painting in storage, that it would be a marvelous first.

All right. I'm not going to go into the names, but we made quite a bit of progess with key trustees. Then it was

turned down by the president of the museum, the executive committee meeting with Mrs. Rockefeller. Blanchette [(Mrs. John D.) Rockefeller III] wasn't interested. And the president of the year before--I forget her name now, charming lady [Elizabeth Parkinson], who had been president of the Modern before Blanchette--also wasn't interested.* So, it just died.

Now, that left one alternative: Norton Simon. So, Gifford, Esberg, and I just worked at it. He gradually became interested. We finally closed the deal then. That simple. It was the third alternative, but the feasible one.

GOODWIN: Well, how did you make overtures to Simon?

ROWAN: Just called him up: "Norton, if you become interested-- The Pasadena Museum is in financial difficulty. There could be a situation here which would be of interest to you." It was that simple. "Take a look. Look at the land and the building and the collection. If you're interested, come back to us." That simple.

He first showed some interest and then less interest. I think at that time, he was thinking maybe of some structure at Twentieth Century-Fox, in that area. I mean, I don't know this. He never told me. But he may have been trying to work out something on land there. (You'd have to ask Alfie Esberg.)

I'm just saying, he began to show a little interest,

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* Between the tenures of Parkinson (1965-68) and Rockefeller (1973-), William S. Paley was president of the board.--Ed.

and over a period of six months or so, he showed more interest. Finally, Esberg and Gifford were able to work out a satisfactory transaction with him.

In the meantime, we had a time of trouble in the museum. We could see things were going wrong, and we had a few meetings. Bill Agee kept on saying that we should rent a supermarket someplace. This museum was too expensive to operate. Somehow he got off onto a sort of binge for a supermarket. He wanted a committee to study, look for supermarkets. I think we did explain to him--Gifford and I and Esberg--that there was no way to pay the rent or finance the move or exist in it from insurance and every other point of view if we got it. This was something which wasted three or four meetings. In the meantime, he had a job elsewhere but hadn't told us. I'm happy for him that he got the job in Phoenix. But I mean, this was a difficult time for everybody.

Everything worked out: the deal was made with Norton, and the museum changed its centuries. The only thing left is to see if we can't persuade Norton to lend to others the permanent collection that's in that museum.

GOODWIN: Why doesn't he?

ROWAN: I don't know. Puzzle. It's really puzzling.

GOODWIN: Well, he doesn't care for the art himself, does he?

ROWAN: I'm sure he doesn't, or he'd show it. He keeps it in the basement and won't lend it and won't show it. I mean, for

the first few years, he stayed with his agreement, and then he locked it up and hid it. I just simply don't know. We have kept in a friendly way as much pressure as we can to bear on him--the media has, everybody has--to persuade him to lend these paintings to others. They were not given by the artists or by people like myself to be hidden. So, we think and hope, if we stay with it, that Norton one of these mornings will see the light and start lending this painting.

I might add just one other thing: it's the only thing he's got-- His own things are lent to the museum from the foundation; so they are not the permanent collection. And the Galka Scheyer things are subject to court approval; they're housed in the museum. So, the one thing that the trustees are responsible for is the permanent collection. And they are responsible. That permanent collection is mostly modernist things that we gave or artists gave, and it's locked in the basement. So, it's a difficult situation for everybody: the artists, the former trustees, and above all, the public. So, let's hope. I don't know why he shouldn't.

GOODWIN: Well, does Simon have any legal claim to the Pasadena's permanent collection or the--

ROWAN: The trustees: they're just different faces. Everything is the same. The name changed; he changed everything. But we changed the name from the Pasadena Museum to Pasadena Museum of Modern Art and then back to Pasadena Museum again at his request. All right. Then he changed the name a year or

two later to Norton Simon Museum. There's no reason why a board of trustees can't change the name of their institution. All right. Now, when it comes to the permanent collection, they're responsible. Those fifteen trustees, every one of them, are responsible for every painting. It's a public museum, and they're responsible.

GOODWIN: That's really in no sense a public museum.

ROWAN: Yes. But so far they're in the basement. We have done our best in writing, in board meetings, in executive committee meetings over the years we got off the board because he wouldn't lend the painting. We haven't forgotten for one moment that Norton should lend them. We think it's right, just, fair, and reasonable that he should. Other institutions request them, to borrow them.

GOODWIN: Well, couldn't the state attorney general take action?

ROWAN: The state attorney general: I don't know what action he could take right now.

GOODWIN: Well, I'm thinking specifically of the Scheyer collection.

ROWAN: The Scheyer collection is not the permanent collection. It's housed there, and some judge, if the roof leaks enough, could move it to UCLA. So, let's not call it the permanent collection.

GOODWIN: Right. But wouldn't that be a good idea: to get the Scheyer collection seen if Simon isn't--

ROWAN: Oh, it's seen. No, he shows it damn well. I mean, he shows it better than we did. Take a look. The Klees are all up there right now.

GOODWIN: Well, it changes from month to month.

ROWAN: Yes. But I'm just saying, he's done a better job than we have, or as good a job as we did, on showing the Scheyer things. What isn't shown, and hasn't been seen for years, are the big, important American paintings. I don't have any grouse about the Scheyer collection: whether he can show it a little better or a little worse. He's doing a pretty good job there. He likes Klee and Jawlensky.

What isn't seen is the big Sam Francis. It's hidden. The Lichtenstein. The Diebenkorns. You could just keep going. This is what we want him to lend. He's kind of shown us he won't show it in his own museum--not his own, the museum that his friendly trustees control, his pals. Now, we want those pals of his to lend certain of the paintings to San Francisco. [San Francisco] asked for them; got turned down. And Berkeley and La Jolla and Newport and the County [Museum]. We want him to lend these things so that the people that gave them will feel-- I mean, [we] gave them to be seen. That's all we can say. Gifford Phillips and I and Esberg are doing everything we can to remind him of what he should do--that's why we got off his board--remind him with a communication which was in the press: why we got off the board.

GOODWIN: Did you have any duties as trustees during Simon's tenure?

ROWAN: No, very little duty. Sit at a board meeting, read a report, and scold him when he did what we thought was the wrong thing, like refuse to lend Diebenkorn two paintings that Diebenkorn had given. I'd given one; Diebenkorn had given the other. So, at board meetings, ask why he refused to help California's most important artist, or one of the most important, for his own retrospective.

Essentially, everything in that museum is lent by his foundations or himself. Really, he's not doing a good job. We encouraged him: "Keep on buying van Goghs. Try to buy the best ones." He didn't need much encouragement; he does it. His foundations do it, and he lent it. Now, the public up there can see it. It's really quite encouraging that this--

GOODWIN: I agree. My complaint is that there isn't enough public accessibility. Four afternoons a week?

ROWAN: Ah! We'd like to see him keep the museum open longer hours, add one day immediately.

GOODWIN: Why doesn't he?

ROWAN: Maybe it's the bill that he doesn't like to increase. Let's say, it's five hundred thousand [dollars] a year now. Could it be that his foundations that put up the money for that bill don't want to put up any more money? They are paying it. Deficit that we--

GOODWIN: He charges admission. The attendance seems to be--

ROWAN: Yes, but this can't be a huge-- Remember a university doesn't make it on admissions.

GOODWIN: Right, but it wouldn't be five hundred thousand dollars.

ROWAN: No gallery does. They have to be funded. I mean, no museum can depend on the gate. He shouldn't get the gate any higher.

GOODWIN: But why does he charge admission?

ROWAN: Why does he?

GOODWIN: Yeah.

ROWAN: To help with the deficit. It helps. And the bookstore maybe helps, if he doesn't lose money on the bookstore. And if he had a restaurant, it would hurt. He doesn't have one; so you get hungry in there. [laughter]

GOODWIN: But it doesn't seem that he's fulfilling an obligation to the public.

ROWAN: Don't you think he's doing pretty well for the public? I mean, as against, let's say, if this was all in his own house in Malibu or in the attic or in storage? Listen, it could be in storage in a warehouse.

GOODWIN: But he's reaping benefits, isn't he?

ROWAN: He can look at his own painting. You're damn right.

GOODWIN: He has a wonderful space.

ROWAN: His foundations are laying out a hard five or six hundred thousand [dollars] a year. Now, we'd like to see them

lay out seven or eight hundred thousand, keep it open one more day. Why not? And let's encourage him all we can. And how about Saturday and Sunday, or more days? Doesn't the County Museum close on Monday?

GOODWIN: Yes.

ROWAN: Well, how about making the County stay open on Monday? I'm just saying, if he could be open five days a week, I'd be pretty happy.

GOODWIN: So would I.

ROWAN: He should be open one more day a week. I'm sure a lot of people come there and are turned away. They don't realize.

But I'm just saying, let's encourage him. Look at the things he needs encouragement on: one, one more day a week open; two, continue-- I mean, one, "Keep collecting. And how! Don't stop. Accelerate." Two, "Open more. Serve the public better." All right. Three, "Don't complain when the bill goes up. I mean, when it's a higher bill, it's your responsibility, Norton. You did it; so, do it." Four, "Let's build a new building right now on the land that you own down there, below the hill, or modernize those old showrooms to see the modernist painting, a complex right next door. You own the land. You own the building that could be fixed up for it." All right. "Let's do it. Failing to do it, let's get some space where those tapestries are. Let's find space for a rotation of seven or eight big paintings. Let's show them. Let's not hide them." All right. Seven, "Congratulations,

Norton, we know you're going to do the right thing."
[laughter]

GOODWIN: Well, do you have any doubt whether Simon will eventually give his collection and the foundation collections to the permanent collection of the institution operated by the trustees? [laughter]

ROWAN: I haven't got a clue what goes on in the Simon mind. I do think that it's his baby now. He's spent some money to fix it up. I think he's with it. I don't think he's going to try to have someone build him a new museum. I just think that this is it and that the arrangements will continue. If the foundations continue for a hundred more years or fifty, they will continue to lend their painting to the [museum]. I'd like to see a transfer from the foundations to the museum because the idea that it's within his power to withdraw everything on ten hours' notice isn't-- I don't like the feeling.

GOODWIN: Neither do I.

ROWAN: So, the hope is that his foundations turn over this painting, assign it, give it to the museum board. Now, those trustees will be responsible for what's on loan as well as what's permanent, and those trustees would have more responsibility. Let's hope. But I don't know what goes on in the Simon mind or what goes on tax-wise or anything else. It's none of my business. I just wish that he'd do it.

GOODWIN: He doesn't have to justify his policies at board meetings? They're ceremonial?

ROWAN: See, the chairman of the board is Jennifer [Jones (Mrs. Norton) Simon]. She could carry on for him. She's young. It seems to me that the normal thing would be the title to those paintings should come out of his personal foundations over to the trustees of the Norton Simon Museum. They might even change the name back again: Pasadena Museum. [laughter]

GOODWIN: Well, wasn't his agreement to participate in the Pasadena Museum only for five years?

ROWAN: His agreement was to do certain things for five years, and he lived up to them. The first three years he showed way more than-- It was 25 percent of what the old museum had should be shown on an average of five years, and he probably pretty close to met it. It was very good the first year and good the second. Then, as he got his own things back, it fell off. Then it fell down to almost nothing. But I'm just saying, if you take the average--

GOODWIN: Yeah, I agree.

ROWAN: I'm not complaining about the average, but it was only five years. Those are past. We only made an agreement for five years.

GOODWIN: Right, so there's no further agreement.

ROWAN: No. It's up to him. On the other hand, I know that he feels the pressure from the public, the artists, and the former presidents and trustees to do the right thing by the

permanent collection, which is the only thing that his trustees are responsible for. They are responsible for raising the money, but he does that. So, let's hope that as Norton gets older and, let's say, gets a bit wiser and the balance is even better, that he'll just do it. He might even begin to like his own century. He likes it until 1930, and then he stops as though he were shot. It seems to me that he might. Everything he's done has been in this century. By keeping looking, he might begin to understand or feel better about the great art, the American art, of the mid-century. He just might. He's keeping looking. It's a huge opportunity for him.

GOODWIN: Well, isn't his basic problem that he needs a home for the collection? It has to be exhibited somewhere.

ROWAN: He had a policy before of a museum without walls. He lent to Princeton, to Yale maybe, to the Met. So, now that he's got walls, to put the stuff on them. Now he's got a museum with walls.

GOODWIN: Right. That seems to make perfect sense: that he would back his own institution.

ROWAN: I'm confident that he will. I feel that he will.

GOODWIN: Well, he sounds even more elusive than I thought he was, if as a trustee you have difficulty figuring out, you know, what he does or why he does what he does.

What do you think his interest in art is?

ROWAN: I think he's really interested. Back again to one meeting of the trustees. This was an executive committee meeting to which-- We weren't on the executive committee but asked to attend by [Alvin] Toffel. Alfred Esberg was asking him to lend the painting, and he lost his temper and said that he was fed up with all the pressure he was getting about showing this goddamned painting. What he felt like doing was having a fire sale and selling it all and using the funds to meet the challenge grant. That's what he said.

I was able to say to Norton, "I'm still a trustee here, but if what you've just said, if you mean it and do it, I'll not only have to get off your board quick but get out of California--quick."

Of course, we covered it. We wrote him a letter saying that we feared that he might-- He made this threat, and we just wanted it in the record that we're opposed to this, and that it was illegal. You can't sell a permanent collection to pay a challenge grant. So, what he suggested was both absurd and illegal.

All right. At the next board meeting, before we got off, I argued the point with him in front of the trustees. This is what they were responsible for. We'd object a lot to their selling it or in any way-- I mean, it's possible for a museum to trade it, but it's very unlikely. What we'd be thoroughly opposed to was selling it and getting money. My fear would

be this money would be used for deficits, paying deficits. So I'm just saying, this is all in the record.

GOODWIN: Is that precisely the reason finally why you and Esberg and Phillips resigned?

ROWAN: Yes. We didn't want to be among this board where all this painting, for a reason that we can't fathom, is hidden. We're fearful that one day he might try to sell it. If he does sell it and he has the cash, we're fearful that he'd use that cash to pay operating deficits. That's what we didn't want to have any part of.

GOODWIN: Right.

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GOODWIN: I'd like to discuss some of the museums other than the Pasadena Museum with which you've been associated. I understand you've been a member of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art.

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: Are you currently a member?

ROWAN: No. After serving there for fifteen-odd years, I resigned from it; oh, it's about, I imagine, six or seven years ago. Its function, George, is-- Essentially it's a money-raising arm for the Modern, where the money raised is focused on overseas operations for the Museum of Modern Art. It's about that simple. It's essentially a social gathering of collectors and trustees and supporters of the art. They gather once or twice a year. They go on tours. They meet one another. They meet in different cities, for example in Texas, Houston. It's a very pleasant-- The dues, I think, are fifteen hundred [dollars] a year; they used to be a thousand. So, they take--let's say, there are a couple of hundred members, two or three hundred--they take this money and give it to the Modern. In exchange, they have interesting meetings, where a member can look at other people's collections in other cities, both abroad and in America. So, we have to just remember it's social and it's money raising.

GOODWIN: And you weren't encouraged to lend from your collection?

ROWAN: No, no; no one asked me. Oh, I lent paintings to-- They had a program, Art in Embassies, and I lent four or five paintings to our embassy in Finland. So, I was asked to lend occasionally. The painting would be away for a year or two, and it would be in somebody's embassy. The idea was to have American art seen in American embassies all over the world. The Art in Embassies program, I imagine, worked pretty well.

Again, it's money raising. You go to social functions, meet other people in other countries, and in exchange you support the Modern with money--its overseas operations. I mean, for me it was interesting enough but fairly time consuming. A week or two, maybe ten days, in Europe--quite expensive--and this kind of social thing has never appealed to me too much.

GOODIWN: Were there other California collectors on the council?

ROWAN: Yes. There was Freddie Weisman and Marcia, and Gifford Phillips has been a member for a long time, and Norman Haas and his wife from San Francisco. These are the ones I remember from California.

GOODWIN: What are your thoughts on the Museum of Modern Art today?

ROWAN: We all know it's a great museum, does well. It's not for me to criticize it. It's done a phenomenal job over the

years. Its problem, I think, is essentially that it doesn't have space enough to show the paintings that [have] been given to it. It used to have five or six thousand paintings in storage in Santini Brothers. I'm sure it would be way more than that now. So, the problem has always been how to show what's been given. This is why the Modern, as you look at the future, will have difficulty in gifts, as others are apt to give to other institutions which can show the painting. This is why all along I felt that long ago the Museum of Modern Art should have gone national: should have lent the stuff it has in its warehouses to other museums and shouldn't be focused 100 percent in New York City.

GOODWIN: Did anybody else support that idea?

ROWAN: Yes.

GOODWIN: I think it's an intriguing idea.

ROWAN: Yes. Others can see it. Mr. Paley saw it instantly, Bill Paley, and others. As I said once before in this interview, Blanchette Rockefeller, the then-president of the museum, and the previous president, a nice lady whose name I forget just at this instant [Elizabeth Parkinson], both were opposed to any thought of the Modern leaving New York City. Of course, it wouldn't have left; it would have stayed in New York City. The theory would be that this is a way that it might have paid its deficit: if the museum went national, it could go into a fund-raising drive, both from

the New York foundations and from the midwestern foundations, assuming that it found the right spot in Texas. And then if it'd come to Pasadena, the Pasadena Museum, you would have had the West Coast foundations. So, a drive to raise a substantial sum of money could have been put on, and probably very successfully. And now, the income from that endowment could have gone a long way to eliminate the [$]2 million a year that the Museum of Modern Art has been running in the red, while the membership would have gone way up. I'm thinking of the national membership. It would have been beneficial for all concerned. Then the great Picassos and Matisses could have been seen in the West, in the Midwest and West.

GOODWIN: Have you followed the National Gallery's plunge into twentieth-century art?

ROWAN: Yes. I've followed it. It was inevitable that they would take a look at American art since America has been dominating the planet in the painting area, I mean, totally, since the 1950s. We all know. It's obvious that, if they were going to stay with things and keep up with anything, that they'd move into this field. They also have some advantage, the Museum of Modern Art having run out of space twenty-five years ago. They have space and can interest New York collectors like the [Burton] Tremaines in big gifts and had done so.

GOODWIN: But are the masterpieces available to collect?

ROWAN: Well, a gift of the Tremaine collection will include some masterpieces. I'm thinking of [Piet] Mondrian and a few others. So, [the Tremaines'] collection is going to the National [Gallery of Art].

GOODWIN: I wasn't aware of that.

ROWAN: They may have changed their minds, but three or four years ago it was their intention. No, they said they just weren't going to give their painting to the Modern and have it go into storage, though they were, of course, members of the International Council.

GOODWIN: You've also been on the board of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: That followed the term over at Pasadena?

ROWAN: Yes, the people that filled the vacuum, or tried to, since nothing was happening here. The County Museum was doing nothing. And during that five years, I became interested, was interested in supporting the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, that was doing a good job in this area, I mean, really trying and really filling the gap that Pasadena left, albeit 380 miles north up there.

GOODWIN: How do you account for the sudden revitalization of San Francisco, other than the participation of a former Pasadena Museum trustee?

ROWAN: No, their trustees could see--Pasadena Museum changed centuries, and they observed that the County Museum was doing nothing: no new building, just some talk--they could see that it was an opportunity for them to really do something for themselves and for the state, and they did it. They had good leadership from Hopkins, and they have a good strong board. They've raised large sums of money, and they're in the process of expanding their space. There's a little bit more space each year. Though they have a space problem, essentially they're addressing themselves to slowly solving it by taking little by little space that was occupied by the veterans' organization in that big building, by acquiring it little by little.

GOODWIN: So, most likely, the San Francisco museum will once again become the major museum of modern art on the West Coast.

ROWAN: Well, just at the moment it is. But at this moment there's a probability of one or two new museums appearing in Los Angeles, seven or eight or nine years late. But we can't tell. We'll just have to--

GOODWIN: Well, let's talk about that possibility.

ROWAN: --we'll have to observe the future.

GOODWIN: Do you think it makes sense to have two museums of modern art?

ROWAN: No. I think it's far better to have one. On the

other hand, humans being what they are, each group wants to build a building. I mean, we had that once before: we had the County Museum and the Pasadena Museum. One of them changed centuries. If the two museums are indeed built, then we'll observe a struggle to see which one is the most successful. For example, if the County did not show a remarkable change in its whole position towards mid-century painting, if it stumbled along the way it has been, obviously the museum downtown [the Museum of Contemporary Art] would be the winner. It would get the support of the collectors, the people, the members, and the County could always use its building [the Robert O. Anderson Building] for something else. And if the museum, I might add, downtown--or the proposed museum--got built and wasn't properly financed, wasn't properly endowed, it could do another Pasadena. But I don't think it too smart an idea to struggle in this way. I think it would be better for the County to get back of the museum downtown, or vice versa.

GOODWIN: Why hasn't there been a successful effort to make modern art a major part of the County Museum program?

ROWAN: I just don't know. They did start pretty late in covering a whole lot of centuries. The West Coast came along late in comparison to all the Eastern museums. So, with a late start, they're trying to cover five or six or seven, ten centuries. What got left out was what was happening in America in the fifties, sixties, seventies. I think they

just had too much to do: try to make a first-class museum, starting very late, to be a specialist at the mid-century.

GOODWIN: Except it would be easier to establish strength in the modern area than any other.

ROWAN: Yes. But they were committed already. Being a county museum, receiving the taxpayers' money, [$]3 million plus a year, they had the obligation to cover all the centuries. The trustees had that obligation. What got left out was their own century. The problem was it was weak, their effort in that area.

GOODWIN: Well, there was an emphasis on large, temporary exhibitions--

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: --but very little, almost nothing, on collecting.

ROWAN: The fact that they had these shows helped. I'm just saying that they were weak in comparison to the best Eastern museums. They were weak in comparison to what Pasadena Museum was doing. It's a relative term. They were trying. The effort just wasn't good enough.

GOODWIN: Were you ever asked to become a part of the County Museum's Contemporary Art Council?

ROWAN: Yes, and I am a member. I'm a recent member, about a year or two. And I was asked long ago to become a trustee of the County Museum. This was at the time that I was becoming interested more and more interested in the Pasadena

Museum. I knew I couldn't be a trustee of both organizations. And then recently, I was asked to be a trustee of the County Museum.

GOODWIN: Have you also been asked to become a trustee of the proposed new museum?

ROWAN: Yes, I've been asked.

GOODWIN: What is your affiliation with the new museum?

ROWAN: I'm supportive of the new museum. I've made up my mind to support the new museum in its try. I have told them yes, I will, if they want me, be a trustee of the new museum.

GOODWIN: What are the plans at the moment to build the new museum? There hasn't been any news in the last few months in the newspapers about the project that was discussed over last summer.

ROWAN: The project is, I believe, making progress. It has good people on its board. It has to do two things. It has to, first of all, observe who wins the award, what group of contractors is successful in the bid to build the new office buildings, towers (around [$]7[00] or 800 million in value) on the nine-acre site. Once it's been decided who the winning bidder is, then it seems to me that the trustees will be in close touch with the winning bidder, who has an obligation to spend 1.5 percent of the cost of these new buildings for the arts, or actually for a new museum building. So, the trustees will undoubtedly remain in close contact with the architects

for the new construction. So, the first step is, will there be a new building, and what kind of a building will it be? I feel fairly confident that this is going to happen.

Then the next step at the same time is for Mr. [Eli] Broad and his committee to raise $10 million minimum.

GOODWIN: For endowment?

ROWAN: Yes, for endowment.

And the third step, while the first two are going along, is to get some gifts--some art gifts, important art gifts--to the new organization, always subject, of course, to the building being completed and the [$]10 million being raised. I'm confident that they will succeed in getting some nice gifts toward that end.

GOODWIN: Where? From whom?

ROWAN: They're working on the Weismans. They're working on me. We're all working on others. So, this is work which is in progress. Give us six months or three months. There could be nice things to report if all is successful. For example, I've decided to give four paintings.

GOODWIN: Which ones?

ROWAN: I'm in the process of selecting. A Morris Louis, a Stella, an Olitski, and a Noland is how I'm thinking just at the moment.

GOODWIN: It seems that Marcia Weisman is one of the leaders, or maybe the major leader, on this project.

ROWAN: Right. Let's hope that Marcia-- I mean, she's told me on several occasions that she'd giving everything, that she's making a big gift to the new organization. I've encouraged her to do just that, pointed out that in the cycle of things in L.A. County it's her turn and Freddie's turn. We pushed the wheelbarrow a long time at Pasadena Museum, and others did, and now it's the turn of the Weismans to both give and lead. At the lunch I had with her not so long ago, I encouraged her to-- I mean, she said she was making a big gift, and of course, I encouraged it. She did mention that she had marital problems with her husband and this might delay things. I did point out to her that her husband had told me very recently that he was strong for a gift; no matter what happens, that he was all in favor of supporting the new museum and giving.

GOODWIN: Well, are the other collectors more or less waiting for the Weismans?

ROWAN: I just can't answer that question. I think what we're going to see is some gifts. It's bound to happen.

GOODWIN: Well, it seems there's an obvious conflict of interest on the Weismans' part, between supporting the County Museum and helping establish a new museum, because Fred Weisman is a trustee of the County Museum.

ROWAN: That did surprise me frankly, that he didn't resign as a trustee of the County Museum at the time that he threw

his lot in with the new museum. Maybe he has. I just am not in touch with Freddie.

GOODWIN: Who are some of the other collectors who are interested in the museum?

ROWAN: We'll find that Max Palevsky, for example, is interested in the new museum. Norman Lear is interested in the new museum. Phil and [Beatrice] Gersh are interested in the new museum, though I don't know in their case. My guess is that every collector in town is bound to be interested in what happens here. Now, some will be interested in the County; some are interested in the County.

GOODWIN: Who? [tape recorder turned off]

ROWAN: Michael Blankfort, for example, an important collector and a very decent fellow: he's always supported the County Museum.

GOODWIN: What about the Phillipses?

ROWAN: Oh, Gifford Phillips, yes. He served in the old days with the County Museum on their [Contemporary Art] Council. Of course, he served with Pasadena Museum. He was president of the Pasadena Museum. So, he was in competition with the County during those years, just as Pasadena was. No, he is interested in his uncle [Duncan Phillips's] museum in Washington, D.C., the Phillips [Collection]. He served for a long time on the board of the Museum of Modern Art, on their board as vice-chairman of their acquisitions committee; so

he does have two important obligations to come way before the County, and may even come before the proposed new museum downtown. But he has told me that he favors the new proposed museum downtown, and he's most interested in following their activity.

George, you've run out of questions. [laughter]

GOODWIN: No. My opinion is that there are not enough collectors in Southern California to support two museums, and I'm worried if there are enough collectors to support one museum very well.

ROWAN: George, your worry is well founded. You're right. If there are two museums, it won't be a bright thing; it'll involve human egos. There shouldn't be two museums. There should be one first-class museum. Now, I've thrown my lot in with the museum downtown because, on the record, the County had the opportunity of, one, taking over the Pasadena Museum, which would have been vital to them and to the Pasadena Museum; it would have given us one museum of modern art. They failed to do so. Their trustees just had a failure. Often we make mistakes. No matter what board you're on, you look back, and you find that you've made a big ball-up. So, they did make that mistake. Let's not scold them. Let's just observe what they did.

The second thing they did was not to provide-- Once the Pasadena Museum had changed its centuries, they didn't dive

right in and energetically build a new building and provide the leadership for a new building, didn't do it. Now, that's the second failure. Now, at any time they could change. Something could change. But at the moment, I'm not satisfied with the County's management, either in the past or at the present.

GOODWIN: Neither am I.

ROWAN: Right. So, if they elect to build a new modern building, it just could be one more mistake. It could be that they'll observe what happens and end up by being supportive of the new museum in some way or other. The new museum at least, if it survives, would be free of the taxpayers' $3 million a year or more and all the things that go along with that. I mean, the taxpayers could chop off support to a museum any time.

GOODWIN: It's happened.

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: With Proposition 13.

ROWAN: Right, but the County Museum still received its money. But that doesn't mean that at some time down the line, the supervisors might decide that they prefer something else. The arboretums? We can't tell what these people will do. So that [$]3 million isn't absolutely secure. And inside it the management-- I mean, tenure is obtained by people-- That is to say, it's hard to operate a county museum as well as one could operate in the ever-changing field of modern art as well

as a museum that was quite open, well funded-- I mean, for example, the Modern has been successful, as Albright-Knox has, because they're free. They raise their own money and make their own decisions, and they've been well managed. So, the County has had that difficulty. The record isn't in just a modern field. It's bad management, the way I look at it, and that might continue.

GOODWIN: Well, I'm puzzled by the idea that there aren't very many collectors or serious devotees of modern art in this city or almost anywhere except New York and Chicago.

ROWAN: See, this is why Pasadena Museum didn't make it: it didn't have enough people that would commit to support a specialist in the modern field. So, it's a real problem. Now, times change, and there are going to be more collectors. Let's think of Gary Familian, who is a new collector. We can think of Norman Lear, a new collector. And if we started really looking, we could find that things change. I mean, we may be focusing a little bit too much on the past. Eli Broad is an important collector. Gifford Phillips is an important collector, though he's an old one. I'm just saying, things may change for the better.

GOODWIN: Yeah, but at the moment we can count prominent collectors on two hands.

ROWAN: Right.

GOODWIN: Why aren't there dozens of collectors?

ROWAN: There just aren't. I don't think there ever were dozens of collectors.

GOODWIN: Neither do I.

ROWAN: In any century.

GOODWIN: But what makes a collector?

ROWAN: What makes a collector?

GOODWIN: Yeah.

ROWAN: This guy has an interest. Let's look at collecting for just a second. Look at the collectors of other things: straw hats, all kinds of things, coins, stamps, diamonds, furniture. The collector bug is in every human. The resources with which to collect often aren't there. They'd like to collect, but they're missing both the financial ability to collect and they don't really know enough. They collect a lot of things that aren't really of interest at the museum level. So, here in this community with its film industry, its TV industry, and its interest in all kinds of things, music, it should be that we can find collectors here, and we're bound to find them. If the community remains prosperous, they're going to show up. They have in New York City, they're beginning in San Francisco, and they're going to be here. So, what we want to look at is: May the swing of collectors be more rapid in the present than it has been in the past? We can remain optimistic.

But one thing--let's get back to the essential--there isn't room at the moment; no one can say there's room; the most optimistic guy couldn't say there's room for two museums.

It's going to hurt, not help; [it's going] to divide the effort. I've heard several people say there's plenty of room for two museums. I think there might be room for two failures.

GOODWIN: And one success.

ROWAN: I'm hoping that the focus will be on one of them. We're just in the path, and we're observing what's going to happen. [tape recorder turned off]

GOODWIN: Mr. Rowan, what are your thoughts about the L.A. Institute of Contemporary Art, LAICA?

ROWAN: See, I haven't got many thoughts about them. As I understand the organization, it's artists, 100 percent artists, and it's an interesting idea. I saw their first show, and I followed what they've done. Let's put it this way: what's happened is almost what I thought would happen.

GOODWIN: Which is?

ROWAN: It's a nice, little group, and it does nice, little things. It hasn't done an important work in the community. I don't know what their method or the line of decision making is, but if you have a hundred or so artists in a room, all making a decision about their own and their friends' work, what comes out of it usually isn't too important. But I'm happy that they're in there trying. It's a kind of interesting experimental effort.

GOODWIN: What about the Fellows of Contemporary Art?

ROWAN: The old Fellows of the Pasadena Museum?

GOODWIN: They're still around.

ROWAN: Yes.

GOODWIN: Are you a fellow?

ROWAN: No. But they were one of the supporting groups, raised money for the old museum, one of maybe five or six supportive groups. They did a good job. They interested people in the arts at whatever level it was. I'm sure that the fellows did a good job for the old museum. Now, the fact that they continued as a kind of social group is no harm. I mean, it's good. I'm sure. I'm sure it has the effect of increasing the base, or broadening the interest, in modernist painting or sculpture or photography. I mean, that's the feeling that I have.

GOODWIN: But do you think that the group would be more useful if it got behind one institution, wherever it is, rather than sponsoring an exhibition here and there?

ROWAN: Since Pasadena Museum changed its centuries, see, there hasn't been anything really to focus on. There's no modern museum. My guess is that they would find a place in a new museum, for example, the downtown museum. A museum of modern art might be a place that they could focus on. I don't think it's easy for them to be supportive the way they're organized at the County.

GOODWIN: What do you think of the smaller museums in Southern California that are emphasizing modern art: Newport and so on?

ROWAN: I like Newport. I think they've done a good job at their level. I mean, they're down there, sixty miles from the center. But it's a big, new area of new money. I'm really encouraged. I mean, I've done everything I can to help them, like lending them painting or doing the little things that help them. They put on good shows. I mean, think of the Stella show. We would have missed the whole Stella show if it hadn't been for Newport. So, they've done some things which are absolutely essential that the County flopped on. That would be a good example: Why didn't the County have the Stella show? Good question. But instead of missing it 100 percent, here it was at Newport, sixty miles away, and we could all see it. Likewise, La Jolla: they're assets. Whenever Santa Barbara [Museum of Art] does anything in the mid-century, it's supportive. It helps us. So, in the vacuum, here at the periphery of things, we've had a lot of people trying and, I'm sure, developing new collectors. Mr. [David] Steinmetz and others are quite important collectors in this area. Maybe without the museum, the collectors in Orange County wouldn't have a focus.

GOODWIN: Do you have any official association with the Santa Barbara museum?

ROWAN: Yes. I'm on an art committee, on a committee that screens future shows before it goes to the full art committee. I serve on it with four others, and it's interesting.

GOODWIN: I know you've loaned parts of your collection to Santa Barbara.

ROWAN: Right. I told them, whenever they want to borrow anything, I'll lend it. They, of course, don't have much space. And [William] Spurlock, their new director, really has quite a different focus; he's interested in conceptual things.

GOODWIN: Right, as opposed to painting.

ROWAN: As opposed to painting. [laughter] He did make a statement not long ago in the local press that modernist painting was dead, I mean, that painting was dead, and that conceptual things of the type that he liked were still living--were the only things living, as I read the statement.

GOODWIN: That's encouraging. [laughter] A few moments ago, you mentioned that you have plans to make a gift to a new museum of modern art in Los Angeles if such a museum materializes. Do you have other plans about the future of your collection?

ROWAN: Yes. I'm inclined to stay right in L.A. I know I will. My hope would be that the new downtown museum of modern art makes it, and this is where I'd focus everything. I'm planning to make a gift right now, in a week or two, of certain paintings as a starter, to show interest. Of course, this kind of a gift would be contingent upon the new museum being built, a $10 million museum being built, and that it earn

endowment of about [$]10 million. So, the gift is dependent--the current gift right now; it's like four paintings--would be dependent on those conditions being met. Otherwise, my interest is to the County Museum.

GOODWIN: Can you sum up in a few words what your interest in art has meant to you, what role it's played in your life?

ROWAN: My interest in it has really helped me. It's made me happier and given me something to do, I mean, something that's quite different from the business world or other worlds that I'm in. Essentially, you'd have to maybe call it a hobby. I don't care what you call it, it's focusing one's awareness in a big, changing, marvelous area that without a question helps a person that's thinking as much as it does-- The tangible object, the painting itself, or let's say, being able to collect museum-quality work now and then gives pleasure. OK.

Also the idea of giving is just part of the concept. Anyone [who] works at this or [who] has this as a hobby is better off than the fellow that has no hobby. I must say, when you think of hobbies, collecting painting has got a certain something that makes it quite different from collecting, let's say, wasterpaper boxes or all the things: old automobile tires, old sewing machines. It's just different. It's a much higher effort, possibly in a spiritual way, in my opinion.

GOODWIN: Well, in your experience, has collecting been even more than a hobby?

ROWAN: Yes. I mean, the word hobby is just a word. An important part of my life is to collect. So, what can start just as a hobby because you like a painting or because you prefer painting to other things, or sculpture, can end up getting you more interested in all kinds of things, both, let's say, in the area of philosophy and maybe in the spiritual area. They're all there.

One other thing: it keeps your mind on giving. Remember George, what I told you before: you can't send it ahead or take it with you. So, essentially, immediately you are involved with collecting, you're involved with museum world. They just go together.

TAPE NUMBER: FOUR, SIDE TWO*

FEBRUARY 7, 1980

GOODWIN: I'd like you to tell me about your family background please.

ROWAN: Well, I'm one of four kids. It was an early California family. My [paternal] grandfather [George D. Rowan] was out here in 1860, a tea merchant, top Chicago tea merchant. He made trips to China in the middle sixties. Because his wife had TB, he settled in, first, San Francisco and, then, down [in] L.A. The TB didn't get better in San Francisco, but it cured immediately when he came down here. So, my father [Robert A. Rowan] was born here 1875. He had a lot of brothers. His kids were all born in Pasadena. I was born in 1910 and lived here until my father died, [when I was] age eight, 1918. We were then at that time at boarding school, the three of us, at Santa Barbara, the old Deane School.

Then my mother [Laura Schwartz Rowan] decided that we'd all go to Europe, my sister and the three kids. We were about age eleven. So, we went to Europe and went to school, first, in an English school in Switzerland and, then, after about three years, went to an English school in the south of England called Down House.

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* Material on the following pages replaces material from Tape I accidentally erased (see Interview History for further explanation).

GOODWIN: (That's the point where the tape [Tape I] resumed. I wanted to ask you a few details about the earlier material.) What was your mother's family's background?

ROWAN: Her mother's-- They were southern German, Bavarian, and lived in a village some twenty-odd miles--I can't remember the name of the village--from Munich. When my mother's mother--my grandmother, aged nineteen, and her sister got a new stepfather, the two girls decided to come to California to visit. They disliked the stepfather; so they came at age nineteen and eighteen to San Francisco to stay with a relative. So, these two girls came via the Panama [Isthmus], crossed it by mule train and steamships. So, they were here early.

My grandmother married a fellow called [Adolph] Schwartz, a deserter from the German army, 1875, a German officer who came to the U.S.A. He had a little skill in brewing; so amongst other things, he worked for the Meyer Brewing Company here. They had a small, ten-acre farm from Main Street down to the L.A. River. They had this large family: my mother, three sisters, and a brother.

GOODWIN: How did your parents meet?

ROWAN: I just don't know; I don't know. There were these three good-looking sisters that lived on Main Street, and somehow some way he met one of them. Another aunt was married--I mean, [my mother's] sister was married to [Nat] Wilshire, the son of the person [Gaylord Wilshire] that owned

the farm after which Wilshire Boulevard was named. Her name was Lucy, Lucy Wilshire.

GOODWIN: And you spent your early years in Pasadena.

ROWAN: Right, until age ten.

GOODWIN: Where did you live in Pasadena?

ROWAN: Right next door to where I'm living now.

GOODWIN: Really?

ROWAN: Right. My father's house adjoins over there. My brother [Louis] lives there now, one of my brothers.

GOODWIN: Do you have a twin brother?

ROWAN: Yes, I have a twin brother and a younger brother. We all work in the same firm [R. A. Rowan and Company].

GOODWIN: What was the name of the school you attended in Pasadena?

ROWAN: I first attended a school right next door, called Miss Ranney's. It's now Westridge. Then, at age eight, I attended a school in Santa Barbara, a boarding school in Santa Barbara, called the Deane School. Oh, [I] went one year--I forgot--one year or maybe six months to the Polytechnic, the early Poly.

GOODWIN: Why did your mother take you to Europe?

ROWAN: She just liked the idea of going to Europe and told me she thought it would be good for her sons to take a look at Europe. Of course, it was her desire to go to Europe; she loved European things. She liked Paris, she liked Rome,

she liked the life in Europe in the twenties. And I might add that it was quite pleasant: the dollar was strong, and it was a very nice place to live.

GOODWIN: And she remarried?

ROWAN: Yes. She remarried in 1925, an Italian called Orsini, Prince [Domenico] Orsini, who was a member of the Roman aristocracy and the highest lay official in the Vatican. I just might add one more thing: he had seven popes in the Orsini family from the thirteenth century onward; so he was closely related to the Vatican. Seven popes were Orsinis.

GOODWIN: Did you have any relationship with him?

ROWAN: Oh, yes. He introduced us to the pope, both Pius X and then later Cardinal [Eugenio] Pacelli [Pius XII]. And we got to know the Roman cardinals; at lunch there'd often be one. So, he knew everybody in the Church.

GOODWIN: Did he have a palace in Rome?

ROWAN: The Orsini Palace, which is one of the nicer ones, was built on the Theater [Teatro] Marcello. But he had to sell that palace when he was a young man to pay the debts of his father [Filippo Orsini] who was a big entertainer. He also had a palace called Bracciano, about twenty-five miles out of Rome, that he had to sell, a beautiful one: sixty thousand acres on Lake Bracciano of woodland. In addition, his father owned the Nemi, the little palace at

Nemi, where Caligula's galleys were sunk. He owns still a little palace at Foggia in Italy, where they had grainland: six thousand acres of good wheatland.

GOODWIN: Did you have any stepbrothers or [step]sisters?

ROWAN: Yes, I did. He had a son, Virginio Orsini, and two daughters, Isabella and Hilda. They were all friends. I mean, they were older than we were.

GOODWIN: And you went to school in Switzerland.

ROWAN: Yes. English school in Switzerland.

GOODWIN: What was it called?

ROWAN: It was called Ecole les fleuris [?]. Then the school that we went to in England was called Down House, near Brighton and Rottingdean.

GOODWIN: So, you were an American expatriate.

ROWAN: Yes, for almost ten years.

GOODWIN: How did that feel?

ROWAN: Fine. [laughter] It felt fine. We came back on one or two summer holidays. I remember spending '29 in Newport. My family had a little house at Newport Beach.

GOODWIN: I think we're caught up.

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* This building had not been erected at the time of the interview. Rowan generally referred to it as "the new building."

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* MOCA was in the planning stages at the time of the interview. Rowan generally referred to it as "the new museum."

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