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RICHARD KOSHALEK: AN ORAL HISTORY

Interviewed by Joanne L. Ratner

Completed under the auspices  
of the  
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University of California  
Los Angeles

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## **RICHARD KOSHALEK**

Born in Wausau, Wisconsin on September 20, 1941, Richard Koshalek attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, where he obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in Architecture in 1965 and Master of Arts degree in Architecture and Art History in 1967.

### **PROFESSIONAL HISTORY:**

**Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, California**  
President 1999 - present

Richard Koshalek was appointed the fourth President of Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, in September of 1999. Under his leadership, Art Center has embarked on a landmark program to invigorate the College's educational goals and expand both its programs and its campus. He has implemented a six-step approach comprised of: implementing the College's educational and "research and development" mission with a new degree of flexibility, usefulness, and relevance to a rapidly changing world; positioning the College at the center of national and global dialogue in design and visual communications; assuring continual leadership in the exploration and uses of technologies; ensuring greater visibility for Art Center's work and achievements; aggressively building the case for support of Art Center's campus extension program; and addressing long-range physical and environmental needs by holding to the highest standards in architecture and design as an appropriate reflection of the College's mission.

Koshalek conceived and led a collaborative design project entitled "LA Now" to focus creativity on downtown Los Angeles and its potential for future development. The project brought together the work of UCLA architecture students under the direction of Thom Mayne, CalArts graphic design students, and Art Center film and photography students in two publications which is being distributed by the University of California Press. The project was part of a "wall-less classroom" initiative that gives students an opportunity to have hands on experience in tangible projects that have a wider reach and impact on the community.

**The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA),** Los Angeles, California.  
Director 1982-1999; Deputy Director and Chief Curator 1980-1982.

Provided the leadership for the development of the founding endowment of \$30 million. Together with comprehensive program support, membership and annual giving, led development efforts to provide financial stability for an annual operating budget of \$8 million.

From 1980-83, worked with architect Frank Gehry on the design and construction of MOCA's Geffen Contemporary (formerly known as the Temporary Contemporary), opened in November, 1983. Beginning in 1983, with Frederick M. Nicholas, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at that time, worked with architect Arata Isozaki on the design and construction of the permanent building for The Museum of Contemporary Art, opened December, 1986.

Provided leadership in building the permanent collection, initiated in 1985 by the acquisition of eighty works from the collection of Giuseppe Panza di Biumo made possible by a fund-raising campaign that raised \$11 million over a three-year period. Developed the permanent collection with the gifts of The Rita and Taft Schreiber Collection including major works by Alechinsky, De Stael, Dubuffet, Giacometti, Mondrian, and Pollock; the Barry Lowen Collection of sixty-eight works by artists including Susan Rothenberg, Joel Shapiro, Frank Stella, and Ellsworth Kelly; the Beatrice and Philip Gersh Collection including works such as *Cubi III* (1961) by David Smith; the Marcia Simon Weisman Collection including Jasper Johns' *Map* (1962) as well as many important works on paper; the Robert Halff Collection with key works by Ellsworth Kelly and John Chamberlain; the Robert Rowan Collection including important works by Morris Louis, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella, and Mark di Suvero; and ten major works of art by Sam Francis including *Grey* (1951), given by the artist to the permanent collection. The collection has continued to expand through purchases and individual gifts and is building in-depth representation of a select number of contemporary artists including Robert Gober, Martin Puryear, Elizabeth Murray, Mike Kelley, Roni Horn, and Ed Moses.

Developed an extensive and diverse exhibition and performing arts program. Among the projects organized or presented under the directorship of Mr. Koshalek are "The First Show: Painting and Sculpture from Eight Collections 1940-1980"; "Available Light," a dance collaboration with Frank Gehry, Lucinda Childs and John Adams; "Michael Heizer: Sculpture in Reverse"

(traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art); “Dan Flavin: Monuments to V. Tatlin” (traveled to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., the Centre d’Arts Plastiques Contemporains, Bordeaux, France, and the Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller, Otterlo, Holland); “The Panza Collection”; “Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art”; “Anselm Kiefer”; “Arata Isozaki 1960/1990 Architecture” (traveled to Mito Art Tower, Kitakyushu City Museum of Art and Daimaru Museum in Japan; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and the Brooklyn Museum of Art); “Ad Reinhardt,” co-curated by Mr. Koshalek and William Rubin, Museum of Modern Art, New York; “Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture” (traveled to the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Gunma Prefectural Museum, Japan; Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas; Wexner Center, Columbus, Ohio); “Robert Irwin” (traveled to the Kolnischer Kunstverein, Koln, Germany; Musee d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid); “At the End of the Century: One Hundred Years of Architecture” (traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City; Museum Ludwig/Josef-Haubrich-Kunsthalle, Cologne; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago); and “Richard Serra” (traveled to the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao).

In conjunction with the “Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses” exhibition in 1989, organized an architectural design competition in collaboration with the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency for 40 units of affordable housing recently constructed in Hollywood, California.

Instituted the award-winning education program, Contemporary Art Start, a curriculum-based art education program that introduces contemporary art and culture to elementary and secondary school students and teachers in collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District, which currently involves more than 2500 LAUSD students and teachers; and First Visit and Beyond, a long-term community program of off-site, interactive presentations and guided tours of MOCA designed to increase awareness of the interrelationship of contemporary art and contemporary life.

In 1992-93, in collaboration with sculptor Robert Graham and the Community Youth Gang Services program, created a project in which young adults learned marketable skills while producing an original work of art. This project provided ongoing employment for the participants, and a substantial amount of earned income for The Museum of Contemporary Art to support its education programs.

Completed \$25 million fundraising campaign to increase the museum's exhibition and education endowment.

**The Hudson River Museum of Westchester**, New York. Director 1976-1980.

Initiated a broad new interdisciplinary program in the arts, sciences and humanities. Presented in the museum's contemporary exhibition, planetarium and classroom building a series of exhibitions which typified the museum's dedication to broad education in the humanities: e.g., "Warburton Avenue: The Architecture of a Neighborhood," designed by architects Hardy Holzman & Pfeiffer, explored the options for positive change in a racially-mixed neighborhood in transition. Increasingly, the museum's program involved the participation of distinguished artists, architects, scholars, photographers, composers, writers, and graphics designers, including Siah Armajani, Lee Friedlander, Richard Serra, Vincent Scully, Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan, Nancy Hanks, Milton Glaser, and Philip Glass.

Developed an extensive performing arts and film program. Expanded the museum's collection with permanent environmental installations by Red Grooms, *The Bookstore*, 1979; and Dan Flavin's fluorescent light installation in the museum's exterior entrance-way and skylights.

**The Fort Worth Art Museum**, Fort Worth, Texas. Director 1974-1976.

Initiated development of the institution's exhibition program and administrative organization. Organized large-scale exhibitions and extensive performing arts and film programs, including dance residencies by Twyla Tharp and Trisha Brown; performances by composers; and theater residencies. Initiated an annual graphic design program in which leading American designers such as Massimo Vignelli and Ivan Chermayeff participated. Developed new programs to inform the community of the institution's programs via a full-page newspaper-catalogue printed in the local newspaper with essays by leading curators, museum directors, and critics.

**National Endowment for the Arts.** Assistant Director of the Visual Arts Program 1972-74.

Chaired panel meetings and worked closely with City, State and Federal officials to choose artists selection panel members. Resulting large-scale commissions throughout the country included works by Louise Nevelson, Al Held, and David von Schlegel in Philadelphia; Claes Oldenburg in Chicago; Mark di Suvero in Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Isamu Noguchi in Honolulu.

**Walker Art Center,** Minneapolis, Minnesota. Curator 1970-73; Assistant Curator 1968-1970; Exhibitions Coordinator 1967-68.

Assisted Director Martin Friedman with the organization of large-scale exhibitions, including “14 Sculptors: The Industrial Edge,” “Jean Dubuffet,” and “American Indian Art: Form and Tradition.” Managed logistics, organization and installation design of the opening exhibition, “Works for New Spaces,” including works by Mark Di Suvero, Richard Serra, and Robert Irwin.

#### **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND MEMBERSHIPS:**

- Board Member, American Institute of Graphic Arts, 1983
- IBM Fellow in Design, Aspen Design Conference, 1984
- Chase Manhattan Bank Art Committee, 1986-1999
- Chairman, Architectural Selection Committee, Walt Disney Concert Hall, 1987-1990
- The Yale University President’s Council Committee on the Art Gallery and British Art Center, 1989-1994
- David Rockefeller led Nominating Committee, Praemium Imperiale Award, 1989 - 2001
- International Board, Wexner Center for the Arts, 1990 to present
- Committee of Assessors, Tate Gallery of Modern Art Architectural Competition
- Lingotto International Museum Directors Committee for the City of Turin
- International Advisory Committee, La Biennale di Venezia, 1992-1993
- Board of Trustees, American Center in Paris, 1993-1994
- Executive Committee, American Center in Paris, 1993-1994
- Judge, 1993 Business Awards, Business Committee for the Arts
- International Jury, Philip Morris Art Award, 1996 & 1998
- Commissioner, 1997 South Korea’s Kwangju Biennale,
- National Endowment for the Arts Federal Advisory Committee For International Exhibitions
- Jury Member, The American Institute of Architects' Inaugural Business

- Week/Architectural Record Awards, 1997
- Screening Committee, Japan's Osaka Triennale 1997-Print
  - Selection Committee, Mexico's Museo de Art Contemporáneo de Monterrey Prize, 1997-1998
  - Chair, Pew Trust Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative Panel, 1998
  - General Services Administration National Register of Peer Professionals, 1998
  - International Advisory Committee, Friends of the Stuart Collection, 1998
  - Award Committee, Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, 1999
  - Advisory Committee, Cultural Facilities Fund & Irvine Foundation, 1999
  - Recognition for Lifetime Contribution in Support of the Arts, L.A. Art Core, 1999
  - Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the French Government, 1999
  - Jury Member, The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual P/A Awards, 1999
  - Chairman, Award Committee, Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, 2000
  - Children's Freedom Award, Children's Museum of Los Angeles, 2001
  - Board Member, American Federation of Arts, 2001
  - Board Member, International Design Conference in Aspen, 2001 to 2003
  - Architecture Selection Committee Co-Chair, Caltrans District 7 Headquarters in Los Angeles, 2001
  - Moderator and Panelist, World Economic Forum, 2002
  - TED12 Conference, 2002
  - Architecture Juror, La Biennale de Venezia, 2002
  - Juror and Advisory Panel Member, Chrysler Design Awards, 2002
  - WIRED Brain Trust Jury, 2002 & 2003
  - Gold Crown Award from the Pasadena Arts Council, 2002
  - Honorary Tour Committee, Southwest Chamber Music, 2002
  - Delegate and Panelist, World Economic Forum, 2003
  - Imagine Award, Inner-City Arts, 2003

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

### INTERVIEWER:

Joanne L. Ratner, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program; B.A., American Studies/Art History, Scripps College; M.A., Art History/Museum Studies, University of Southern California.

### TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

**Place:** Koshalek's office, Art Center, Pasadena.

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### TRANSCRIPT PRODUCTION:

TechniType Transcripts transcribed the interview.

Koshalek did not review the transcript and some names thus remain unverified.

Victoria Simmons, editor, prepared the table of contents and the interview history. Koshalek provided the career summary. Jane Collings, senior editor, compiled the names list. The names list was assembled using an automatic marking program, and instances where persons are referred to by pronoun or inference are not included.

### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

JUNE 19, 2002

RATNER: Today is Thursday, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002, and we're at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena with its president, Richard Koshalek.

Before we begin our discussion of the Museum of Contemporary Art, I'd like to know a little bit about your background.

KOSHALEK: Oh, boy.

RATNER: When and where were you born, and where did you go to school?

KOSHALEK: I was actually born in Wausau, Wisconsin. It's a city, a small city, of about 30,000 people, and it's located in northern Wisconsin. I spent a short period of time there, actually, not a very long period of time there.

My father was a contractor, and we moved—I moved sort of quite frequently. The family moved its home to Madison, Wisconsin. I sort of spent a little bit of time in Madison but went away to school. My father was constantly sort of traveling and dealing with very large-scale construction projects, the electrical side of it. He was an electrical contractor. He was involved in building air force bases in Glasgow, Montana; a taconite processing plant in Silver Bay, Minnesota; power plants in Iowa; department stores in Nebraska; whatever, and had this great sort of ability to take on whatever task possible without too much concern for the scale of it or what it involved in terms of complexity, to build these large-scale projects, which I spent summers working on and had many sort of extraordinary experiences.

Like one summer, going to Glasgow, Montana, it was nothing but sort of a vast field, and working with the surveyors to lay out an air force base, and then going back five years later and working there every summer to pay my way through college. And there was a full-blown air force base with F-18s. This was in the period, I would say, the 1950s. It was that kind of situation.

I have two brothers, one who's a lawyer and one who's in the world of computers, and they both live in Madison, Wisconsin. My father died at a very early age, fifty-four, fifty-six, in that range, and my mother's still alive at ninety-three. Her connection was to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where she worked for thirteen years and retired. I think now it's been quite a while ago, but still very much connected to the University of Wisconsin in all forms. That was sort of the early background.

I went to high school in Wisconsin, but also went to high school in many different cities across the country, traveled quite extensively, then went to University of Wisconsin for the first year and wanted to be an architect. They had no School of Architecture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, so I transferred to the University of Minnesota. And studying at the University of Minnesota, it evolved into the idea that I wanted to be an architectural historian or journalist and have some kind of connection to the larger world, to the public, in terms of communication, and got a degree in architecture from the University of Minnesota.

I was working for an architect in Minneapolis. His name was Robert Cerny, and he was an architect. I think he had over a hundred architects working for him.

But he did all the major buildings in Minneapolis. He did the airport. He did the University of Minnesota main library. He did the stadium where the Minnesota Vikings played.

He had an interesting way of working, where he had a department which I was sort of a part of, where he would come up with an idea of what Minneapolis or St. Paul needed, like they needed a dome stadium, or they needed a new airport, or they needed a new library at the University of Minneapolis, and then we would create the project. We'd go look for a site, and we'd build a gorgeous model. Then he would take the model to all the powers-that-be. At that time, it was the Dayton family, Pillsbury family, the Cowles family, the newspaper. And he would sell them on the idea that Minneapolis needed this stadium or Minneapolis needed this new library. It worked for him. It worked for him, and he was a very good architect, working in the same— And we worked in that area, developing these sort of fantasy projects, or sort of future projects.

Working in the same office was a lady named Mildred Friedman, who was the wife of— A very talented architect and designer in her own right, but she was the wife of the director of the Walker Art Center. The Walker Art Center was in transition. It was moving out of an old building. It was going to tear down the old building on the same site, build a new building by Edward Larabee Barnes, the architect from New York, and then was going to be connected to the Guthrie Theatre. So the museum was going to be without a home for about two to three years during the construction.

Martin Friedman asked me to design installations, because they were going to do what was called a “Guerilla Museum” on Thursdays, like guerilla warfare, show up in different places, vacant lots, abandoned buildings, department stores and so on.

RATNER: Because they didn’t have a building.

KOSHALEK: They didn’t have a building, and they wanted to be active during this interim period of construction, and build membership and build community support and so on. So they did this wonderful project during that time. We did shows in department stores, Dayton Hudson’s big exhibition hall, shows, one called *144 Sculptors: The Industrial Edge* that showed the work of Ronald Bladen, Don Judd, and so forth. Another one, called *Figures and Environments*, which showed the work of Red Grooms and people like that, Paul Thek and so forth.

I worked on the exhibition installation for those projects, and it was a very exciting time then, a very, very, very extraordinary performing arts program led by a lady named Suzanne Weil, who developed a program where she brought to the Guthrie Theatre people like Janis Joplin, Big Brother and the Holding Company, Arlo Guthrie, whatever, James Taylor, at a time when they were affordable. And she took the money she made from those performances and she gave it to dance and theater groups like Trisha Brown, who was emerging at the time, Twyla Tharp, Mabou Mines, the Wooster Group, and whatever. It was an extremely heady time.

The reason I left the architecture firm to go with Walker Art Center is, the first day I went to the Walker Art Center to be interviewed for the job, it was a day in which they had just opened an exhibition called *Light, Space and Motion*, and it

included a lot of work by artists that aren't recognized today, who have almost disappeared, except for very few. But it dealt with this whole idea of light, space, and motion as sort of a means of communicating sort of artistic value and so on. And the day I went there, the Hell's Angels from Minnesota had showed up, and there were hundreds of motorcycles parked out front, and they were all in the building seeing this show.

Also that day I met the artist [Roberto] Matta, which was a great experience. He was installing an exhibition, and I remember he was discussing the possibility of hanging paintings from the ceiling. And I thought, if I could work in this kind of creative environment, if I could be part of this kind of, sort of situation, that would be damned exciting. So my whole life, starting then, actually, was based on the idea that I wanted involvement with creative people, creative individuals, and that was going to give me sort of my feedback and going to give me my sort of reason to sort of function and sort of keep me interested in the larger world.

From then on— I went to the Walker, and from then on I had this great, great, great, extraordinary opportunity for a long period of time, working in museums, first of all at the Walker Art Center, where I became a curator, ultimately, and did shows like *9 Artists/9 Spaces* and so forth, and worked on an American Indian show called *American Indian Art: Form and Tradition*. I'm trying to think what else. The opening show for the new museum that Ed Barnes designed called *Works for New Spaces*.

And the whole idea was that I wanted that engagement, that involvement, with the creative individual. I've always had this enormous respect and admiration for creative people, whether they be writers, dancers, performers, filmmakers, artists, architects, whatever.

And I did then become— I left the Walker and went and became assistant director of the visual arts program at the National Endowment for the Arts at a very extraordinary time, when the NEA had just started, roughly. This was in the early seventies, and Nancy Hanks was the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, and just a remarkable, remarkable, strong, hot—

[Pause]

KOSHALEK: That is an earthquake.

RATNER: Wow.

KOSHALEK: That is nothing less than an earthquake, and a pretty serious one. Let me just make one call quickly. We should just turn it off for a minute.

[Pause]

KOSHALEK: Nancy Hanks had this sort of— It was the time of Richard [M.] Nixon. Richard Nixon probably, of all the presidents before and since, was more supportive of the arts than anyone. I was in charge of the public art program, not only for the National Endowment for the Arts, but we consulted with the General Services Administration for Art for Federal Buildings and wrote the guidelines for that program. And we did, I think, at the National Endowment for the Arts in roughly two years, we did at least, at least, maybe, I would say, a hundred projects all over the

United States, all over the United States. It was everything from [Dan] Flavin in Alaska for a federal building to [Isamu] Noguchi in Honolulu, to Louise Nevelson for a federal building in Philadelphia, and so forth, and really led that program in cities all over the United States.

It was a wonderful experience, because it brought us in contact with city governments, brought us in contact with civic leadership in those cities, and we built this sort of incredible connection of people across the country. Almost every Monday morning we'd leave Washington [D.C.] and go somewhere and come back on Friday, and commission at least three major works across the country somewhere. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, for example, a number of works by Mark Di Suvero.

It's a real long history, and it was when the public art program was just starting to evolve and we were just starting to learn about what this meant, and that the work that was needed in the public sector was not work that was done in a studio that got enlarged in scale, but that had to be directly designed for the site, be site-specific and so on.

RATNER: And people applied for these grants?

KOSHALEK: City governments did, cultural organizations. Every federal building had a rule that a certain percentage had to go to fine arts, and we did that program for roughly two years.

I got the job because of a man named Brian O'Doherty. Brian O'Doherty was doing then the commentary on *The Today Show*, and he was head of the visual arts program at the National Endowment for the Arts and very close to Nancy Hanks. He

invited me to join as the assistant director to run the public art program, which I did do and which was a great thrill for me, because I got to work with a lot of artists again.

We got to work in the public sector changing cities, getting involved in city building, whether it was a university, college campus or it was a city situation. I had unbelievable experiences in dealing with the artists and interfacing between the artist and the city government or the corporate entity or the university administration. The interesting thing about that is that you learn a lot about how to convince people to do things, and you learn a lot about what you need to do to understand where people are coming from with regard to a specific situation, what they want to accomplish. And there's a million war stories about what happened there.

Then one day I'm sitting at the NEA in my office, and a man named Richard Fargo Brown, who used to be the director of LACMA and went on to build the Kimbell [Art Museum], said, "Richard, I'm on a search committee, an advisor to a search in Fort Worth, Texas, and we'd like very much for you to become the director of the Fort Worth Art Museum." He said, "I heard your presentation at the NEA about public art and so on, and I think you'd be the right person."

So I ended up going to Fort Worth, and there's a lot of stories connected to all this we don't have to get into, becoming the director of the Fort Worth Art Museum. I stayed there for roughly two years— Three years. Then went to the Hudson River Museum.

RATNER: We have to— I want to hear about— You're going too fast.

KOSHALEK: Okay.

RATNER: I have a few more questions. First, just to back up a dash, why did you decide at a particular point to leave the Walker? You just were ready to move on, and that offer presented itself to you?

KOSHALEK: I had an unbelievable mentor at the Walker Art Center. His name was Martin Friedman. And Martin Friedman, every year, made sure I got a trip to Europe. I was married at that time. That's rather interesting story, because I had very little money. My father had died, actually. I went to the Walker to interview, and I got the job at the Walker.

After I got the job at the Walker, I came home and I said to my current wife, I said, "I'm a rich man. They're paying me \$4,500 a year to be at the Walker Art Center." This was 1967. I'd never heard of so much money at that time, because I had struggled through school because of the death of my father. And I said, "Let's go away and get married," so we went away and got married that weekend.

And I remember Martin asking me, when I did the job interview, he said, "Are you married?" and I said no. Then I came back, and about a week later, he said, "You're not married, are you, Richard?"

I said, "Yes," and he was sort of dumbfounded, because I got married over the weekend.

So I went to the Walker, and he was fantastic. He sort of introduced me to a different world, the world of art, contemporary art, of which he was just a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant museum director and writer and so forth. He made sure every year that we went to Europe. He told us what to look at and what to look for. He was

fantastic. I mean, without him, I would have never had the kind of understanding I did of contemporary art, and I would have never ended up where I did.

But one day, on a Saturday morning, we were installing a Louise Nevelson show, and we got into an argument over the installation. I came home, and I said to Betty, “This man has meant so much to me that we’re not going to end this by arguing.” And I said, “I’m going to resign on Monday.”

So I went in on Monday, and I resigned. I said to Martin, I said, “Martin, I’m leaving because you mean so much to me and you’ve been so good to me, that we’re not going to end this by arguing into the future, and I sort of need more ability to do things on my own and so on.”

I had an NEA fellowship to study museums in Europe, so we disappeared to Europe. My wife was pregnant, and we went all over Europe. We went to Russia and so forth. And we were actually in Russia, and she was seven months pregnant, closer than that, even. We were actually in St. Petersburg, and we decided we’d better do something.

I was unemployed, and I didn’t have a lot of money. I had just this fellowship. So we decided that we would go to Washington, D.C., and have the baby born in Washington, D.C. We checked into the Georgetown Hotel, and our daughter was born at the Georgetown Hospital.

Then I got a call from Brian O’Doherty, who said, “Do you want to work for the NEA?”

RATNER: Just out of the blue?

KOSHALEK: Just out of the blue.

RATNER: Did you know him?

KOSHALEK: I knew him slightly as the editor of *Art in America*. The magazine or he, I'm not sure, had written a story about a show I did called *9 Artists/9 Spaces*. The idea of the show was that we took a whole series of sites around Minneapolis, and we commissioned artists to do site-specific pieces for those sites. It was artists like Barry LeVa, artists like Siah Armajani, artists like Bill Wegman, artists like Robert Cumming, people we know today. Then in those days they were very young.

We did all of these installations around the city of Minneapolis, and each of the works got destroyed. I mean, just one— The TV station WCCO in Minneapolis did a thing that— You know, *9 Artists/9 Spaces-slash-8 Artists/8 Spaces-slash*, and we ran into everything you can imagine, everything you can imagine. It's a very long story.

RATNER: It was unintentional that they were destroyed?

KOSHALEK: Bill, William Wegman, put up a— He built this vast billboard image of the Foshea Tower, which was then the tallest building in Minneapolis, on its side. It was removed by the FBI, because they thought it was a bomb threat or was going to encourage people to sort of cause the blowing up of the Foshea Tower. Now, this was the time when there was a lot of anti-war protest and the Vietnam War was going on, and I think the Federal Building in downtown Minneapolis— Actually, there was an explosion, so they took that one down, right?

Then there was another piece that was— Robert Cumming diagrammed all the correspondence between himself and myself regarding the show, just like you do with, you know, the noun, the verb, and so on. But he built it as a series of billboards that went back across this vacant lot. One day, a semi truck saw it, lost control, and went right through the middle of it. So that piece was destroyed.

Then an artist named Ron Brown built a piece that was a series of pipes that were weaving through a park. It was a People's Park, and the people who controlled the park destroyed it, I mean, that lived in that park and so on, destroyed it.

So it was that kind of thing, and *Art in America* wrote a big story on this thing, and it was quite a good story and so on. But it was the first time, I think, anybody ever took artists into the public realm to experiment with site-specific work to that degree, and it got a strong community reaction.

Barry LeVa did a brilliant piece. I mean, it's— That we got into trouble— Actually, the sheriff came to arrest me over it.

RATNER: What was that?

KOSHALEK: Barry LeVa wanted to find a site around Minneapolis. One artist, Richard Treiber, who is now deceased, but he built a huge scaffold in front of the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul, and then on top of it, he put this huge pile of brush. It was a statement about the environment and what we're doing to the environment and all of this stuff. Well, the governor at the time ordered it taken down. He looked out of his window at the Governor's Office, and he ordered it removed, so that piece disappeared, I mean, so that piece was gone.

Barry LeVa was looking for a site that— Oh, another piece which was very interesting was done by a guy named [Fred] Escher. We took an abandoned building in a transitional neighborhood in St. Paul, Selby District, and this building was a brick building that had burned down in the riots or some kind of event. He poured tons of neon into the building. He just threw piles and piles of neon, and he lit up this building, this ruin of this building. And walking back to the car after the opening night, we heard somebody say that they just lit up a building in which “we’ve stored all the explosives.” So we called the FBI and told them, and they found just tons of explosive dynamite and stuff in this building. So that piece disappeared.

Barry LeVa was looking for a site which was a natural earth-shaped site. So we rented a helicopter. We flew all around Minneapolis-St. Paul. One day he said, “That’s the site. That’s where I want to build this.” What he wanted to build was, he wanted to take the points of the compass and build a concrete platform at each of the points of the compass, and he wanted people to have difficulty finding it. He wanted them to have to really work to find it.

So we saw the nearest sort of place nearby, and it was a trailer home. We flew, landed at this trailer home, and this man came out. We said, “Do you own this land?”

He said, “Yes.”

We said, “We want to build a sculpture here by Barry LeVa, and it’s for an exhibition called *9 Artists/9 Spaces*.”

This man said— And I think he was not sober, but he said, “I don’t give a goddamn if you build a motel there. Go right ahead.” I remember his line.

So we put this series— We flew in a helicopter these platforms and plopped them in the landscape. Then a farmer, who did actually own the land, started to go through there with his tractor and ran into something. So he called the sheriff and everybody, and they came to arrest me for doing this on this guy's property and so on and so on. Once we told them the whole story about what had happened, I never ended up in jail, but it was like that.

Brian had read about it. He was editor of *Art in America*, and he said, "You'd be the perfect person to experiment with the public art program and take it in a different direction." So that's how we ended up there and so on. Then Nancy Hanks, she offered me the job, and it was very nice. I spent two wonderful years traveling around the country and meeting people and so on.

But that's why I left the Walker, and we're still friends, but he was critically important to me in helping me to find my future and what I wanted to do, and gave me every opportunity, for which I'm forever grateful.

So then I stayed at the NEA, and then I went to Fort Worth. And then I left Fort Worth and—

RATNER: No, no, no. We have to talk about Fort Worth a little bit, because at Fort Worth it seems like you incorporated a lot of the things that you had learned and worked on at the Walker—

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: —and really expanded their program. And now I can see you brought Twyla Tharp there and Trisha Brown, so obviously you'd had some experience with them previously.

KOSHALEK: We developed what we'd say would be a comprehensive program for a museum that dealt with all the arts. The whole idea was that we were looking for multiple audiences, that there was a different audience for film than there was for performing arts, than there was for painting or photography or sculpture or architecture. So we wanted all the arts to be involved, yes, and that came from the Walker, to a large extent.

RATNER: And so that was probably something of a new idea at Fort Worth, to really expand the program like that?

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And how was that received?

KOSHALEK: It was a combination of things. First of all, I think the program was a bit too radical for the city of Fort Worth. I mean, for example, we did a dance performance with Deborah Hay, and Deborah Hay did what she called circle dances. We advertised throughout Fort Worth that the circle dances were going to be a program sponsored by the Fort Worth Art Museum, and it was going to be at Texas Christian University in the gymnasium. Well, Deborah Hay dances nude, and guess what shows up for anything that has the word "circle dances" in it, but all the square dance clubs in Texas. [Ratner laughs.] So we had this audience of the most incredible people, all dressed in their square dance costumes, thinking this was going to be a

demonstration of square dancing, and Deborah Hay comes out with her dance company nude. And you know what happened. That ends up on the front page of the newspaper in Fort Worth, Texas, and so on.

We also hired black security guards, which became a serious problem. I hate to say that, but it did. I was warned at one of the board meetings that “If one of these guards ever says ‘Don’t touch’ to me, Richard, it’s going to be a problem.”

We also did a lot of other very radical things, radical things, and, to a certain degree, I was in a stage of life that I actually— I don’t know how you would describe it, but I’d come out of the Walker. It was a fantastic experience. I was there for six or seven years. And I felt that, first of all, the director made the decisions with regard to what the museum does. I also was, maybe, a little too arrogant at the time. I would also say that maybe I was a bit too out of control, and we won’t go deeply into that.

But it went on for about two years. We did extraordinary things. The Talking Band was there. Joe Chakin was there. We did the Kalevala. We did Twyla Tharp. We did Trisha Brown. We did performances with every major performance artist. I mean, it was an incredible program for two years. At the end, we were working on Edward Ruscha’s retrospective exhibition, and at the end, the chairman of the board, a man named Sid [Richardson] Bass, and I think it had a little bit to do with disagreements between myself and his wife, Anne [Bass], his first wife. He called me and said, “Richard, we want you to resign.”

I said, “No,” like that was— That tells you where I was at. [Ratner laughs.]

So then he got the board together, and they fired me. But he hadn't done it before then. But I had great support from Martin Friedman at the Walker and great support from Richard Fargo Brown at the Kimbell, which is kind of interesting, because he got fired at the L.A. County Museum [Los Angeles County Museum of Art], right?

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And he remembered that experience extremely well. Rick Brown's and my birthdays are on the same day, so we'd celebrate birthdays together, and he would tell often, when we'd be together late at night at dinner parties and so on, about the bad dreams he still had having to do with LACMA and being fired at LACMA. So he was very upset with the trustees for doing this, because— Interesting thing, when I went to see Sid Bass, there was an article in *Art in America* on the Fort Worth Art Museum, and it said something about the fact that this is a museum now that is really emerging, that is developing. It was a wonderful article, and I gave it to him. I handed him the *Art in America*, and I said, "There's this wonderful coverage," and I didn't have a clue, I was so out of it at the time. I handed him this wonderful article in *Art in America*, and I said, "The museum is doing very well. It's getting national press now," and so on and so on.

He said— I remember him saying, "It doesn't make a damned bit of difference." And he said, "Richard, we want you to resign."

So that was that. It was a blessing in disguise. It was a very good, positive— I mean, for me it turned out to be a very important thing. My wife, Betty, came and

said, “Okay. We’re going to disappear for a year.” We borrowed some money from the bank, and we went to Scottsdale, Arizona, and I spent the year sitting under a tree, a palm tree in Scottsdale, Arizona, to a large extent.

In the meantime, I got an offer. Nancy Hanks called up and she said, “Richard, I have a fellowship for you, and I want you to—.” It was terrific. She said, “I want you to travel to every museum, every arts institution in the State of Arizona, and I want you to write a proposal for the NEA, what the state can do with regard to the arts.”

So we traveled everywhere, I did, in the state of Arizona, even went to that prison where John Ehrlichman was. He was the head of the arts program, by the way. I mean, I went everywhere. I went to every city in Arizona, across— A small state.

So then we wrote a paper, and we had all kinds of ideas which I thought were extraordinary. One was, for example, that all the communication functions of each of the different museums in the state would come together and publish one publication for the public on a monthly basis that would tell about all the arts events in the state of Arizona. So if a tourist landed at the Phoenix Airport, they could get this one guide, and they’d know what was going on in Tucson, what was going on in Bisbee, what was going on in Phoenix, all the museums. One guide, where people in Tucson, who lived there, could say, “Okay, in Phoenix this is happening now.” They’d pool their resources, they’d spend less money, and they’d have this cohesive sort of public relations sort of idea or concept for promoting the arts in Arizona.

We came up with another idea, because I met a lot of people at Howard Lipman's, who is the great collector and trustee at the Whitney [Museum of Modern Art], who lived in Carefree, and Jean Lipman, who was the editor of *Art in America* for three years. They were living in Arizona. But what Arizona had was all these people coming who were great collectors in Chicago or New York or whatever, to Arizona but having no involvement with the museums, or leaving nothing behind, right? Because they'd leave it in Chicago, or they'd leave it in New York, or whatever.

So we came up with this idea that the state and the arts organization would get together, and they'd build an extraordinary conservation lab. This conservation lab would be of assistance to the people who were in Arizona, who had collections, with one condition, that if they had a painting that was going to be restored, they'd have to make a commitment of that painting to the collection of the museum in Arizona.

RATNER: That's a great idea.

KOSHALEK: And it would be free of charge, right? I mean, so that would be the idea.

Another idea we gave to the National Endowment for the Arts and so on was the idea that every year we'd bring one curator to the state of Arizona. And we did this. We tested this idea. The first one was Marcia Tucker, who was then curator at the Whitney. They would travel the state, and they'd look at where the best work was being done, and then they'd put together an exhibition, every year, every single year. That would go from Tucson to Phoenix and the, hopefully, out of the state to other

states, to that it would bring recognition to the other artists' work in Arizona, but that the state would work together as one state.

Well, we developed those ideas. Some of them happened and so on, and we wrote it all down, and it was a wonderful thing for me, because I could think about all these things, but it was a very important break for me.

Then I got a call from a man named Edward Larabee Barnes, the architect who I worked with on the Walker, in the building of the building.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: He said, "Richard, there's this museum in Westchester County," it was actually in Yonkers, "and it's bankrupt." What happened is, it was supported by the city, but just like the city of New York, the city of Yonkers got into trouble, and they took all the money away from the museum. Ed Barnes said, "Richard, why don't you come up here? Within two miles of this museum is the worst ghetto you can imagine, but within five miles of this museum is the greatest corporate headquarters, from IBM to Pepsi, to General Foods, to whatever, and there's support here and a lot of wealthy people in Westchester County. Why don't you see what you can do?"

So we did, because I didn't have anything at the time. So I went to the Hudson River Museum, and we did this, I think, interesting program where we were going to turn— It had a Victorian home called the John Bond Trevor Mansion, but all the furniture and all the things that were part of it were sold to William Randolph Hearst, and so it was gone. So we decided that we were going to change the mansion and turn

it into a permanent installation with period rooms done by Ed Kienholz. That was one thing.

RATNER: But was this the museum's building, or it was just a piece of property they got?

KOSHALEK: That was one part of the museum. They had the mansion. He was the guy that sort of stopped Jay Gould from cornering the gold market. He was a major financier. It's on the Hudson River, a beautiful site, actually.

Then we also commissioned Red Grooms to do *The Bookstore* as a functioning bookstore [now in the Red Grooms Gift Shop]. The idea was that we could accession *The Bookstore* into the permanent collection.

We commissioned Dan Flavin to put in security lighting, because it was in a very difficult neighborhood of burned-out buildings and so on. Flavin did exterior lighting around the museum, and it's still there, actually. Grace Glueck just wrote about it, just recently, in the *New York Times*.

Then we also did a show called *Warburton Avenue*, which was the major street, *The Architecture of a Neighborhood*. The whole idea there was, when we got there, we found that in the neighborhood there was a whole series of warring factions. They were called Warna, Warpac, all of these different groups, and they were fighting for attention at City Hall.

So we decided to bring them together at the museum and to sort of have a cohesive, organized effort to deal with City Hall, to deal with the state, to deal with the county, and so on, to get things done. And we did an exhibition. We brought

them to the museum. It was one of the scariest moments of my life, because this was like the South Bronx, where this museum was. We had to have most of the meetings either at the museum and notify the police, or we had to have them at a police station, because that's the only place the people felt totally safe. Unbelievable.

We brought together a group of artists, from [inaudible] Mayne to whatever, plus an architect named Hugh Hardy, who grew up on that street when it was a very important neighborhood. But we did an exhibition called *Warburton Avenue: The Architecture of a Neighborhood*, and the whole idea was to show all these burned-out buildings and what it would take to restore them and how good it could look, and all of this to generate community interest. Also, then, we came up with plans to redo the burned-out A&P store into a community center, to redo the Glen [inaudible] Train Station, and to change the neighborhood.

So this is the first time where I really, in a way, moved out. We got involved in Disney Hall and a few things, you know, like moved beyond the museum's four walls. I've always felt that the museum needs to do the right things within its four walls, but it also has to exist in the community and do things in the community, because if you believe in architecture and design and the value of these things, that you should apply them to the community.

So we did that exhibition. We brought this group together, and then every week we brought in somebody like from the bank to talk about redlining, from the police, the chief of police, to talk about police patrols and foot patrols, which is what they wanted. We brought in everything you can imagine.

Then we started to take a few stances, also. The community people that were living there were brilliant about what they needed, right? They didn't need high-rises. The elevator is the most unsafe place in these high-rise buildings and so on.

One of the ideas we came up with was to close the liquor store, which was about three blocks on Warburton Avenue from the museum. So we went to City Hall. This is actually a true story. We went to City Hall, and we met with the mayor, and his name was Angelo Martinelli. We said that we'd like to have the liquor store closed, we have this community group, and so on and so on and so on. Really a true story.

About a week later, two guys came to see me in shiny green suits, and they said, "We love your museum. It's a beautiful museum." We had this wonderful conversation. They said, "There's just one thing we think we need to talk to you about." And they said, "Leave the liquor store alone. We think it'd be better for the museum and so forth if you just leave the liquor store alone." And the liquor store's still there.

RATNER: Oh, right out of a movie.

KOSHALEK: It was right out of a movie. As you know, Yonkers is sort of a— I remember once asking why all the schoolyards are paved in concrete and surrounded by chain-link fences, right? They said, "Because the Mafia controls the concrete business and the chain-link business, and that's why that is." So the liquor store is still there. But we ran into all kinds of things like that.

RATNER: Let me just stop you, and we'll just pick up—

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KOSHALEK: With the museum, we wanted to not only change the neighborhood, but we wanted to change the museum. I mean, there's incredible stories that happened here. My mother, who is this extraordinary lady who's traveled the world, she was going to make a surprise visit. So she took the train from New York City up to Hudson River Museum, and she got off at the train station, and there was a policeman at the platform. And she said, "Which way is the Hudson River Museum?"

The policeman said to my mother, "I think you'd better just get right back on the train, and you'd better go right back into Manhattan, because you won't make it alive to the museum."

RATNER: Oh, my gosh.

KOSHALEK: And my mother never saw the museum. She never saw it. She got on the train and went back. [mutual laughter] This is actually a true story. But we had—I mean, the stories were unbelievable. I mean, we hired— This was like the Bronx. I mean, this was a tough neighborhood in transition.

We hired a new driver for the museum truck, and we had two policemen from the Yonkers Police Department that took care of us, and we nicknamed them "Starsky" and "Hutch" because they had this incredible look, and they were incredible characters. We hired this guy to drive the museum truck, and we got a call from Starsky and Hutch, who said, "Richard, the man who was driving the museum truck is dead."

We said, “What’s that about?”

He said, “Well, the first thing he did when he took the truck out was go hold up a grocery store with the museum truck.”

We could not put paper towels in the museum because there would be a fire. They’d start fires. It was the toughest thing in the world.

But it was one of the most creative times in my life, because I got to learn to deal with the city problems like this, urban problems like this. And I love that idea, being involved in sort of the public realm and solving these kind of problems. But I also got to be very experimental in terms of the programs. I mean, we did everything possible there. We did, well, the Red Grooms *Bookstore*.

RATNER: Right. How did that come to be, the Red Grooms *Bookstore*? Where’d that idea come from?

KOSHALEK: Well, it just came from the idea that we were trying to sort of solve the problems creatively and find original solutions to this problem. We could have hired a very good designer to design the bookstore, but we felt that if we could hire somebody like Red Grooms to do it, that it would draw attention to the museum, that it would be a work of art, and it could be into the permanent collection. And this is what Red Grooms does, right? So we did that, for example.

Then we started to create a whole new— Well, we wanted to create a second Hudson River School of artists, and we did a series of exhibitions, which were brilliant. Because we were in the ghetto and because it wasn’t a major museum, we

could not get major paintings of Hudson River School painting. They would not lend. So what we did is we did a whole series of the drawings.

Our show was a very serious exhibition of the drawings of Hudson River School artists like [Jasper] Cropsey and so forth. And they were fantastic. They were scholarly and academic and beautiful books and so, but we were going to focus on that aspect as a series of shows on the drawings of the great Hudson River School artists as the first part of our program.

The second part of the program was going to be the creation of a new School of Hudson River artists, dealing with contemporary artists. We did one project where we commissioned Robert Whitman, a performance artist, a very good performance artist, to do a piece in which he built, on the other side of the Hudson River, a house. We built a house over there. It had a big picture window, and in the picture window was a film of a couple making love. Then you go across the Hudson River, and in the museum were this whole line of telescopes like tourists use. Then you could come into the museum, and you'd look in these telescopes, look across the Hudson River, and you'd see this couple making love, right?

That was just one of a whole series. We commissioned John Mason, Robert Whitman to do a new series of works based on the Hudson River, inspired by the Hudson River.

Then the third one was to do these permanent installations, like Dan Flavin. We commissioned Richard Serra to do a piece for the entranceway, but it never got built, actually, because I left. Then we commissioned Dan Flavin to do the security

lighting as an installation. Then we were working on Ed Kienholz to do the period ones. So these were the three parts of the program, actually.

It was a very good time, and I had a great time. For example, every time we confronted a problem, we'd look for a solution. And we did the same thing in Fort Worth. In Fort Worth, we came up with an idea for what we called the newspaper catalogue. The idea was that very few people went to the Fort Worth Art Museum, and we found that ads in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* sold for \$1,450 a full page. So we did what we called a newspaper catalogue, and we got it funded by the NEA.

The idea was that we would have somebody, a major scholar or critic, write for the general public about a Brice Marsden show, for example. Then there'd be a biography of Brice Marsden at the bottom and information on the show. Then it would say, "Please tear this newspaper catalogue out, bring it with you to the Fort Worth Art Museum, and compare the writer's ideas to the original works of art."

We're used to doing crossword puzzles. We're used to clipping coupons. We're used to— People use the newspaper that way. And I can tell you, on the Sunday after that— During the Sunday when that ad, that newspaper catalogue, ran, people would flock to the museum with the newspaper catalogue and sit there and read it and look at the works of art.

So when we got to the Hudson River Museum, we did a series of lectures. Nobody came. Nobody's going to that neighborhood late at night to go to a lecture at the Hudson River Museum.

RATNER: Did they even come to see the exhibitions? What kind of attendance did you have there?

KOSHALEK: They did very well, because they had a very elaborate, very extensive school program of busing schoolchildren. And they had a planetarium, also. The interesting thing about the planetarium, we commissioned programs with— One called *The Exploration of Mars*, where the graphics were done by Milton Glaser, the music was done by Phil [Philip] Glass, and the script was written by Carl Sagan. So we were doing all of these programs in the planetarium, bringing together composers like Phil Glass, graphic designers like Milton Glaser, and then writers like Carl Sagan. And it was called *The Exploration of Mars*. But the attendance wasn't— Because of where it was.

So the lecture series, nobody showed up. So we said, "Okay. We're going to do something different. We're going to do the lecture series in Manhattan, one lecture in Manhattan, one at State University of New York in Purchase, one at Sarah Lawrence University," which is also in Bronxville. They say Bronxville, but they're actually in Yonkers. "Then we'll broadcast it live over the radio, Westchester radio." The idea was that— For example, Germaine Greer came, and she spoke about women poets and poetry. Then after she gave her lecture to the people who were in the auditorium at wherever it was—I think that one was at Sarah Lawrence [College]— then it was broadcast live on the radio. Then there was a half-hour question-and-answer period where the people could call in and ask Germaine Greer about her lecture.

RATNER: Oh, what a great idea.

KOSHALEK: So we had a talk radio— So that's how we— Every time we confronted a problem like that, like a bookstore problem, like the lecture series problem, we came up with a greater solution. So for me, it was one of— I stayed four years. It was one of the most creative times of all time and a very good time for me.

And then I actually— The way I got to Los Angeles is, I had no idea they were starting a museum in L.A. It was called the Museum of Modern Art at the time. I had not a clue. I was getting on the train at the Riverdale train station where I lived, in Riverdale, and I picked up the *New York Times*, and there was an article by Hilton Kramer. He said that, “The leading candidates for the directorship of the new museum in Los Angeles are—,” and it listed all these people, including me. And I was dumbfounded. I was totally dumbfounded. I didn't know what to think about that. I read it in the newspaper, in Hilton Kramer's article. I didn't know anything about it, and I just thought, “There's something wrong here,” right? “This is dead wrong,” right?

Then I got a call from Eli Broad, and that's how it all started. Eli said, “Richard,” he said—

RATNER: Did you know him already?

KOSHALEK: Never heard of him. Didn't even know who he was. Not a clue.

He said, “We have a committee here that consists of Robert Irwin, Sam Francis, Marcia Simon Weisman, Max Palevsky, and myself.” I think that was the

cast of characters at that time. “We’re going to start this new museum, and we want to talk to you about the directorship.” As I said, I was dumbfounded.

I had done a series, a show, with Robert Irwin, and Robert Irwin had always seen me as someone who was close to artists and supported artists. We did a show at the Walker Art Center called *6 Artists/6 Exhibitions*. When I was in Fort Worth, we brought Bob Irwin out to do a show called *Continuing Responses*, which was an exhibition that— One of the things I kept hearing from artists at that time was they had no way to do research, in a way, to try ideas, to test ideas.

So we came up with this idea with Bob Irwin that his show would last two years and that he would come back every six months, and he’d do a new piece. And he came back the first time, and he did a piece outside my office in the hallway, a scrim piece. Then he moved on into the hallway. Then he moved into the gallery. Then he moved into the solarium. Then he moved outside the front door of the building, the museum, and then he went into the Texas landscape.

This was a research project, an exhibition. The dates were two years long and so on. Bob felt it was critically important, because at that time he was rethinking his work and going through this whole thing, and here’s a museum that helped him do the research, right? So Bob is the one that sort of put me on the list to come to Los Angeles. And you can talk to Bob about all this.

And so I got a call, and they said, “Richard, would you come for an interview?” And they said that, “We’re going to be talking to you and Pontus Hulten.”

So we came out here, and we went— They took us to dinner at Michael's, upstairs at Michael's.

RATNER: But what did you know about Pontus Hulten at that time?

KOSHALEK: I just knew he was the head of the [Centre] Pompidou, but that was it. I'd not seen the Pompidou. I knew almost nothing about Pontus Hulten, except very few things; some of the shows he's done.

We came out, and there was a dinner party at Michael's, and I remember afterward there was all this conversation, and I remember Max Palevsky saying, "Well, I'm going to spend the weekend at my house in Malibu," and I was sort of saying, "Why would you have a house in Beverly Hills and a house in Malibu? I don't understand that." And I learned something there. [mutual laughter] But it was one of those things.

But the point of all that is that there was all this conversation, and Pontus and I left the meeting and said we never discussed what this museum's about. We never talked about the museum. We talked about everything else, about their lifestyle and this, this, this, and this, and so on. So then there were some discussions afterward, and then we all left, and I went back to New York and so on.

Then we got a call from Eli Broad, and he said, "Richard, we are asking Pontus Hulten to fly to New York, and we would like you and Pontus Hulten to get together with Sam Francis, and we'd like the two of you to see if you can work together. There's a chance you two can work together."

So I made arrangements that we would meet at the Sky Club, because one of our trustees— We had this incredible Board of Trustees at the Hudson River Museum, I mean, for a museum like that. We had Charles Tillinghast, former head of TWA, who lived in Bronxville. We had Leo Wyler, head of Otis Elevator, who lived there. We had this incredible Board of Trustees, people from IBM and so on.

Leo Wyler arranged for us to have a private room at the Sky Club on top of the Pan Am Building, now the Met Life Building. Pontus came, myself, and Sam Francis, and they had a telephone to Los Angeles, to Eli Broad. So the question was, can the two of us work together?

So Pontus and I had a conversation about museums and where I thought they should go and where he thought they should go. My focus was on the fact that I thought that the center of any institution had to be the artist, that all decisions had to come from the fact that we're involved with the living artist, and what the artist needs to accomplish their goals and accomplish their work, the museum has to provide, that the museum is not— It doesn't exist primarily for attendance, doesn't exist for the general public primarily; it exists for the artist. And if we do well with the artist and we do the very best work, the audience will follow and the public will get what they should get, which is the very best work possible from those artists.

Pontus had similar connections to artists and similar beliefs, having worked with [Jean] Tinguely and so on and so on and so on and so on, Claes Oldenburg and so on.

So finally, it— I can't remember it exactly, but we got down to the point where Sam said, "Can you guys work together?"

I said, "It's less up to me than it is to Pontus. He's the senior figure. He's the director of the Pompidou." I said, "This is more his decision than mine."

So Pontus said, "We can work together."

So then it came to the whole idea, were we going to be co-directors or was it going to be a different arrangement? I felt that it wasn't appropriate to be co-directors, and I'll tell you the reason for that in a minute. So the title I got was deputy director and chief curator, and that title actually was selected by Pontus Hulten.

Deputy director never entered my mind. It came from Pontus Hulten. And Pontus Hulten would be director.

The reason I wanted that was that I wanted to not deal with the trustees or deal with the administration or deal with the fundraising; I wanted to deal with the artists and the creative side. I thought that if Pontus was the director, he would deal with that and I would deal then with the artists and the creative program and the exhibitions and the catalogues and so on. And I thought I had the perfect system. I thought I had it figured out.

They called Eli Broad on the phone, and Eli said, "Okay. We're going to go ahead." And that's how it worked. Then I started first, because Pontus needed time to leave the Pompidou, and then Pontus came later. Then it goes from there.

RATNER: When you first read in the paper that they were planning this museum in Los Angeles, did you have any awareness of L.A.'s sort of sketchy history in terms of

being able to support a Museum of Modern [Art], let alone [a Museum of] Contemporary Art?

KOSHALEK: No.

RATNER: They've had the demise of the Pasadena Art Museum, and LACMA wasn't very supportive at that point.

KOSHALEK: I knew a little bit about it, because when I was at the Walker Art Center, one of my great interests was the work of California artists, people like Larry Bell and Bob Irwin. I'm still very close to Bob Irwin. I just saw him, actually, and we talk almost weekly still. We talk never about art, though. We talk about football, horse racing, whatever.

But I knew about California, and I knew about the California artists, and I came out here often. I did interviews, and I did the last taped interview with Richard Neutra, for example. So I was interested in the architecture of [inaudible] reform.

I used to come to the shows at the Pasadena Art Museum, and I saw the Richard Serra show where [inaudible]. I saw a show that Barbara Haskell did on Oldenburg, Claes Oldenburg, and I was sort of a frequent visitor to the Pasadena Art Museum when it was just starting.

And then one time I got a call when I was at the Walker Art Center from John Coplans. John Coplans wanted to interview me to become a curator at the Pasadena Art Museum. I was at the Walker at the time, and I flew to southern California, and I went to the old building of the Pasadena Art Museum, the Chinese pagoda, whatever it is there. They hadn't built the new one yet. And I was sitting outside, waiting to see

John Coplans, and he was yelling and screaming at his secretary. His secretary, or his assistant, was Melinda Wortz, the late Melinda Wortz.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And I thought, “What the hell is that?” Right? I said, “Nobody, nobody goes to work to be mistreated. Nobody goes to work to be talked to that way.” Right?

So then I had this interview with John Coplans, and he was very decent and all of that, and then afterward, he took me to the home of the Terbells, Melinda and Tom Terbell, over here on Prospect, and I saw their collection, which was quite extraordinary. But that exchange between him and Melinda [Wortz], and that kind of situation, I said, “I will never in my life work for anybody like that, and never in my life will I ever treat anybody like that.” That’s not the way the world works. And so I said no to him, but I kept coming out here.

Then I did that show, *6 Artists/6 Exhibitions*, and then we commissioned Bob Irwin and Larry Bell to do new pieces for the opening of the Walker Art Center. So I knew that Pasadena was in trouble.

I used to also go see Walter Hopps a lot, just to sort of have an exchange of ideas and find out where he’s coming from, and that was always very interesting. So I always saw him as sort of an educational sort of experience that I needed.

So I knew Pasadena had folded. I saw the *Art and Technology* show at the LACMA, and I was sort of aware of all of that and that LACMA was afraid, had some kind of generic fear factor with regard to contemporary art, and that Pasadena had

folded and was folding and so on. So, yes, I was aware of that. In fact, there's a wonderful story, because when I took the job at— When I was offered the job at Fort Worth, I called Martin Friedman and I said, "Martin, should I take the job at Fort Worth as director?"

He said, "No." He said, "This institution will be looking for a director in two years." And he said, "This is not a good situation. Don't do it." And I did it. And they did. After I left, they had another director, Jay Belloli, and he was fired, and they had another director, David Ryan, and he was fired. So there's a history of it.

So the second time, I called Martin and said, "Should I go to the Hudson River Museum in New York?"

He said, "Richard, it's broke. There's nothing you can do there. It has no funds." He said, "Just sit tight." He said, "Don't do it." And I went.

So when I called him about L.A., Martin Friedman, I said, "Martin, should I take the job in L.A.?"

I remember him saying to me something like, "This time I'm going to get it right, and I'm going to see." He said, "I think you should take the job." And he said, "But I'm only saying that because that's what you're going to do." And he said, "But you shouldn't, because if you look at the history of LACMA and the number of directors they went through—" And this Pasadena Art Museum, due largely to this man named Robert Rowan, went through every major director in the country. Jim [James] Elliott was there; Walter Hopps was there; John Coplans was there; you name it; Bill [William] Agee was there; and this guy, Bob Rowan, ended their lives as

directors at that museum. They went on to do great things after that, but— I knew that history, right?

So I knew about it, I was well aware of it, but I thought it was worth the risk, and I wanted to live in California and I wanted to be close to the artists here. And there was a lot of support from this Artists Advisory Group, which was an important group here and really wrote the early history of this institution.

RATNER: And kind of unusual, isn't that?

KOSHALEK: Oh, it's totally unusual that artists would be the inspiration, with Marcia making the contact to Tom Bradley and so on. But I was young right then. I mean, I gave it a try. I got here, I don't know, thirty-eight, thirty-seven, and it was worth the risk. I figured Pontus Hulten was there, and that was going to be— He was going to take care of all that kind of stuff, right? And I could just do the creative work and have it all work.

That's why we actually drafted the Playbook, right? We'll get into that later, but the whole idea that there was no consensus on what the museum should be. And that's one thing you find in working with words, that you can go around the table, if you do that, if you've got the courage to ask that question, you can go around the table in any institution, and you can say, "Okay, what do you think this museum should be? What do you think MOCA should be? What should it do?" And you'll get thirty different opinions, right? Then your job as director is to say, "How do I bring all those thirty different opinions together or thoughts about what this museum should

be?” And we found that when we first talked to the board at MOCA, and we found that there were many different points of view of what this institution should be.

RATNER: Before you even accepted the position?

KOSHALEK: No, afterward. Afterward. One of the reasons we said— So to bring that all together, I came up with the idea of the Playbook, because I’m a football freak, as you know. I’m deep into football. I understand all the strategy and study it in great detail and took a sabbatical with the San Francisco 49ers football team for three months and all of that.

So the whole idea of the Playbook was an offense and a defense, right, and how were we going to play the game? We talked about the staff. We talked about the exhibitions we were going to do and what kind of organization it would be, the responsibilities of the board, the responsibilities of the staff and the director and so on. And we wrote the Playbook. It’s around somewhere. We can get you a copy. And we wrote, also, a Playbook for the building, the design of the building, that we wanted to capture what we called “L.A.-ness” in the building and so on.

But that Playbook was critical, because it brought the board together. They had a book in front of them where they could sort of agree or disagree. But in that Playbook was everything you can imagine. I mean, there were— The first idea for the Lou [Louis] Kahn show is in that Playbook. The first idea for *Automobile and Culture* is in that Playbook. The first idea for *Art and Film* is in that Playbook, way before the museum even had a building, and that’s how that happened.

But I got to L.A., I think, to a large extent, because of support of the artists, and it was Robert Irwin and the Artists Advisory Group, people like Ed Moses and people like Alexis Smith and so on. That's how I ended up at MOCA. I didn't get there because of trustees. I didn't get there because I had a great national reputation the trustees would know about or collectors like Eli Broad would know about. But that's how I ended up there, because of the artists.

RATNER: Can we talk a little bit about that Artists Advisory committee? Because, as we said, it was somewhat unusual. How did they come together with the early trustees and the mayor's advisory council to be involved in the formation of the museum? And then they had so much power.

KOSHALEK: Yes. The one individual who could tell the story better than I can is Sherri Geldin, and you should do an interview with her. She was very much involved at that early stage. She volunteered to work at the museum free of charge and just graduated from college. But she wrote all the initial papers having to do with the founding of MOCA.

The way it happened is, the artists got together, and I think Bob was their major spokesperson there, and DeWain Valentine was part of that and Alexis Smith and Lita Albuquerque and Sam Francis and so on, but I think Bob was the brains behind it all and the spokesperson. They felt in just a simple way that Pasadena was artist-rich, institution-poor, that since Pasadena closed and LACMA wasn't doing what they should be doing, that this city needed a Museum of Contemporary Art to deal with their work and to deal with— I mean, Bob Irwin had the real vision here

early on. He said, “It’s not just that we need a museum to show work by California artists, but that’s important.” He said, “We need to see work by other artists around the world. Otherwise, we’re not going to have the kind of exposure we need.”

Usually, artists don’t have the money to travel. They can’t go to places. And Bob will tell the story about [Willem] De Kooning, never having seen a De Kooning painting or being very interested in his work, based on the fact that he’d seen reproductions and so on, and why couldn’t he see an original sort of De Kooning work? That’s one of the reasons that MOCA didn’t become a Kunsthalle, that it was going to build a collection so that there’d be this history that artists could refer to, this contemporary history.

So I think Bob and the artists all got together, and I think the organizing force there was Bob and DeWain Valentine and a few people. Then they got to Marcia Simon Weisman, and Marcia was this remarkable, remarkable— I miss her today, actually. She would call me frequently, I mean like every other day, “I have an idea for you.”

I loved this lady. I truly loved this lady. This lady— I mean, there are so many people involved in the founding of MOCA and so many people that take credit for things that they shouldn’t take credit for, and we know all these people, and you know all these people, and we can get into that later, but Marcia was really the soul of MOCA. She really believed in the idea coming from the artists. I mean, she loved artists. You’d go to her house, and we went there often, there were always artists there. And they weren’t— They were welcome. They were part of the group, and

that's who she liked being with. She admired the artists, and she had this great, wonderful connection to them. Fred had a different world he lived in, but Marcia really loved the artists, and so she listened to the artists.

Then there was a dinner, a fundraising dinner, for Joel Wachs, and she sat next to Tom Bradley. She was very close to Tom Bradley. She said, "It's about time we have a Museum of Contemporary Art." So the mayor formed a committee that Sherri Geldin was on, and Bill Norris was the head of it, and Bill Norris was very close to Bradley, to study this idea of could they build a contemporary museum in Los Angeles.

The Artists Advisory Group was well aware of what was going on. The Artists Advisory Group had, if I remember right, three things they wanted to do. They wanted to get a museum built, they wanted to hire the director and let the director run it, and they wanted to sort of understand what the original concept for it was and agree to that. So then they would go out of business, which they did do. But it was a very good group, and I met with them often, the fantastic group of dedicated artists that really believes in this.

So then the mayor's committee got formed, and there was an article in the paper. The people at the CRA, Ed Helfeld and Diane Kosko, read this article in the paper, and they said, "Ah, the mayor wants to start a new museum. He's put this task force together. We've got an idea here." Right? And the idea was that we're going to redevelop California Plaza, and why not put a Museum of Contemporary Art in that picture, right? So then they started to meet, and that's where it came together.

So Marcia Simon Weisman really was the person who seemed to bring all of this together; the artists, the idea of building a museum. She deserves all the credit here. I don't care what anybody says. The idea that a contemporary museum was needed, the ability to listen to artists and what their needs were, and the political contacts to Tom Bradley, that lady was right there in the middle of all of that. And, boy, did she tie it together, and was she persistent, and did she insist and really encourage this thing. And that's how it got started.

This lady was special, very special. My last quote. Just before she died, she called me, and she said, "Richard," she said, "I have an idea for you." I welcomed her calls. There was a long pause, and she said, "I'll call you back when I remember what it was." Then I knew she was in trouble. I think she had a series of strokes. I think she had a major stroke. But she was a great loss. This is a great loss, actually, this lady. I get tears in my eyes when I talk about her. She was special, truly.

RATNER: Did your world change at all when, as you say, you came here initially and— Oh, I'm sorry.

KOSHALEK: No, I just— That's nothing. It's okay.

RATNER: You arrived here full time before Pontus Hulten arrived.

KOSHALEK: Yes. Yes.

RATNER: And I wondered how things changed, if at all, once he was at MOCA full-time.

KOSHALEK: He came, I think, about a year after I got here, and there was a very small staff. It was Sherri Geldin, myself. Andrea Van de Kamp was working on

development at that time, and a lady named Chris Sisley, who is now the head of a foundation, the Flintstone Foundation— No, not the Flintstone. I'll get it in a minute. A very important foundation here. And that was the office. That was it.

We then, during that period, wrote the Playbook. That was written before Pontus got here, although Pontus was well aware of it. I checked in with him and so on. We wrote the building book, which was the program for the building, and so forth, and started to build the board and sort of get things going. It was a very productive time.

I would go see Pontus in Paris on a frequent basis, and he would come here. It was not a very productive time. Pontus had a very interesting way of working, and it was— I remember him saying to me one time, he said, “You have to understand I'm like Charles de Gaulle. The staff should anticipate what my needs are and then do it. I don't have to tell them.” I remember him saying this thing about De Gaulle.

He had a very interesting idea of who he was and what role he would play, and it wasn't really the role that a director in a museum in this country plays. So it was very difficult to get him to come to grips with all of this, and it was a very, very, very, very difficult time.

Then when he got here, for the year he was here, it was even worse. I mean, it was very difficult. There were meetings with Max Palevsky and Eli Broad and Bill Norris, and they got very contentious. There was— I don't know how many of these stories we should tell, but Pontus, they thought, was the head of the whole Pompidou. I think they had a misconception of who he was and what his responsibilities were,

and I think they assumed that he was the head of the whole Pompidou. They would, in meetings, ask him questions like, “What is the budget for the Pompidou?” and he wouldn’t know. Right? And then they’d say, “Well, rough idea?”

He would say, “Oh, maybe 30 million.” He didn’t know. Then they would ask him how many staff he had at the Pompidou, and he wouldn’t know. Right? Or they’d ask him what kind of attendance there was at the Pompidou, and he wouldn’t really know.

So they started to get wise to the fact that he maybe wasn’t the head of the Pompidou, because he didn’t know these things. Then they found out a little later through some research that they did, that what Pontus really was, was the curator of the museum part of it, the director of the museum part of it, and that there was a library and there was all this other stuff, the Music Institute of Pierre Boulez and so on, and that there was a president at the Pompidou that dealt with all of this, and that really what he was, was a curator, to a large extent. So when they started to talk to him about the role of the director, it was very, very interesting.

RATNER: But he’s already been hired as the director at this point, right?

KOSHALEK: Oh, he’s hired. He’s hired, because they— I think they misunderstood what his role was at the Pompidou. I don’t think they understood that he was like a curatorial leader at the Pompidou. He wasn’t the head of the Pompidou, and he wasn’t running an institution.

His big supporter was Sam Francis. My big supporter was Bob Irwin; his was Sam Francis. So they started to sort of wonder what this was all about, right?

Because it was— Eli, I remember, one time said to me, he said, “Pontus, you’re our candidate for president. We want you to go to cocktail parties, shake hands with people, say, ‘I’m the director of MOCA, and I need your help. I need your support.’” And Pontus was totally puzzled by all of this, because he’d never really dealt with any of this. He didn’t even deal with the French government. I mean, he didn’t deal with the Board of Trustees. And he was totally puzzled by it.

I remember flying to Paris, and they had set up a whole series of cocktail parties at people’s homes. And we came up with this idea, which was a brilliant idea, actually, that we were going to raise money for the institution without spending money. So we had this idea of the founding endowment, and there was a reason why we had to do that, because the developer said, “We’ll give you the money to build the building, but you have to, first of all, find a collection, an initial collection, and have a founding endowment of \$10 million, so that once you open and we build a building, you don’t fold and you have something for the building.”

And I went to Paris, and I sat down with Pontus at the Pompidou, and I said, “When you come to L.A. next time, these are the cocktail parties you have to go to, and you have to talk about the future of MOCA, and you have to sort of explain this all to the people.”

He said, “How many people are going to be there?”

I said, “Probably a hundred at each.” Right?

He said, “No, I won’t do it. I’m not going to do it.”

I said, “Why is that?”

He said— I remember his exact line. He said, “I never talk to more than six people at a time, and I’m not going to do it.”

So I came back to Los Angeles, and I said to Eli and Max and everybody, I said, “He’s not going to do it. He said no.” Oh, you don’t want to know what the answer was to that. Right?

So then everybody talked and talked and talked, and finally, they got him to do it. And before he could go do it, we would— Our offices were downtown. We’d stop at the Biltmore Hotel and have a drink. And that was the only way he could do it. It was very interesting.

Then he would get up, and he just couldn’t do it. He just couldn’t do it. There was no enthusiasm, and he didn’t know the story. He couldn’t do it, and it got very complicated. So then, finally, I ended up doing it.

We did a slide show, and we showed slides of exhibitions at other museums around the world like the Pompidou and MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, New York City], because we had nothing. We had no collection, no building, and so on.

Then Pontus would be there and he’d say a few words, and then somebody would ask for the money. You know, the whole idea of the founding endowment campaign was that we made a list of the twenty-five most important people in L.A., and then we went down the list and asked each of them to give a cocktail party, invite their friends, at which we asked each of them to become a founder at a minimum of \$10,000 paid out over four years or a larger amount, and then also to throw a cocktail party and invite twenty-five of their friends.

Then I went for a whole year to every house in Pasadena, every house— You can imagine. I've seen every house in Beverly Hills, Malibu, and so on, and I did this two or three times a week. We gave this speech and showed slides and then asked for the money.

And that's how we built the endowment, and it came out to 14.5 million. It went over the top. The greatest thing about that all is it was not only an inexpensive mechanism to raise funds, but it was a public relations thing, because we went into everybody's home, talked to these people, talked about the museum with enthusiasm and so on.

But the thing with Pontus was getting worse and worse and worse. Things that happened— For example, we got a call one day, and they said, "There's a boat at the L.A. Harbor, and there is a bill due on it of \$25,000 for shipping." And we knew nothing about it. It was Pontus's boat.

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RATNER: Okay. Today is Thursday, July 18, 2002, and we're at Art Center [College of Design] with its president, Richard Koshalek.

I'd like to follow up on a few things that you talked about at our first meeting. The first is that you mentioned an exhibition that you curated at the Walker, called *9 Artists/9 Spaces*, and you commented that it was the first time anyone had taken artists out into the public, into public spaces, to experiment to that degree. And I wondered, just really where that idea came from, because it seems to me that that exhibition was a way and a catalyst for your career, because then the people from *Art in America* read about it, you got the job at NEA—

KOSHALEK: True. True. It actually came from the idea— It came from a lot of discussions with artists, and my source material has always come, or my inspiration has always come, from conversations with artists. I've always felt that, as opposed to curators or as opposed to collectors, to a certain degree, that the best information on the most interesting work being done anywhere is going to come from artists, because they go to studios, they're involved in the creative process, and they know what is happening.

So I spent a lot of time, even when I first got started at the Walker Art Center, really talking to artists like Siah Armajani and so forth, about where the good work was being done, what was sort of important at this moment in time in terms of contemporary art and so forth. I kept hearing from artists that they wanted to move

beyond the museum, they wanted to move, to steal a phrase from Ernest Hemingway, to a “clean, well-lighted space,” right? And they wanted to move beyond the confines of the museum and the gallery, and they wanted to function in the real world.

They wanted to do this for a number of reasons. They thought the challenges there for their work were going to be much greater and that it would provide a greater opportunity for them to express themselves and to do more original work. I think they felt also that they wanted to reach a much larger audience, a greater public audience, than you see going into the museum. And I think, third, they really felt that they could have an impact on the decisions that were made with regard to the cities that we occupied, the design of the cities and how cities function and how we sort of participate in city life, urban life.

And so we came up with this idea that we would let each artist of nine artists— It was funded by the Minnesota State Arts Council. It was not funded by the Walker. It wasn't even connected to the Walker, actually. And the Minnesota State Arts Council commissioned me to do this show. We came up with the idea that we would let each artist find their own space within the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and that then they would take that space and create an original work that was site-specific.

This was something new at the time, work that was site-specific. There was a little talk at the time— And I've got a catalogue for you, which I'll bring in, on *9 Artists/9 Spaces*. But there was talk at the time that there was a need for public art, and we know that there's been a long history dealing with public art, whether it's connected to the church or to the government and so forth, but that there was a need in

this country to sort of have a program to deal with public art. But the answer always was that work that was done in the studio by an artist would then be increased in scale, and it would be sited somewhere near a public building or corporate headquarters or whatever, but that the work was never truly designed for a specific site, taking into consideration the context of that site, how people sort of use that site, pass by that site, and what its sort of unique characteristics are.

So we commissioned nine artists to go around Minneapolis and St. Paul and define sites that they felt were unique and that connected to their work, and then to create an original work for that site. So that was the idea.

And it did have a lot to do with, like you mentioned, sort of my future evolution, but I think it comes from architecture. I think it comes from my exposure to artists. I think it comes from a belief in cities and public spaces and a great interest in how people live in cities and occupy cities and are inspired by cities. So it comes from all of that somehow.

RATNER: Okay. Thank you. The other follow-up question was, during your hiatus in Arizona—

KOSHALEK: In the wilderness exile.

RATNER: Ed Barnes called you, and, with him you had worked at the Walker, and he tells you about this position at the Hudson River Museum. I wondered how, at that point, you felt about returning to the museum world and whether you had entertained or explored any other options at that point.

KOSHALEK: Well, there were a number of options that appeared in other museums, but it never worked out, actually. There was some talk that I was on the list, and it was in the newspaper, actually, in Chicago, that I was going to be the next director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, but I think that that didn't work, for all kinds of reasons and so on.

But I didn't consider any other options outside the museum world. I was really convinced of the museum world and believed that that's where I could do my creative work and that if I could work with contemporary artists, that would give me sort of the kind of satisfaction and opportunities that I wanted to do and so forth. So I wanted to stay in the world of museums. I don't know if I told you about that extraordinary meeting with Martin Friedman, who sort of invited me to Minneapolis.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: We talked about that. And so I really wanted to stay in museums. And Ed Barnes was somebody I knew and trusted and who I actually sort of admired greatly for— He was a pure modernist when it came to architecture and believed deeply that modern architecture could have an impact and could change society and so forth.

He said, "Richard, there's a museum in Yonkers." It's on the Hudson River. It's connected to a former mansion of John Bond Trevor. It's got a new wing that was undistinguished in terms of its architecture. It had a combination of science and art as part of its program, which is very, very interesting, because we're coming back to that again, potentially, with the Power Plant Project, which would be a Museum of Art,

Design, Science, and Technology. So it's very, very interesting. It's almost coming full circle.

RATNER: Full circle.

KOSHALEK: But I loved the idea of being involved in an institution that had multiple disciplines like science, technology, architecture, design, art, and so on, and all the cross sort of boundary sort of activity that can happen there when you're searching for original solutions.

Ed Barnes called up and said, "The city of Yonkers is bankrupt like the city of New York. They've withdrawn all the funds from the museum. The museum is in serious financial trouble. The county of Westchester is thinking of taking it over," which they did ultimately, but after I left, "and would you be willing to just take a risk here?"

And I remember him saying to me, "Richard, within five—." What did he say? "Within two miles of the museum is nothing but just the worst ghetto possible." I mean, it was like the South Bronx. "But," he said, "within ten miles of the museum is some of the greatest corporate wealth you can imagine." IBM was there. Then it was General Foods. It was Pepsi. It was Ciba-Geigy, the Swiss company, and so on. And he said, "We think that we can bring these people together to sort of make this institution function and provide the support that's necessary." And he sort of convinced me to do it, actually.

It was in terrible, terrible, terrible shape. It had not been maintained. It had a program that was rooted deeply in the past and uninspired. And we turned it into an institution that focused on the living artist.

The idea was, at the time, in the beginning, that we would commission major artists to do major spaces and that, over time, the temporary— We started out with a very elaborate and hopefully original exhibition program, and I talked about one which had to do with the fact that we wanted to create a second Hudson River School.

RATNER: Right. Right. I remember that.

KOSHALEK: Working with contemporary artists, and we worked with Robert Whitman, and we worked with John Mason and other artists, but that also we wanted, beyond the temporary exhibition program, and we wanted to reduce that commitment over time, we wanted to commission artists to do permanent installations.

I've always had this very strong feeling, almost like Don Judd did in Marfa, Texas. I never was able to do it on the scale that he did it on and with the greatest sort of— I mean, it's an amazing place, what Don Judd has tried to accomplish there, what he did accomplish there and which is now being continued by Marianne Stockebrand. But I also believed that artists needed places for their work to be permanently installed, also connected to this whole idea of public art that I was involved in and so on. And maybe, again, it goes back to architecture, in that there's a certain permanence. I mean, Frank Lloyd Wright had that great quote where he said that "Doctors bury their mistakes; architects can't," right?

But I always believed that, whether you made a mistake or not, in doing something in the public realm, that it was still a positive thing and that these things should be permanent. And you see that also in history. If you have a sense of history of art and architecture and sculpture and design and so on, these things have been with us for a very long time.

And so we commissioned Red Grooms to do the bookstore. Red Grooms' assistants were people who were unemployed, in this neighborhood, who worked through the CETA [California Educational Theater Association] program. Isn't that an amazing thing, that we took unemployed people, put them through the CETA program, and they were Red Grooms's assistants in building the bookstore?

We then commissioned Dan Flavin— Because the neighborhood was in transition and a very dangerous neighborhood to function in, we commissioned Dan Flavin to do security lighting, which is still there, and use an artist to solve a problem, such as security. And again, we used electricians who were unemployed through the CETA program to work with Dan Flavin to do the installation.

RATNER: Wow. That's great.

KOSHALEK: So the idea was to help the community, to help the institution gain a special sort of recognition and a uniqueness that it needed to have, but to also involve artists in solving not only problems that deal with artistic expression, but functional problems that connected to the museum but also connected to the community at large in terms of unemployment and so forth.

Then we had commissioned Richard Serra to start studying the possibility of a permanent installation in an oval where cars did a dropoff on the way in and so forth. Then we actually did a show with Richard Serra.

And then we were working on the idea of Ed Kienholz taking the period rooms and turning them into permanent installations, but contemporary work with some connection to the sort of Victorian quality of the building, so that there'd be these permanent installations and then there would also be the temporary exhibition program, but also connecting it to what the situation was there at that museum, the neighborhood in transition and our ghetto situation, but also the magnificent, as Mark Twain called it, Hudson River.

So we connected to the river and the environment, but we also connected to the trauma that was existing inside that community, and always felt that museums should be places of activism. They should be places where, if you believe in the creative individual and you believe in an architect, you believe in the sculptor or an artist, that they have a role to play in society that goes way beyond being isolated in museums and isolated in universities or in their own studio. And I've always believed that, that we leave too many of our decisions to people who are lawyers and politicians and so on, and we should involve in solutions to these problems the most creative architects and so forth. That's coming full circle again.

RATNER: Yes. Exactly.

KOSHALEK: In L.A. now.

RATNER: Right. I looked at that. It was very interesting. But where do you think you got that idea from? Because it's certainly not— When one thinks of a museum, it's not a typical idea, that the museum would be so engaged in the public and especially in such a dramatic way, and that seems to have been something you were interested in pretty much from the get-go.

KOSHALEK: I think it came from— You know, it also showed up in the Guerilla Museum we did at MOCA. I mean, it's the same thing. The Temporary Contemporary came out of that thinking also.

But I think it came more from my father, actually. My father was a contractor, electrical contractor, and he was involved in building everything from air force bases to hospitals, to power plants, to— Mostly in the Midwest, actually, throughout the Midwest and so on. But I would spend time with him, and it was always this idea that we have to build things, that we have to improve the world, that we have to add something, right? And I've always had this feeling that one of the reasons, maybe, I wanted to be an architect, that you have a responsibility, yes, to make a living, you have a responsibility, yes, to a corporation or to a business or to an institution, but that you also have a responsibility to the larger world, and that whatever corporation you work for, whatever institution you work for, that you have to take that responsibility seriously and that you have to motivate or sort of inspire that institution through your own sort of force of will to get involved in these things, in issues that are of social and community importance.

And it's been there since the beginning, actually, and I'm trying to think where it might have shown up early on. In Wisconsin, to a certain degree, I campaigned, when I first went to the University of Wisconsin, for John [F.] Kennedy, and the Wisconsin primary then was a very important, important primary, a little different than it is now. I had that feeling that there was this ability, I mean, the talk of the Peace Corps, whatever, whatever, whatever, that you could have an impact and that it could change.

Also, I think it's just the very strong feeling that some people are very fortunate and some people are not that fortunate, and that people who are fortunate need to sort of be aware of the other part of the world that sometimes gets ignored. It impacted almost sort of everything about my life. I mean, many times, salary increases in institutions I worked with, I actually turned them down because I never wanted to separate myself, in terms of the salary I was getting, from the rest of the people that were working for me.

I never wanted it to be— I knew if you're the director of a museum, you get paid more than if you're a curator, but I never wanted that gap between what a director gets paid and what a curator gets paid to get to be too large, actually. And the greed we see today in the corporate world and corporate executives in this period of the beginning of the twenty-first century, where there's this extraordinary separation from what a CEO of a major corporation gets paid and the people underneath him are getting paid a lot less or being sort of let go in large numbers in the name of corporate profits and earnings and so forth and so forth and so forth, it's always been a problem

for me, and I don't know where that comes from, but I think it came from my father somewhere way in the past, this idea that we build things, we do things, yes.

RATNER: Served you well, it seems.

KOSHALEK: So far. So far.

RATNER: Okay.

KOSHALEK: Coming back to Pasadena again, I mean, this is kind of a rather dull life, actually.

RATNER: [laughs] Yes. Well, I hope we'll have a chance to talk about what you're doing here, too.

KOSHALEK: Well, we'll get there.

RATNER: You mentioned the Playbook last time when we talked, and you said that, in it, you were trying to capture L.A.-ness.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: What exactly did you mean by that? And also, what parameters were you given, if any, upon your arrival, in terms of defining the scope and programs of MOCA? Because I think you said there wasn't really a consensus as to what MOCA was going to be at that point.

KOSHALEK: It was first described to me as going to be a sort of a West Coast version of the Museum of Modern Art. Then it was called the Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles, I think, so that when we had our first board meeting, we had a series of discussions, and then, also, in private discussions with board members at that time.

And the board was evolving. It was sort of just being put in place, actually, because MOCA was really built from scratch. There was nothing there.

And I found out that everybody had a different opinion of what MOCA should be and that it was— And I was coming out of this situation in New York where we were dealing with this extraordinary neighborhood and all the problems that that brought to the museum and how we tried to solve those problems and so on. So I had this strong interest that the museum had to go beyond its four walls and had to engage the community and especially downtown L.A.

In fact, when we did what we called the Guerilla Museum, we defined our exhibition space as being defined by the freeways that surrounded downtown L.A. That was our gallery. That was our museum. And if I had to do MOCA over again, in terms of the Bunker Hill building, I'd have a very different attitude about what we would have built, which would have been interesting. But I think, in the beginning, when we defined that large piece of grass, that large piece of territory in downtown L.A. as our museum and our exhibition space, that was an interesting way to go about it, as opposed to just having a single building on Bunker Hill. And we might have done something totally different if we had to do it all over again.

So since there was no consensus at all, and since every time we had a meeting to discuss what the purpose of this museum would be, and it ranged everything from it should be a museum that just builds a permanent collection, to a museum that builds a permanent collection but also has the temporary exhibition program, then we got into discussions about whether it should just be painting and sculpture, or architecture and

design should be involved, or performance should be involved, or film should be involved, and we had all these discussions. There was no consensus, so we decided that the only way we were going to get consensus was to put something down on paper.

Two people, actually, myself and a lady who was working at MOCA and who was recommended by Robert Irwin, who was a trustee at the time, a lady named Marcy Goodwin, and Marcy Goodwin and I went to the conference room at— There's a law firm of Tuttle and Taylor on the corner of Grand and Sixth, and we worked for weeks. We just worked on what this museum could be and what the concept for this museum would be.

I've always been interested in football playbooks, so that's why it was called the Playbook. Football playbooks deal with offense; they deal with strategy; they deal with defense; they deal with personnel; they deal with organization and who reports to whom, because it's a very structured, almost military-like sort of way in which a football team functions. We weren't looking for that, but we came up with the Playbook and said, "Okay. Since there's no consensus, we will put it down on paper and we will define it," and all the ideas we two talked about got into that picture. So, yes, there would be a collection, but it would be 1945 to the present.

It's very interesting that, in these discussions, Pontus Hulten wasn't involved at all, basically. But if you read the Playbook, the introduction, we wrote a paragraph, an introductory paragraph, for Pontus, and it's one paragraph that is— So it's in the introduction for the book, but he was not involved at all in these discussions.

RATNER: Because he was still in Paris at this time.

KOSHALEK: He was still in Paris, and he seemed not to have an interest. We made a visit one time to see him and to talk about this, that we were going to produce this Playbook, and in a way, I think he felt it was unnecessary, that we just do what we do, right? And I also think he had a very limited idea of what a museum should be, and I think it had to do with painting and sculpture and works on paper, to a large extent. He wasn't interested to any great degree in performance. He wasn't interested to any great degree in film or architecture and design.

So we wrote the damned Playbook and then wrote his introduction and presented it to the board. The purpose was to get consensus from the board, and it worked. It truly did work. And I still believe in this idea, that if you put it down on paper and you bind it, and you make it look good, and it's well written and it has a lot of content, and it deals with not only the conceptual problems of what the museum should be and what the content should be and what the program should be, but it deals with the functional aspects of how you accomplish this, which we also had.

And then it gave examples of shows that we felt would be important for us to launch this institution. We actually wrote descriptions of shows. Alexis Smith was in that, individual artist shows. The Lou Kahn show was in that picture. There was a thing called "Art and Film" that later happened at MOCA. There was something to do with the car and the car culture, that idea coming from Pontus Hulten, by the way, that show. That was a show he was very interested in. And I think there was something in

the book on miniaturization, because Pontus Hulten was very interested in miniaturization and the impact it was going to have on our world.

But his interests were very, very different. He's a different generation than I am. He saw Los Angeles differently than I saw the city. He came from a much more classical background of art history and museology. His influence, his greatest influence was a man named Will Sandberg, who was the director of the Stedelijk Museum we all admired. My influence, to a large extent, was Martin Friedman, who came from a different kind of institution, and he was very, very important in how I define myself in terms of the museum world.

I've always had, in a way— I go to museums often and I admire museums. I mean, if I go to New York, to any city, I usually go to the museum, and it's the greatest moment possible, to spend time in a museum, especially now, when I'm out of museums, because I spend more time looking at the art and less time looking at who owns that individual work of art or who has lent that individual work of art or who's on the donor wall or whatever. I mean, when you're working in museums, you spend a lot of time studying other museums and who's supporting them and how's the support being given and what corporations are involved and so on.

But I've never like sort of the idea of the museum as an institution that is not— And I hate that word *proactive*, but not actively involved in the larger world. So I could never have worked at the Met. I could never have worked at the National Gallery. It wasn't in my DNA that I could sit there and be a scholar or sit there and worry about just one specific period of art historical research or work on an exhibition

for, you know, five to six— Five to ten years, one single exhibition. I could never have done that. My pulse, or my— I couldn't have handled it.

And so those institutions would never have been for me. It had to be a different kind of institution, like the Walker Art Center and what we've created since. And so my role in museums was very different from— When I'd meet with the museum directors and— I mean, there's a very good example. When I came to the Walker Art Center, the new people that joined the staff at the same time, I came from the School of Architecture. I had almost no artistry background.

The people who joined the Walker at that time, Jay Belloli was a graduate from Berkeley, wrote his thesis on Andy Warhol, and was, you know, a true art historian. Robert Murdoch had had a Ford Foundation fellowship. He came just before me at the Walker. He was there before me, had a Ford Foundation museum fellowship. He went to, I think, Harvard or Yale, had a very different background. Phillip Larson had a Ph.D. degree from Columbia in art history, and I can go on and on and on.

So my world and where I came from was totally different from the world that most museum people come from, and that's not to say that that's not the right thing for them or for museums, but it wasn't right for me. So I came at this with a very different point of view and, I think, a greater openness to artists and a greater sort of ability to sort of connect with the creative people. And that, I think, made the difference.

RATNER: So what about the L.A.-ness? When you say you're going to—

KOSHALEK: Oh, I forgot. [mutual laughter] I've always believed that art, that museums—and this is a very big problem we're confronting today in the museum world—is that a museum must draw strength from the city in which it's located. When we go to the great museums around the world, whether it's in Japan or whether it's in China or whether it's in Europe, the ones that seem to impress us the most and to have a certain authenticity or legitimacy are the ones that draw strengths from the city in which they're in, that draw strengths from the work that is being produced in that city by the artists and the creative people working there, whether it's an architect like Frank Gehry in Los Angeles or an artist like Robert Irwin in Los Angeles or an artist like Ed Ruscha in Los Angeles or an artist like Jorge Pardo in Los Angeles, that they draw strength from that city.

And I think the creative people draw strength from the city in which they live. We know that throughout history, from Florence to Paris to whatever. And I felt that this museum had to capture L.A.-ness. We had to find out what was unique about Los Angeles, what were the strengths of Los Angeles, what made it distinctively different from New York, distinctively different from Chicago, distinctively different from Paris or from Tokyo, and we had to build upon that, and that the clues to what that was would be coming from the thinkers and the people who lived here, but also from the artists that lived here.

One of the clues that— And we picked this up along the way, actually, from visiting museums around the world, but also from artists and also from an experience that seemed so remote from all of this, and that is that when we did that show

*Warburton Avenue: The Architecture of a Neighborhood*, we did video interviews with the people who lived in that neighborhood. We talked to them about all the aspects of that neighborhood, from the crime situation to the situation with the kind of housing that gets built, their relationship to city government, their relationship to their neighbors and other people, the racism that existed in those neighborhoods and how they felt about it, their relationship to banks, for example, and questions of redlining and so on. And I found the people that we talked to who lived in that area to be unbelievably articulate about what the problems were and what they needed, but nobody listened to them. Nobody listened to them.

Decisions would be made about public housing, and they would never be listened to. So they'd build a high-rise building. They'd put an elevator in it. The elevator became the most dangerous place in the building. The people wanted sort of a place that had sort of gardens and to sort of occupy themselves. That was totally out of the question.

I mean, we learned— And so I had this feeling, always, that if you listen to the people who live in a specific city, you can get a lot of information about what's right, what's wrong, and what decisions need to be made in the future, and that this information can be sometimes— Because these people are living it. They're living this life. They're living in this community. They're information is more sort of real. And they do actually think about the condition they're in, the situation they're in, the environment they're living in. They think about it much more intensely than people who sit in, say, City Hall or people who sit in a corporate headquarters or a foundation

office. They think about it very intensely, because they're living it every single day, but they very seldom get listened to.

And so that also had an impact, that if we're going to capture L.A.-ness, you have to talk to a large number of people, from artists to whatever to whatever, to get there. And I think it's important.

I'm not sure we got there to the degree that I wanted us to get there. I think we got there with the Temporary Contemporary. I think, to a certain degree, we got there with the Bunker Hill building, but in a very different way, actually. The Temporary Contemporary is right for Los Angeles, and it's right for downtown Los Angeles, and it's a small part of that huge area we defined as downtown Los Angeles within the freeways.

MOCA became the permanent building by [Arata] Isozaki, who's a very dear friend of mine, became much more of an institution that could exist in other cities, even though it had aspects that we thought captured L.A.-ness, such as the Marilyn Monroe curbs, such as the ticket booth being exposed like in a movie theater, out front so that it's not in the building, it's out front, the use of the pink and green color scheme, which had to do with the Polo Lounge at the Beverly Hills Hotel, the idea of the entranceway, where you go in behind the ticket booth, being sort of a copy of the hotel in Santa Monica that Iso stayed at. That's the front entrance, only it's a blue light, and it's got the glass block around it and so on. And the idea of the lobby being inside and outside, you know, the whole idea of that lobby at MOCA was that half would be inside, half would be outside, and the use extensively of natural light. But it

still didn't get there to the degree that Frank Gehry would have gotten there. So it's that kind of picture, I think.

And we wanted to capture L.A.-ness, and I think this is even more important now, because we're building museums in cities all over the world, and they're all turning out to be very, very similar, and they're almost universal in their sort of design sort of criteria, and I think somehow that's not the way to do it. Now, you can find certain museums in different parts of the world, the Louisiana Museum in [Humlebeck] Denmark, for example, which we all admire, and so forth, that have a strong regional sense and capture sort of Danishness or whatever. But that was very important to me, to capture L.A.-ness somehow.

We succeeded with TC to a much greater extent. We succeeded with the Guerilla Museum. We succeeded in a very different way, in a humorous, witty, sort of satirical way with the building at Bunker Hill, but we didn't succeed to the degree that we should have there, at that site. And that was not Isozaki's fault, by the way. That's just that we weren't able to communicate what was needed, and there was confusion there. There were more than one—I wasn't the client.

RATNER: Right. Well, we'll talk about that, as well. But just one last thing about the L.A.-ness. How would you describe the L.A. art scene upon your arrival?

KOSHALEK: Well, the artists that I knew were Larry Bell and Robert Irwin and James Turrell, to a certain degree, Ed Ruscha to a certain degree, Ed Moses for sure, Alexis Smith. They approach their work very differently. They don't carry a lot of historical baggage or a sort of past history that they have to sort of deal with. Artists

in New York have this connection to a long history that goes back to the Ashcan School and on and on and on and to [Jackson] Pollock. You know, the ghost of Jackson Pollock has had a huge impact not only on artists in New York, but beyond.

California artists tend to have a much greater openness to new ideas, to new materials, to expressing their own individual sensibility. And to do that when, over a long period of time, there was not very much support for it.

One of the people that recognized this extremely well was Count Panza, Guiseppe Panza and his wife, Rosa. They understood instinctively, somehow, the connection between the natural light in the city, sort of the urban condition of Los Angeles, different from New York, the lack of sort of a history here—like New York, that can be very sort of overwhelming—and this freedom and this openness and this willingness to take risks with materials and ideas.

Robert Irwin, in my mind, is the one artist that really was able to deal with this more than anybody. He really did understand it. But the New York critics never really captured it to that certain degree, were always suspicious to a certain degree. And that's what I actually liked about it, because it also fit with me, with my own sensibility of sort of having that same kind of lack of museum history, lack of art historical sort of history, lack of having my educational background, having gone through a Department of Art History at, say, Yale or Harvard or whatever it was, but coming at it from architecture and a different point of view.

And so L.A. and myself and the artists that were working here, and the conditions of this city, for me, were all in sync somehow, and that was very important.

I mean, I don't think I would have succeeded with MOCA, whatever that success is, in a city like Chicago or a city like New York or a city like Boston or a city like Philadelphia. It had to be L.A. And it was all in sync, the city and what it stood for and what it was all about and its sort of special quality, its uniqueness, the artists and so on and the creative community, from Frank Gehry to Robert Irwin to whatever, who worked here, and my own sort of sensibility. And so that's why it worked for me. That's why it worked for me.

And it might not have worked somewhere else. It didn't work in Texas, but it might not have worked somewhere else. And so I was very fortunate that there was this convergence of city, myself, artists working here, creative people working here, and the total thing worked, actually. Strange, huh?

RATNER: Lucky.

KOSHALEK: I'd have been a total failure somewhere else.

RATNER: I don't think so. [mutual laughter] I find that hard to believe.

We spoke a bit about Pontus Hulten and how difficult it was once he was on board full time. Well, apparently, it was difficult before he was on board full time.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And I wondered if you know who else was considered as a possible first director.

KOSHALEK: Martin Friedman, Henry Hopkins, myself, Pontus Hulten, and— I actually think that's it. I think they were the four, but we could check a *New York*

*Times* article by Hilton Kramer, because he listed them, and I can find out for you, actually. But those four for sure.

RATNER: And were they all interviewed, or— Because I know it said that Pontus Hulten was the first choice. You and Pontus Hulten were the first choices, so I wondered whether they'd ever talked to anybody else.

KOSHALEK: You'd have to ask Henry. I don't know that, but I can find out. But I know they did talk to Martin Friedman, and Martin Friedman wasn't interested, because he was very secure at the Walker, and he could do everything possible at the Walker Art Center. The seriousness of the interview with Martin Friedman I do not know, but those were the four candidates that I know, and I know they did talk to Martin, and I think he did come to California. Henry Hopkins was one. Might have been James Elliott also, but I'm not sure. But that was it. That was it.

RATNER: Okay. You know what? I'm going to flip this right now and then ask you the next question.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

JULY 18, 2002

RATNER: When we had to stop last time, you were in the middle of telling me a story about— You had received a call from the L.A. Harbor, and they said there was a bill for \$25,000.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: What was that all about?

KOSHALEK: Well, what happened was that they chose Pontus to be the director, and they chose me to be the deputy director, chief curator, and I got here much earlier than Pontus Hulten. I got here in December, and he was still at the Centre Pompidou, and it took him another, I think, nine months to a year to get here, but he started to ship things out. He shipped a library, and he shipped a boat, a very large boat, that arrived as a total surprise. We got a call from somebody at the L.A. Harbor saying that “There is a crate here for Pontus Hulten, the bill to paid by MOCA, and it’s a boat.”

He also shipped a Citroen from Paris, his car, his favorite car from Paris. And somehow he understood that when they said, “We’ll take care of your shipping,” and usually that means certain things, he took it to mean his boat, his car, his complete library. The library’s not much of a problem, but all of these things started to arrive, and it led to a lot of confusion of how to pay for it, because this was a very fragile institution in the beginning, and we didn’t have very much money, I can tell you.

There’s wonderful stories about that. When ARCO [Atlantic Richfield Company] gave us its first \$4 million gift, a man named William Kieschnick, they

tried to call us to tell us that, “We’re giving the gift, \$4 million, to MOCA,” and the answer they got was that they hadn’t paid their phone bill and it was disconnected. So Bill Kieschnick, who’s a dear, dear man, who was the CEO of ARCO, sent over his driver, and the driver said, “I want you to get in the car and call Bill Kieschnick.” And I got in the car, and I called Bill Kieschnick, and he said, “We have a check for you for \$4 million so that you can pay the phone bill and MOCA can continue to do what it had to do.”

So it was very fragile. So all of these things starting to arrive, from a car to a boat, to a complete library was a huge, huge hit. And then the question was, how do we deal with it and how do we pay for it and does the board approve this? And it got to be a very difficult situation.

The relationship, actually, between Pontus and the museum, only for a very brief time in the beginning was it a positive thing, actually, in a way. The public read it differently. The public read the fact that Pontus was from the Pompidou, a major institution, international press, and that this was an extraordinary thing for Los Angeles. It was helpful in the beginning to gain recognition for the institution and for funding and the support from the community and so on, but the relationship between Pontus and the staff and Pontus and the board was strained almost from the— Difficult almost from the beginning, almost from the beginning. It was just a very short period of time.

And even two or three months after I was here, we understood very clearly that it was never going to work long-term. It just wasn’t going to work. There was no

way they could communicate, no way they could communicate. Pontus had a very different concept of what a museum director did, how museums functioned in Europe, where the support came from, usually the government or the federal sources. He had a very different idea of what a museum was in the United States.

The trustees who were involved then had a very, also, different concept of what the director did and what role they wanted him to play, and they could never work this out. They never were able to work this out. And Pontus knew that, and then Pontus came under a lot of stress personally, with regard to his health and so on, and the board came under a lot of stress. I think when Pontus did present the idea that he was returning to Paris, that it actually came as a great relief for the people internally at [MOCA].

He had a very difficult, very sort of complicated way of dealing with people. I mean, he truly wanted people to say nothing but *yes*, and if anybody had a different opinion or objected to what he was saying, his first reaction was, “Fire them. Just fire them. I don’t want them around.” And I won’t give names, but a lot of people did leave, his secretary usually, in the early stages.

Then, finally, Pontus came in and said— And he was a very interesting man. He would pound the table and things like that. Anger would be there. There was a lot of anger there. And he wanted to fire somebody, and he slammed his fist on the table and said, “I want this person out of here today. I want this person fired.”

It had to do with car rental, that Pontus had rented cars in Europe and then had gotten into some accidents. This person said, “We’ve got a problem here. Hertz is

suing us, and Hertz is after us legally, and we've got to resolve this. Were you in these accidents?" and so on.

He said, "No, I was in no accidents, damn it."

And he came out and said, "I want this person fired."

I said, "No." And I said, "We have to stop this." And that's when Pontus and I started to develop difficulty also. It got very, very, very, very difficult, beyond belief. The interpersonal relationships between, then, him and the staff, him, Pontus, and myself, and then Pontus and the board, it got very difficult. I mean, there are stories that you would not believe about what that conflict led to, and we were very close to meltdown, very close to meltdown.

RATNER: The whole institution?

KOSHALEK: The whole institution. There were about two periods where we were very close, for this fragile institution starting up, that it could have disappeared, just actually folded, where the board wasn't sort of as well organized as it needed to be, it was still forming, still being evolved, and so they didn't— They were having difficulty dealing with all this, and with Pontus having tremendous stress and reacting in very irrational and sort of very difficult ways with regard to decisions, that it was very close to meltdown, and we could have lost the institution, without any difficulty.

Another person who can tell you the story is Bob Irwin and a lot of other people who were close to him. But he had strong support from Sam Francis, Pontus did, and so forth.

And then when he told me he was leaving, he called me and he said— I probably told you. But he said, “I want you to fly to New York, and we’ll have lunch at the Stanhope Hotel. I have to talk to you.”

And so I flew to New York, and he was there, and he showed me a letter from a man named [Robert] Boudez, who was somebody who he worked with at the Pompidou. He was the president of the Pompidou, saying that the president of France is calling Pontus Hulten back to Paris to do a [Henri] Matisse exhibition, which never happened.

And then there was great— I think there was great relief on the board and everybody else’s part that Pontus would not have to be fired or that they weren’t going to reach that stage where they had to fire him, and that he had to leave for this other reason, right, that he was going to do this major exhibition for some kind of huge World’s Fair in Paris. That never happened, and we don’t know the degree of whether that was true or not true.

But then if you read the press, you’ll see that it was— The press conference was actually held at the boardroom of ARCO. Bill Kieschnick was there, and I was there, and Pontus was there. And that’s where Pontus— Somebody asked Pontus where he— It was explained that he was going back to Paris to do the World’s Fair and that he couldn’t say no to President Mitterrand or the French Republic and all of that, and that MOCA would miss him and that he provided great leadership and all of that stuff. Then somebody said, “Pontus, how do you feel about returning to Paris?”

and that's where Pontus' great line was. His response was, "Sometimes in life you get lucky." That's what he said. [mutual laughter]

RATNER: Oh, god.

KOSHALEK: That's what he said. That was his line. He said, "Sometimes in life you get lucky." And that tells you a lot.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: That he was homesick for Paris, that he was missing Paris, that that's where he could function. I mean, when I talk about my connection to Los Angeles and the sensibility of this city and the people who work and live here and artists and so on and that it worked, Pontus was Paris, Pontus was Europe. But it was also telling you that he wanted out, also.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: Yes. So it was complicated. But the press handled it extremely well. Nobody actually dug beneath the surface or had any inclination that there was this great difficulty, that this thing was— This was tremendous trauma inside MOCA.

RATNER: Why do you think they didn't dig below the surface on that?

KOSHALEK: I don't know, actually. It's very interesting. This happens often with the press, actually. I mean, I can tell you a rather intriguing story, because when we bought the Panza Collection, we had no money to buy that collection. We were a young institution. We did not have the money to buy that collection, and it was \$10 million over five years or something. So to convince the board, we built in all kinds of sort of ways in which we could step aside if we couldn't meet the payment, and

Panza— So that the board felt comfortable; they could go ahead. And we can sometime go into all of that.

So we announced the acquisition of the Panza Collection, and the late Carter Brown was very interesting, because it— I'll tell you about that later. But we announced it at City Hall, and Tom Bradley announced it at City Hall, that there was this great acquisition. Panza was there and I was there, and I spoke and Panza spoke, and Eli spoke and the mayor spoke, and so on.

But the night before, Sherri Geldin, myself, and a number of other people sort of stayed up very late. I think Eli [Broad] was there. And we were trying to say, “Okay. If they ask us where the hell the money's coming from, what are we going to say?” Because sooner or later, the press is going to say, “What is the value of this collection, and do you have the money, and where is the money coming from,” right? So we came up— We stayed up with all of these— Trying to figure out all the reasons, what we could say to the press that they would believe that we could really afford to buy this collection. And the question was never asked.

We left that meeting and we went to lunch, and we were dumbfounded that the one question we worked on so hard to get the right answer, which we didn't have an answer for, to tell you the truth, that the press never asked. But many times it surprises you.

The Pontus thing was a situation with that, and the Panza thing was a situation with that, and there were a few more. I don't know what that's about. They're on deadline. They've got to get this story in the paper. That's a very difficult job, to be a

reporter, to cover a story and to find out what the real essence of that story is and if there's anything underneath the surface that they should be aware of, because they are on deadline, and they've got to get the story out, and they don't want to be scooped by the *New York Times* and God only knows what. But this happened over and over again, actually, and those are just two examples.

But overall, the press treated us unbelievably well and were very important in the future, in this institution's [inaudible], people like [Joseph] Giovannini and John Dreyfuss, Suzanne Muchnic, Christopher Knight, extremely, extremely important in the success of MOCA. I mean, if the press had not been there— The same thing with Disney Hall. If the press had not been there, MOCA would not have happened, and if the press had not been involved in Disney Hall, Disney Hall would have never happened. They have a program called Light Center for kids, where they learn about design. It's fantastic, fantastic. It's moving down to this building in the future.

RATNER: While he was still on board, Pontus Hulten, and I don't know what the relationship was at this point, but in May of 1982, he gives this director's report at a board meeting, and he titles it "A Need for a Balanced Commitment."

KOSHALEK: Ah, yes. Go ahead.

RATNER: And in it he discusses the differences between public and private museums and talks about how public museums, the power is more clearly defined and less apt to be a question of personalized power play. And he goes on to say that he wants to stress that "The staff and the administration of the museum, in spite of severe criticism, is the best I've ever seen." So obviously something's brewing, and I'm

wondering what kind of personalized power play was going on and what was the deal that he felt the need to do this particular report at this time.

KOSHALEK: Well, first of all, the report was written by myself and Sherri Geldin. We wrote the report for him, truly did. I'm not exaggerating. We wrote every single word. The title, so on, everything is us.

The problem was that there was a lot of conflict developing between the trustees. The trustees at that time, where the conflict was coming from was Eli Broad, Bill [William] Norris, and Max Palevsky. They were in great conflict with Pontus Hulten, and it got to the degree where the trustees at one time, when Pontus and I were in Europe, hired somebody to be on the staff who was the wife of one of those individuals, to be the head of development.

So there was a lot of conflict developing, and there were meetings. At one meeting, for example, they presented Pontus with a book on Sherman Lee, called *Understanding Museums*, and said, "You'd better get a hold of this. This is how museums function in this country," and so on. So it was our feeling— And one person that was very much involved in this paper, which is very, very interesting, was an extraordinary woman named Dominique de Menil. Dominique, we discussed it with—

RATNER: She was a trustee at that point, right?

KOSHALEK: Yes. She's one of the trustees from outside. We had a meeting, and I think the meeting was at Marcia Simon Weisman's house, because Marcia had the right instincts here and knew something was going wrong. We talked about what we

needed to do here, and we came up with this idea that we'll write this paper, and we'll put it in the record, we'll put it in the record of the board minutes and so on, about where this problem was, that there was a problem and we needed to resolve it.

I'd love to get a copy of that again. I forgot about that damned thing. I don't have a copy, actually. It's interesting.

And then the idea was Pontus would read this at the board meeting, and that's where it came. But Pontus came in the night before from Paris. We had written the document. Those words— Sherri Geldin has a lot to do with this. She'll recall this. There's an oral history there you must do, because she wrote all, really, the founding documents, but that document was conceived by all of us, and then Pontus read it at the board meeting.

If I remember right, and I can't remember too well about what happened afterward, the forces that be just ignored it. It didn't lead to any further discussion, any further change. It probably set both sides even more sort of solidified in their views and in opposition. It didn't work. It didn't work, but it was a beautiful paper, still could work in other institutions.

But this is not unusual for museums, you know. A lot of museums have this kind of conflict. LACMA's had this kind of conflict with Norton Simon and Sid Brody and the director, Ric Brown, who left to go do the Kimbell. This is a very, very typical sort of interaction that happens within institutions, especially museums, where there is a continuous struggle for who's in control, who's making decisions, and who has the power. It's a continuous thing. Very seldom do you find an institution where

it's truly in balance, like we said in that article, where that it functions the way it should function. And if there are times when that does happen, there's usually one or two people on the board that make it happen.

The only time in the history of MOCA that that happened was under two chairmanships. One was Bill Kieschnick and the other was Fred Nicholas. That's the only time we had this thing in equilibrium, where they had respect for the staff.

There was one point where it got also very difficult, and I remember Bill Kieschnick—he'd be worth talking to here—and he gave a talk to the board about there are certain responsibilities that belong to the staff, certain responsibilities that belong to the board, and we're going to keep these two things separate. And the staff's going to do what they're going to do, and we're going to encourage them, and we're not going to be—I remember his great phrase was that “If somebody makes a mistake on the staff or the staff makes a mistake, we're not going to take the attitude that we're going to look for who shot John. We're going to see it as one large institutional project. We're going to solve it together.” And then he said, “This is what the board does, and this is the decisions we make, and that's all we're going to do.”

I remember that lecture to the board. I remember Bill standing up to give that lecture at a board meeting, and it was extremely— Because it was just so much trauma and so much internal conflict, that it was hard to believe that we were going to survive, and this happened at different stages in that early history.

The interesting thing is, I think, in founding institutions like this, this is not unusual. This is truly not unusual. It's not just MOCA. This happens at— You know, if you look at the early founding of most institutions, this is what happens. But, boy, it was something. Surviving this one was not easy, not easy.

RATNER: So early on, at least prior to that speech he gave, the trustees were really meddling in the day-to-day business of the staff?

KOSHALEK: Oh, total, total. Oh, they wanted to hire the staff. They were very interested in hiring the staff. They were interested in dictating what the museum would do, you know, week— You know, year by year. “No, we won't do that now.” “No, we will do this.” “No, you can't hire that person without our approval.” They hired one person, without even talking to Pontus or I, to be the head of development, who was the wife of one of the trustees. Oh, they were deeply, deeply trying to control completely the situation. No doubt about it. No doubt about it. It wasn't going to work. It wasn't going to work.

That paper was a critical turning point, but it didn't actually accomplish what was needed, actually, it didn't. So the Playbook, and that was called “A Balanced—.” What is it?

RATNER: “A Need for a Balanced Commitment.”

KOSHALEK: That was it. Oh, jeez. [mutual laughter] Oh, was that a board meeting. Oh, was that a tense board meeting. Oh, my god, that was a tense board meeting. Oh, that was that article, I think, because we didn't have a boardroom, even.

We met in offices, you know, boardrooms all around, at ARCO, Security Pacific Bank, all those things. Whew. Now you're bringing it back. I won't sleep tonight.

RATNER: [laughs] Because some of the other things that you bring up in this paper— Apparently you wrote it.

KOSHALEK: No. It was Sherri Geldin and myself, actually. I shouldn't take sole credit. We did write it. Pontus didn't— There's not a single word there by Pontus.

RATNER: You express concern, or he expressed concern on your behalf, that the museum wasn't progressing as it should in the collections area.

KOSHALEK: That's right.

RATNER: And that no comprehensive campaign had been formulated or resources allocated for that purpose, and that the museum had no reference library, which was making it very inconvenient.

So you're saying that the trustees didn't really care about that? Nothing really changed after this, or—

KOSHALEK: It didn't really, to the same degree, but what did emerge as a result of it, I think, which is very important— But, yes, I think the agenda was, on the part of the three people that were really part of this, Bill Norris, Eli Broad, and Max Palevsky, was that we raise the money first, and we don't want to do a damned thing until we raise the money, and no decisions will be made to spend money, to do a program, to develop a program, and so on and so on and so on. And we get to the Temporary Contemporary and how that got— You know, there was a lot of opposition to that on their part.

But what did emerge, and I think what that that paper did accomplish was, it awakened a certain number of trustees that this thing wasn't going the way it should, and they brought great wisdom to it. One of them was Lenore Greenberg, Lennie Greenberg, who started to understand— I think, based on that, she started to see that there was a problem here and conflict here, and that we'd better get to the real reason for building a museum and that is because we are building a museum. And what does a museum do? It builds a collection, it has a library, it builds exhibitions, and it has a curatorial initiative, and that the staff has to make certain decisions. And I think there were other people that started to come to that realization.

So even though the three top people, it didn't have any impact on them, I don't think, although we did get done what we wanted to get done, but we got it done because new trustees started to emerge, like Lenore Greenberg, that started to see the picture a different way. And that was critically important, critically important. So it did accomplish that, yes. Interesting.

Where did you get this paper? Did MOCA send you this paper?

RATNER: No. No, they weren't very helpful at all, actually, in unearthing anything. I think I found that at the [J. Paul] Getty [Museum] in Count Panza's papers, actually.

KOSHALEK: Oh, that would be there, yes, yes. He was on the board. See, that awakened, also, Dominique de Menil and Panza and so on and so on. And they played a very important role, the foreign trustees, because they actually, then, started to say that— You know, we started to use them— That, you know, "You don't want to embarrass yourself in the world, right, with Panza, with Dominique de Menil," and

so on and so on and so on. So that, I think, was a very sobering— I think it had some kind of impact, but not with the three people we wanted it to have a great impact on.

RATNER: How is it you got her to advocate on your behalf in terms of—

KOSHALEK: We came up with this idea that—That part of it was my idea, that we needed to have people from outside Los Angeles be on this board so that we could convince our board to behave differently. Truly, that was my idea.

And so we came up with a list of names. And Panza was brought into the picture by Robert Irwin, because he was very close to Panza. Dominique was very close to Pontus Hulten. He brought her in. Pontus was very close to Peter Ludwig and got Peter Ludwig to join the board, although Peter never knew he was on the board somehow. He was on the board, he was sent everything, but every time we would see him and go interview him and talk to him, he'd say, "Am I on that board? Am I on that board?" Then Seiji Tsutsumi was brought in by Sam Francis.

But the idea was that this would provide a certain amount of security, because the trustees who were providing the leadership wouldn't want to be embarrassed in the world, right? And we always talked about that we had to be an international institution. I was very strong on that. But that idea of having this participation from these role models on our board would be helpful. It was almost like there was the Playbook, and then there was this having these role models on the board to also set an example and talk about collecting and collecting is important, talk about museums and what they mean and the integrity of an institution, like Dominique would talk about.

Panza and Dominique were very, very helpful, Seiji Tsutsumi less and Ludwig almost zero, but the fact that his name was on the list was very helpful to our board, I mean encouraging to our board. But Panza and Dominique, and Dominique being the most important, amazing woman, amazing woman of incredible integrity who understood the value of museums like nobody I know. I've never met anybody like Dominique de Menil, who understood what museums stood for and what value they had in the larger world and that they must be respected.

So she builds a museum in Houston, and she takes the bookstore out and puts it across the street. And she gives a speech at the opening, when everybody's there for the dedication, and she says, "If the attendance drops now, after the opening," she said, "that's a good sign, because we're going to find the people who really care, and they'll come back often." Just the opposite of what any other chairman of the board would say, right? And how she believed in artists and respected artists and how she worked with Renzo Piano on the design of the building and treated him like an artist, with the greatest respect possible. She was unbelievable. She was— Whew. Wow. Amazing. We don't see too many people— We see so few people who have that kind of strength and core beliefs that really are significant and valuable, invaluable.

I spent a lot of time with her, actually. Last time I saw her, she was quite elderly . I went to Houston, it was on a Sunday morning, and we went by her house, the Philip Johnson House, and she sat down and— Sunday morning. This lady's in her eighties or nineties. She took out a legal pad and a pen and said, "Now, tell me,

where can I find money for my museum? Tell me, what do I do about the Getty, to get money from the Getty? What do I do about the National Endowment for this?"

I thought, here's this lady who's eighties or nineties, and it's Sunday morning, and she's got a legal pad, and she's working, she's working, you know, trying to continue to build this institution. It's pretty amazing, pretty amazing. She's worth a major book. It's too bad she's no longer here.

RATNER: When you said that you had the idea that you wanted it to be— For MOCA to be international in scope, did you come into the project knowing that you wanted this museum— That you were coming because you wanted to be building a museum that had an international presence, or that happened after you arrived?

KOSHALEK: I knew it coming in. I actually truly knew it then, while coming in. I just felt— Well, I knew MoMA, because I was living in New York at the time. It was international, right? I knew that if L.A.— My feeling when I came to MOCA was that if MOCA was going to become— I'd seen what happened in Houston, the Contemporary Museum. It went basically nowhere. I saw the ICA in Boston. It went basically nowhere, right? I saw the MCA in Chicago, and it was struggling, struggling. It's stabilized, but still struggling. And I saw all of these museums, and I said, "Okay. Something's wrong here."

The Walker Art Center was international to a certain degree. It wasn't dealing with Latin America and Asia, but it was dealing with London and so on, London, the New Scene, that exhibition, and so on, and Miró and so on. And they all failed. And I kept thinking, "Okay. Why did they fail?" And one of the reasons was that they

didn't really draw strength from their area, or there wasn't the strength, an artist community like we have in L.A. or New York, in Houston or in Boston. Second of all, that they saw themselves existing just in that city. They didn't see themselves as being national or international.

So I really did feel, in the beginning, that for MOCA to succeed, it had to be truly international. Otherwise, we'd never succeed. And a city like L.A. could be truly international.

And my first instinct was that we should look more to the Pacific Basin than we should to Europe, maybe one reason why Isozaki got chosen, not because I had that, but there were other strong feelings for that. But I felt that maybe the Pacific Basin and Asia and Latin America were areas in which we should be involved in. But it had to be truly, truly international; otherwise it wasn't going to survive.

And I read a lot of business magazines, which is interesting. I read every business magazine you can imagine, and I can't tell you why, but even back then, these corporations were talking about being multinational, right? Like IBM was multinational and so on. And I had this strong feeling that if you're going to have a role to play, you're going to have to be truly international.

One of the things we did draw up, or I drew up, was a list of the top twenty-five museums around the world, and I said, "Before it's all said and done, we're going to have worked with each of these institutions. I can't deal with everything else. I can only deal with twenty-five." Pompidou was on that list. MoMA was on that list. I'm trying to think of— National Gallery was on that list. And there were twenty-five

museums on that list, and I said, “Before it’s all over, these are the twenty-five internationally that we’re going to deal with,” right?

I think we dealt with all of them except the National Gallery by the time I left. And now, just recently, the De Kooning show [*Willem de Kooning: Tracing the Figure*] is going to go to the National Gallery, so it finally worked.

But I actually felt that if this MOCA was going to have that kind of role, that it had to be connected to these institutions around the world, the Stedelijk, whatever, whatever, whatever, the Tate in London, and so on.

It was very helpful in many ways. It was helpful for the institution. We built contacts. Our curators got to know curators at those institutions. We exchanged works on loans. We did exhibitions that went to different places. And it brought international recognition to MOCA, as a very young institution, that’s still there, actually. Yes, it was a very important part of the whole scene for me.

Also, we had an international city here, but it wasn’t as international as it is today. I mean, in 1980, it was a very different city than it is today. Now it’s a much more cosmopolitan city. We have the Latin American population, to a large extent the majority. And you’ve got the Asian population and so on. But then it was a very different thing. I mean, it was a midwestern city, almost.

RATNER: Just wrapping up with that 1982 paper on the “Balanced Commitment,” it says that the right type of confidence and trust between—

KOSHALEK: Is there a lot of correspondence at the Getty between Panza and—  
About MOCA?

RATNER: Yes. It's mostly pertaining, obviously, to the acquisition of his collection, but there are some other—

KOSHALEK: That's very interesting, because Panza— We arranged a meeting, for Panza to meet with Franklin Murphy and a man who's no longer at the Getty, to talk about them buying his archive. And we had a meeting—

RATNER: Oh, they bought it?

KOSHALEK: They bought it. Oh yes. He got paid for it. He got paid for it. And it was Franklin Murphy, and it was [Mel] Edelstein, who was the head of the archives. I set up the meeting, and Panza came and Franklin Murphy came and Edelstein came. Gerald? I can't remember. And that's where the Getty decided to buy his collection. It was a beautiful meeting, because I remember Franklin Murphy asking Panza about one of the great libraries in Milan and the architecture, and Panza said, "Oh, yes, I know that library. I studied at that library. That was a great, great historical library of great material."

Franklin Murphy said, "Well, it's in Santa Monica."

And that's the first time Panza heard that they had bought the library. It was a very interesting day. So, yes, of course there would be material. He kept every piece of paper.

RATNER: Yes. Yes.

KOSHALEK: Wow. Interesting.

RATNER: That was helpful.

KOSHALEK: But MOCA wasn't very helpful, huh?

RATNER: Not at all, except—

KOSHALEK: And who did you talk to there?

[Tape recorder turned off.]

RATNER: Okay.

KOSHALEK: If you want to join us, you can.

RATNER: Oh, thank you. So you talk about that, “The right type of confidence and trust between the staff and the board is lacking,” which you’ve mentioned, and you say, “The professional staff must feel genuine board support to function in a creative way,” and that, “A climate of lingering mistrust is unhealthy. There have been persistent rumors regarding plans to fire the staff in September of this year.” So what was that all about?

KOSHALEK: I think it reached a stage where they were finding that the staff was unsettled and that the staff was sort of becoming more sort of— It was becoming stronger in its convictions and that we were heading for a showdown, a real showdown. At one stage, we actually developed a proposal for a new museum, and the staff, or a good number of the staff, Pontus, myself, a good number of the staff, Sherri Geldin, were going to leave and that we were going to start our own museum. We actually looked at space in the Santa Fe Railroad Station, and we had one donor who said that they would be willing to support us to get us started.

And a paper was written, and I don’t know where the hell that is. Sherri Geldin might have a copy. A paper was— I think it was called— It was called “The Breeder’s Hill Proposal,” because we were trying to disguise it, and that we were

going to start a new museum separate from— Leave MOCA, just give it up, because it was just too difficult. And it got pretty bad, essentially, I mean, to the degree that a proposal was written for this new museum and that we were looking at space.

We wanted to do an old warehouse, you know, pre-Temporary Contemporary and so forth. And that's when I decided that before we went there, I would sit down and talk to a number of trustees that I thought could be helpful, and just explain the situation, that we were at the end here and that we needed their help or it was going to implode. Yes. Not a good time. You enjoy less in life when you're sitting in a situation like that.

RATNER: [laughs] I'll bet. But at that point, you're thinking that you might still want to do something with Pontus.

KOSHALEK: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

RATNER: So things hadn't really come to a head with him at that point.

KOSHALEK: No. No, no. No. Not between us over the— Because that firing came later, but over— No, no, no, exactly. We were still— It was going, actually, fairly well, but we were totally confused by the role he thought he should play and that his involvement was so limited and that he wasn't really involved and he wasn't providing the leadership, but he was still there. Yes, he was still there, but then that went to hell, too, unfortunately. Oh, you lose a lot of friends in these things somehow. It is really, in a way, survival of the fittest.

RATNER: What size staff were you talking about at that point?

KOSHALEK: Oh, it was maybe, at most, ten people. Julia Brown was there. Sherri Geldin was there. I was there. A lady named Kim Bradley was there. I'm trying to think who else was there. I don't know if Leslie Marcus was there yet. I don't think so. I can't remember who else, but there was a small group of people, and Pontus Hulten. And there's a proposal somewhere. I wonder how we get a copy of that, actually.

RATNER: Yes, that would be great.

KOSHALEK: It's called the— And oh, Jesus, it was totally drafted for the new museum to replace MOCA and just to start all over. But if they would have lost Pontus, myself, the staff, and we'd have stepped aside and said, "We're going to start our own museum," MOCA would have died.

RATNER: Well, had it come to that point, do you think they would have— Obviously, they had a little wake-up call before that even happened, but had you said, "This is what we're doing," do you think they would have tried to convince you otherwise?

KOSHALEK: Not the difficults, not the leadership. I don't think so. They might have. I don't know. They would have to answer that. But there were a number of people, like Lenny Greenberg and Carl Hartnack and so on, who I did go see and who didn't want this to happen and, I think, realized that if it did happen, it'd be very difficult to put Humpty Dumpty back together, to put the thing back together again. So they became a much more positive force in the future of this institution, and that's the good news. That's the good news.

I mean, the one that really was— The two that were very strong here—and Bill Kieschnick was part of this, too—were Kieschnick, Hartnack, and Lenny Greenberg. They were the strongest. They were really— They really stepped up and said, “No, no. We can’t let this thing implode. We have too much at stake here, and we have to get this worked out.” They were extraordinary.

RATNER: Okay. I think we’ll wrap up here for a few days.

KOSHALEK: Good.

RATNER: Unless you have anything you wanted to add about that.

KOSHALEK: No, no.

RATNER: Okay. Good.

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SEPTEMBER 17, 2002

RATNER: Today is Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002, and we're at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena with its president, Richard Koshalek.

The last time we spoke, we were talking about the problems with Pontus Hulten and his departure from MOCA. Once it was clear that he was leaving, was it assumed that you would take the helm?

KOSHALEK: No, not necessarily, not at that stage. They appointed—I had been deputy director and chief curator, and at that stage, the board appointed me acting director. I think I stayed acting director—and I'll get the exact dates for you—for about- I think it was about six months.

They thought about what their decision needed to be, and there was considerable discussion among the board. There was very, very strong support that I would become the director, but there was also certain people who felt that that was not the right thing to do, on the board. But they did work it out, and I think roughly six months later, in November— And I'm trying to think of the year. Was that '83 or '82? We'll have to correct these dates. But they did appoint me director, yes, but it wasn't a given that I would succeed Pontus Hulten at that stage, because there were certain opposition among the board to my sort of concept for what the museum should be, and they felt that maybe there needed to be somebody else at that stage.

I had very, very sort of strong ideas about what I thought the museum should do, and it ranged everything from the fact that I thought the museum should draw

strength from the city it's located in, and that it was an artist-rich, institution-poor city, but yet there was this extraordinary sort of vibrant and highly creative artist community here. It was artists from the sixties, people like Robert Irwin and James Turrell and Doug [Douglas] Wheeler and Maria Nordman, but it was also artists that were starting to emerge, the Mike [Michael] Kelleys, that generation, the Allen Ruppersbergs, and then also a younger generation that was just starting to emerge, the Jorge Pardo and so forth.

So that I felt they had to draw strengths from this area and the creative work that was being done in this area, also in the area of architecture with people like Frank Gehry and Thom Mayne and Eric Owen Moss starting to emerge. And also in the area of performing arts, film and so on.

But our concept of the museum was that it had to be a source of enormous energy and that it had to have a pluralistic program that would reach a pluralistic audience. I actually truly believe that if you did a film program, you got a very different audience sometimes than if you did an exhibition on photography. If you did a performance like the Wooster Group that we did at that time, or we did Elizabeth Streb, you got another very different audience. And I thought that it was very important that MOCA actually sort of reach out to all those different audiences.

I also felt that we need to build a very strong curatorial staff that was extremely capable of doing and originating our own shows, exhibitions, because I've always felt that museums, yes, are judged by the quality of their permanent collection, but that they're always judged by the scholarship and the creative work they do in

organizing and originating exhibitions that tour. I also felt that that was critically important if MOCA was going to generate an international reputation for itself and not just be a regional institution, which is what happened in Boston at the ICA, which would happen in Houston with the Contemporary Arts Museum, and that we needed to go beyond that and that we wanted this institution to be a part of a larger context which was global and international.

We felt that you could not build a wall around the city of L.A. and that if we did have a truly international program, that's why we spent a considerable amount of time in Latin America, for example, but also in Europe, that then the institution would be sort of an integral part of what was happening in contemporary art and the reality of what was happening in contemporary art, not just in Los Angeles, not just in the United States, but far beyond.

And I've always felt that MOCA should have a purpose way beyond its mission, and it should have a mission that goes way beyond its site in Los Angeles. Let's put it that way, and that it needs to sort of reach out into the larger world. I felt the artists in L.A. needed that kind of exposure to work being done in different parts of the world. I felt the audience, to become a sophisticated audience about what was happening in contemporary art, needed that international exposure to new ideas and what was happening in different parts of the world, and that that was what was going to build [MOCA].

So what we did, actually, is we drafted—I drafted— In a very quiet way, I drafted a list of the twenty-five most important supporters, people, influential people

in Los Angeles and said that somehow, some way, these twenty-five top people are going to be, over time, involved in MOCA. Then I drew up a list of the twenty-five most important institutions around the world, and it ranged from the Centre Pompidou to the Museum of Modern Art, to the National Gallery in Washington, to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, and so forth, even smaller institutions, like in Bordeaux, and the idea was that over time, we were going to collaborate with those major institutions on a specific project or send them an exhibition.

Then I drew up a list of the twenty-five most important critics, and I said over time, MOCA was going to be involved in dealing with those individuals and bring their talents and their expertise to bear on the program of MOCA. And we did the same thing—I did the same thing with the artists.

These lists have never been seen. They weren't broadcast. They weren't taken to the board. They weren't really sort of discussed with the staff, to a certain degree. This was my secret sort of agenda for MOCA, but the goal of it all was to say that if we stay here for twenty years, in that twenty-year period we will have collaborated with the most interesting institutions, most interesting individuals, and the most interesting sort of leaders in the city of L.A. that will help build this institution as one of international acclaim. And I kept those lists to myself, because I felt that was important somehow. I think it's still a good idea, actually, for any institution.

RATNER: Do you feel that you were able— Once Pontus Hulten was out of the picture, you were able to progress more directly with your goals? Because, clearly, they weren't quite the same as his.

KOSHALEK: True. Pontus came from a whole different sort of background and had a very different sensibility and sort of idea of what a cultural institution should be, and it was one based largely in Europe. It was one based, to a certain degree, on sort of a much more traditional— Although Pontus did break new ground on many of the exhibitions he did do and was a brilliant sort of curatorial mind, not so much a director, I don't think. But as a curatorial mind, he was brilliant. But I thought that L.A. was a very different city than Paris and a very different city than Stockholm, and that we had to find our uniqueness. And this allowed me to sort of understand what that was and to push that forward in terms of the program, in terms of building the collection and so forth.

So, in terms of building the collection, first of all, the first thing was the Panza Collection, and that actually got initiated because I got to know Panza in Fort Worth, Texas, where I did a Flavin show at the Fort Worth Art Museum, and he came to see it. That when I first got to know him, and we stayed good friends. When we bought that collection, it was very strong in the forties, the fifties, and the sixties. It was American, but it was also European. [Jean] Fautrier was in that collection, but so was [Claes] Oldenburg and so forth, and [Mark] Rothko. I felt that if we could get that collection acquired for [MOCA], and we took the idea to Eli Broad, and the meeting was at the Regency Club, and Eli understood immediately what this meant to MOCA. He really, truly did. Most trustees would have not understood the importance of this collection to the degree that Eli did, and he got on board and was very supportive of it and very helpful of it and helpful in us acquiring the collection.

But I also thought it would be a reference point for other collectors so that they would want to say that if this museum has the Panza Collection, or this internationally recognized, I think the most important collector of contemporary art that ever existed, I truly do believe that, because this man believed in ideas. He would actually— Panza would have bought  $E=MC^2$  if he could— That then we could encourage other collectors to join us.

My whole idea was not to sort of— It's not that we ignored the search for individual works of art from collectors, like singular works, but that my goal was to not seek so much individual works of art but to seek complete collections. And so we focused, under my tenure, to really look for collections. And I can tell you that when— I probably told you the story of Barry Lowen and that whole sort of extraordinary situation.

RATNER: No. I did want to get to that. Well, let me just back up one second and ask you—

KOSHALEK: His collection came to us because of the Panza acquisition, basically, among other things.

RATNER: Okay. Just to kind of be chronological here, when we talked a while ago, you had mentioned that, you know, initially you guys were hired as co-directors, in a way, and that then it was decided that he would be the primary director, you would be deputy director and chief curator, and you were happy with that because you weren't really that excited about dealing with the board and having to do fundraising and that kind of thing and you really wanted to focus on the creative side of—

KOSHALEK: True. Totally the case.

RATNER: So when it was clear that Pontus was on his way out and then there was some question about who would be the director, I mean, was there a part of you at that point that still wanted to stick to the creative side, or you had been, you know, meshed into the fabric of MOCA already at that point that you really felt like you were the person to take it forward?

KOSHALEK: At that stage I felt that I've invested so much in this institution already, it was a very short period of time, but it was very intense. And also I recognized that there were certain individuals involved in MOCA now that could make this possible, and those individuals were Lenore Greenberg; those individuals were Carl Hartnack; those individuals were William Kieschnick; and those individuals were Fred Nicholas, just to name a few, and others such as Marcia Simon Weisman and so on.

My strong feeling was now that if I did take on this extra responsibility of being the director, that we could possibly sort of, with that sort of support from the board, create an institution that would be a bit more original. I didn't want to model MOCA after any other institution. I read all the books on Alfred Barr, and I admired greatly what he did and learned a lot, right? I had gotten an NEA fellowship when I was at the Walker Art Center, and I traveled and I visited museums around the world. I went to Russia. I went to Switzerland. I visited museum directors in every part of the world. I mean, truly, every part of the world, and met major museum directors, and I was gone for about six months just talking to them and looking for ideas and looking for what they found was unique about their institution in relationship to the

city that it's in, such as in Bern, for example, the Kunstmuseum in Bern, and the Klee Collection and so on. So I kept thinking, "We've got to find the way to find the uniqueness of what is MOCA in the architecture, in the collection we build, in the program we do.

So at that stage I sort of gave up this sort of reluctance to be the director and said, with that trustee leadership, with that experience I've had of talking to museum directors around the world, and with the great desire to build something unique for Los Angeles that could not be duplicated in any other city in the country, that I should take the risk, yes, and do it, yes. And it still was a very difficult time, because there was still a lot of trauma involved in what MOCA was all about, and there was still a great need to raise substantial funding to make this happen, and the institution was quite fragile. The institution could still have disappeared at any stage here or reduced itself to the kind of institution I would have never wanted to be involved in, one lacking ambition, one lacking sort of a vision, and one lacking sort of a desire to be singular among museums in the larger world.

RATNER: Okay. The thing, of course, one of the major things that gets you on the road is the plan for the building, and I wanted to talk a little bit about California Plaza and trace some of its history. So when Mayor Bradley convened his Museum Advisory Committee in the spring of 1979, he asked them to investigate potential locations for a museum. Then the *Los Angeles Times* wrote a piece on the mayor's committee, which, apparently, someone at the community—

KOSHALEK: Barbara Isenberg wrote that piece.

RATNER: She did?

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: So then someone at the Community Redevelopment Agency read that. Then they proposed that the traditional one-and-a-half percent of a construction budget that would be set aside for works of art from each new building at Bunker Hill could be rolled into one pot, as it were, and used to build a museum.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: So approximately \$22 million was set aside for this purpose, and I think all of this was set in place before you ever even came to Los Angeles. Is that true?

KOSHALEK: Yes. The lady most involved in that was Sherri Geldin. And William Norris. They were the two keys, yes.

RATNER: So can you talk a bit about the deal between Bunker Hill Associates, the CRA, and the fledgling museum and the initial plan for hiring an architect?

KOSHALEK: It got very complicated, and I'm not the best person to talk about that. It's really Bill Norris or talk to Sherri Geldin. She's the best choice. She really knew the whole situation.

But in the first— There was a competition for Bunker Hill, to redevelop Bunker Hill, and the competition was won by Cadillac Fairview, and their architect was Arthur Erickson. He developed a scheme that had three office buildings, a hotel, and then a massive mall and sort of public space. And the scheme was that there were three apartment buildings going this way [gestures], and then there were three office

buildings like this and like this [gestures], and then a hotel over here, and this was a huge plaza, and this is Grand Avenue.

He proposed that the museum be in the lobbies of these apartment buildings. So they were going to be integrated into the lobbies of the apartment buildings. And when our group got together, we said, “No, we need a structure that is singular, that stands out, and that is identified as the Museum of Contemporary Art.”

The brilliance of this whole thing is they could have spent the money that would have been for that percentage of art for public sculpture, and we’d have had the same situation we had everywhere else in the world, but somebody came up with a very bright idea, at the CRA, I think it was, that said, “No, no, no. If we build a museum, there’s continuous programming, continuous exhibitions, performing arts, and so on.” Brilliant, brilliant idea.

So we wanted a site that would be separate, and we wanted our own architect, and we wanted to have a building that stood by itself. So then the battle became for what happens here, and that was the site. We wanted it to be on Grand Avenue and so forth and have its own presence. So we went through a whole series with Arata Isozaki once he was chosen, and it was an interview process.

RATNER: Right. I want to find out how— How did that whole— Who sat on that selection committee?

KOSHALEK: I was on that committee.

RATNER: What architects were looked at, and what parameters were the architects given?

KOSHALEK: Okay. It was chaired by a man named Max Palevsky, which became problematic in the end.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: It had on the committee Robert Irwin and Sam Francis. It had on the committee Coy Howard. It had on the committee myself and Pontus Hulten.

The committee put together a list, I think, of maybe two hundred architects, and then they got the list down to six. It was Edward Larabee Barnes, Arata Isozaki. And Arata Isozaki at that time was recommended by Sam Francis, who knew him from Japan. Kevin Roche. And I'm trying to think who the other one— Frank Gehry. Frank Gehry. Those were the six architects that were interviewed.

The interview process took, I think, a series of meetings. Each architect came out, showed their work that they had built, and then talked about what this museum meant and how they would approach the problem and how they'd work with the client. Then when it came down to a vote, Max Palevsky in the first round voted for Richard Meier, and everybody else voted for Arata Isozaki.

There was a strong feeling on my part, and I should only speak for my part, that since we are a museum located in the Pacific Basin, we should not reach to New York or we should not reach to Europe; we should reach either to Japan and Asia or we should reach to Los Angeles, like Frank Gehry or Arata Isozaki. And I thought we should live in this Pacific Basin in terms of our commitment to an architect.

Then Max changed his vote to make it unanimous, and Arata Isozaki won the commission. He was very young at the time. He spoke limited English. He had done a number of buildings but strictly in Japan. This was his first project outside of Japan.

Then the program was written by myself and Marcy Goodwin for the thing. It was called *The Building Book*, and we wrote this extensive program called *The Building Book*, and that detailed what we thought was important in this building. We had a factor in there called— We wanted to capture L.A.-ness. We also in *The Building Book* talked about staffing. We talked about the spaces and the kind of institution we wanted to build, easy access from inside to outside, for example, which is a California situation. And the program book was then adopted by the board and by the architecture committee, and then the design process started with Arata Isozaki.

RATNER: So that was in place before you had an architect, *The Building Book*?

KOSHALEK: No. It came after we selected the architect. The architect had *The Building Book*. Then we started to work, and then there was a lot of changes of sites, and somebody like Sherri or Fred Nicholas would understand this better than I would, because I'm not very good at details, and we just explored every possible thing. I think he went through something like thirty or forty schemes, working with this site.

I should tell you that Arthur Erickson always wanted us to be pushed down into the ground, as low as possible in terms of a profile, and the developer always wanted us to be pushed up so we could have parking underneath, and on and on and on. It became a real conflict. There were a lot of lawyers involved, a lot of discussion. We put Arata Isozaki through a lot of unnecessary—and I think the

important thing was he was quite young and willing to do it—sort of effort to find the appropriate site, to find the appropriate balance within this total complex and so forth.

Then the work of the committee became very traumatic and stressed, and there seemed to be a division of the committee that happened. The committee, it split, was Robert Irwin on one side with Max Palevsky and Coy Howard, and on the other side was Pontus Hulten, myself, and Sam Francis. It got very contentious, and the person who got caught in the middle was the architect, Arata Isozaki.

We don't have to go into the details, but the meetings were very, very, very, very difficult, difficult for Isozaki. One meeting, Arata Isozaki just got so frustrated, he just walked out and started walking down the street.

And then I was actually dismissed from the committee by Max Palevsky.

RATNER: And why is that?

KOSHALEK: I think it had to do with I think he felt that I was very, very strongly supportive of Arata Isozaki and that I was advocating for Arata Isozaki to stay in the picture and working on that. I got a call from him one day, and he said, "You will never attend another meeting of the Architectural Design Committee," and that, "You are off the committee."

RATNER: So at that point, he's rooting that Isozaki's out of the picture?

KOSHALEK: Yes. Then we had a board meeting, and the board meeting was two days and was at Eli Broad's offices on the freeway, the Santa Monica Freeway. The first meeting, Isozaki came.

Well, what happened, actually, was that the committee thought they had gotten a final design, or got close to a final design, and there was a big presentation of the design on Grand Avenue. They closed the street. There were balloons, the whole thing.

RATNER: That's in 1982, I think.

KOSHALEK: '82. And they closed the street, and the model was there, and Max spoke, and so on.

Then a critic named Joseph Giovannini stepped up and was looking at the model with Arata Isozaki. He's a very, very, very sort of intelligent and well-informed individual. He said, "If this is your work, two things have happened. One is, you're really having a major change in the direction of your work, or this is not your work."

And Arata Isozaki just said, "This is not my work. I was forced, to a large extent, to do this by the committee as it existed, and this is not my work."

So then the articles appeared in the L.A. [*Los Angeles*] *Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Herald-Examiner*, which did extremely well because of Giovannini, John Dreyfuss writing in the L.A. *Times*, and then Paul Goldberger writing in the *New York Times*. It turned out to be, you know, MOCA's made the same mistake that LACMA did when it came to Mies Van der Rohe and they picked, what, [William] Pereira?

RATNER: Yes, right.

KOSHALEK: "Here goes LACMA again," and, "L.A. doesn't know how to—." *New York Times* really hit this, "Doesn't know how to work with architects," and so on.

So there was a series of board meetings, and at the first board meeting, Iso presented what he would really like to do at that stage. Then Max came in and made his presentation about what was wrong with it and asked for the dismissal of Arata Isozaki, and it turned into a very, very contentious meeting.

At one stage in the meeting, Max Palevsky turned to me and pointed his finger and said, "Richard, you're responsible for all this trouble." He said, "You have been advocating Arata Isozaki, and you are the one who's responsible for all this difficulty," and pointed his finger.

So shortly after that, a beautiful man named Rocco Siciliano, who was on the board, said, "Let's end the masochism. Let's take a vote." This is after two days. And the vote came out seventeen-to-three for Isozaki to stay as the architect. The three votes against were a man named Leo Wyler, William Norris, and Max Palevsky. Then Eli Broad abstained. But it was carried.

Then Max was removed from the process as head of the architecture committee, and then later sued us because of breach of contract or breach of agreement for the return of his \$1 million commitment, and Fred Nicholas was put in charge of the architecture situation. Fred understood very clearly that if the staff and the director of the museum, who will run this institution, don't understand what's going on here and are not part of the process, and if the architect is not able to design the building separate from the politics that had happened before, that we will not get something successful. Fred was the key that reorganized the process of design, and I was brought back into the picture at that stage and so on.

Then Max Palevsky sued the museum. And what he said was that he had an agreement with Eli Broad that, based on a walk on the beach, that if he gave \$1 million, he'd have total control of the architecture, and being removed, that's a break of that promise. Then he hired a lawyer, Manella and Irella, I think it's called, and they went after us.

Then ARCO donated the services of its lawyers, Hubbard and Hughes, and defended us. Then they found out that there maybe was that kind of agreement. So we were encouraged by our lawyers to settle it, and Bill Kieschnick of ARCO, the chairman of the board of ARCO, met with Max and worked out the settlement. It was \$700,000 stayed at MOCA, and \$300,000 was forgiven, and that's how that all worked out.

But it was a very difficult period because, again, it was in the newspaper constantly. It demonstrated that MOCA could not sort of have a cohesive board, staff, leadership situation.

But the good news of all of that was individuals like Fred Nicholas emerged. Individuals like William Kieschnick emerged to be a future chairman and future president. Individuals like Carl Hartnack emerged, the former head of Securities Bank, and Lenore Greenberg. So we got new leadership as a part of it.

Then things stabilized, and we were able to get a building, as you know, that won most awards, just about every award possible, for the quality of its design. Architects from around the world, whether it's Louise Nevelson or Cy Twombly,

Ellsworth Kelly— Cy Twombly and Ellsworth Kelly refer to it as the “painter’s museum” because of the quality of natural light and so on.

So it became a very— It worked itself out, but not without a lot of trauma and difficulty and without people being very seriously sort of damaged by it, Coy Howard and Max Palevsky.

RATNER: Do you think that Max Palevsky was disappointed that Richard Meier hadn’t been selected and he was going to derail the process regardless? I know that he has a number of quotes saying that what he was interested in was anonymous architecture.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And I’m not exactly sure what he meant by that, but apparently it wasn’t anonymous enough for him, because he then began to create this—

KOSHALEK: I’ll give you my opinion of it all. I actually think Max Palevsky, because of his ideas about what the museum should be and— See, I’m a firm believer that quality is quality and there have to be equal sides between the quality of architecture. This is done by an artist, somebody who is a creative individual, and the quality of the collection and the quality of the exhibition program. If you don’t have all three of those in balance, you don’t have a museum that is going to sort of be able to do what’s necessary.

You can take the greatest Rembrandt and put it in an awful building, and it will be diminished. You can take the worst Rembrandt and put it in a good building, and still, the institution hasn’t accomplished what it needs to accomplish. This is one of

the things we advocated also at Disney Hall, that there are equal sides between the quality of the performance and the quality of the architecture. We know this is true because there's a psycho-acoustic sort of concept that, you know, people do judge the success of the acoustics of a hall based on the quality of the architecture and the history of the hall and so forth.

And I think he had a very dead wrong, in my mind, idea of what kind of building was needed here, this idea of the neutral building that had no architecture in it, basically, and had no original thought in it, and it was dead wrong, just dead wrong. And I think that was the problem. I think it was less the fact that he didn't get Richard Meier, and I think it was more an idea of what architecture for a museum should be. It was, in my mind, just totally dead wrong.

But he insisted on it, and he was a powerful man, and he was a major contributor, so he had a considerable amount of influence. This course that he was proposing would have led to total disaster for MOCA in terms of the building it would have built and the quality of building it would have built. There's just no doubt in my mind that he needed to step aside or be forced out by the board if we were going to advance this institution and have a building that the rest of the world recognized as important. I could say a lot more, but I won't, about his personality and everything else, how he dealt with people.

RATNER: It seems a bit unusual to make a promise to somebody that if— And maybe it's not unusual, but it seems unusual to promise somebody that if they give x

amount of dollars, that then they could have total control of the design process, and that's what he claimed, that his gift was based on that premise.

So I don't know, once things came out into the open, whether that's exactly what had transpired or that was his interpretation, but do you think that was just a secure and important early gift or that William Norris and Eli Broad—I think they were the ones who made the agreement with him—they didn't see a problem with Mr. Palevsky having control of the process?

KOSHALEK: I think that decisions having to do with the architect that is selected, decisions that have to do with the quality of architecture of the building and decisions that get made have to be made by the director and have to be made by the full board, and this was a mistake, period, dead wrong.

No institution should allow these kind of special arrangements to be put in place, that jeopardize the authority of the board or that exclude the staff, the leadership of the staff. And this was absolutely wrong, and it should have never happened. You'd never give any single individual that kind of authority and control because of a major grant that they've given to an institution.

It was a lesson learned, and a lesson that was very painful for MOCA in its early history. So this is not the way that proper governance and board leadership and board sort of responsibility should be sort of handled. No doubt about it in my mind. It does happen, but it leads to disaster most of the time. That was not a good incident in the history of MOCA.

RATNER: Because it's interesting that William Norris was one of the ones who voted against, and Eli Broad abstained, so, clearly, somewhere in their minds, they recalled that they had made this pact with him.

KOSHALEK: They did. They did. They did. It's hard to prove these things, but they did. Max didn't make that up, and I think that's why our lawyers recommended that we try to settle this, as opposed to go to court. And there's other little situations in that picture that were part of it.

RATNER: Apparently things got so intense that you, I believe, and Pontus Hulten threatened to resign at one point during this. Is that correct?

KOSHALEK: Yes, we did, and it got— We actually— There were three people. Sherri Geldin, myself, and Pontus Hulten did threaten to resign, and I think that happened, actually, more than once, a number of times.

And we also actually developed an alternate scheme. It was called the Breeder's Hill, just to disguise it, Proposal, and it's in the files somewhere at MOCA, and Sherri Geldin might have one, where we actually decided that we were going to resign and start a new Institution of Contemporary Art in L.A. And we had actually found what we thought was backing for that idea from a single individual named Ed Janss. And we had actually looked at a building, the Santa Fe Train Station in downtown Pasadena, to start the museum in that building, renovate it as inexpensively as possible, and, yes, leave the institution, because we actually felt that with the leadership of the board, and by that I mean, at this stage, Eli and Max and so forth and

so on, that we weren't going to be able to accomplish what would give us credibility and allow us to sort of hold our heads up high.

But then at that stage we found, as I mentioned, people like Hartnack and Kieschnick and Greenberg and Nicholas, and that made a huge difference in our minds. I think institutions sometimes do get very lucky in terms of their survival and their ability to sort of move forward, and in this situation I think we got very lucky that these people were there, that they were a presence, that they were strong, and that they understood the problem, the leadership problem, and they dealt with it. Max was removed from the picture, and Eli Broad was actually removed from the chairmanship at a certain stage.

RATNER: Do you think there was any long-term negative impact in terms of the publicity that this situation garnered for MOCA?

KOSHALEK: Huge, huge, huge, huge. And everybody internationally started to repeat the history of LACMA. Richard Fargo Brown leaves in conflict with the trustees. He wanted Mies Van der Rohe to be the architect. They bring in Pereira. A lot of people said, "Okay. Business as usual. This is the way L.A. functions."

And, yes, there was a tremendous amount of negative publicity that came from that, that damaged the reputation of MOCA early on as an institution that was going to function differently and on a higher level in terms of its board governance and its leadership and what it was trying to accomplish. No doubt about it. No doubt about it.

There were articles, as you can track, in the newspapers, about this whole controversy. And it wasn't just articles in the *L.A. Times* and *Herald-Examiner*. It popped into the art magazines, professional journals. It popped into the *Washington Post*. It popped into the *New York Times* many times, I think several articles. And it popped into the international press, yes. A lot of people felt that this situation now was hopeless and that they were going to do business as usual, and that would have been a disaster.

Not a nice time, I'll tell you. Not a very pleasant time. I used to— To deal with it all, I would go to the UCLA track, because I lived in Westwood, and Bob Irwin and I would run up and down the steps of the stadium and run around the track, the whole idea being that, not Bob but me, if I'm going to go through this, I'd better be as physically fit as possible to survive.

RATNER: Now, why was Bob Irwin on the other side of the fence?

KOSHALEK: He's very close to Max Palevsky. I think he does believe that architecture should be neutral. We disagree on that, that it shouldn't have the ego or the personality of the architect in the picture, and he believed that very strongly, coming from the point of an artist. And I respect Bob enormously. He is a very dear friend. I think he felt he had very strong ideas of what the design of this museum should be, and a lot of his ideas, a lot of his ideas, were incorporated into the final design. The idea of the kind of spaces that we have at the Bunker Hill building, that largely comes from Robert Irwin, that there needed to be a diversity of spaces, very

flexible spaces, like the South Gallery and the North Gallery, but also very defined spaces, like Gallery A and B.

I think the concept of lighting, natural light, in the building came from Robert Irwin and the idea that as you move from one gallery to the next gallery, there can be a different kind of natural light so that it's not all the same. You go to many museums in Europe where they have natural light, from gallery to gallery to gallery, it's the same natural light, sort of quality of natural light and character of natural light, and Bob wanted us to have a great diversity of natural light, because he felt that would help with museum fatigue and make the experience more enjoyable.

Then Bob got involved in making some very important decision, because the plan of the Isozaki building is, to a certain degree, modeled after the Kimbell. As you know, the Kimbell, you go in through that sort of little— The Lou Kahn Building, you go through that little courtyard into the Kimbell, and then there's the entrance, and then there's the lobby right here. Then you go to this side of the building, and you look at this side of the building, but you have to return to the lobby. And then you go and you look at this side of the building, but you always have to keep going through the lobby.

Bob came up with the idea that that's not a good idea, because you want to do a large show sometime where you want it to be continuous. So he's the one that came up with the idea that you have to have another route to the back of the lobby, so that you can do one big continuous show through this without always going back and forth through the lobby.

So he was critically important in helping define the sort of architectural concept for what the Bunker Hill building is, even though he might disagree with the kind of architecture, exterior architecture and so on, that resulted in it. But he was very, very important, even though he felt strongly in a very neutral building, background building, not to compete with the art. So he sided with Max on that issue, yes. It was very interesting to see how that all played out.

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RATNER: Okay. We were just talking about Bob Irwin. Was there anything else you wanted to add about him?

KOSHALEK: He was critically important here, and even though at the early stage he sort of sided with Max Palevsky in his thinking, which was probably Bob's thinking, by the way, that Max picked up on, but he actually believed— And I think this is so important. He understood how important this institution, if it was done right, was for southern California. He really, truly did, and he saw it as a noble sort of action, to provide a place for contemporary art in southern California. He actually did. And he gave his time, endless hours, endless hours, and extraordinary wisdom. And he was the reason, as you know, for me being hired as the deputy director. I mean, he was the reason, because I was not known to the other trustees at all, or maybe even to Sam Francis. So Bob was there, but Bob was critically important. I mean, the success of the building that Iso did is a combination of Isozaki and, to a large extent, Robert Irwin, and then Fred Nicholas, myself, and a few other people. But Bob was very important.

RATNER: So he hung in there even after Palevsky was out of the picture?

KOSHALEK: For a certain period of time. Then he resigned from the board, and I know a little bit about that, because we live nearby, and he came by— I came by his house, and he had written in his red pencil on notecards his reasons and why he was resigning, that he just couldn't deal with the politics on the board, kind of the way of

governance and how decisions are made, and he resigned. He resigned. It became a very frustrating, very difficult situation for Bob, because Bob has very clear ideas, very strong opinions, and likes to take action and doesn't need all that kind of discussion. Also, he's extraordinarily intelligent, and so he doesn't suffer fools. So a lot of the discussion he felt was truly a waste of time. And then trying to get something done with all the politics, it just does not work for somebody as independent-minded and as intelligent as Bob was, so he resigned from the board. But his contribution is very important, critical to the success of MOCA. No doubt about it.

RATNER: I just wanted to go back and fill in a few details about the building process with Isozaki.

KOSHALEK: I just saw him in Venice yesterday.

RATNER: Yesterday?

KOSHALEK: Two days ago. Yes. Venice, Italy.

RATNER: He apparently wanted a firm other than [Victor] Gruen as the local architect, and there seems to have been some conflict between Isozaki and Coy Howard. What was all that about, and how was it resolved?

KOSHALEK: I think the conflict there was that I think Isozaki perceived that there was a move on the part of Max Palevsky and Robert Irwin to replace him by Coy Howard as the architect. That's number one. And I think he perceived that to be, you know, a threat in a way and an inconvenience. So that would not work.

Coy interjected himself into the picture. He was on the committee, the selection committee, but he got more deeply involved and actually, I think, drew up plans for another kind of design for the museum, which I didn't think was appropriate.

And then the Gruen situation, Fred Nicholas, I think, insisted on Gruen being involved, because he had strong contacts to them, to a man named Herman Guttman, who really worked with us on the project, and he felt that that was the way that he could work with Isozaki, have a local office that understands the code, knows how to deal with City Hall, knows how to get a building built in this country.

There were all kinds of concerns about detailing. They detail a building sometimes very differently in Japan than they do in this country. Fred needed that kind of support and that kind of trust, and so I think Fred just insisted on Victor Gruen being the architects. And actually, in the end, it worked out well. It worked out well, because Fred was in the middle of it all.

We had many conversations, actually, with Isozaki during this period, and he wanted to quit. He actually wanted to resign, and I always kept saying, "Don't, don't do that. There's good people here. These good people will help resolve this conflict and this difficult and this trauma, and find a way for us to work together." And I can say there must have been at least five conversations long distance with Iso, where he threatened to quit and I said, "Don't. Please don't do that. Stay there. Stay there."

But what was interesting about this whole situation is there was so much communication between people involved in MOCA and people not directly involved, but who were talking to Arata and talking to different people, and the kind of

information that was flowing to the newspapers, to the L.A. *Times*, and to the *New York Times*, and to the *Herald-Examiner*. I suspect that there were a million Deep Throats involved from different points of view, from different points of view. So the press had— I mean, the press was— There would be a board meeting, and the day after the board meeting, the press would have a story that only somebody sitting in the board meeting would know, with details that only people sitting in the board meeting would know. So the press go very much involved in this thing.

But I think the press's role, Giovannini and John Dreyfuss and Paul Goldberger, was critically important in having the board make the right decision with regard to Iso staying, Max Palevsky leaving, and Fred Nicholas being appointed, and restructuring how this building was going to be designed and programmed. We always overlook the press. We see them as critical or looking for difficulty, but the press in this situation did find difficulty, but they took a very positive stance, one that I think allowed the project to move forward and be successful. So those three individuals deserve a lot of credit here in this picture, which is sometimes overlooked.

RATNER: So the leaks were beneficial in—

KOSHALEK: Oh, you'd better believe it. It was very tense.

RATNER: Once Palevsky was pretty much out of the picture, it was at that point that Isozaki was able to really put forth his own ideas?

KOSHALEK: True. Yes, exactly.

RATNER: And things then moved forward?

KOSHALEK: Exactly. Yes. And that had to do with Fred Nicholas setting up the right sort of procedure of how we were going to function. He brought me back into the picture. I think that helped a lot, because we could represent the museum and how it was going to function. And there's no doubt about it, then Iso felt that he could now be the architect that he wanted to be and was able to design this building.

He still talks about it. I saw him in Venice, Italy, and he still talks about it. I mean, how many years is that since this has happened? He still goes through this whole thing, about the trauma, early trauma of trying to design MOCA as a young architect, never working outside of Japan, and so forth. It's still on his mind.

RATNER: It sounds like it was very intense.

KOSHALEK: Oooh, I'm glad it's over.

RATNER: In April of 1983, Fred Nicholas received a memo regarding the status of Isozaki's contract, because Iso had apparently begun a work slowdown and was delaying sending Shin Watanabe, I think was his name, to Los Angeles.

KOSHALEK: Yes. He was his assistant.

RATNER: And what was the problem with the contract that he would have started a work slowdown?

KOSHALEK: Don't know. Have no idea, actually. Fred would have to answer that. I actually have no idea. That's a good point, and it would be a good thing to have in the history. I think Fred and Sherri, these are the people to talk to, I think.

RATNER: Okay. Then in October of '83, you suggested, due to the substantial architectural fees, that Iso should only come a limited number of times to Los Angeles

to review and approve Gruen's progress, and that Gruen should go ahead and design the millwork for the private spaces and Iso should design them for the public spaces. How did that work out, and did he, Iso, have any problem with that?

KOSHALEK: He didn't, and that was really Fred Nicholas's decision. That wasn't my decision, but that was Fred's decision. And that was a good decision. A man named Robert Barnet, who worked for Gruen, was very sympathetic to Isozaki's design and design sensibility, and that was a decision by Fred Nicholas, and you'd have to ask him about that. But Iso didn't seem to have a lot of objection to that at the time, that I remember. These things are complicated, I'll tell you.

RATNER: Then by September of '84, Fred Nicholas— So maybe you don't know this either, but I want to try. He receives a letter from Shem Krey, who's the California Plaza project director, and he expresses his concern that MOCA hasn't taken appropriate action under the Bunker Hill Associates-MOCA agreement to ensure that Isozaki maintains an office in Los Angeles. And Bunker Hill Associates was concerned that some problems might arise due to this. So why didn't he maintain an office here, and did you feel that that was an issue at all?

KOSHALEK: Fred Nicholas. I would love to answer it for you, but I actually don't know the right answer.

RATNER: Okay.

KOSHALEK: But Shem Krey was somebody who was involved. Iso worked through Victor Gruen's office, and it seemed to work all right. I actually don't know that detail. Fred handled those kind of details.

RATNER: Okay. The building finally opens, to considerable praise.

KOSHALEK: 1986, right, December 1<sup>st</sup>.

RATNER: Was it December 1<sup>st</sup>?

KOSHALEK: December 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>, yes. I think the invitation's back here, framed, somewhere.

RATNER: Lots of praise, but there was some criticism of the galleries as difficult places to show art. I think somebody said the Pollocks looked like postage stamps. How did you respond to that, and were any of Palevsky's concerns validated in the final design?

KOSHALEK: In my mind, none. But any time you open any building— I think the overwhelming sort of first response was positive, but any time you open— I mean, Philip Johnson came, for example, and he didn't like the idea that— He said, most museums, you walk up the steps into the front door, and he never liked the idea of walking down the steps to enter MOCA. He didn't understand the complexity of why that happened and that Isozaki defined that as that sort of vacuum that exists in, say, Tokyo, as a metaphor with the imperial gardens and so on.

But, no, the criticisms such as those had no impact on me. Zero. I mean, I think it was a difficult process. I think we got a building that has won every award possible. I think the artists have responded to it in a very, very positive way, like Cy Twombly calling it a painter's museum and so on, and Ellsworth Kelly. And so it worked all right, but there's always going to be that kind of criticism, because people have very strong opinions of what a museum should be, and artists especially, and so

does the press. No, considering what we all went through, we thought we accomplished quite a bit.

Now, looking back, looking back from experience, and experience—I mean, that was 1986, so it's twenty-some years. No. Is it twenty or forty? Thirty? What the hell is it?

RATNER: Not even quite twenty.

KOSHALEK: Well, just coming up on twenty, I guess.

RATNER: '86, yes.

KOSHALEK: Yes. If I had to do it all over again and write the program for that building, knowing what I now know about museums and how art has changed and so on, we would have written a very different program for that building. I think it would have been one that would have been even more original. But that's not faulting Isozaki. He worked with the program we gave him. But I think we also learned a lot about writing a program for a museum and one that would be right for this city.

I would have written a program that had a lot to do with sort of breaking down the different structures to a much greater degree so it wasn't this monolithic sort of statement, but that there would be different kinds of buildings, almost different kinds of architecture, that would deal with the different functions that the museum should have.

I would have made a much larger commitment to film. I would have made a much larger commitment to performance. I would have designed a separate building in the museum for large-scale installations like the Richard Serra show I did, the last

show I did, called *Torqued Ellipse*, that we can only do in the Temporary Contemporary, but we should also be able to do at Bunker Hill. I would have done another part of the building that really dealt with the permanent collection in a very significant way, and that requires a different kind of space than what Richard Serra requires. And I think I would have designed a building that had a very different relationship, in terms of accessibility and so on, to the general public. But these are the things you learn. And if I ever got a crack at doing another museum, I think we'd do something very different, from hindsight.

RATNER: Always 20/20.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: You'd said at a previous session that you felt that Bunker Hill didn't capture L.A.-ness, but that it was not Isozaki's fault. It sounds like what you've just described to me is maybe a little bit more L.A.-ness.

KOSHALEK: Yes. Yes.

RATNER: But what do you think was missing at that point in time from the L.A.-ness?

KOSHALEK: It was a whole combination of things. I think, number one, it was that we were handed something. We were given something. It was a site. It was a very constrained site. It was a very difficult site to work with, with the parking underneath and surrounded by a commercial development and a very limited sort of envelope in which we could build. I think that was part of it.

I think the early trauma of evolving the design and having two different directors involved, with Pontus Hulten having one idea of a museum and what it should be and myself having a very different idea of what a museum could be at that time, and how we tried to merge those two sort of sensibilities and that kind of thinking.

I think it had to do with the fact that it takes time to understand a city like Los Angeles. That's why I've now become a very big advocate in support of architects from Los Angeles, and like Disney Hall, which I chaired the committee for architecture and Frank Gehry, and now Tom Bane with CalTrans, because I feel that they have a different relationship to this city. They understand this city very differently, and you cannot replace that by flying in on an airplane. I think that's the difference between the design by [Rafaek] Moneo, who is a very good architect, and the Cathedral [of Our Lady of the Angels], and the design of Disney Hall by Frank Gehry, who lives here. He flies in from Madrid. He understands the city differently. And so you have at the cathedral a very closed statement. Even the outdoor plaza is a very closed situation, not that welcoming to the general public. And the cathedral is a very sealed sort of situation, where Frank Gehry has opened his up, with no monumental entrance, the relationship between the garden and the interior space, the wrappers, as he calls them, that go around the building then make it a much more formal thing.

But I think it was a learning experience, and I think it's all of those factors and the early trauma and the developer and their requests and their demands and so on. So

I think it was the complexity of the situation that made it more difficult. But I wish we could build another museum, because I think we could do it differently. And that's not to fault Arata Isozaki by any means.

RATNER: When we last spoke, you mentioned Dominique de Menil and the fact that she treated Renzo Piano with the utmost respect as an artist.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And after Palevsky was out of the picture, how do you feel Iso was treated in comparison?

KOSHALEK: In a similar way, similar way. He was listened to, he was respected, he was admired. He was given a chance to explain his ideas without a lot of, you know, difficulty and hostility. And I think if you talked to him today, he would say that, "At that stage I did get the kind of respect I need as an artist and an architect to do my very best work." And that did change. That definitely did change.

I think Max came from the corporate world. I think sometimes the corporate sensibility has a way of thinking that "If I hire an architect, I tell him what to do, and they'd better listen, because I'm paying the bill." That's not the way it works, actually. If you hire a very talented architect, a very original, sort of thoughtful architect, you have to listen to a much greater extent and you have to have confidence in them, and you have to let them do what they do without constantly second-guessing them, correcting them, and having some sort of ready, pre-arranged agenda for what you want them to accomplish. Because then you cut off the creative flow. You cut off the ability for that architect to be creative and to do something original.

So I think that's part of where his problem came from, also. And after that, with Fred and with myself and the other trustee leadership, he was given the ability to design that building. And I think he feels— Well, he's very pleased by it. He thinks it's one of his great buildings in this life. But L.A. was fortunate that that worked out that way. Usually, it doesn't, by the way. LACMA's a good example. It didn't work out that way. They could have had Mies Van der Rohe.

RATNER: Yes. Right. Exactly.

KOSHALEK: And then we wouldn't have Rem [Koolhaas] today designing a Miesian court, even though I was involved in selecting him to do it. We'd have had a Miesian court already.

RATNER: Right. Exactly.

KOSHALEK: Something like that.

RATNER: It was years ago, at the March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1982 board meeting, Pontus discussed the Temporary Contemporary, and he indicates that it was his concept. And he describes the program as one which would feature several exhibitions designed to establish the museum as more than a building, rather as a set of ideas, a spirit which goes beyond the physical attributes of the institution. Is it your recollection that the TC was his idea?

KOSHALEK: It was not at all. And we wrote the speech, because he was the director. And we started this— This idea for the Temporary Contemporary came from the fact that I worked at the Walker Art Center. I worked under Martin Friedman.

The Walker Art Center tore down its existing building when I was there and built a new building by Edward Larabee Barnes. The Walker Art Center, the reason I was hired by the Walker Art Center was to design installations during this period. The Walker Art Center did sort of a Guerilla Museum. It did exhibitions at Dayton's Department Store. I did performing arts events in churches and fire stations and in parks. We did exhibitions in parks throughout Minneapolis.

And that idea we brought to Los Angeles. We brought that idea to Los Angeles, and the idea was— And we did that, the Guerilla Museum, in the beginning. That idea was that we wanted to build an audience as soon as possible. We wanted to start to work with the artists here who have had difficulty functioning and getting projects done, and we wanted to demonstrate that we could do a highly creative program, original program.

Then that program started. We did Maria Nordman. We did Rudy Perez and dance performance, *Closing Streets*, and so on. And then we worked with Mark Taper on a program. Then we got this feeling that we needed a permanent sort of a temporary home. Sherri Geldin and I were walking down the street, Central Avenue, and saw that building with the sign, "Closed" and said, "That's the temporary home, the warehouse," and that's where that came from.

That is not Pontus Hulten's idea, and that's one of the mysteries of this whole thing, is because he was the director, we were writing all the speeches for him to give his board report. And no, it was not at all, at all, at all. That's very, very interesting. And you haven't seen any of that in the past. He's always worked in institutions

where he stayed within the four walls of the building, whether it was Stockholm or the Pompidou. There was no outreach program of shows in Paris or Stockholm. That was a totally different thing, but he got credit for it because we wrote the speech and he read it at the board meeting and it's in the minutes. It's very interesting. Very interesting.

RATNER: Were any other sites considered besides what was formerly the Union Hardware Building?

KOSHALEK: No, not really. We looked at the Santa Fe Train Station during that difficult period but none at all, none at all. No. This was a find. This was like— This was a find. I mean, if we hadn't been walking down the street, saw this building, I don't think there would have been a Temporary Contemporary, but this building was available, and it was owned by the city.

And, you know, the idea was that Central Avenue be closed— And this truly is my— I shouldn't say this, but fucking truly my idea. And there were these buildings all along the street like this [drawing], if you remember, and there's photographs, and a building across the street. This building we used for Maria Nordman and did a show. This what became ultimately the Temporary Contemporary. This we wanted to renovate into a theater complex and do experimental theater. And this we wanted for artists' studios. And this we wanted, here, for a workshop for artists.

And then Frank built that chain-link gallery over the street to connect this building to this building, because my original concept was that we could create a cultural district here of artists and creative people working in these buildings, and this

is the street that would be the major cultural thoroughfare. That was the complete idea.

We lost this building, because the [inaudible] earthquake, this building, this building, and this building, and this was left standing with the chain-link galleria. Now what we're trying to do in Pasadena, with downtown Pasadena, with the land with the power plant and the Douglas Aircraft Factory, is to recreate this idea. So hopefully, whatever, twenty years later, twenty-five years later, I'll be able to pull this dream off in Pasadena where I wasn't able to pull it off in downtown L.A. But we ended up with this, which was sufficient, and it was 60,000 square feet of space.

This guy Pontus showed up for the opening but had almost nothing to do with anything to do with raising the money or whatever. Very interesting situation.

RATNER: Well, when it's in print, people believe it.

KOSHALEK: Well, and we set it up that way because he gave the— He was the director. I was the deputy director. And he was speaking to the press, and he was speaking to the board. But we wrote every speech for him for the board.

RATNER: What architects were considered for the renovation?

KOSHALEK: Frank Gehry, period. You know, on the TC, Frank Gehry, period.

RATNER: And how did that happen? Had you ever worked with him before?

KOSHALEK: I'd never worked with him before, but we always felt that the kind of work that he did do, working with fugitive materials, working with sort of very relaxed spaces, and creating structures that were highly accessible, and being, I think, the most important architect at the end of the twentieth century, that there was no

doubt we would work with him in the picture. And there, Sherri Geldin was in the picture again, because she did a lot of the work between Frank and the design of the TC.

RATNER: How would you describe your working relationship with him?

KOSHALEK: Oh, we're very close friends, from the beginning. From the beginning there was a very, very sort of—I don't know. We're like brothers. It's a very, very close relationship. I mean, we talk almost every week, and we talk about a lot of things. And any time he's working on a new project, he asks me to come by and discuss it with him. I don't have that much to add, because this man is the genius he is, but he likes that kind of discussion. We're extremely close, extremely close, and have been now for twenty years, since 1983, for sure, for sure. He just sent me some drawings of Disney Hall.

RATNER: What was it about his design, just going back to California Plaza, since you were thinking it either needed to be an L.A. architect or a Pacific Basin orientation, what was it about Isozaki, maybe, that was more appealing than Frank Gehry's design at that point?

KOSHALEK: I think if we had to do it all over again, in my own opinion, we'd have taken Frank Gehry. I did not have the strength or the power or the influence at that stage to insist on that. I think that Sam Francis had a lot of weight here, and Sam Francis really did push for Isozaki, and he got his very best friend, Pontus, to support it, and it moved in that direction very quickly.

But when I traveled to Japan and I met Isozaki, I also found him to be an exceptional individual. So it wasn't that Isozaki being chosen was a problem for me. It wasn't a problem for me. And Frank, at that stage, had done very little.

Even at the time we did the meeting for the Walt Disney concert hall, I got a visit just before we did the final vote at the end of the competition from some of the leadership of Disney Hall at MOCA. We had lunch in the cafeteria at MOCA, the restaurant at MOCA, and they said, "Richard, whatever you do, you cannot select Frank Gehry tomorrow morning to be the architect of Disney Hall."

I said, "Why is that?"

They said, "Because we cannot have a chain-link, cardboard, plywood, corrugated-metal concert hall." Because that's all they knew about him. That's all he had done. He hadn't done Duval [Center]. He hadn't done any of that, and that's what they saw, and that's what they believed he was into, and that's what he would do. We tried to convince them otherwise, and then we convinced them when he was chosen.

And I think that there was a certain feeling among certain people on the committee that Frank, at that stage in his career, was not, maybe, able to do a project on this scale, and that was a mistake. That was a mistake. That would have been the best choice.

But Isozaki was not a wrong choice either. These are difficult things, and a lot of personalities at work. So that's how it went.

RATNER: Were there any adversaries to the idea of the Temporary Contemporary art gallery?

KOSHALEK: Oooh, all over the place. The strongest advocate— The strongest person against it was Eli Broad, who was—

RATNER: He was still chairman at this time?

KOSHALEK: He was chairman, yes. We proposed the idea, and Eli Broad was quoted at the board meeting, and it appeared in the *L.A. Times*, for some reason, that the idea was “obscene,” to use his word, and that nobody would come downtown to see contemporary art in a warehouse, and that it was going to damage the reputation of MOCA at a very critical time, when they were trying to raise money for the Bunker Hill building, and he was actually very much against it, very much against it in the beginning. And in the end, he became one of its largest, biggest advocates when it opened and got press. But he was very much against it.

There were others that were sort of frightened by it, concerned about it. It was a new thing at the time. I mean, very few museums were talking about warehouses as exhibition spaces. Now it’s a very common thing. You’ve got MoMA in Queens and so on.

And so we came back with a proposal that said, “If we can find the money to do it, would you allow us to do it?” And that’s where we came up with a portfolio, *Eight-by-Eight*, for the Temporary Contemporary. There were people like [Andy] Warhol and [Robert] Rauschenberg and Sam Francis. The thing was organized by Sam, to a certain degree, with a lot of participation from Gemini [G.E.L.] and so forth.

And that portfolio was the money that was raised to fund the Temporary Contemporary, to a large extent, plus a loan, because here's where Bill Kieschnick stepped in a very major way again. He arranged for a \$500,000 loan from ARCO to get it started, and then that loan was forgiven at a later date. But that was William Kieschnick again, stepping up and believing in the idea. And the portfolio did sell, and it was an edition of 2,500, which is just [unheard of] today.

RATNER: That is huge.

KOSHALEK: We sold it for \$10,000 each, and that's what did it. But we spent about a million-five to renovate the Temporary Contemporary, a small amount of money. It went mostly behind the scenes doing the restrooms, doing the earthquake work, so forth, on the building, putting in very inexpensive lighting, and it turned out to be this huge success. But, yes, there was opposition. There's no doubt about it. I felt it.

But that's one of those projects you don't give up on, right? That's one of those projects that if you feel strongly about, you don't give up on. And that's what this is all about, as you see behind you. This is Douglas Aircraft Factory. Over here is the power plant and all of that, and we have all that land now tied up, and we're going to try to create what we were unable to create here, a creative community in downtown Pasadena. This one's under construction almost. We're doing the inside demolition now, and then we'll go work on it. There's a restaurant on top up there, outdoor dining and indoor dining, and then the skylights are all for natural light, and we want natural ventilation, to a large extent. This one building is all about public education, from zero to infinity, from children to adults. And if we pull this off, that's

the first phase. And the Art Center is building a cultural community, creative community, educational facility and a campus in downtown Pasadena.

RATNER: Wow. That's fabulous.

KOSHALEK: So we're trying again. See if we succeed. If we don't make it downtown, we'll try to make it here.

RATNER: I'm sure you will. That looks incredible, sounds incredible.

I'm guessing Bill Norris was maybe one of the people who wasn't in favor of it because he— Or maybe he's just concerned about the financial situation, but in December of '83 at an executive committee meeting for the Board of Trustees, he said that he thinks the number one pressing problem at that point is ensuring adequate short- and long-term funding. He goes on to say that it's his understanding that the design and the construction costs for the TC have far exceeded the budget. He says that while dealing with the CRA—quoting here—“I adopted as a bedrock principle that the museum was not in a position to spend money on the building while establishing an operating endowment that would start the museum out on a solid financial footing.”

And several of the trustees who'd been involved with Pasadena, obviously, knew that spending money on a building at the expense of the operating endowment could prove fatal, as it did there. So I wondered how you addressed those issues with the trustees. Was it simply just getting enough money that they couldn't argue with you, or—

KOSHALEK: [laughs] It's one of those things that— I've always been a firm believer that if you pump enough enthusiasm and enough energy and enough ideas into a situation, you've got a chance to succeed. And it was one of those situations where we said to ourselves, "This idea is too good to not happen." And so we, to a certain degree, a certain degree, ignored the board and all of these complaints.

We listened to them. We sat in the board meetings. We listened to them, but I don't think we ever got into the position of trying to explain it, trying to answer those kind of questions, because we felt that if we started to do that, it was all over, because that kind of discussion will go on forever, and we would never have got this thing accomplished. So, to a certain degree, we listened, we ignored, and we just pumped as much enthusiasm, energy, and ideas into getting it done, at great risk to myself and my position at MOCA.

There were some people who supported it, like Bill Kieschnick, like Sam Francis, like Robert Irwin, and so we had some strength on the board to overcome it. Sometimes, in dealing with boards, if you listen to all of that, because everybody's got a different opinion, and if you try to answer every concern and every question and to have a long discussion to bring them along and convince them, you go nowhere. You don't succeed. You truly don't succeed, because you will be frustrated to no end. And you have to believe in something. You have to keep your eye on what the goal is.

So we just took a side step and then went for the portfolio and tried to find the money, tried to build support among certain people like Robert Irwin and Sam Francis and Bill Kieschnick, and just went forward.

There's a wonderful story about how this all happened, to a certain degree, because we started to actually dig the footings for the chain-link galleria columns before we even had a permit from the city of L.A. to build. They saw us doing it from City Hall, and they stopped construction because we had no permit. Because my idea was, "We are going to build this, if it costs me my life." So then we had to go back to Tom Bradley, who was a trustee of [MOCA] and said, "Help us through this. Help us get a permit so we can continue."

But they actually stopped it, because we started construction before we had a legitimate permit to build. I think sometimes it has to be that way, where you just have to push and push and push, take a certain amount of risk that certain people are going to be in objection, but that it can't be slowed down, and we did that with the Temporary Contemporary.

And to a certain degree, we're doing it with this part here. If I went around the room at MOCA, and this is not just this project, but if I sat the board down— And there's certain questions you learn not to ask the board. For example, if I said to the Board of Trustees of MOCA, "Should we have a program in architecture and design?" they would have voted it down. There's no support for it. If I said to the board, "Should we have a program in performing arts," like the Wooster Group and Elizabeth Streb and so forth, they would have voted it down. No doubt about it.

For example, even this situation here, which has to do with public education, if I said to the board, our board— Now, that doesn't mean there's no support for it. If I would say to the board here, "Should we start this public education initiative in

downtown Pasadena and deal with the Douglas Aircraft Factory and spend the kind of money we're going to spend to do it, to assume a responsibility, that public education's important, what we do in our community, this is our Oxford, this is our Cambridge?" the board would vote it down.

So you learn, to a certain degree, never to ask for a vote on certain issues, because they will vote you down, because boards tend to be very conservative, and they never want to get the institution into financial risk. They sometimes look at people who have that kind of drive as the same kind of people that sort of were behind the *Titanic*, right? You're going to either make it across the ocean, or you're going to go down on an iceberg.

And in the Temporary Contemporary, at that stage, I felt we had very little to lose. The building of Bunker Hill was postponed from the Olympics of 1986. We had an audience out there. We had an artist community out there. We had to respond to them, and that there was no way we were, hopefully, going to allow people to say no except to fire me. And they didn't do it, thank God, because there were good people there like Lennie Greenberg and Fred Nicholas and so on.

But yes, there was a lot of— I think, sometimes, raising all these questions, board members want to be heard, and so they have all these questions. One of the most difficult things of being the head of an institution like this or MOCA is going to board meetings, because you're grilled. You're constantly sort of being asked questions. "Can we afford this? Can we do this? Should we do this? Do we have the right architect? Do we have the right function? Is it a good financial model?" Right?

You still have to answer all those questions. You try to answer them, but if you start to answer all those questions, you won't build the thing, because it never all adds up, in a way. You never have it all down on paper where you can say, "This is a guaranteed, no-risk situation." It never works out that way.

So we realized right on, very soon on, that we weren't going to ask any questions about whether architecture and design should be part of the exhibition program of MOCA. We never asked whether we should be doing low-cost housing in Hollywood. The board would have voted it down. They'd have said, "Hey, we're not developers, guys. We don't want to be doing this."

And sometimes you have to do that. And sometimes you get lucky and you survive, and sometimes you lose, and you lose your job. And that happens. And Eli Broad tried to fire me twice, two or three times.

RATNER: Wow. Well, we'll have to hear about that. I'm going to wrap it up here, because I'm just about at the end of the tape. But will you talk about that next time?

KOSHALEK: Sure.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

OCTOBER 9, 2002

RATNER: Today is Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002, and we're at Art Center with its president, Richard Koshalek.

When we last met, we were talking about the Temporary Contemporary, and you mentioned the portfolio that was created to help finance it. And I wanted to talk a little bit more about that project, which was called *Eight by Eight*, to celebrate the Temporary Contemporary.

At that time, obviously, the Temporary Contemporary was still thought to be truly temporary, and it was going to be a signed and numbered limited edition, featuring the work of Richard Diebenkorn, Sam Francis, David Hockney, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Rauschenberg, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, and Andy Warhol, with the box and front end piece to be defined by Josef Kosuth.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And all the artists donated their prints.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And I wondered whose idea the project was, who selected the artists, and were any artists invited who declined.

KOSHALEK: The concept, I actually don't know whose idea it was. Actually, I don't. Actually, I'm trying to think of who might know, but I actually don't know whose idea it really truly was.

But we had a problem, as you know, in terms of how we're going to fund the Temporary Contemporary, and that time it was called the Guerilla Museum, like guerilla warfare. And then we came up with the idea, and the goal was not to do one portfolio, but to do a series of portfolios to fund the Temporary Contemporary, because we felt that once we got the building work done, we were going to have to do another portfolio to help us with the program money, and there was a certain amount of opposition. I sensed opposition, but concern among the board that we were trying to raise money for the Bunker Hill building to get the founding endowment and so forth and the building endowment, and that this project should have a sort of an alternative way of being funded. And if we could find that alternative way of being funded, then we could go ahead with the project.

So the first one was the portfolio, and the artists selected all said yes, and there's not a single artist we asked that said no, but we had very sort of influential people doing the asking. And in addition to myself, not that I'm influential in that sense, but Sam Francis was also very involved, and he had very strong contacts. And also Pontus Hulten was involved in talking to people like Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle and so on, so that we got no no's.

But we kept certain people out of the first portfolio, because we wanted then to do a second portfolio which also we wanted to be very strong. And so, for example, Jasper Johns was going to hopefully be asked for the second portfolio. And [Roy] Lichtenstein and so on. So that the idea was that one would be for the building and

the construction, the other one would be for underwriting the costs of the exhibitions and the programs there.

And in the beginning, it was considered to be temporary by everybody. But the title, I don't know if I told how the title came about.

RATNER: No.

KOSHALEK: The title came about by the fact that we had gone to City Hall to discuss this project with the people in City Hall, and we were told— And that time we addressed it. It wasn't sort of known to be temporary. Everybody assumed it would be sort of permanent. Not because it wasn't going to be temporary, but nobody just even thought in that sense. So we went to see the City of Los Angeles people, the people in city government who would have to issue the permits and so on, and they told us that "If you want a permit to do this construction and so on, it's going to have to be a permanent— You're going to want an occupancy thing, a permit that would be permanent." And there's a phrase for what that is. I'll get it in a minute. And that "You're going to have to do all of this extra work," in terms of handicap access, in terms of the size of the restrooms and the scale of the restrooms and so forth.

And so we walked away a little sort of concerned about that, because that meant huge costs, and it meant that the project would be delayed and that it was going to be much more difficult to fund and to make happen. And so we started to flirt with the idea of how do we get around this, and we came up with the idea that we would name it the Temporary Contemporary, that we would convince people at City Hall that it was temporary and going to be temporary so that we only wanted a permit for

temporary occupancy. I think it's called a Certificate of Temporary Occupancy, as opposed to a Certificate of Permanent Occupancy.

But it was a way of speeding this thing through City Hall. It was a way of sort of doing sort of less work and having less expense than you do if you made it permanent, and so that's where the idea came. And so then we went back to City Hall, and we said, "Okay. It's going to be a temporary facility. It's only going to be five years. All we need is a Certificate of Temporary Occupancy and your approval to go ahead." So then we could do a minimal amount of work, which we did do.

RATNER: And you really thought it was only going to be five years at that point?

KOSHALEK: We actually didn't know, actually. We didn't know. But I think we did, yes. I think we thought it would be five years.

And then there was a lunch. A graphic designer who was doing all the logos for us, the new logo for MOCA, was Ivan Chermayeff in New York City. And myself and Ivan, and I think Sherri Geldin was there having breakfast with Ivan at the Chateau Marmont, and we were talking about this project and how it was going and that we asked for a temporary permit and that we were saying it's only going to be temporary in five years. And Ivan Chermayeff then said, "I've got the title. I've got the perfect title. We'll call it the Temporary Contemporary." And that's where it came from. It was actually Ivan Chermayeff's suggestion. The title was Ivan Chermayeff's, but the concept to make it go for a temporary permit was one of ours to make it more expedient and efficient in going through City Hall.

And then we figured, okay, if it was going to continue after the five years, then we would go back for a Certificate of Permanent Occupancy. And also at that time, we probably would have been stronger, had more ability to raise money. It would have been a success, and people would have been supportive of it, which is what turned out to be the case. And then we did go back for a long-term lease, and we got a fifty-five-year lease and all of that, as opposed to a five-year lease, so it did work for us.

But that was a little stunt, actually, to help us get this thing through City Hall. And we actually started construction on the outside before we had the permit to start construction, and people from City Hall saw it because we were in the neighborhood, and they stopped construction. So then we had to go back and see Tom Bradley and say, "Please help us get this thing through City Hall and so on, and we apologize for starting before we should and without the permit and all of that." And then Tom Bradley worked it out.

But because of that, there was a certain suspicion among the sort of bureaucratic leadership of City Hall about [MOCA] and how it sort of makes decisions and moves forward. But there was this great sense of urgency that we had to do it and we had to do it now, and if we waited much longer, that we were going to start to lose the momentum that was being built up. And the expectations were high for MOCA and its founding, and so because of that sense of urgency and that desire to start to build an audience, build a program, and start to engage the community, that we did make decisions that you normally wouldn't do with regard to starting construction

before having a building permit and little sort of ideas like go temporary as opposed to permanent and so on, things like that.

That's how it happened, and it was a start, I think. You know, Charles Saatchi was very much influenced by the Temporary Contemporary, because he was in the first show that we did, called the *First Show*, and he saw the Temporary Contemporary. And I remember at that stage, I remember him saying, "Well, this is something I think I want to do in London." And then he went back to London, and he hired Max Gordon, and they searched for a building, found the building on Boundary Road, 98-A Boundary Road, and he created the Saatchi Collection in a warehouse. And I know that was inspired, truly inspired by his participation in the opening exhibition of the Temporary Contemporary.

And the whole idea of keeping it— As you know, there was a great sort of feeling that exhibition spaces have to be very neutral and that you paint the walls white and you have the perfect ceiling and the perfect floor. And if the space is neutral and doesn't have any of the architect sort of gestures in it or whatever, that then the work can be seen to best advantage. There was some concern that the Temporary Contemporary was this raw space and that the columns being what they were and so many of them, and the columns having fire extinguishers on it and pipes running through it and so on, that that was going to be a huge distraction and be a great concern to artists.

And we found just the opposite, actually. I think that was one of the great learning experiences about the Temporary Contemporary is one was about

accessibility, that accessibility is important when you're dealing with contemporary art in a museum, and that accessibility of the TC where you walk in right off the street into the museum, and then you walk on top of the loading dock and you can see the whole space. We were very fortunate.

Then the idea of having Frank Gehry touch it just lightly with sort of a magic wand and just doing certain things like, for example, like lighting a ceiling. People don't even notice that, but there's a whole series of fluorescent lights that just turn upward in that building that light the ceiling. So the ceiling became this gorgeous redwood ceiling that when we first went in was black, and we steam-cleaned it like you steam-clean a car engine, and once all the grease came off of it, it was this gorgeous redwood ceiling.

So Frank Gehry decided to light the ceiling. So when you walk in, it has this lift to the space and becomes this vast volume. And there were little tricks like that, that I think made a huge difference. And Frank understood all that very instinctively.

We found afterward that artists like Rauschenberg and Louise Nevelson and Richard Serra, and I can name all kinds of artists, found this to be the most comfortable space possible for their work and the most conducive space, because it connected to the idea of their studio. And that was the big connection. That was the key to its success. It was a studio-like space that we called the Artist Studio.

And we know that if you work in museums, you have this great good fortune of seeing artists work in a studio. So if you go to Brice Marsden's studio, you see the work in the studio where it was made. If you go to Richard Serra's studio, you see

something different. If you go to Louise Nevelson's studio, which was quite extraordinary, painted all black, right, and had a certain kind of lighting, you understood where the work came from. And it was the perfect relationship, equal sides between the space in which it was created, the space in which it was being shown, and the work.

That's what the Temporary Contemporary got close to, in a sense, and that's why with the second show we did with Michael Heizer when he built those hard pieces in the TC made out of cardboard with the stone pattern enlarged I think a thousand times, we said that we're going to treat it as a studio.

So, during the construction of his work, the museum was open and visitors could come. Like they could stand and watch in the artist's studio the artists doing the work. And this idea I like a lot, because I think many times when you tear a work out of a studio and you bring it and you put it in a clean, well-lighted space or a perfect neutral box, the light cube sort of, that something gets diminished, something is lost. And that's one of the biggest problems museums have to confront is this disconnection between the artist studio and where the work was created as the perfect environment for that work, and then taking it into this sterile sort of very cold.

And I think that's one of the reasons why the audience has difficulty sometimes in dealing with contemporary art. One woman at the Temporary Contemporary one time I went up to and I said, "Do you enjoy your visit to the TC?" And she said, "I love this museum. I can really understand and enjoy the work of the artist in the Temporary Contemporary more so than the Bunker Hill building, the

Isozaki building, because in this building I don't have that feeling that I have to go outside to breathe." And I thought that was one of the great lines of all time.

And so we created something that changed the character of how museums— It was very, very important. It really changed people's attitudes about spaces that can be appropriate, that we never thought would be, for the showing of contemporary art with the general public and having a different, more sort of congenial, I guess, or comfortable relationship between the visitor, the space, and the work. So that was a very important project, actually.

And you know the story about we wanted the whole street?

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: You know, all the buildings, yes, and we were going to create a commune— Or the idea in the beginning was to close Central Avenue, make that the lobby, and then to take all the other buildings that surrounded what is now known as the Temporary Contemporary. And there was one, two, three, four additional buildings, and we were going to turn them into performing art spaces, theatre. Mark Taper Experimental Theatre could have used it.

RATNER: And you had a design competition for that. Is that correct?

KOSHALEK: No, that came later. And then artists' studios in some of the buildings and then workshops and so on. So what we wanted to create there is a complete critical mass, a creative community, which now I think we're going to be able to pull off in Pasadena. So it's an interesting leap. We couldn't get it in downtown

Pasadena, because the city then destroyed those buildings, which they owned, because

of earthquake problems and so on, which we didn't want to happen. But now we're going to get that, I think, in this new downtown project in Pasadena where we'll have roughly eleven acres of land and buildings, including an abandoned power plant that we can turn into this creative community.

But you need all of that, I think, in the world of contemporary art to make it work. You cannot just have an exhibition space. If you have an exhibition space, you have a performing art space. If you have artists living there, if you have artists' lofts there, if you have designers living there, and you have workshops there for artists, then you have this critical mass that the public can understand, and the artist community can come together.

One of the problems in L.A. was this idea that there was no place, because the city is so sort of spread out, that there was no place where artists could come together, like, say, in SoHo. And we thought that this could be an answer to this problem, and it could be in downtown L.A. Unfortunately, we didn't get it there, but we might get it now in Pasadena.

So that was also part of this picture, so that's why that chain-link galleria, which is a continuation of the structure system inside the TC, two different buildings, so that's why they collide, they overlap at one point, because the systems weren't on the same grid. That was to create the lobby between an existing building across the street and the Temporary Contemporary and so forth. And then the other building got torn down also. So this thing looks like it's sort of open-ended. But Frank Gehry's

initial idea was that it would connect these two buildings across the street somehow and that would be the lobby, and it would be sheltered by those two buildings.

When we did *Available Light*, the first thing, one of the reasons we did *Available Light* to open the Temporary Contemporary was we did it before the construction had started, and we opened up all the doors, all those huge doors. And for the opening, we lit all the surrounding neighborhood buildings so that the idea was that we built the stage in the middle of it by Frank Gehry, and then Lucinda Childs did *Available Light* with music by John Adams, which was one of his first commissions. Then Gary Winogrand was the photographer, and there was a fashion designer that did the costumes with the sets by Frank Gehry in the building before it had been renovated. And then we raised all the doors, and we put lighting on the surrounding buildings. The reason for that was that the stage, actually, the setting for all of this, went beyond the walls of the building and went into the neighborhood.

And we did that for all kinds of reasons. One reason is we had that potential to do that, and it was a good creative decision to make, but the other one was that we felt that a lot of people would be concerned coming, because they'd never come downtown to the warehouse district, and they'd be concerned about their security. So if they drove in there and they saw all the neighborhood buildings lit, number one. And then we actually got students from the art schools, and we had a long line of students from where the parking was, with flashlights. So the public walked from the parking lot through this sort of line of students, with all the surrounding buildings being lit, and then went into the performance, to cut down that anxiety about going to

a dark warehouse district and so on, but also to enhance the creative experience within the TC.

So this building has this— Well, even for the Richard Serra show, as you know, we cut a new door in the building, a huge door so trucks and cranes could go in the building. That kind of flexibility does not exist in most museums, and so this was a major breakthrough. Now people are looking, whether it's MoMA in Queens or other institutions, they're looking at warehouses as potential for doing this kind of project. So that's how it happened. So it was a big idea. Too bad it didn't happen with the other buildings.

RATNER: So what was that design competition that happened a little bit later?

KOSHALEK: That happened— The plaza, that big— It's a parking lot, not a plaza. But the parking lot in front of the Temporary Contemporary is equal in size to the Piazza San Marco, and we realized that and we measured it, and we found that it's equal to the size of the Piazza San Marco.

RATNER: I don't get that feeling.

KOSHALEK: I know. It's funny, but it is, actually. And then there were all kinds of plans that came up by developers to build in that area, and there were a lot of plans for the city to build an office building there and for there to be all kinds of projects that were going to be built in that area.

To be quite honest, we were a bit disturbed by the architecture of the Japanese American [Cultural] Center. So we said, "Okay, we're not going to leave this up to

developers anymore. We're going to make the decisions on what happens in our neighborhood, and we're going to come up with the scheme for what this should be.”

So we came up with this idea of the Art Park, and that was the first thing that we did. We commissioned Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung to do that, and they came up with a design where this would become a gigantic sort of public plaza for, the same size as the Piazza San Marco, but for art performance, art exhibitions, markets, you know, for selling things, artists' markets, and so on, and it could have all kinds of multiple functions, but that we would determine the character of our neighborhood, and we would determine what development plan happened here. And the only way we were going to be able to do that is come up with an idea that everybody could hopefully get involved in.

This was going to be open to everybody. This was not just going to be programmed by MOCA, but we were going to put together a coalition of the institutions in the city, theatre groups, dance groups, the whole thing. And this space could be used by them. So we'd bring together all, again, the arts.

We're trying to do this in Pasadena. I've always had this desire in L.A. to find a way to bring together the arts community, and all of them, from performing arts to theatre, to whatever, in a critical mass where the public could really engage in in a serious way and see all this cross-discipline activity and so on going on. So that was another chance.

So then I left MOCA, and they hired a different architect, Michael Maltzan, and they've come up with a new plan, but I'm not sure where it's at now. I'm not sure

where it's at. But there was two reasons there, to create that sort of cohesive— That place where a lot of action, art action, could happen, and there could be a critical mass, but also to determine our own development plan for this area.

We got a lot of support from the city and Japanese American Cultural Center to do that, and I think it could have happened. We could have gotten it done, I think, and it would have been a brilliant thing, actually. I think it would have brought L.A. a kind of public space that is focused on art and culture that doesn't exist here. And that's what the city needs, and we've got this gorgeous climate, right?

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: You can function twelve months of the year.

RATNER: Exactly.

KOSHALEK: It's not New York.

RATNER: So the Hodgetts and Fung idea just sort of laid fallow for a while, I guess, because—

KOSHALEK: I don't know how why the change was made, but I suspect the new director wanted his own architect to come up with a different concept, and I'm not sure where it is. But we were getting close to this happening. I mean, it was going to happen. We had a lot of strong support from City Hall, and we'd brought the different community organizations together and so on.

There was a question about a gymnasium, all of that. Now there's talk about, you know, the Children's Museum going here and a few other things. Whether it all

happens is another matter. Right now the economy has changed, as you know, and so on. So that was another fallback position after we lost the buildings, to try something.

RATNER: To develop something there.

KOSHALEK: But not leave it up to developers and so on to determine what surrounds us.

RATNER: I just wanted to ask you one more thing about the portfolio. There was some controversy, I think, with the board about the number of portfolios to print. Initially I think you guys talked about a thousand, and the board wasn't even so enthusiastic about that. And then ultimately twenty-five hundred were printed, I think. What happened with that?

KOSHALEK: Well, in the world of works on paper, there's this strong feeling that the editions have to be limited, and if you ask people at, say, Gemini [G.E.L.] or whatever, they'll tell you that editions should be within a certain range and they should be small. They're fifty to a hundred and so forth, and that otherwise people don't buy it, because they think its value starts to diminish and so on. And there was a strong argument made by an extraordinary individual named Dominique de Menil that we shouldn't do this, we shouldn't make it this large, right, because nobody will buy it.

But we had another purpose here, and that was that we wanted people to buy it because it was not just a print in a portfolio and that was an edition of twenty-five hundred, but that it was a print portfolio that had a historic connection to the building

of the Temporary Contemporary, and that gave it another kind of value. It gave it a value in a sense that you could participate for— What did we sell it for, \$10,000?

RATNER: \$10,000.

KOSHALEK: You could participate in building a great cultural project in the community for a \$10,000 contribution, that that would hopefully become an historic event, that the portfolio would take on value because of that, even though the edition was quite large.

But we based it—*we* based it—on the idea that we needed this money to do this project, and that the community would understand that and that collectors would understand that and be willing to sort of deal with the twenty-five hundred limited edition of works on paper, and it did sell. It did unbelievably well, and that helped us fund it.

So it was an okay move, and I understand the sensitivity of collectors to the size of the edition, but I also understood that we needed the money to do a project of hopefully historic importance for the city and of importance to artists. I mean, the TC, I think of all the things that MOCA did, I think the TC was one facility that was really a gift to the artist and recognized how they do the work in the studio and recognized that we're sensitive to that, and we had all kinds of other reasons for making the edition larger, we thought. And it worked, so we got lucky.

RATNER: Was that the first time that artists had ever come together to support a new museum in that way, to donate their work to help raise money and—

KOSHALEK: No doubt about it, no doubt about it. And the important thing there is we put two artists on the board, Robert Irwin and Sam Francis. I didn't, but the Board of Trustees did. And that was a very important step. By putting artists on the— Well, as we know, the museum was founded by the Artists [Advisory] Group and artists' whatever it is, the artists' coalition, and they were there from the very beginning, and they were the inspiration for this institution.

So from the beginning, it was driven by the artists, in a way, and their desire to have a museum of contemporary art in the city that was artist-rich and institution-poor. And so the artists were always in the picture, and then when we put them on the board, there was a lot of controversy about that, a lot of controversy about putting artists on the board, that they have very strong opinions, they're not going to see the sort of the comprehensiveness of the program that MOCA needs to do, that they're going to have a very limited point of view, and they're going to insist on that point of view, and it's going to exclude other sorts of artists and so forth.

But we had two terrific trustees in Sam Francis and Robert Irwin, who didn't have that problem, and in every stage they were critical along the path of building MOCA and getting it— They were more critical, I think, than almost any other trustees. And we find, also, that they're very well connected to sort of collectors and so forth, people who can provide sort of financial support for institutions like MOCA, and so they have very strong connections to a world where many times corporate executives who are on boards, to a large extent, civic leaders, don't have those connections. And so both Sam and Bob Irwin were critical. Then DeWain Valentine

came along and also played a very important role as a trustee, and then Robert Graham after that, with his project, you know, for the members of the gangs and so on.

So, having artists onboard for MOCA was a very positive thing, but it took a lot of convincing from the larger world, from the artist community and also from trustees and museum directors.

RATNER: Why from the artist community?

KOSHALEK: Well, because they felt that if you put Robert Irwin, and he has a certain point of view of what is valuable and what's important in the art world. Sam Francis has a certain point of view, and it's going to exclude me or it's going to exclude this body, this sort of group of works, or this direction or this sort of initiative. Yes, there's great sensitivity about that, no doubt about it.

And you know, alternative spaces in those days were sort of artist-motivated and many times they didn't succeed. We saw that here in L.A., because there was too much confusion of what the agenda should be and who makes the curatorial decisions and what kind of influence do these artists have, and does their influence mean that the work of certain other artists is excluded? And so it becomes very difficult, but we didn't have that problem because of the people involved. Very lucky.

RATNER: You mentioned Ivan Chermayeff, who was the graphic designer. Had you ever worked with him before? How was he selected, and what really was his role?

KOSHALEK: When I first went to the Hudson River Museum in New York, I was sort of encouraged to go there by an extraordinary man named Edward Larabee Barnes, who's an architect. He lived in Westchester County, and he called up—I had

worked with him at the Walker Art Center—and he said, “Richard, you want to do this, but the museum’s bankrupt.” And that’s when New York City got itself into serious trouble, as did other cities in New York, and this museum lost all its city support and was in a state of bankruptcy.

So I went and looked at it after I left Fort Worth. It was on the Hudson River. It was close to New York. I thought we could attract a lot of talent from New York City, people that are very creative people in curatorial roles and so on, that can’t work at MoMA [Museum of Modern Art] or work at the Guggenheim [Museum] because there’s limited job opportunities, and that we could bring up that short distance up the Hudson River, and we could create a wonderful sort of experimental situation.

So the first thing we did, when I did take the job, is I went to Ivan Chermayeff, and I didn’t know him at the time, and I went to his office, and I said that “I admire your work, and I want you to design the logo and the graphics for the Hudson River Museum, because we’re going to give it this new start. And you have to do it for nothing, because we have no money.”

He got angry, actually got angry, and he said, “No, no, no. Don’t do that. Don’t come here and ask me to do this one.” And then he thought about it for a while, and we talked, and he said, “Okay. I’ll design it for you.”

What he did is he asked his secretary for two pieces of plain paper and one envelope, and on the first piece of paper he drew a line along the left side of the paper like this [demonstrates], that sort of was like a mimic of the Hudson River Museum,

and then he wrote in his own handwriting, "The Hudson River Museum." Then he told the secretary to type the address and everything up in the right-hand corner.

Then he took another piece of paper and did the same thing, and up here he wrote, "Press Release." And then he took the envelope and he wrote on the bottom in his own handwriting, "The Hudson River Museum," and then he had the secretary type in the address.

He said, "That's what you get for nothing." And it was brilliant. I mean, it was brilliant, and it was the kind of solution we were looking for. And we became very close friends, so when we got to Los Angeles, we asked him to do the logo for MOCA, and he did do it.

But the interesting thing was that this won all kinds of awards. It was published in the *New York Times*, and it was the whole thing. But it was that kind of decision that I like, actually; that is, that it's got a certain intuitive, instinctive, sort of reaction to a problem as to the more many times studied solution that loses all its energy and loses a lot of its sort of special quality, creative quality.

So then we became close friends and actually worked on a series of things, an exhibition that was going to go to Russia that dealt with New York, and then the exhibition was going to be sponsored by the USIA and was going to go to Russia, and it was going to be on New York City, and it was based on the concept that you take one week in the *New York Times* and all the art activities and performing activities and Broadway theatre activities that happen within that week, that's the theme of the show.

The installation that was designed was going to be a section of the street pattern of New York with Broadway slicing through at an angle, and then in each one of these blocks was going to be something on that program that happened in New York, and that was going to be the exhibition. It was all worked out, and it was going to go to Moscow. And then Jimmy Carter— Was it Jimmy Carter? Something happened, and he cancelled it. Something happened between Russia and the United States, and I'm trying to think what the hell it was.

RATNER: What year was that?

KOSHALEK: Oh, god, I'm trying to think. And so the whole damned thing never happened.

And then we asked him to do the logo for MOCA, and he did, as you know, two different schemes. The last one was, you know, the square, the circle, the triangle. The *C*. The square, the *C*, the triangle, and the circle. The circle and the triangle. Yes, the circle and triangle.

And then when we met with him again, we had these wonderful conversations, and we said, "Well, you forgot the Temporary Contemporary."

And he said, "Oh, no problem." And in his own handwriting wrote a *T* and then put a little dot at the bottom that the *T* was slipped in here before the *C*, so it's MOCA and the Temporary Contemporary.

RATNER: It's brilliant.

KOSHALEK: But nobody knows that, really. Nobody picks that up. But that's how that happened.

But we had this wonderful working relationship where we could come up with the name Temporary Contemporary or we could do a logo and slip in the *TC* or we could do the Hudson River Museum stationery. And I always felt like he was an artist, and I feel like architects are artists, and I feel like designers are artists, and I enjoy working with them in that kind of creative dialogue in that kind of creative situation.

But I like coming up with solutions that aren't overstudied or overlabored or overworked or overdesigned, and that's what we got here. But we did pay him when he did the logo for MOCA.

RATNER: In hindsight, is there anything you would change about the Temporary Contemporary?

KOSHALEK: With regard to the Temporary Contemporary, no, not at all, zero. And the only thing I wish we were able to have accomplished was what we talked about with the other buildings, and create that community of artists and that focal point for artists to sort of meet and have cafés there and so on. That's the only thing.

No, I wouldn't change anything about the Temporary Contemporary. It had that magic because there was that sense of urgency. It wasn't thought through to the degree that it lost its inspirational quality, and the decisions were all made with all the right intentions, and it worked extremely well. No, I wouldn't change anything on the Temporary Contemporary.

In fact, at one time, with the Board of Trustees at MOCA, after we opened the Bunker Hill building, I proposed that they spin it off, because there was a little concern whether we could afford both buildings at the time and whether the

Temporary Contemporary should continue as a part of MOCA and be a long-term commitment. I actually proposed to the board and to Fred Nicholas that we spin it off, and I would become the director of the Temporary Contemporary and form a new board and make it a separate entity, and then they could hire a director for the Bunker Hill building and then what they would call the official Museum of Contemporary Art, and that could be run as a separate thing, two separate budgets, two separate boards, and so on.

But I think the success that the Temporary Contemporary got outweighed the concern about the financial responsibility, and they decided not to do that. But for me, that would have been a nice creative move to go do that, just that alone.

RATNER: What year was that, about?

KOSHALEK: Oh, that had to be 1986 or '87, in that period of time, right after the Bunker Hill building opened, and the idea was to spin it off, you know, like you do a television show.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: But for me that would have been great, because then I could have stayed close to working with the artists and the creative work and left a large part of the administration behind.

RATNER: Right, which you hadn't really wanted to do to begin with.

KOSHALEK: No, I never wanted to do that in the beginning. Isn't it interesting? And there I ended up, yes. And here I am again, right?

RATNER: Right, right.

Okay. Let's talk about the acquisition of the Panza Collection.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: Now, you mentioned last time that you first met Count Panza when he came to see a Dan Flavin exhibition in Fort Worth and that you became and remained friendly.

KOSHALEK: Still do, yes. Just saw him in Milan.

RATNER: So in regard to the Panza Collection, which represented the largest single acquisition of post-World War II art, you said—and I'm quoting—"There isn't an institution that I can think of that has in the last fifty years, if not longer, made an acquisition of this scale and scope. It establishes a collection core for MOCA that is without parallel. MOCA will now be *the* Mecca for those who want to see in-depth the great work of the forties, fifties, and sixties, just as the Museum of Modern Art New York has been the place to go for works from the teens, twenties, and thirties."

So, given that description, I imagine there was no doubt in your mind that you wanted to work out the details.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: So I wondered who made the initial overture regarding the purchase of the collection and what exactly was proposed.

KOSHALEK: There's a letter, which we should give you a copy for your files, and I'll have to find it, that a letter was sent to me from Count Panza. I can't remember the date, but I'll get the date and so on. He sent me this letter in his own handwriting, and he said, "This is the problem I have." And you know what the problem was; a tax

problem, and the trial and so on. “This is the problem I have, and I’d like to sell the collection, but I want to keep it intact.” He said, “I built this collection because I wanted to keep its critical mass.” And he said that “I don’t want to sell it through Sotheby’s or Christie’s, so that it goes in different directions to different collectors, and I don’t want to sell it to a private collector. I want it to be in the public sector, in the public realm, so the public can enjoy it.” And he says, “Is there any way MOCA can buy this collection and help me with this collection?”

And when I got the letter, the first thing I did was I took it to Eli Broad, and we had lunch at the— I figured that Eli Broad was this sort of— He has this extraordinary ability to see the future, in a way, and he has this extraordinary ability to understand decisions that might be considered by most people to be risky, but that they could be very powerful things for an institution long-term.

We met at the— Panza sent along with his letter photographs of every work, by the way, so there was a box of photographs of every single work.

RATNER: Were you the only person he sent that letter to?

KOSHALEK: Yes, absolutely. So I took it to Eli, and I showed him the letter and I showed him the reproductions, and Eli understood it right off the bat. There was no hesitation, zero hesitation, zero. And Eli said, “Let’s do this. Let’s get this done.” He was chairman of the board. And that is one of the great contributions that Eli made as the chairman to MOCA, and he said, “We’ve got to get this thing done.”

So then the question was, how do we negotiate this, and, number two, how do we actually sort of convince the board to do this when [MOCA] is a very fragile institution?

I'm trying to think of the year, but I don't think we even had the Temporary Contemporary or Bunker Hill, but I'll have to check.

RATNER: I think it was '83, is when this all started.

KOSHALEK: '83. So the Temporary Contemporary either had just— Was it early '83? Yes, June, I think, '83.

RATNER: July. I think the initial—

KOSHALEK: I've got to get you a copy of that letter.

RATNER: I think the letter was at the end of July, maybe, or—

KOSHALEK: Well, then it was before the TC opened, so we didn't even have an opening of a building to show the collection. We didn't even have the Bunker Hill building done. I don't think it was even under construction by then.

So Eli actually said, "Let's send Panza a plane ticket immediately. I'll pay for the plane ticket, and let's get him to California."

So Panza came to California, and the negotiations happened. Eli led the negotiations and was very, very, very good here and understood this very extremely well. The negotiations moved very quickly, but the key thing that had to be in this picture was a way of having a series of what we at that time called escape hatches, escape routes, or whatever, in case we couldn't handle the payments. So first of all, the idea was to spread the payments out over a certain period of time.

Second was that it had to be interest-free, right? Then we at first proposed that we would select the works that we wanted up front, so every time we'd make a payment, we would take two million— And the payments were two million dollars each. That every time we made a payment, that we would take certain works from the collection that then we would own and Panza would own the rest until we made another two-million-dollar payment, and then we'd take a certain group of works.

And at that time we were going to go, first of all, for the Rauschenbergs and just get them all first, and then go for the Rothkos or whatever, right? And Panza said no to that, and he said, “No, you're going to have to take one of each or a different range of works, a diversity of works,” because he wanted the collection to stay intact and he didn't want anything.

But one of the parts of the contract—and we should get you a copy of the contract; it should be in the file—was that we could at certain times sell works from the collection to help make the payments. That was just one way out. Or that if we defaulted, we would keep what we paid for, and he would have the rest, right, if we couldn't make the payments over time. There were all these conditions. Conditions, by the way, no interest on this thing. And conditions that Panza all agreed to.

Then the deal was signed and then the press conference was at City Hall and Tom Bradley made the announcement. Eli was there, and Mort Winston, chairman of the Acquisitions Committee, who was also involved in negotiations. He had a very nice role to play, too. He was chairman of our Acquisitions Committee and is a very intelligent man with regard to such matters. He was the head of TOSCO at the time.

The three of us really worked that situation out, and then we made that trip to Switzerland to see the work, which was in a duty-free zone in Zurich.

And then we took it to the board, and the board said yes, and that was quite remarkable. What it said to me was that this board has confidence, that this board has an ability to sort of make major risk-taking decisions in anticipation of the future. And when you see a board do that, then you realize that an institution can have a future that MOCA did have.

Without that, if they had said no, then you realize that maybe this institution doesn't have that kind of confidence and courage to make those kinds of decisions. It was critically important, that decision. It was critically important in the sense that, number one, we got this extraordinary collection that gave us strength in the forties, fifties, and sixties, and we can use it as a reference point for other collectors like Barry Lowen, which made a big difference to Barry Lowen, to Marcia Simon Weisman, to the Gersh Collection and so on, [Ralph M.] Parsons [Collection] and so on.

But then also what it did is it sent a signal to the community that this institution has courage and has confidence and is going to have a future that's going to be different, creative, and that it's going to function at a very high level. So it had all kinds of critical sort of influence on the larger world of collectors and the press and also the other museum people and funders and so on, that [MOCA] was going to play the game in its own unique way somehow.

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RATNER: Okay. So there was the press conference at—

KOSHALEK: Well, we expected the one question that the press would ask at City Hall was, “How are you going to pay for this? Where’s the money coming from? And have you found the money?” And we hadn’t found the money. The first payment was due twelve months later, and we were going to raise the money. And we practiced every possible explanation for how we were going to explain that to the press, and to our great relief, that was the one question the press never asked.

We’re just still, to this day, a young institution, no buildings, almost no resources, a board that’s being built, a staff that’s being built, I hadn’t done a single exhibition, was able to do this, and where did they find the money? And we even got a call from the late Carter Brown, I did, and he said, “Richard, extraordinary, extraordinary. Where did you get the money to pay for this collection in a young institution?”

And I said, “We don’t have it. We actually don’t have it.” And I can tell you, he was sort of amazed that this institution had that kind of confidence and that kind of courage to take that step.

Then we also got a fair amount of sort of rather strong mail from museum directors across the country, and that had to do with the fact that they felt that since Panza was a trustee, you never pay a trustee for his collection, and that I was setting a horrible precedent with regard to paying a trustee for their collection, and that this was

going to cause difficulty for all museums, because trustees are going to say, “Okay, MOCA paid for it. Why won’t you pay for mine even though I’m a trustee?” And the museums were trying to make sure that they made it as gifts.

Then we did write back to most of them and say that “You know, it’s a unique situation. Yes, he is a trustee, but, yes, he gave these to us as sort of a partial gift,” because the value, what he charged us was less than the total value estimated by Christie’s and Sotheby’s, and so it was a gift and a partial acquisition. But I took a lot of heat from that, from museum directors across the country, including some people who I had worked with and so on, saying, “You’re setting a very bad precedent here.”

RATNER: Did you think of that ahead of time or—

KOSHALEK: No. [mutual laughter] Couldn’t care less. No, I never did. Couldn’t care less. My whole feeling was, “We need this collection if we’re going to build a museum and have international recognition and attract other collectors and get off to a start that people admire or respect and so on, that I’m not going to worry about that.” No, I never thought of it. It would have not mattered if I did.

RATNER: As part of that original agreement, which was entered into between Count Panza and Eli Broad on behalf of MOCA, and that was on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1983, it states that “In consideration for the preference given to MOCA by this agreement, MOCA undertakes the obligation of, (a), mentioning in any catalog of the works the name Panza; (b), seeking Panza’s advice with regard to installation and any changes in such installation; and, (c), giving Panza and his wife free accommodations during any

visits by them to Los Angeles.” I wondered how common it was to have those kinds of strings attached to the sale of a collection, and were they negotiable at all.

KOSHALEK: The mention of the name was not a problem. I mean, that happens often, right?

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And the idea of the installation was that that was my sort of condition. I wanted that, because I thought that Panza really understood this collection and I also knew him and I knew that he would let us use it in the best way possible and that he would not eliminate the ability and the freedom of the curators to do what they wanted to do, but that with certain special presentations, like the first one we did in the Temporary Contemporary, which he actually installed and laid out, which was a very good thing, actually, I liked this idea. I liked these sort of equal-sign kind of situations where you have like the Temporary Contemporary, it's like an artist's studio, and you put an equal sign between that and the artist's work, something happens.

If you have Panza doing the first installation of his collection as he saw it and as he collected it and based upon how he installed it in his villa in Varese, that there was a wonderful thing for the public to experience there, right? So that having Panza do the first installation at Temporary Contemporary, I thought that gave the general public maybe just instinctively, not in any very explicit way, but gave them an understanding of Panza's thinking and how he saw he works of art, how he saw the collection as a totality, how he saw relationships between different works and different

artists and so on, and how he saw the progression of history, in a way, in terms of how he collected. I thought that's an excellent lesson for the general public, in a way, to understand.

We did the same with Barry Lowen. When Barry Lowen made a gift to his collection before he died, I spent a considerable amount of time with MOCA notepads of Barry Lowen's sketching out how he thought the installation should be. And I'm trying to understand different relationships, like why the [Cy] Twombly should be next to the [Frank] Stella, or why the [Julian] Schnabel should be next to such-and-such, right, and getting the collector's sort of thoughts on how installation should happen, based on how he built the collection, how the works entered the collection, why he bought one work at one time with regard to the total collection, and so forth.

We made drawings about the installation, so the installation that happened at the Temporary Contemporary of the Barry Lowen Collection had a lot to do with the way the work was installed in his house and how he saw this collection as a totality. I think there is a wonderful lesson there, and that's part of the experience that you want to give to the general public, that collectors do see such things and do concern themselves with such things, and that collectors aren't just concerned about, "Okay, I want to buy a Lichtenstein." The good ones, the ones that we admire, the Dominique de Menils and so on, and Barry Lowens and so forth, and Panzas, that they do see these connections and that installation is important, and when they buy works, they want to see this total sort of experience. And I think that's of great value, and so I had no problem with that.

The last one was the request of the Panzas, and we had no problem with that. I mean, that's a condition— Because we love seeing them, and any time they did come here, they were of great benefit to us. We also saw them being continuous donors to [MOCA], and they did make a gift in terms of this acquisition. I mean, they gave it to us for far less than the value set by Sotheby's and Christie's. We did get another collection from them of seventy works later on, so that was simple. Those are easy conditions.

RATNER: Okay. So you've just mentioned that when the acquisition was announced, you didn't have any money to pay for it, and so I wondered how in the original contract, as you said, you had these escape clauses, so to speak, but did it stipulate what funds MOCA could use to pay off the purchase price? Did you have to raise outside funds? Could you borrow against the endowment?

KOSHALEK: I think the first payment was made with unrestricted capital funds that we have, unrestricted, not restricted capital funds. And then after that, we went and raised all the additional money, yes. So it was a challenge for everybody. I mean, we were raising money for endowment, raising money to pay for this collection. We were trying to get a building built. We were trying to operate the Temporary Contemporary right after that. There was a lot of stress on this institution for it to succeed and to not go into a state of bankruptcy.

Institutions like MOCA in those early states, especially if you're in the world of contemporary art, are very fragile institutions. The support base for contemporary art, even in a city like L.A., which has sort of a futuristic sort of optimism and

outlook, is very small, and so you have to be very careful here that you don't get sort of the army too far ahead of the supply lines, right? And yet you've still got to make these risk-taking decisions that can lead to a certain kind of institutional anxiety among trustees and staff, can cause, anyway.

RATNER: Initially, Fred Weisman's foundation was approached to help fund the Panza Collection, and believe he was asked for five million dollars, or just about half of the purchase price. Weisman apparently attached a host of conditions and the deal never came to fruition. One of his concerns seems to have been that MOCA might sell off various pieces from the Panza Collection in order to meet its financial obligations, and, as such, one of his conditions from February of 1984 states that, "Upon prior written consent of the foundation, MOCA may sell, transfer, or dispose of works, or a portion thereof, for the purpose of upgrading the Panza Collection."

I wondered how valid his concern was in that regard, and whether you thought that was a reasonable condition for him to place on his gift. Ultimately, of course, as I say, it didn't come to fruition, and so something went awry. What was that?

KOSHALEK: That condition wasn't of too great a concern to us at the time, because our intention was never to sell this collection. I mean, when you make that kind of gesture, and it was so important to this institution, that you many times don't want to really get involved in de-accessioning works, and the fact that the Panza Collection is still together and will continue to be together into the future tells you that it wasn't the intention of the institution at the time to in any way take it apart, and it's still not the

intention of the institution. I would guess twenty-five years from now it will still be there intact.

With regard to the Barry Lowen Collection, for example, my conversations with Barry Lowen, Barry Lowen had some very strong thoughts about where the collection needed to be strengthened and what works he thought he made a mistake in acquiring and that could be sold, or that he bought a work at a time, and then he, in studying the artist's work, realized that there might be another work that would be more important to represent this artist, and that there should be an upgrade process. So, in the Barry Lowen relationship, for example, we have notes at MOCA that tell us where he thinks we should upgrade the collection. And that's still a possibility.

But we never really wanted to sell the Panza Collection. But we had a meeting. Eli Broad was there, I was there, it was at Fred's home. It was in his study. At that time, I think Mort Winston was also there. At that time, he committed to give us five million dollars. And he told his accountant, whose name was Mitch Reinschrieber, he said, "Okay, work out the details and make sure that they get the five million."

He had wanted to name the collection the Panza-Weisman Collection. That was one of his conditions. We checked that with Count Panza. He had no problem with that. He didn't have an ego problem with that. That bothered me a little bit, to tell you the truth, but we also wanted to be able to acquire this collection and keep it intact.

But in discussions and negotiations with Mitch Reinschriber, his representative, I can't exactly tell you where it went wrong, but— And I think Bill Kieschnick was also at that meeting, William Kieschnick. But I think what happened is this thing, in the end, the decision never came, right? We never could get the final decision from either Mitch or from Fred that they were going to give us the five million.

And so, finally, the board of MOCA, and myself, we all agreed that we better not spend much more time here, because this is not going to happen. But we had actually walked out of his house with the understanding, three or four of us, that he had actually made that commitment. And it didn't happen.

But this was the second time that had happened, you know. The first time, when the deal was done, the deal was being done for us to build the building on Bunker Hill, that the developers asked for two other conditions. For the deal to work, that there had to be a commitment of works for the permanent collection, there had to be a founding endowment of ten million, and then the developers would give the money to build the building. Well, then at that stage, the Weismans promised works from their collection, which they never delivered. Then Bob [Robert] Rowan stepped in and gave us gifts from his collection to satisfy that condition.

So this was the second time we had this difficulty with Fred Weisman, and it was never forthcoming. But there were a lot of meetings with his representative to try to get this worked out, and it never got worked out. And so, finally, we just stepped aside and moved in another direction.

But then Marcia came into the picture later as an individual, not with Fred, and, as you know, was very generous to MOCA. So I think the blockage there, somehow, or the lack of decision, sort of rests on the shoulders of Fred Weisman. That's all I can understand. I mean, that's all I can tell you. But it was sort of a mystery trying to get this worked out, and we never could get there, even though we walked out of his office with all three of us saying, "Well, that's now been worked out." So, interesting, but these things happen.

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RATNER: When we stopped last time, we were talking about the acquisition of the Panza Collection and the negotiations with Fred Weisman, which you realized were going nowhere. And I just wanted to ask you a few more questions regarding those negotiations. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1984, Mr. Weisman wrote to Fred Nicholas stating that he was terminating discussions with the museum, and he said that he was most unhappy with the premature publicity and unfavorable atmosphere that it created. And he goes on to say that “It has placed the Fred Weisman Foundation of Art and myself in an untenable position.” And despite his withdrawal, eleven days later Fred Nicholas sends Fred Weisman a letter saying he’s prepared to recommend to the museum’s executive committee a proposal for the receipt of his five-million-dollar gift. And I’m guessing that must have been the five million you mentioned last time that you all thought he was going to give.

KOSHALEK: Yes, that he said he was going to give the museum.

RATNER: Yes, but then a few days later he sends a letter offering his congratulations to MOCA on the acquisition of the Panza Collection. So I wondered what the premature publicity was and how did everything turn around so quickly, and then where did you get the money from if it wasn’t from him?

KOSHALEK: It’s very interesting. I don’t know what— The interesting thing is I’ve just gone on the board of the Fred Weisman Foundation, which is in a way ironic, because I’m going to be a board member now, and Fred’s no longer around, and we’re

going to be giving money to the arts and setting up the foundation. Our first board meeting's November 22<sup>nd</sup>, which is, I guess, this week.

But I don't know what the advance publicity was. I know that there was one issue which had to do with the fact that Fred wanted his name on the collection, and it was supposed to read the Weisman-Panza Collection. And Fred wanted to be mentioned first. And we checked that with Count Panza, and he had no problem with that. He didn't have the same kind of ego sort of difficulty with that, and so we had worked out that detail and there were other details to work out. I don't remember any advance publicity on the fact that Fred Weisman was buying that collection for [MOCA]. That surprises me.

But there was a lot of opposition, I think within Fred's organization, coming from people like Mitch [Mitchell] Reinschriber and so on, that Fred should not do this, even though Fred had told us that he would do this. And I think it was an excuse on Fred Weisman's part to sort of not participate, and I think he was being heavily influenced by people like Mitch Reinschriber and people like that, because we met with Mitch many times to work out the details, which is what Fred told us to do. And we never got anywhere. So it was one of those hopeless situations.

But it was sort of a repeat situation in the sense that when we first did the original documents for MOCA to be founded and the developers were asked to put in so much money to build the building on Bunker Hill or California Plaza, that the developers asked for a number of things. One was that we establish a Board of Trustees. The other one was that we have an endowment, operating endowment, of at

least ten million dollars so that if they did build a building, it didn't close, there was operating money, which we did with the founding endowment. And the third part of that was a collection.

And at that stage, Marcia and Fred Weisman promised their collection or a selection of their collection to MOCA. Then they withdrew that promise, and that put the deal to a certain degree in jeopardy, because we were missing one of the components that the developers deemed essential. And then that's where Robert Rowan stepped in and made a gift of a number of paintings to MOCA, including the Ron Davis—and I'm trying to think what the other pictures were—and Frank Stella, I think, so we could say that there was a collection involved. So that was the first time they sort of disappeared on us.

Then the second time was this situation where they said yes. Oh, Fred said yes, not Marcia. They were separated at the time. Fred said yes, and then as the process of working out the details went forward, there were always complications or difficulties. And this publicity thing I do not know about, because I don't think it showed up in the paper—we'd have to check that—that he was going to make this gift. I don't think that happened. I don't think that happened. And that he always was sort of—Or his people were encouraging him to look for reasons to not do this.

And it was a terrible mistake on his part, because I think maybe now in the future with the foundation, that the Weisman Foundation can make an extraordinary contribution to southern California and the art scene in southern California. And in a

way, they never did, and now with the foundation they might be able to if it's managed well and run well.

But the woman who did make a contribution in the end is Marcia Simon Weisman, who did give all the works on paper to MOCA and then gave the Jasper Johns *Map*. And the Jasper Johns *Map* was a very competitive situation between the National Gallery [of Art] and MOCA. And the National Gallery, Carter Brown, the late Carter Brown, had an extraordinary ability to convince people to do things. And he was telling her that this picture, which is a map of the United States, belonged in the National Gallery, and he made frequent visits here and talked to her and so on. I think the good news was that we lived in L.A., and we could spend more time with her. But in the end, that gift of that great painting by Jasper Johns came to MOCA, and then the works of paper came to MOCA.

And Marcia, in the end, did the right thing, but it took a long time. In the end, we were to a certain degree successful, but the vast majority of the other collection went to other institutions like the National Gallery, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, museums that she had been involved with in the past history. Not too much of a problem, but it would have been nice to keep the whole collection together.

RATNER: Right, right. But why do you think they reneged in the first place at the inception of MOCA?

KOSHALEK: I actually think there were maybe no reasons, no specific reasons, why they reneged. I think they just couldn't actually let it go. And this is a very interesting thing. Because of that collection, they were getting attention from MoMA,

from the National Gallery, from San Francisco. Every major museum director paid visits to them, talked about the collection. They were being courted. This is nothing unusual. This happens in the museum world all the time where major collectors, you know, sort of have this sort of conversation with many institutions about where their work is going.

And I think that based on all that attention they were getting, and then there was the divorce, which caused some other difficulties that followed later, that they just couldn't give it up. They just couldn't give it up. And I think they actually enjoyed the attention and the conversation having to do with where this collection was going. And I think to a certain degree they were both interesting people and, you know, sort of generous people in a way. I mean, I don't doubt their generosity towards MOCA and to other institutions, although it wasn't on the scale or in proportion to what their net worth was or the influence that they had in the art world, that they just could not do it. It was just one of those things. They just couldn't get to the point of making that decision.

This is a typical pattern, or typical routine that museum directors find constantly in search for collections, in search for works on art. Our goal, when we first got to MOCA, which was— Most museums go look for individual works and they collect works from different collectors to build the collection. What we were interested in is searching for not individual works, but collections. We wanted to acquire collections, not individual works, even though we tried to get individual works at the same time. But our major priority was to acquire collections. That's why we

went after Barry Lowen. That's why we went after the Panza Collection. That's why we went after the [Taft and Rita] Schrieber Collection. That's why we went after the Gersh Collection. We weren't looking necessarily for individual works. We were looking for complete groups of works. And then the Marcia Weisman Collection.

But that's one of the reasons why we, instead of just— At an institution I worked at before, the Walker Art Center, if you gave a work or a collection of works to the Walker Art Center, it became part of the collection of the Walker Art Center, and it could say “gift of” or whatever, whatever.

But what we decided to do was to let the name of these collections stay intact. So what it is, it's the Barry Lowen Collection at the Museum of Contemporary Art and gift of whatever. It's the Schrieber Collection, Taft Schrieber and Rita Schrieber Collection. And so we let their name be identified with it, as opposed to like the Walker Art Center or the Museum of Modern Art, where it's the museum's collection. And we thought that gave us a greater advantage.

But our competition was the Whitney, to a certain degree. It was the National Gallery. It was dealers, such as Larry Gagosian, who were very aggressive in this area. And we needed a certain advantage, and that's one of the reasons we acquired the Panza Collection, because we knew that would give us that advantage to solicit and to obtain other collections who wanted to be in the same museum with the quality of work of the Panza Collection.

So we worked very hard at that, but we were really focused on— And that was one of the things I believed was essential if we were going to have MOCA build a

collection of any kind of stature, was you could do it by individual works, but it was going to take a very long time. But if you did it by getting collections, you could do it much quicker, and you would build bodies of strength. Like Barry Lowen was very strong in the sixties and the seventies and the eighties, and Panza was very strong in the forties, the fifties, and the sixties. And we had a wonderful overlap between those two collections and moving forward. And then the Schrieber Collection fit into that picture also.

So it was an interesting situation. LACMA, which was also very competitive for us, in a way, dropped their— They didn't do what they needed to do to make sure those collections went to LACMA, and they've had a long history of that. But the Gershes were very much involved in LACMA; the Schriebers were very much involved in LACMA; Barry Lowen was very much involved in LACMA; Marcia and Fred Simon Weisman were very much involved. Fred was on the board. But all those collections came to MOCA, which I think is quite remarkable.

It has something to do with the architecture. I also think that the architecture of our building by Isozaki was much more admired than the buildings that they built at LACMA. And there's something about that. I think there are equal signs between the quality of the collection, the quality of the program, and the quality of the architecture. And somehow people rather instinctively understand that, right? They maybe don't say it explicitly, but they understand that if you have a great building and you give a great collection and they have a great program, you're connecting the dots in the right way.

RATNER: Right. So how did you ultimately pay for the Panza Collection? Where did that big chunk of change come from all of a sudden, that initial five million?

KOSHALEK: Well, we had no money to buy it, and we were at very early stage in our history. And there's a wonderful story about Carter Brown. Once it was announced that— He called me from the National Gallery and said, "Richard, great acquisition. Wonderful acquisition. How did you do it? How did you pay for it?"

And I said, "We haven't paid for it. We have no money." I said, "We have a special arrangement." And we didn't have to make the first payment for twelve months, and then we would make a payment every twelve months, I think it was in May or June, until it was paid off. And every time we made a payment, then we would select a certain amount of works that would actually go into the permanent collection. The rest would remain in the collection of Count Panza.

At first we wanted to take all the Rauschenbergs. And I think I told you that story.

RATNER: Right, right.

KOSHALEK: And then he said, "No, no, no, you have to take a selection of works."

And then we had a series of escape hatches, so that the board could accept this, and the idea there was that we could sell part of the collection. That was part of it. There was the condition that if we couldn't make the payment, we would default on the rest of the collection, keep what we've already paid for, and then Panza would keep the rest. Although Panza didn't like that, it was part of the contract, because he wanted his collection to stay complete and to be a complete collection.

I think the first payment we made of two million came from endowment funds, unrestricted endowment funds. And then we started to raise money from different sources. I think the campaign, to a large extent, was headed by William Kieschnick, and working with the staff and myself.

Then we had an unfortunate incident where we were coming up on a situation where the economy was slipping into recession. Bill Kieschnick, who was the chief executive officer of ARCO and its president, said, "Richard, at the board meeting explain what those options are in case we are not able to raise the two million to make the payment." I explained them, like selling certain works from the collection, and so on. We had no intention of doing that. I can honestly tell you that. And the board didn't either.

But Panza wasn't at the board meeting, got the minutes, read the minutes, was outraged, and contacted the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the L.A. *Times*, without telling us, and we got a series of phone calls from, I remember, the lady named Jo. I think it was Joanne Lewis at the *Washington Post* and so on. And the questions were, "How could you possibly do this? This man wanted his collection to stay together. He made his commitment to your museum. How could you possibly sell works from his collection to pay for his own collection?" And there was a series of very difficult articles.

I thought it was going to be almost impossible to raise the funds necessary, and then an anonymous donor called us and said, "I don't like what this person's doing. I

don't like the press. I'm committed to MOCA, and I would like to make a significant contribution if you pay him off in advance and we get a reduced price."

Now, on the deal, there was no interest due. It was an interest-free arrangement. And that individual, who was quite remarkable, and it was Laura Lee Woods. I shouldn't say Mrs. Robert Woods, but it's probably out there. And we were able to pay off the Panza Collection in advance and discount the final purchase price. And I'm not sure of all details, but we did do that. And then this saga was over.

But I think without that problem, this person might not have stepped forward in the way she did, which was unbelievably courageous and with great foresight, because she knew it was going to bring other collections to the museum of that quality.

And the interesting thing is when we went to look at the collection. I don't know if I told you this, but when we went to study the collection before we signed the final deal, we went to Zurich, Switzerland. It was in a duty-free zone because of a tax problem he had, and the courts had made a judgment against him. He had two choices: either sell the collection, bring the money back, pay interest only on the money, on the interest of the money earned, or to bring the collection back and pay a rather large tax on the fair market value, which had gone up since he purchased it, because he claimed he never paid more than ten thousand dollars for any work in his collection at that time in that collection of many works.

And he wrote that letter to me saying, "I'd like to deal with this and MOCA will now acquire the collection." So it was an interesting situation that worked out

well. But on that first meeting to Zurich, only three people went along in that meeting to look at the collection. One was myself. One was Morton Winston, the head of TOSCO and head of our Acquisitions Committee. And I asked, for some unknown reason—I have no good reason for this, because I wasn't thinking that she'd pay for the collection at the time—I asked Laura Lee Woods to go along.

The three of us went, and we met Panza in Zurich. We looked at each work, took them out of the crates, studied the condition, and then made a final agreement to do it. And there might be some connection between that first trip and her having that first exposure to the collection and being included, that led to her making a decision when the press went bad because of that incident, even though the museum really truly was never interested in selling. We weren't going to do any of those options. But we didn't have that much money in endowment. We were trying to build the endowment. So we didn't have too many resources to go to for backup. But that maybe made a difference.

RATNER: Why do you think he went to the *New York Times*?

KOSHALEK: He never called us. He never asked for an explanation. He always was sort of very sort of savvy or very sort of clever about dealing with the press and convincing the press to be very much on his side. You can see that in the writings of Christopher Knight and so forth, also in the writings of the *New York Times*.

But I think he was so concerned, having not been at the meeting and not hearing that we're not going to do this. But I think he was so concerned that he did it— His intentions were good in a way, and I think he did it because he didn't want

this collection to be broken up and he wanted it to stay as a complete collection. He wanted it to be in California, because he has a strong connection to California and the artists that have done work here and they're a part of his collection. And I think he did it for all the right reasons, in a way, from his end of the telescope, and I can understand that. I can understand that.

We're still very close friends. I just saw him in Milan at the Milan furniture fair. I did a dinner party for him and invited a good number of people for him and his wife. I actually sort of not only admire greatly what he's done and who he is as an individual and his sense of integrity and his commitment to quality, and that also for his wife, because she had a very big part to play in this whole picture, but I also am very grateful that we're still friends and that we remained friends through all of this difficult time of getting accomplished what we needed to get accomplished.

So I have nothing—I think he actually is— And we wrote an essay on this for a book he asked us to do, Sherri Geldin and I did. But I actually think he was the most original collector, one of the most original collectors in the twentieth century, without a doubt, because he collected ideas and he was close to artists and he believed in artists, and he was truly, truly committed to their work. He did not collect for social reasons. He did not collect to gain some kind of prestigious advantage within the community. He collected because he had an intellectual sort of interest and involvement with the work of those artists. And that's what makes a great collector. And then he gave another collection to us after that, as you know, of seventy— Quite a few works, actually.

So I cannot explain that. He could. But I think his intentions were good, actually, even though— Well, and it worked out well for us, too. Sometimes you get lucky.

RATNER: It's interesting hearing you talk about it, because, you know, I read a lot of information in preparation for this, and when you're just reading the information, it seems like he was very meddlesome in some ways and was interfering in a lot of things.

KOSHALEK: That's true.

RATNER: So you get a different perspective. Like, for example, he had a big issue with the withholding tax problem, and so there's a letter from August of '85 where he makes really clear his irritation regarding this issue of the withholding tax, and he said that he didn't know about the issue, that it's not done in Italy, he didn't use a lawyer for the transaction because he was acting in good faith.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And he says he now believes that the museum deliberately avoided mentioning the issue and that MOCA should pay the withholding tax.

KOSHALEK: Which we did do.

RATNER: Well, it seems like you paid the withholding tax on the last payment.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: Did you do it for the whole—

KOSHALEK: Yes, I think we did, yes.

RATNER: On the whole thing?

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: Because I know then later in '88 when it comes time for the last payment, it says that you'll pay the withholding tax, if any, due with respect to the final payment. So I'd wondered about—

KOSHALEK: We did, yes. I think we took care of all of it, yes.

RATNER: And then he says in the same letter from August of '85, he says that the only way to disprove his suspicion of MOCA is that the Board of Trustees must make a formal statement saying that he made a substantial gift to MOCA, reducing the price, not asking for interest payment on a six-year installment, and thus that the withholding tax should be paid by the buyer. And number two, that the sale and gift were made to keep intact a part of the American cultural heritage. Thus, if MOCA is compelled for unavoidable financial reasons to sell, then all eighty works must be sold as a unit and only to another institution willing to assume the same obligation. And number three, the trustees had to confirm that it was Panza's task to design the installation of the Panza Collection every time it's shown to the public, not to show individual works without the written approval of the Panzas and MOCA or other museums.

And when the Panza Collection is installed, then the works in the other rooms of the museum may not be of lower quality. And he said that this was necessary because he was offended by works of another artist that were installed near one of his rooms. And I'm quoting here, he says, "I and my wife have a moral obligation toward the artists. If our goals aren't the same as the trustees, we will return the money for our paintings so a deal can be made with another institution."

KOSHALEK: Who's the letter addressed to? Is it addressed to me? [laughs]

RATNER: I think it was addressed to you. So, you know, when you're just reading that, it sounds pretty intense.

KOSHALEK: Yes. I'll tell you my feeling about all of this, is that, first of all, that we were a very young institution, and he had a problem he had to resolve. The arrangement between Panza and MOCA was done very, very quickly, very quickly. It wasn't studied in great detail. There weren't a lot of lawyers involved. It was Eli, it was myself, and Mort Winston, a small group of people that did it with the Panzas. This was a very unique situation for all of us. He was on the Board of Trustees.

And these kind of problems or these kind of situations or these kind of sort of misunderstandings in a deal, in a situation or arrangement like this, happen all the time. They never surprise me. In what you just read, there's no big surprise to me, because these things do happen. If you're building a building, if you're buying a collection, it's never as clear and as neat as you'd like it to be, and it's very difficult to get the kind of clarity and the sort of understanding of both parties where it works out in great detail.

The important thing for me was that the collection was at MOCA. That was important, and the nature of the collection. The fact that Panza has expressed different concerns about works that were installed next to his collection or about the fact that he wanted to install the collection every time he had an opportunity to do it, none of these things surprised me when you're dealing with collectors who have a very strong

commitment to their collection and what they have accomplished. So that's nothing new. We see that all the time. We see that all the time.

I think the important thing was that we were able to work all these things, all these issues out, and these issues are always there, always there. I mean, there's certain arrangements where the issue was how often will MOCA show this individual work, and there's certain collections we got, like the Schrieber Collection, where there're actually conditions that the Pollock has to be shown a certain percentage of the time and so on.

These are things that you work out and you evolve and resolve over time. They're not done immediately, because if you try to draft the perfect contract in the beginning, the perfect agreement, it will take, first of all, too long. There will be too many lawyers involved. You've got a very good chance that both parties are going to get frustrated before they get to the end and sign on the dotted line, and we didn't want that to happen. And so we knew there were going to be these issues along the way and that we'd have to resolve them as we went forward, and I think we were able to resolve them.

I should also tell you that there was on the board strong support for the Panza Collection coming to MOCA, but there was also opposition. I mean, it wasn't the board sitting around the table and taking a vote and all voting aye, because there was some strong opposition and there was a certain sort of, not major hostility, but there was a certain amount of hostility to the Panzas, and not only actually within MOCA's board, but in the larger museum community, because I got letters from certain people

saying that “The museum director’s saying you set a very bad example here, because the Panzas are trustees,” or he’s a trustee, “and they’re supposed to give their collections. And you bought his collection, and this is going to be a very bad example for other collectors and other museums,” and couldn’t put up with it. And I really did get letters to that. So there was opposition to it in the larger museum world also because of the nature how this was structured.

But there was also some opposition on the board, and a lot of— Not a lot, but there were people, individuals, who felt that the Panzas sort of in a way took advantage of MOCA, right, and that we were paying them too much attention, as opposed to paying attention or the same attention to other collectors. One of these individuals was Doug [Douglas] Cramer, who was a collector, right, that we were too much involved with the Panzas in giving them too much and paying too much attention to them and that that was going to jeopardize our relationship with other collectors, himself, most likely. So there was opposition, too.

So this was not a situation where everybody was totally favorable, whether they were outside the museum or on the board of MOCA. But there were also issues, we knew that, because you can’t get the perfect contract up front, that we’d have lost the deal trying to get it done, and that we had to resolve the issues. And I think we did resolve the issues. I think the Panzas to a large extent, not totally, are sort of comfortable with the fact that the collection’s here and that we have remained friends and so on.

But these issues appeared all the way along, right? I mean, he would come and he'd see an installation and he would raise questions, right? "Did you do this well? Did you do that well?" He's a man of very— He and Rosa, his wife, both, beautiful people in my mind, are individuals of very strong opinions about how their work should be shown, how art should be treated and respected, how the artists should be respected, and that there should never be any compromise with quality ever, ever, ever.

Now, a museum like [MOCA] with different curatorial opinions and different curatorial agendas sometimes is going to show work that they don't agree with, no doubt about it. And we're just going to have to work that out as we go forward.

But these kind of disagreements and these kind of issues that sort of evolve and come forward are not something I found of great concern, actually. We tried to resolve them, but it never came as a big surprise.

RATNER: And how about the curatorial staff? Were they in line with you, or was it a little more troublesome?

KOSHALEK: They were, they were, they were. They were, they truly were. Julia Brown, the Paul Schimmels, the Ann Goldsteins, the Alma Ruizes, they were all very much for having this collection. There was no doubt about it.

Yes, this is a complicated world, because you're dealing with individual personalities, you're dealing with institutional agendas, you're dealing with individual agendas, and trying to find a consensus there so that you can move the institution forward in terms of what it needs to accomplish, is a very, very complicated process.

There's that great story about Nelson Rockefeller when he became governor of New York, and somebody asked him what does he know about politics and why should he be the governor of New York, at a press conference. And he said, "You forget that I was chairman of the board of the Museum of Modern Art, and if I don't understand politics based on that experience and how to be politically successful," he said, "I shouldn't be the governor of New York." And that's true. Museums are very political institutions, and it takes great skill to sort of keep all of this in balance, from the egos to the agenda, different agendas, to whatever.

And sometimes it doesn't work, like with Max Palevsky or Peter Norton or Doug Cramer, it doesn't work. Sometimes it just doesn't work, and you have to live with that, too. There's no perfect museum. There's no perfect contract. There's no perfect Board of Trustees. There's no perfect staff.

I mean, one trustee we got into a huge disagreement with over the museum and who had great difficulty with certain aspects of how it was being run and how he was being treated by the trustees and so on, and his name was Peter Norton. And at a very difficult meeting I had with him, I said, "Peter, I can't give you a perfect museum. I can't do it. I can't. I don't think there is a perfect museum." And I said, "I have to live with these political difficulties, with these different individual agendas, and these different individual personalities and demands, and you as a trustee have to do the same thing. There is no perfect institution." And, as you know, Peter resigned from the board.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: You've got a lot of paper here.

RATNER: A lot.

KOSHALEK: Did you get the original letter, by the way, that Panza sent to me?

RATNER: I must have it. I think it must have been in Fred Nicholas' papers that he—

KOSHALEK: I'll bet it was. Fred kept everything.

RATNER: Yes, he did.

KOSHALEK: I kept nothing. I have nothing here, no papers.

RATNER: I know. That's how come I had to get it from Fred Nicholas, because you had nothing.

KOSHALEK: I have absolutely no file. I don't even have one single file on MOCA after twenty years, at home or anywhere, not a single file.

RATNER: Such an unusual thing for a museum person, not to have any archives of any sort.

KOSHALEK: Yes, or not to collect letters and critical correspondence.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: I should have the letter where Panza wrote to us about the collection, but I kept absolutely nothing.

RATNER: Why is that?

KOSHALEK: I think my sort of personality is one where I don't value the past that much. I don't think about it. I don't want to look back. I don't want to rethink the

past. And I think if there's any one word that sort of matters to me, it's called *next*. And I'm constantly saying, "Okay, what's next?" as opposed to looking back.

And that's why I would never write a book on MOCA, ever, because I would have to remember, and I would have to go back and recreate that history, probably never get it right. And there are a lot of things I'd like to forget about that past, the mistakes I made, mistakes other people made, conflicts, whatever. And so it doesn't interest me. It has no interest to me at all.

And when I left MOCA after twenty years, I walked out with not a single file, not a single letter, absolutely, absolutely nothing. And I sort of prefer it that way. I prefer to sort of be involved in what's going on today and being involved in the future and not having anything to do with the past. So you'll never see me go to a college reunion, a high school reunion, buy an old house, anything. I don't like anything from the past, so it's a whole different thing.

RATNER: Yes.

KOSHALEK: And that's why I have nothing. I have absolutely nothing. Can you imagine, there's no files after twenty years?

RATNER: No, I can't.

KOSHALEK: I walked away with nothing. Nothing. And I wanted it that way, actually. That was not an accident.

RATNER: Well, it's lucky for us that Fred Nicholas kept the things and was so organized.

KOSHALEK: Yes, yes.

RATNER: Tell me a little bit about the gift of the seventy works that came in 1993.

KOSHALEK: Yes, that was a difficult one. At that stage, the board, there was greater frustration on the board with Panza, right? This one, the board, I think, was totally convinced that we shouldn't take this gift. Panza was not willing to pay for the shipping, which he shouldn't have. I would agree that he should not have to pay for that, and there was great opposition on the board to taking this collection.

There was enormous frustration among certain trustees with the Panzas at that stage, and the only way this collection really, truly ended up at MOCA as a gift to MOCA was that Paul Schimmel and I fought for it, and fought for it hopefully with great skill and also without ever thinking that we would not accept this collection. I don't remember the history exactly. Paul might. But I think it was actually voted down by the board. I think the board actually voted that we should not accept the collection, and then we went back to work to convince them that we should. I don't know what you have, but I think something happened there where the board was very much against it.

RATNER: I think they were against it because he placed some sort of interesting conditions on it.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: It involved renegotiating the original gift, I think.

KOSHALEK: Yes, which we got by pretty quickly, yes.

RATNER: Yes. And so they did initially—

KOSHALEK: I think the opposition here was led in a very sort of— I don't know what the right word is. By Doug Cramer. I think he was leading the opposition and convincing different people on the board that we shouldn't be, again, dealing with Count Panza anymore and that he doesn't have the best interest of the institution in mind, and that we are jeopardizing our relationship with other collectors, which I think he meant himself, yes.

RATNER: How would you say that Panza's relationship changed over the years with individual trustees? Because it seems like initially, he's a very highly respected man, and everybody seemed to be seeking his advice. Eli Broad asked for his opinion on the board structure, the nominating committee, and what the composition of the board should be to begin with. Palevsky consulted him on the architectural design. You sought his advice on the lighting and the skylights for the Isozaki Building.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: So I'm wondering how all of that changed and evolved over the years, because he was a trustee.

KOSHALEK: He was a trustee. Well, I think in the beginning people had great respect for him. I think they should have. I think they believed that he could make a contribution, because he had a lot of press, people knew him. They visited Varese. They saw what he did. They were enormously impressed. And I think in the early stages, in the early history, yes, he was respected.

I think the one that was also very much respected was Dominique de Menil. She had tremendous influence early on, and that's one of the reasons we came up with

the idea of the international council. And that was Peter Ludwig, who never really knew he was on the board somehow. I don't know what that was all about. But Panza contacted him. Seiji Tsutsumi from Japan, which Sam Francis arranged. And then Panza and Peter Ludwig. And who else was the other one? Dominique de Menil.

Dominique played a very important role. She came to board meetings early on, was an extraordinary presence, and had great intellectual sort of interest and also understood museums and what a legitimate museum should be and what a quality museum should be. And she was very vocal in the early stages at board meetings and also contributed small amounts of money.

Ludwig never really got involved. He would call every time he came to Los Angeles to visit the Getty, to talk about the manuscript collection. He inquired for the Getty. Panza was much more involved, much more involved. And Tsutsumi wasn't truly involved in any sense.

But we wanted to bring to this board, because we thought the board was rather provincial and inexperienced at building an institution, and I think that's true, and also, at that stage, I think inexperienced at collecting work. I mean, I think Eli was building his collection, whatever, whatever. And so we thought this would bring an international balance, different perspectives that would contribute to the discussions and the conversations we had within the board to what kind of institution we should build.

And it was a very important move, actually, because it did do that, and it gave us credibility internationally. The trustees respected these people early on and paid

attention to them and listened to them and sought out their advice. As time moved forward and their confidence increased and the institution started to develop a reputation around the world that they started to identify with and, I think, be proud of when they traveled and so forth and mentioned that they were involved with MOCA, that they moved away from Panza, they moved away from Tsutsumi, they moved away from Dominique and those individuals, to try to establish their own sort of presence and their own sort of prominence in the building of MOCA and also to try to establish the fact that we are here, we're dealing with this on a daily basis, or weekly basis, monthly basis, and that we really want to be the controlling voice here into the future.

And so as that moved forward, they not only moved away from these individuals to a certain degree, but they developed a much greater sort of— I wouldn't say it's animosity, but sort of reluctance to let the Panzas have a major sort of leadership role in terms of advice about installation, collection-building, and so forth. And I think we tried to work very hard, because I respected them, and I actually loved these two people, respected them enormously, to keep them in the picture, but it became very difficult.

I can remember there were meetings where people would say, "Richard, would you for once stop focusing on the Panzas and start focusing on the trustees that are here and the collectors that are here in L.A." I thought we were doing that, but there was that sort of difficulty that evolved, and it evolved with everyone from Bea

[Beatrice] Gersh to Lennie [Lenore] Greenberg to Doug Cramer, to a number of other people, Eli, for example.

Fred Nicholas was another one who kept that communication going with the Panzas because he had that great respect for them, and he kept building the bridge and holding onto the relationship. And he was very important in that, very, very important in that. But, yes, there were difficult moments.

And then he put conditions on that collection; again nothing that surprised me. This is what happens. These are things you discuss, you negotiate, you resolve. But you have to keep your sort of eye on what we wanted to accomplish here, and that was to continue to build, acquire collections by gift or by acquisition, as a policy of the institution. And this was a collection. It was a good collection. It had strong representation from young California artists. We had to continue to sort of support the young artists, not just the Rauschenbergs and the Kleins and so on. So this was important to me to get this job done. And, hopefully, we kept our eye on what needed to be accomplished and what the goal was and then tried to resolve the issues. But it got very complicated politically within MOCA with regard to some trustees' relationships with the Panzas. No doubt about it.

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KOSHALEK: This kind of complexity within an institution, and these kind of issues that sort of come forward and these kind of competing forces and agendas within institutions is just part of the picture. There's no way you're going to ever eliminate it, and there's no way you're going to ever sort of completely resolve it as you move forward, even MOCA, and sometimes it gets worse, sometimes it sort of gets better, but it's always there. It's always there.

You wake up every morning as a museum director, you go in and you say, "Okay, you know, what seismic sort of activity are we going to have today within this institution that deals with individuals? And how are we going to handle it?" That's why you need a very good staff and you need certain people on the board who have a different view of this, who believe in finding a balance, finding a solution where it's a win-win situation, as opposed to a win-lose situation. And Fred Nicholas was one of those people, again.

RATNER: Yes, it seemed like he was very involved—

KOSHALEK: Critical.

RATNER: —in being an ambassador and a negotiator.

KOSHALEK: He's got a good bedside manner.

RATNER: Do you feel the handholding and the finessing with the Panzas then set a precedent in terms of acquiring any other collections, that people said, "Well, you did X, Y, and Z for the Panzas, and I want X, Y, and Z"? Or that wasn't really a—

KOSHALEK: No. Actually, I cannot remember one instance where a collector, whether— Well, Barry Lowen, for example, said to me— And I don't know if I told that story about the Barry Lowen Collection and—

RATNER: Well, you told a story. I don't know if it's this one.

KOSHALEK: Well, the one that happened where we went to see him and asked him for a work and asked him for a work? No.

I'll answer your question first, and then I'll tell the Barry Lowen story. But Barry Lowen said that, "I want my collection to be in a museum where there's the Panza Collection, the same quality." I think that Lennie Greenberg felt the same thing about the Schrieber Collection. I think the Gershes sort of knew that the Panza Collection was there. So there was always this sort of enormous respect, no matter what the difficulties were, for what the Panzas had accomplished as collectors, and there's no doubt about that. All the trustees had that enormous respect.

I can never remember one incident where a collector said to me, "I want the same conditions as Panza," or, "I want a deal like Panza's," or, "This is something you did for Panza but you're not going to do for me." I never heard that. I really, truly never heard that and that never, never did come up, actually.

But each of these situations is unique. I mean, how the Schrieber Collection ended up at MOCA was really largely due— The credit there goes to Lennie Greenberg, right? I mean, she arranged this, along with her mother, Rita, who was still alive. And that's where the credit there goes. The Gersh Collection, Phil and Bea

Gersh have always seen their collection as going to a public institution, and that was that situation.

The Lowen Collection was a little bit different, and that was that we had become aware of his collection, and so I made frequent visits to see it.

RATNER: So he wasn't involved with MOCA at that point?

KOSHALEK: No, no, he was involved in LACMA. He was on their modern art committee, or whatever it is, and very much involved in LACMA.

But we got aware of what he had and what he was trying to do, and we went and saw him. I was very impressed by the seriousness of what he was trying to accomplish and that he was not just building a collection, but he was interested in building a collection where he understood the artist, the relationship between their work and other artists' work of the period and was constantly thinking about it in a very serious way and, I think, in a very sort of intellectual way. I mean, he was really looking at the ideas, studying the artist's work and intentions and where the artist— What he was trying to accomplish, or he or she was trying to accomplish, and then put that all into the context of his collection and his own personal sensibility.

So this was a very serious collector, respected by Mike [Michael] Ovitz as a— I mean, he was a collector respected by all of them, Doug Cramer, Mike Ovitz, all of them, the Gershes, all of them, because of that seriousness of purpose. And we went to him, and I think the first time we went to him, we asked him if he would give the Susan Rothenberg painting "The Hulk," this great painting that we thought was

important for the future of MOCA's collection, and he said no. He said, "No. I'm building this collection. I'm a young person," and so on.

And so then I went back, I think, about six months later, and I said, "I understand the importance of this one, but, Barry, we want you involved in MOCA. You're a collector people respect, like the Panzas." And I said, "Would you give the Don Judd piece, the work by Don Judd?"

And he said no, and he got slightly angry, and he said, "Stop this." He said, "I want to keep this collection together. Right now I'm working on this collection, and I'm going to continue to build a collection. And I'm a young man, and I've got time, and I want to work with this collection." And so I think that was important, actually, because I think it told us that this collection was extremely important as a total thing, as a complete comprehensive sort of statement of his personality and his sensibility and his interest.

Then he called me on the phone, and he said, "Richard, we have to have a series of confidential meetings. You cannot tell anybody, not even your trustees." And he said, "I want to meet you, first off, at the Studio Grille," on, I think it was, Melrose. I'm trying to think where it was. And he said, "We're going to meet at three o'clock so nobody's there." And he said, "I have to tell you something."

So I went to the meeting, and he looked at me, and his exact words were, "I'm going to be hit by a truck." And I didn't know what that meant. I truly did not know what that meant. And he said, "Richard, I have AIDS and I'm dying." And he said, "You were the one that showed the greatest interest. You are the one that came to see

me often.” He said, “You are the one that helped acquire the Panza Collection for MOCA. I want my complete collection to go to your museum because of that interest on your part.”

And he said, “But there’s certain conditions.” And the conditions were, number one, that the day he died, his lawyer would call us, and that we would be standing by with a crew, and that we would take everything out of his house within twenty-four hours. He had some kind of concern that things might get stolen or there might be a break-in or something. So we had to take it out instantly.

Second condition was that he said, “I want to work with you, Richard, on designing the show that will present the collection and the book.” And so I would go to him with notepaper from MOCA, MOCA notepaper, and we would sit at his house and we’d talk about the installation in the house and how that could be communicated in terms of the installation at the Temporary Contemporary. He wanted the Temporary Contemporary.

We talked about the catalog and what the catalog should look like and who should write for it and so on and the design of it, and I made copious notes, notes which I have no idea where they are. They’re probably in the archives at MOCA, but maybe not. And we talked about the exhibition. We talked about the catalog. We talked about what happens when he dies.

Then we also talked about individual works that he felt were not of the same quality as the rest of the collection. He spoke about a Malcolm Morley, for example,

and a number of other works that he felt we could de-accession, if we would upgrade with work by that same artist to improve the quality of the collection.

So he took not only— He saw it as a complete thing and something he tried to build as a total collection, but he also saw it as something that needed to be upgraded and worked into the future and continued into the future. And I can honestly tell you that one of our trustees, Bob Rowan, when word got out that Barry Lowen was sick—and it got out rather quickly—came to me and said, “Larry Gagosian, the dealer, is trying to buy his collection and split it up. Tom Armstrong of the Whitney has come to see him and wants the collection to go to the Whitney. And the LACMA people are talking to him, and he was on their modern contemporary art group. And, Richard, have you done your homework? We want this collection for MOCA.”

And I could not tell him, because I gave my word to Barry, and I did not tell him. I did not tell the board.

And then there was a board meeting at one time, and it came up again. And I truly kept my word to Barry, even though, even though, there was tremendous pressure on my part to say something. And I didn't say anything. Very, very interesting. I did say to the board that “I think I'm doing what is appropriate and what is necessary and that there could be a very good chance that we could succeed here.” But I didn't say the deal was done. And that secret stayed with me and an individual named Mo Shannon. Mo Shannon was the registrar, and she was the one that was going to arrange and set up the process to take this collection up, which we did do.

I was in New York when he died, and I got the call from his lawyer. It was the DIA Foundation, by the way, the DIA Foundation. I got the call from the lawyer, I called Mo Shannon, and Mo Shannon set everything in motion, and we had the collection out of there within twenty-four hours. And then we told the board. But it was a difficult time, difficult time, because the board thought I wasn't sort of doing what they felt was essential to gain this collection and that I should have been more aggressive and that they wanted to hear more from me. But I did keep my word to Barry Lowen, and that collection came to MOCA.

But there were stories like that all the way along that sort of happened.

RATNER: Why do you think he didn't want anyone to know that he'd made this deal with you, even after it was known that he was going to die?

KOSHALEK: I have no idea. Actually, I have no idea. I actually have no idea, and, you know, I never asked him. I never asked him. But he was a very private man. He was a very private man.

At one time I was there at the house, and there was a real estate agent who came in the house, and I was there, and I heard him say to Barry Lowen, "I can't sell your house." He said, "You have a beautiful house here. It's on top of the hill overlooking Los Angeles, but there's no windows. There's no windows. I can't understand this house. How would you live in a house with no windows?"

And I remember Barry saying to him, "The windows are there if you go outside, but I boarded them up inside so I can hang more art." And so he said, "These are temporary walls that you take out."

But it was a very interesting situation and one that worked to benefit MOCA long-term. But I had a very difficult period of time there, trying to sort of hold on. It was very difficult, actually, because Bob Rowan was actually very insulting about this whole subject and why am I not more aggressive, why am I not going after that collection. I remember him being the most aggressive of all. But it was a very difficult time, actually, but then it did happen.

Then Barry died and then his brother died of AIDS, also, shortly after, so it was a very huge tragedy. It is a tragedy for everybody because if he'd have had a longer life, he would have continued to build the collection and that collection would have become even more important over time, because he did have an eye, he did have a commitment, and I think this was his great passion, to build this collection. And he only got to a certain place, and it was a wonderful collection with Twomblys and Stellas and Schnabels and [David] Salles and so on, and Judds and so forth, and Susan Rothenbergs.

But he didn't get to the stage where he should have gotten if his life hadn't been cut short somehow. So there was more he could have done and would have done. He was getting smarter every day, and he was seeing the collection in a very different way every day. He was thinking about it every day, and he was sort of working on putting this puzzle together. But he only got the puzzle partially finished, unfortunately, which is interesting.

He was a special person. I think he was involved at Twentieth Century Fox doing scripts or screenplays or something. I never really knew. He was very private. He never talked about those things. Very interesting.

RATNER: You mentioned a few minutes ago that you thought part of the reason so many collections ended up at MOCA was sort of this confluence of the program and the architecture and the exhibitions.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And obviously you must have had a role to play there. But it's interesting, of course, because, as you mentioned, Los Angeles has this really unfortunate history of the ones that got away.

KOSHALEK: Got away. [Walter and Louise] Arensberg Collection, yes, sure, sure.

RATNER: Exactly, exactly. But MOCA seems to have really begun to turn that tide, because the Lowen Collection comes in and then the Schrieber. Do you attribute that to anything besides what you've already mentioned?

KOSHALEK: I think it's a whole series of things. I think it's timing, to a certain degree. In the lives of collectors, they reach a certain stage in their life where they feel they have to make a decision. Some people, some collectors, actually don't, actually never get to that point where they actually make a decision. They die before. But I think most collectors get to a stage where if you're dealing with them early on or middle age and they still see a chance to sort of this build this collection and work with this collection, it's very difficult to get a collection. But when they get near the

end of their life, they want to get these decisions made, and a lot of them want to get recognition while they're still alive and so on.

So we had the advantage of coming along at the right time in the lives of a number of these people, like Rita and Taft Schrieber, Rita Schrieber most importantly, because Taft Schrieber was already done. But the Gershes, and then the tragedy with Barry Lowen. But I think we were also very aggressive in a very subtle and a very quiet way and that we would talk about it often and we would strategize and we would— When curators went to see dinner parties at homes of collectors or where a collector asked them for advice, we would talk about what's in that collection and that where would that collection fit within the total context of MOCA's collection. And is it the right thing for us, right?

And then we would start to work on that. I think that was part of it. That was part of it. I think it's timing. I think it's the idea that you do have an awareness and a strategy for focusing on these collections. I think it was also this idea that we really did strongly believe that you can collect individual works, but you'd better start collecting collections, and that was going to make a difference. And we did believe that very strongly.

And so we would always see like Barry Lowen as one complete collection. Or we might start with individual works that sort of made connections and to build bridges and open communication. But we always saw the total collection of Barry Lowen somehow hopefully ending up at MOCA.

Same thing was true with the Gershes. Same thing was true with other collections. But it's both sides. It's an equal commitment from the people whose collection it is, whether it's Rita Schrieber or Lennie Greenberg or Bea or Phil Gersh. But it's also an institution that sort of meets them halfway.

And I think it was also this concept that we said we would make or we would allow these collections to continue to be named as collections within the context of MOCA. So the Panza Collection is the Panza Collection, and the Schrieber Collection is the Schrieber Collection. I think that made a big difference to people, where most museums like MoMA or the Walker don't do that.

Also, I think the other institutions didn't take up the challenge, LACMA being the most important. But they've had this long history of losing the White Collection and the Arensberg Collection and the Gilbert Collection and, to a certain degree, the Hammer Collection and the Norton Simon Collection. I mean, it's not a good history from the point of view of that institution. And most of these collections, because of these people's engagements with LACMA, should have ended up at LACMA.

I think our building had something to do with that, the quality of architecture and the kind of spaces that were built. I think the program, when you start showing people like Twombly and Ellsworth Kelly to the degree like we did, or Anselm Kiefer or John Baldessari, collectors start to perk up and say, "Okay, this Baldessari show," or this Kelly show or whatever it might be, "maybe this is the institution because they respect this artist."

So it's whole combinations of things, but it's somebody sort of being in the center of it all, saying that "We'd better be aware of this. We'd better work to have this happen. We'd better think about how that can happen. Is it right for the context of the collection we're trying to build?" And all of that. You've got to have somebody who keeps those issues on the agenda, and you don't lose sight of one of the things you have to do. But you've got to do it very quietly or you can be embarrassed, right?

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And with Fred Weisman, in terms of the collection, it didn't work. With Marcia, it did. Bob Rowan, it didn't work. Except for a few works in the beginning, it didn't work. Bob Rowan, that's a whole 'nother situation about collectors. I mean, this was a man who built a great collection. But he also was too much of a dealer, and he was constantly selling this material, sometimes giving it away, but many times selling it. And so when it was all over, he had a collection, but it was bodies, large concentrations of work, to a certain degree, of people like [Jules] Olitski and Morris Lewis and maybe Ken [Kenneth] Noland, and then it was individual works by artists, many of which were not of significance, long term, for a museum collection.

And in the end, it was very disappointing, because this man has no serious connection to a major institution, whether it was the Pasadena Art Museum or it's MOCA or it's MoMA or whatever it is, where he has, as a collector, made a contribution to building that collection and providing a historical context within that

institution for artists and for the general public to study. It's a tragedy. But he became more of a dealer than he did a collector, and that kind of constant trading and moving works about is a tragedy, actually, for him. For him, I think. He probably doesn't. I guess he didn't think that way, because he liked playing the role.

His contacts were always with gallery owners, dealers, and you need that to a certain degree. But I think what you really do need is you need connections to institutions like museums, and that's one of the great stories of Alfred Barr. I mean, he built very strong connections to individuals like Philip Johnson. And these people like Philip Johnson depended not upon dealers to a certain degree, but depended on museum curatorial people to help them make decisions and determine where their future was.

And Bob didn't do that. He saw himself as a curator and he saw himself more as a dealer, and he was more comfortable in working with dealers than he was with museum people, somehow. And that's where you get into trouble. You can go to see collections in Los Angeles, all over the city of Los Angeles, and as soon as we walk in, we can tell you who the gallery or the dealer was that helped put together that collection.

Then you get very concerned about the fact whether that collector's sensibility is in what they've accomplished here and is that what they actually believe in and is that what they actually have a great commitment to, or is it just that they have a friendship with a certain dealer who is going to convince them that you should have one of this or one of this or one of this from their gallery. And that's where the danger

comes for most collectors, I think. And I think that if they can build strong relationships with curatorial people they respect as opposed to dealers, then they will use the gallery system in a very different way and not be that dependent upon them.

But we could always tell which— Okay, this collection was put together by X Gallery. This collection is a representation of Y Gallery. We could always tell. And that's not a good thing for any collector. There needs to be independence there. You could tell, too, I'm sure, and I'm not mentioning any names, as you know.

RATNER: I noticed.

I wanted to talk a little bit more in-depth about some of the collections that came into MOCA. So the Lowen Collection came in in 1985.

KOSHALEK: Is that when it happened, 1985?

RATNER: Yes. And then in 1988, under slightly different circumstances, you received a gift from the Max Yavno Estate, which created the core of a new endowment called the Yavno Chair Fund, and the income generated from that fund was to be used solely to support a program in photography at MOCA, involving exhibition, acquisition, and research for a permanent photography collection. And I think the gift included both money and photographs.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: How did MOCA come to be the recipient of this collection, and what had been its philosophy and policy on collecting photography prior to that?

KOSHALEK: Who was the man that owned the collection? I've lost my mind, actually. I'm losing my memory. A wonder man, a beautiful man, and his wife Marjorie. Marjorie and Leonard Vernon.

RATNER: Yes, Leonard Vernon, right.

KOSHALEK: They're beautiful people, actually, who really together built an extraordinary collection, really did, and it was their personal sort of journey to build this collection.

Well, when we got to MOCA and we wrote the Playbook, one of the things I believed in very strongly was that we had to have a program that reached a pluralistic audience, and that if we were going to survive as an institution, that we were going to have to deal with film, photography, architecture, design, painting, sculpture, performance, the whole thing. I believed that for two reasons. One, I believe that we have to reflect the reality of what contemporary art is all about and what contemporary life is all about. And as you know, people like [Andy] Warhol were dealing with film. They were dealing with works on paper. They were dealing with paintings. They were dealing with sculpture. They were dealing with performance. Rauschenberg's another good example. And so there was all this sort of cross-border activity that was going on, or cross-discipline activity going on, and we felt that was important to reflect the reality of what was happening.

The second thing was that I felt that we could not survive with one audience for MOCA and that we had to have a pluralistic audience, and by that I mean that if we do a film program, we get a very different audience than if we do a photography

show. If we do an architecture show, we get a very different community that supports that than if we do, say, a painting exhibition. And so we believed that very strongly in the beginning.

So photography was always on the agenda, that we had to deal with this. And I also felt that photography had a greater connection to the general public and was more accessible to them in a way. And so we met Leonard Vernon, and we had a series of meetings with him.

RATNER: He came to you or you [static on tape].

KOSHALEK: He came to us actually. [static on tape] He came to us. And I'm trying to remember if that's true. I think he came to us, yes, because I think the Vernons were actually very quiet, very private. And he was the executor of the Max Yavno Estate. He came to us and we talked about the situation and what MOCA could do for him.

I think he talked to other institutions, no doubt about it, and that in the end he decided to go with MOCA, and as a result of that, he joined our board. So, the Yavno Collection came to MOCA. There was some concern that we shouldn't have that much representation by one artist. There was some concern among trustees and even the curatorial staff that he wasn't an artist of the stature of, say, a Gary Winogrand or whatever, and so should we be dealing with this or should we turn this down.

But in the end, we did, I think, because of Leonard and Marjorie Vernon, say, a sort of strong belief, not only in the work of this artist, but in the work of other photographers in the kind of collection we built, and we actually worked with them

and had a long series of conversations with them. Paul Schimmel especially led this effort to see if we could get this collection gifted to MOCA over time, over time, and that didn't work. That actually didn't work. Those discussions were still going on when I left MOCA, but I assumed it didn't work.

But there is in institutions—and this is a tough thing to say—there is in institutions sort of a hierarchy of how people get treated. I don't know how to describe it, but there's a pattern of how people are sort of engaged and treated within an institution, and it has to do with social standing. It has to do with who feels they are part of an— They're elitist institutions; I guess that's the way to put it. And it's very difficult sometimes for individuals who do not like that world, have not participated in that world, are not known in that world, to enter a situation, even if they join the board, and to find success or to find a certain comfort level. And there was something about that.

And the Vernons aren't the only ones. There was others, too. And when you talk about diversity on boards, this becomes a very, very, very delicate and touchy subject.

But the Vernons never really sort of were able to join the group, the inner group somehow, and also there was a reluctance for maybe on the part of some trustees that photography wasn't important. I know that Robert Rowan, for example, felt photography— You know, I remember that he would always say, “How long do you really stand in front of a photograph? You don't really stand in front of a photograph very long, because it doesn't have that much significance.” And so there

was all this sort of feeling about, well, does photography matter, does it not matter, is it critically important, is this where we should place the emphasis, you know.

And then this social access business gets very complicated within an institution. So I think that all in the end it became cumulative and led to the fact that MOCA never got the complete collection of the Vernons. I think that's part of it. I'm not blaming it just on the institution, because the Vernons could have made a move also, but I think there was a lack of comfort between the institutional trustee leadership and the Vernons.

And there were different kinds of people, right? I mean, a nice comparison might be— I mean, the Museum of Modern Art has this same problem, right? I mean, there is a core group that is the Museum of Modern Art, and it's Leonard Lauder and it's David Rockefeller and it's Aggie Gund, and then there's other people that like to sort of enter this group, enter that world, and it doesn't— It's very difficult.

And so it didn't work, but the Yavno Collection did come to MOCA. It was an important one, and we also were able to sell works from it, which we did do over time and it's still going on. And then he joined the board, and then an endowment was set up. Then there was the hope that Leonard Vernon and Marjorie would give their collection. Marjorie died. Leonard, I think, might at this stage be quite bitter towards MOCA. I might be wrong. He'd have to say that. But it just didn't sort of connect in the right way, and so the collection never came to MOCA, the Vernon Collection.

And it was an extraordinary collection, but it still hasn't been committed anywhere, so I don't know. There was a show at Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and it

wasn't committed anywhere. But that was one of those things that was very complicated to move it through the system again to convince people that photography was important and that it had great value, and that this was the beginning of something with the Yavno Collection and the money, even though there were doubts about having that strong of representation in Max Yavno's work. And I think we did select a core group of works that were going to be in the collection for sure. And then there was just this social situation that sometimes can make it very difficult for somebody to feel comfortable within an institution as complex, socially, as MOCA is.

These are interesting stories in a way, but actually they're very difficult to deal with, actually, and I don't like it. I didn't like it. It's one of the things about museums that I found quite disturbing, actually, because I come from the Midwest and I come from a more modest background. And even though I was accepted in this world and spent thirty-eight years of my life in museum work, I didn't like it. I actually didn't like it, and at times it was very difficult for me, because I think everybody needs equal access to these institutions and should have an equal role.

We all sort of have the same feelings and sensitivities and all of that. But I think you see it in the other arts, too. I think you see it in the Music Center. You probably see it in the opera, and you probably see it in other institutions. And in a way it always bothered me, even though I was totally accepted and had no difficulty with being accepted in that world as a museum director. So it's an area of the museum world and the arts, and whether it's the Music Center or the opera or it's New York or

it's L.A. or it's Chicago that you see that it can be very disturbing. But it is reality.

It's very interesting.

Sometime in the future, somebody should write about all this, because it could be an extraordinary exposé on how people relate to each other and how they connect with each other, and how people are excluded and people are included. And we can all talk about being inclusive as opposed to exclusive, but that kind of dynamic still exists within many cultural institutions, and probably other places too, clubs, whatever, in golf clubs, whatever. Enough of that.

RATNER: I think we might have just enough time before this runs out to just maybe talk a little bit more about the Taft and Rita Schrieber Collection, which you've mentioned that came in May of '89.

KOSHALEK: May of '89? We were doing well there, '85, '88, '89.

RATNER: Yes, yes.

KOSHALEK: Every three or four years.

RATNER: There were eighteen paintings, sculptures, and drawings that were created between 1939 and 1972 by thirteen artists, and that was one of the collections that you all had featured in MOCA's first show. It was reportedly valued in excess of sixty million dollars. In monetary and artistic terms, it was by far the most valuable bequest that MOCA had received at that point.

KOSHALEK: No doubt about it.

RATNER: And it was admired—I'm quoting here—"for its validity and connoisseurship." And the *L.A. Times* called it a breathtaking bequest.

KOSHALEK: Was that Suzanne Muchnic?

RATNER: You know, I don't remember who said that.

As you mentioned, Lennie Greenberg, who was a trustee, was the daughter of Taft and Rita Schrieber, so obviously she was really instrumental in arranging this gift.

KOSHALEK: No doubt about it.

RATNER: But I wondered what your role was in it and what say you might have had and what works came to MOCA. Did the entire collection come?

KOSHALEK: I think a number of a works went to the National Gallery in Washington; I think the Brancusi and there's a number of works. The vast majority came to MOCA.

The leadership here and all the credit here goes to two people: Rita and Lennie, Lenore Greenberg and Rita Schrieber. And what I did was just sort of follow the guidance of Lennie, and I brought Mrs. Schrieber many times— I shouldn't say many, but numerous times, to downtown Los Angeles. She lived on, I think, Tower Road or Tower Drive up in Bel Air. I would pick her up and I'd go see the collection, and there was that extraordinary Pollock No. 1, 1949, and there was— It was a really sort of— The selection of this collection, but I think Taft Schrieber was the person that really made the decisions. He had good advice from the actor Charles Laughton, and there's a wonderful story about all of that and their connection.

The Jackson Pollock came from Leo Castelli, and Leo Castelli told me that he sold it to him for a hundred thousand dollars at the time. And everybody thought that

was a large number at the time, and it's a great one. You can go to the Pollock home and studio in East Hampton, and you can see the floor it was painted on. And there's photographs that sort of in a way document that activity and this painting. It's one of the great masterpieces of all time, probably the most important work in the collection of MOCA, because everything that comes before it relates to it, and a lot that comes after it also relates to it. That was one of the great sort of acquisitions or gifts, actually.

But this was structured by Lennie and by Rita and with a lot of advice from Bernie [Bernard] Greenberg and assistance, Lennie's husband, and what we did is just follow their guidance. I remember one trip where I picked her up and took her downtown, and she asked me to go down Wilshire Boulevard. She pointed out the apartment building that they first lived in across from the Ambassador Hotel, and talked about their life in Los Angeles in the Biltmore Hotel and the Oscar events and all of that, and the founding of Universal Studios.

She was a very, very elegant, very sensitive, very generous individual, she truly, truly was, and had no other agenda, except, I truly believe, to do something sort of that recognized her husband in the best way possible. And so dealing with her was always very pleasant and very nice.

Then it was not going to happen until she passed away, and so it did happen. But I think the credit there goes to Lennie and to Rita Schrieber and to Bernie Greenberg. I played sort of a supportive role in that situation, but it was a great, great, great acquisition for Art Center. This was as important as the Panza Collection and

maybe even more important because there were works in that collection like the [Arshile] Gorky and the Pollock that we could never afford to acquire, no matter how rich the museum got, because they just weren't available.

So that was a wonderful moment. That's sometimes, again, when you say, "Oh, boy, we got lucky." But we paid attention. We paid attention. I mean, we did pay attention, so that was extraordinary.

RATNER: I think we'll wrap it up there for today, unless you have anything else to add.

KOSHALEK: No.

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RATNER: When we wrapped up last time, we were talking about how various collections came to MOCA, and I wanted to pick up with that today. In November of '89, the Bea and Philip Gersh Collection of forty-five paintings, drawings, and sculptures went on exhibit. The acquisition of this collection was another important addition to the permanent collection, seems to have followed closely on the heels of the Schrieber Collection. I wondered if you were working on both of those acquisitions on the same time or if the Gershes were influenced in any way by the gift of the Schrieber Collection.

KOSHALEK: I think the Gershes were. The decision for the Gershes to give their collection to MOCA was really their decision. No doubt about it. They had been committed to the museum for a very long period of time, with Bea Gersh being one of our trustees, almost way back to the early days of the institution's founding. I think they sort of admired greatly the Schrieber Collection—I know they did—and they talked about it many times, the quality of the Pollock and the Gorky and so forth.

The Gershes were two individuals that really understood quality. They knew what a great thing it was. So I think they were very much influenced by the fact that Lenore, Lennie Greenberg, sort of worked out the arrangement with her mother to give the collection to MOCA.

That collection we did not have to do a lot of work to solicit. The Gershes are people who are extremely generous and who really are committed to MOCA, still are,

still are, and that there was no doubt in anybody's mind that their collection was coming to the museum. They are people who do not play the typical sort of games, political games or the strategic sort of games that are played between collectors and institutions. When they committed to MOCA, they truly committed to MOCA, and their collection was coming to MOCA. And so there was no doubt in anybody's mind, and there was not much work we had to do. That was their decision completely.

RATNER: So you had no say in which pieces came; they decided that themselves?

KOSHALEK: Yes. And we were more than willing to let them decide that. I think those decisions were largely made by Bea Gersh, because I think she was the one who really formulated the concept for the collection and made the final decision, even though it was sort of jointly discussed with Phil, and then Phil would sort of work out the details of the acquisition. But Bea, anything she would selection for MOCA's collection, having also served on the Acquisitions Committee for a long time, would be something that the museum would accept and never question. Extraordinary lady.

RATNER: In March of '94, MOCA issued a photography mission statement and collection strategy, and it was a twelve-page document outlining the need to secure funding to increase the photography collection and program, and I wondered what was the reason for creating that particular document at that particular moment in time, and then what the results were.

KOSHALEK: I think a number of things. First of all, the early history—and I think we probably mentioned this—is that we felt there was a pluralistic audience for MOCA.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And that photography would play a very important part in that, and we had a little difficulty moving in that direction. I think there was some reluctance on the part of certain trustees. I know Robert Rowan, for example, didn't feel that photography was that important to the collection of an institution like MOCA, even though the curatorial staff did, and I would say the vast majority of the board actually believed that photography was something that we should sort of build upon.

I think the paper was written, first of all, to start that initiative at that time so that we could start to appeal to collectors and also to artists, at the same time, to build a photography collection that was unique for MOCA, and we were very concerned about what the Getty was doing. As you know, John Walsh made one of the most extraordinary acquisitions ever when he bought I think it was eight different collections all at once, just to sort of begin with, I guess, Weston Naef, also, the photography collection at MOCA.

Also LACMA had developed an interest in the subject and had a Department of Photography and was building a collection. So, being aware of what they were doing, I think the paper was also an attempt to outline what we should do that would be distinctive and different and would give us a unique collection and make a unique contribution to photography.

Also, the world, in terms of photography's influence on contemporary art, had changed, and as we know, a lot of artists at the time, in the seventies and eighties, moved into photography as a medium of expression. An interesting part about all of

that was a good number of those artists were women, and they found this medium to be an outlet for personal expression, but also to make a contribution, I think, to the history of contemporary art. So this gave us an opportunity to sort of recognize those developments and make it part of the collection and also make it part of the exhibition program.

So we were thinking of the collection, but also thinking about the current situation in terms of contemporary art and how things have changed and the impact that photography was having, and so that it became a much higher priority for us at that time. May be a little slow, but we got there.

RATNER: Then just a little more than a year later, in October of '95, it was announced that the first installment toward a major acquisition in the photography arena had been made, and that was the Robert Friedus Collection.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: Of twenty-one-hundred prints, which was purchased for a bit more than a million dollars.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And you said you hoped the collection, which traces the development of American documentary photography from the 1940s through the eighties in the work of eleven artists, would have a similarly magnetic quality, as did the Panza Collection, in terms of attracting scholars and other photography collectors and receiving more photographs for the collection. I wondered how that played out and where the money came from for that.

KOSHALEK: First of all, the credit for bringing that collection to MOCA was Paul Schimmel, and Paul Schimmel is the individual who knew Robert Friedus, was well aware of the collection, and also was very committed to the idea that we set early on in the history of MOCA, which was that we were interested in collecting collections. And so Paul was really the critical factor in that picture.

The amount of money for what we got, actually, and the impact we could have, I think the collection now must be valued way in excess of what we paid for it, and it included Gary Winogrand. I mean, it was an extraordinary collection, Lee Friedlander and so forth. We knew that it was one of those opportunities that would never come again, that this collection was put together by Robert Friedus at the right time when these works were available, and that it was one of those rare opportunities that you had to take advantage of if you are a museum that's trying to be sort of ambitious and aggressive and progressive at the same time.

Where the money came from, I actually do not know, but I think it came from the [Ralph M.] Parsons Foundation. We had some difficulty with the Parsons Foundation, having to do with Joe Hurley, who in the end turned out to be very supportive of MOCA, but who had great concern about the work that was shown at MOCA, that it was too radical, that it was too challenging for the average citizen to a certain degree.

He had come to see a Marcel Broodthaers exhibition that really disturbed him enormously, and there was great sort of doubt that he would fund anything at MOCA. So we changed our tack a bit, and we went to the Parsons Foundation because of his

interest in architecture and asked him to fund the Lou [Louis] Kahn exhibition, which he did do, and the Parsons Foundation did do. And there was a lot of support on the Parsons Foundation board for MOCA. Jim Thomas was on that board. Al Dorskin was on that board. There were people who supported us. But we moved in the direction of architecture, and they supported the Lou Kahn exhibition.

Then we realized that they had a great interest in photography because of the man who set up the foundation, Mr. Parsons, was a photographer, and they endowed the program at LACMA and so on. So we thought this was a chance for them to, again, participate in the world of photography but in a different way, dealing with documentary photography, which we felt would be more acceptable to their thinking and their sort of strong feelings about what MOCA did, and they did fund the collection.

I can tell you that we also did never show them the most difficult photographs in the collection. We showed them the ones that we thought they would be more acceptable, and so I don't think they ever saw the complete collection, because there were some photographs there that would have developed great concern. But the important thing was that they did do it and they did support it and that acquisition was possible. I think other money was raised for it also, but I think the lead funding was the Parsons Foundation.

RATNER: I think you're right. It was confusing to me, and I'm glad you clarified that, because I think they gave six hundred thousand dollars, but I couldn't figure out if that exactly was for the Friedus Collection, but I guess that it was.

KOSHALEK: Yes. It was. It was. Yes.

RATNER: Okay.

KOSHALEK: I think it's now called the Parsons.

RATNER: Yes, that's right, and that's why I was confused, because then the Friedus name isn't attached to it at all. So I wasn't exactly sure.

KOSHALEK: But it's this sort of finding the right balance between the interest and the instincts of a donor, like the Parsons Foundation, and the interest and the sort of goals of the institution is always a very complex question when you're dealing with contemporary art. I think it's easier in the world of old masters or work that has been sort of not certified, but where there's been a certain consensus on its importance. So, when you're in the world of contemporary art, finding that balance is *very* difficult, and sometimes you succeed and sometimes you don't. But so far, with Parsons we succeeded.

RATNER: The next collection that came in, it looks like, was a year later, and that was the Marcia Weisman bequest, which we've talked about a little bit.

KOSHALEK: Yes, yes.

RATNER: I think the newspapers called it "scoring a coup" and "a windfall." You called it "One of the most significant announcements in the fifteen-year history of MOCA, a major step for MOCA in works on paper." The gift included eighty-three works on paper by fifty-one artists and was valued at six to eight million dollars. And the highlight of the bequest was the [Willem] de Kooning's 1952 pastel and charcoal, *Two Women With a Still Life*, which was valued at more than two million dollars.

And then the gift also included money for a study center and a curator. Negotiations apparently went on for several months with her estate.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And although she wanted MOCA to receive a significant portion of her drawing collection, and I think the negotiations began before she died, the committee for her estate actually decided on the number of works MOCA was to receive. Is that correct?

KOSHALEK: Yes. Now, the idea of the committee was actually my idea, and Marcia was talking about what she would do with her collection. She had commitments to a lot of institutions that she had been involved in; the Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and MOCA and LACMA. She was having sort of difficulty trying to sort of talk this thing— Work this thing out in her own mind, how she was going to do this, and she wanted to be supportive of all those institutions.

So I suggested she put together a committee that would help her talk about each institution, where their strengths were in terms of their collections, and where works should be going. The one person I recommended for that committee was John Walsh, who would be a very good person to talk about the work of that committee. She did put together the committee, and the committee actually, I think, was a very important sounding mechanism for her to talk about this and to actually get to the point of making a decision.

One of the things we desperately wanted, which I think we talked about before, was a Jasper Johns map.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And that was committed. There was a lot of sort of competitive interest in that painting, that work, from the National Gallery and the Met, but mostly the National Gallery, Carter Brown, who saw the map as being important to a national museum, national art gallery collection. And that ended up at MOCA.

But the drawing collection was very important to us because we also, like photography, wanted to move in the area of works on paper. And it's very interesting that the timing of all these things, 1995, 1996, that we had sort of organized this strategy, or this strategy that we wanted to sort of touch different sort of areas of the collection and improve them to the degree that we could attract other collections and other works with sort of large, sort of major gestures or accomplishments or acquisitions, and so the Friedus Collection was one of those. The Marcia Simon Weisman was also extremely important in terms of getting us in this area of works on paper.

This is a great interest of mine. Works on paper, if I could collect seriously, the one thing I would collect is works on paper. If there's anything besides—I guess my greatest interest is sculpture, and that's why there's been all this sort of involvement with Richard Serra and so on, Robert Irwin. But the other great interest I have is in works on paper, because I feel that this is as close as you can get to the

artist's idea as possible, and the artist's thinking and so forth, conceptual thinking and so on.

But also I thought that we could build upon this collection, not just build upon it by getting other works on paper donated for the drawing center, which we did get. We did a campaign, I think, too, a solicitation to bring in additional works to match Marcia's gift. But I also thought that we could build shows around it, exhibitions around it.

I've always liked this idea if you get a major work in the collection, such as Jasper Johns No. 1, you can do a show called *Out of Actions*, right, based on that one painting and what that painting sort of led to in terms of performance and so on. But we also knew that the De Kooning, for example, as you mentioned, was an extraordinary work and that we would never, ever have the resources to acquire it.

Also we knew that if we did get this work, we could actually do a major exhibition of the works of De Kooning, the drawings of De Kooning, based on that one drawing, and so we saw it as not only this great resource to do exhibitions, educational exhibitions that expand on a theme, and Paul Schimmel did the show on De Kooning's drawings that dealt with the women's series, about women being depicted in a series, but also that it would attract other collections. So now we were starting to move in a significant way in photography, in a significant way in works on paper, and we were starting to accomplish what a major museum of international reputation had to do.

If we look back at the history of MoMA, which I followed very closely, I think if there's any institution that I followed very closely, it was the work of Alfred Barr and the founding of MoMA. I read everything I could find on the founding of MoMA, about the exhibitions they did, about how the collections expanded, how departments were added, like photography, later, with Beaumont Newhall, about their exhibitions dealing with the world of architecture and design.

I mean, there was a wonderful exhibition done by the Museum of Modern Art way back when that talked about why can't New Yorkers have decent housing, and it dealt with the tenement situation in New York, which led to us doing, to a certain degree, the exhibition on the case study show. But not just that case study exhibition, but it led to that separate sort of initiative dealing with low-cost housing.

But MoMA's what I followed, to a certain degree, as the blueprint to building an institution, and you can't do it all at once because you don't have the resources, staff to do the work, finances and funding to make the acquisitions. And so we knew we had to pace this thing out, and it had to follow the idea of the major collections of Schrieber and Lowen and so on. It also had to follow the building of the buildings and opening the TC and building the program. It had to follow building an audience for MOCA and the pluralistic audience we talked about.

But then we felt that once the Bunker Hill building was open and we had accomplished the other sort of achievements or whatever it was with the collection, that this was the time to move into works on paper, both photography and drawings. The Marcia Simon Weisman Collection was, for me, one of the high points, because,

as you know, I admired this lady enormously, and she was very much a part of the history of the institution. And for that to become part of the history of MOCA was important. So that was a wonderful moment for me, actually. This lady was very special, actually.

RATNER: It sounds like it. I met her one time.

KOSHALEK: Did you meet her? You actually met her?

RATNER: One time.

KOSHALEK: Did you talk to her? Did you have a conversation?

RATNER: No, very briefly. I actually went to pick up Walter Hopps at her house one time for an interview, and so I just met her very, very briefly.

KOSHALEK: She was never embarrassed to be Marcia Simon Weisman, and that made her unique and made her an individual that her own distinctive qualities and character, and that's what we like in people, and that's what you find many times in artists. And she had that same sort of psychic sensibility somehow that she connected with that creative side, and she saw herself as an individual, like an artist does, and that she had a voice, and that's quite remarkable. We knew her well.

RATNER: One thing I was trying to figure out is that there was money to hire a curator for this collection.

KOSHALEK: Connie Butler, yes.

RATNER: So that's what happened? You first were looking for someone to act as a consultant to the curatorial staff, but you— Is that what happened, or you just straight out hired a curator for that?

KOSHALEK: There's a long history here, actually, that I don't know if we have to get into it too deeply, but this interest in works on paper was an interest that I had almost from the beginning of the founding of MOCA. And at one stage we actually brought in the curator of works on paper and prints for the Kunstmuseum in Basel, and I'll get his name in a minute. I can't remember his name. Do you remember his name, by any chance?

RATNER: No.

KOSHALEK: But the reason we did, and the idea here was that we were going to bring into Los Angeles leading curators of works on paper from institutions around the world, and this was the first one, and he was from Basel, and I'll get his name. He's done all the major shows, and he did remarkable work with Claes Oldenburg and whatever, Joseph Beuys and so on.

We asked them to survey the collections in Los Angeles, to do a survey of the collections in Los Angeles, with two purposes in mind; one, to organize an exhibition of works on paper in Los Angeles that would, again, build interest in this idea of the collection; and the other one was to let us know where the quality work was. And I'm always a firm believer in getting multiple opinions about what is of value and what's important in terms of building a museum collection from different sort of perspectives, from the European perspective, from an Asian perspective, whatever, and so on, somebody involved in the contemporary, somebody involved in modern art.

This person was the first person that came out and did a report that's in the files somewhere at MOCA that talks about the collections in Los Angeles, where their

strengths are, what kind of collection would be the most appropriate thing for MOCA to put together in relationship to what its mission is 1945 to the present. And we did that with this person.

So there was a long sort of early history of building up to this thing. We were aware of the Marcia Simon Collection and a lot of other collections, and so we figured we had to do something and put certain building blocks in place and do our homework, our research and so on.

Now, you have to tell me what the question was.

RATNER: [laughs] I was wondering, because it looks like there was something called an Ahmanson curator.

KOSHALEK: Oh, okay, the curator. Yes, yes. I'm a little foggy on this whole subject, but part of the Marcia Simon Weisman Study Center was to have a curator of Works on Paper. Now, this went against, to a certain degree, what our philosophy at MOCA was—

RATNER: Exactly. That's why I was curious.

KOSHALEK: —which was to have generalists that dealt in different areas, so that we didn't turn out to be like MoMA, which was balkanized, and you've got a photography department and a works on paper/drawing department and painting and sculpture. We didn't want to do that. We weren't on that scale, and we wanted to keep all the curators. I liked the idea of all the curators being involved in works on paper, painting, sculpture, architectural design, and so on, so that they got exposure to the reality of what is contemporary art in all disciplines and so on.

But we made an exception here because of the importance of the gift of Marcia Simon Weisman and that works on paper collection. And also we were concerned that unless somebody is completely responsible for one area in terms of building relationships with collectors, knowing where the collections are, knowing what's being done in works on paper in artists' studios, young artists, and so forth, that we were probably going to miss out, and we were slowly correcting our strategy there. It might have to do with the institution becoming a much more mature institution, a much more established institution, and also one that now needed to really sort of be much more aggressive in terms of building its collection in specific areas like photography and works on paper.

So Connie Butler was hired, who had been an intern at MOCA before and had worked at MOCA and then went to Des Moines and went to the Neuberger in Purchase, New York, and then came back. So that was a little change in strategy, and I think it's been a positive thing. But also Connie now has done wonderful exhibitions on works on paper, but she's also become involved in the other aspects of the program also, by dealing with exhibitions and so forth. But that was a change, yes.

RATNER: So why was it called the Ahmanson curator, if it was money from the Weisman Foundation?

KOSHALEK: I think in the end, and I'm a little unclear about this, but I think in the end the Weisman Estate, Marcia Simon Weisman Estate, there was not enough money to fund this position, and so we went to the Ahmanson Foundation to fund it, and I think that's what happened.

RATNER: I see. And did the same thing happen with the Study Center? Because then there's paperwork as well about a naming opportunity for the Study Center.

KOSHALEK: Yes, yes. We did name it the Marcia Simon Weisman Study Center, the Works on Paper, yes. The estate somehow, Marcia's estate, was quite sort of, in terms of works of art, it was valued very highly, and there was a high number on that. But in terms of actual money, it was not that great, actually, and I can't remember the exact number, but it wasn't that substantial. And with the work of settling the estate and taxes and so on, when it was all said and done, there wasn't much money left to sort of have a curatorial position and set up an endowment for the center, unfortunately.

That's a long story about the divorce and what Marcia got, actually, in the end. As you know, she sold two works near the end of her life, and she told me that she had made a visit to see her brother, Norton [Simon], who had twenty-four-hour nursing care and needed a lot of sort of support system and so on. She visited him at the Beverly Hills Hotel in one of the bungalows, and she got very concerned that if she got to a certain age and her health started to become a problem, that she would need twenty-four-hour nursing care and she might need some other kind of equipment that he— Medical sort of, I don't know, appliances, whatever, and devices.

So she sold the Jackson Pollock *Sent*, unfortunately, and she sold another work, I think a [Alexander] Calder, through Larry Gagosian, and the reason she did that was to make sure that at the end of her life if something happened, she'd have enough funding to take care of herself. And *Sent* was the last painting, as you know,

Pollock did, which would have been a wonderful addition to MOCA's collection. But I can understand her decision, but that's how that decision came about actually, according to what she told me.

I wonder where *Sent* is now. Do you have any idea?

RATNER: No.

KOSHALEK: Nor do I.

RATNER: Okay. So that was 1996. Then in 1997, you have the opportunity to request some works from the [J. Patrick] Lannan Foundation.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And MOCA ended up receiving about 114 works by 53 artists, ranging from the 1950s to the 1990s.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And the gift, I think, included several in-depth bodies of work by a number of artists. I wondered what your thinking was in assembling your wish list, and was that the only opportunity you ever had to put together a wish list like that from a foundation?

KOSHALEK: I think it was a rare opportunity, and I think the foundation was— J. Patrick Lannan was changing the agenda for the foundation, which caused a lot of consternation in the press. I know Christopher Knight wrote about it, and Lisa Lyons had some strong things to say, and she was involved in it. I came out in support of it because I strongly feel that, number one, they were letting these works, not to be sold at auction to individuals, but to go into public collections, so that was a positive thing.

Second of all, I was supportive of it because I think people need to decide what they want to do and where their interests are and where their passions are, and his were changing and he continued to support artists and so forth.

But, yes, and what was good about this collection coming to us was it was strong in the fifties to the nineties, so, again, it builds on what we did with Lowen and Panza, and we were able to fill in many blanks in the collection. But it again continued that idea of collecting collections, but also collecting individual artists in depth.

I think those are the two agenda items we wanted to accomplish in building the collection. We wanted artists in depth, a select number of artists in depth, and we talked about that from the beginning in the first, I think, Playbook we wrote. And the second thing was that we wanted to collect collections. So this actually fit in totally with the strategy going all the way back to the Panza Collection and up until the present, up until 1990. And it was an extraordinary gift, an extraordinary gift. Now, some other works went to Chicago, I think, the Art Institute in Chicago, because I think his father was there, J. Patrick Lannan, Sr. And I'm not sure where else.

But MOCA, this was again another major accomplishment. So if you look at the nineties, MOCA did unbelievably well, thinking about it now, and I haven't thought about it for a long time, but we were sort of doing extremely well from '95 to '96 to '97. We continued it after that, I think, too, so the nineties was a very important period of time. There can actually be a show on the nineties that deals with just the acquisitions that came into the collection and what that meant to MOCA and who the

collectors were and what their personalities were and so on, because each one of these was a different situation, from the Gershes to the photography, to the Lannan Collection, whatever.

RATNER: And the Schrieber Collection came in right before the Gersh Collection.

KOSHALEK: And the Schrieber, too, yes. Boy, the nineties was a good time, thinking about it.

RATNER: Yes, it was hot. And the nineties weren't over, though.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: Ed Moses, also around that time, actually in '95, donated six works on paper, three paintings and two or three works that were in process for his upcoming retrospective, and he allowed you to select works from his studio without any restrictions. And you were quoted as saying that "The gift validates the reason MOCA was founded. MOCA began because of the enthusiasm of artists like Sam Francis, Robert Irwin, and Ed Moses, who felt Los Angeles needed a place to show contemporary art from southern California and beyond."

I wondered if he was inspired by the Sam Francis gift, which I want to talk about later, you know, in depth.

KOSHALEK: Yes, yes.

RATNER: And then did either of those gifts encourage other artists to do something similar?

KOSHALEK: It's very difficult for artists to give gifts to museums, as you know, because of the tax situation. So when they do, it doesn't provide them with much of a

tax deduction. I mean, it's zero, I think. I mean, they can deduct materials and time, I guess, or something.

So it's very difficult for artists to make gifts to museums, so when we find the generosity of a Sam Francis or an Ed Moses, that made a huge difference. Now, the Lannan Foundation brought us a wonderful collection of work by Robert Irwin, for example, and I think there's going to be a special sort of museum or gallery built at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art for Robert Irwin, a complete representation of his work.

But, yes, the artists founded MOCA. They were the inspiration for it. They, as we know, talked to Marcia Simon Weisman. Marcia talked to the political leadership. Tom Bradley, being the most important person, he put together a committee, but there was also the Artists Advisory Committee.

When I first came, I was interviewed for the job of director by the trustees, a small group of them, but also by the Artists Advisory Group, and it had very strong leadership by Robert Irwin. He was the key. DeWain Valentine and Alexis Smith were the key people, actually, that really provided the major leadership. But there was also involvement with Lita Albuquerque and Ed Moses and so on. And so when artists did step up to make gifts, it did validate that early, early commitment on the part of the artists to building a collection and a contemporary art museum for L.A.

But Ed was, I think, inspired by Sam Francis, yes, but I think Ed always felt that MOCA treated him with respect, and I think that's part of this whole picture. I mean, I think if there's anything that characterizes, or hopefully characterizes, my

period of leadership at MOCA was the fact that we put the artist at the center of interest and in the center so that every decision we tried to make was one that recognized the importance of the contemporary living artist. Whether that was that they needed certain technical equipment or they needed support to do things, like Richard Serra, Bill Viola, and the installation, but putting on the agenda for Art Center the primary highest priority was the artist and showing respect for them as creative individuals and their contributions to the larger whole.

So I hope that attitude on the part of the institution had an impact on Sam and Ed Moses, and I think it did, I think it did, and other artists who made gifts to MOCA, because they really didn't get any tax advantages by doing it. And Sam made an extraordinary gift, as you know, including the great White painting, which everybody said we would never get, right?

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: I remember talking Sam through the installation of his work at MOCA in a wheelchair just before he died, and he was deeply moved. So it's that respect going from the institution to the artist, hopefully comes back with the respect of the artist to the institution. And I think that during my tenure there, I think you'll find to a large extent that's the case. I mean, I think if you speak to an Ed Moses or a Sam Francis, if you could, or Robert Irwin or a Richard Serra or a Bill Viola, and I can name many others, I think they will say they had great respect for the institution because of its concern and care for them and what they're trying to accomplish.

So I think that's where the Ed Moses thing came from, and Ed was somebody who was always there, right? He was at every opening. He was supportive of other artists. He had a very sort of important role to play as a sort of a unifier in the art world, not only connecting to young artists, but connecting to artists outside of Los Angeles and New York and artists of his generation. So he had a very important role to play.

RATNER: Were there any other significant collections or small groups of paintings donated by any individuals that you feel were significant that I missed here?

KOSHALEK: No, I think you've hit the major ones. There were small groups of work donated by different people at different times. The collection was largely built, except for Panza, by collectors in Los Angeles, which I think is important. I think it's extremely important that if you are building a collection and works from collectors in the city in which the museum exists end up at the Met or end up— And we saw that with the collection in Chicago, the lady in Chicago who gave her collection not to the Art Institute or to the Museum of Contemporary Art, but to the Met. And you see this sometimes often. I think it's very important that those collections stayed in L.A.

I think that's a wonderful statement on behalf of the collectors, actually, who believed in the city and that there should be a major collection, and I think it also says good things about MOCA, because it was able to keep those collections here. And the history of L.A. has been that collections got lost. The Ahmanson Collection went to Philadelphia. I think the White Collection went to Seattle. And there are other

collections that left the city, and we didn't want that to happen, and it didn't happen during this period of time.

You have to be careful of that, because the competition now for collections is not just within our own city, between MOCA and LACMA; it's international. It's international. And we were able to deal with it internationally, but we were also able to deal with it most importantly by keeping the collections built by collectors from this region in Los Angeles and at MOCA. We built, I think, a critical mass here of work in a very short period of time, with almost no resources. The vast majority of these collections were gifts, and I think that's also a huge accomplishment to be able to convince people to make gifts.

There's an interesting story, because when we first bought the Panza Collection, I received a lot of mail from people, museum directors mostly, who were very upset that we paid Panza. I mentioned this earlier.

RATNER: Right, right, because he was a trustee.

KOSHALEK: That I set a bad example, right, that if you do this, other collectors on boards of other museums across the country are going to expect to be paid for their collection. But I think it proves that by buying that collection it did not in any way hinder or stop the gifts coming from the Gershes, from the Schriebers, from the Lowens, from whatever, the Lannan Foundation, to MOCA. So I think their concern, which I understand to a certain degree, because you want people to make gifts because the resources are limited to buy works, especially with the value that we got, in the end it proved not to be a problem, which was a relief for me, because I did receive

letters from people who— Martin Friedman, who was one of my early mentors at the Walker Art Center, was very critical of that decision.

RATNER: It worked out okay.

KOSHALEK: So far, yes.

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KOSHALEK: —the Bunker Hill building and it was the building of the exhibition program, right?

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And also building a network of institutions around the world that would take the exhibitions of MOCA. And then in the nineties, it really was focused on building the collection to a large extent, wasn't it. And the collection came together as a critical mass. Interesting. Two decades.

RATNER: Yes. A lot happened very quickly in those two decades.

Okay. In fiscal year '91-'92, Senator [Daniel] Patrick Moynihan proposed a change in the tax laws that allowed for a one-year window of opportunity for donors and museums, essentially permitting the donation of a work of art at its full market value. I wondered what kind of effort MOCA mounted as a consequence of this change and then what were the results.

KOSHALEK: Now, I cannot tell you. I remember Moynihan's action. I remember '91, '92, that we took action. We felt we did as much as we could. But we'd have to check the records, because my memory is not very clear. But I suspect we did okay. That was a good moment, actually, and I wish it would have continued. But it shows the wisdom of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who we just recently— As I was a juror for the Chrysler Awards, we gave it to Daniel Patrick Moynihan for his commitment to urban issues and planning and architecture.

But I don't remember any specifics, but I'm sure we could get them. But I know we did take advantage of it, and it was an issue that was discussed extensively with the board and major collectors, and I'm sure something significant happened there. I wish they'd do that again. It was typical Moynihan action to help the cultural situation. Well, I forgot about that. Sorry. I just don't know.

RATNER: I'm sure you've been asked this many times, but what is your favorite work in the collection?

KOSHALEK: It's very interesting. I can tell you works that I wish we'd have been able to add to the collection.

RATNER: I want to hear that, too.

KOSHALEK: For example, the major *Torqued Ellipse* by Richard Serra would have been an extraordinary thing to add to the collection, and I would have hoped that could have happened, but I left and that wasn't able to be accomplished.

I would say the Jackson Pollock *No. 1 1949*. That seems like an obvious choice. That would be one. I would say the De Kooning, the drawing 1952, by Marcia Simon Weisman, which as a work on paper is just beyond belief.

I would say the Bill Viola video installation we acquired, because I think it was at the time where things were changing, and that was a very difficult acquisition at the time and it had strong opposition from the board, that why are we buying this. Mostly the opposition had to do with the fact that every time you installed it, you're going to have to build a room at great cost and it had to be a large room and so forth. It's, I would say, that.

I think what was missing in sculpture was any major work by Bruce Nauman or Richard Serra, and I think that would have been necessary. We did buy one video piece by Bruce Nauman, but I think when he stays close to his own body, the work was quite extraordinary. I wish we'd have been able to acquire a major work by Beuys—Serra, Beuys, so forth.

I was very pleased by the Andy Warhol, the telephone, because it was a gift, anonymous gift, by Jerry Perenchio, and it was an important work, I think, and that period of work by Warhol, I think, is critically important.

And if we look at it all, I mean, it all sort of falls into place rather nicely. I mean, the Jackson Pollock, the Rothkos, the Kleins, the Jasper Johns map, the Rauschenberg combines, the—I'm trying to think of some of the others. The Flavins, the Tatlin Monuments. Flavin is an artist of great importance to me, so on. And the Warhol fits into this picture.

But there are things lacking, like [inaudible]. There are things lacking, like a major Richard Serra. There are things lacking, like a Joseph Beuys piece, of importance internationally. So some of these things we regret, and we would have— If I'd have stayed another decade, we had our short list. We did have a short list of things now that were essential for us to get for the collection, and those three artists were on that list, and hopefully we could have accomplished that.

But I think we were able to start to build a history. I think an important thing about building that history also was that we had strong representation by California artists, and so when we got the Lannan Foundation gift of in-depth work by Robert

Irwin, for example, that was extremely important for me as a museum director, because I'm very close to Bob, and he was one of the reasons I came to California in the first place, to be at MOCA.

And then works by people like Chris Burden and Alexis Smith and so on. So there's things missing, but that would be sort of where I would come down, actually. I remember I had in my office a beautiful drawing for a very long period of time by Agnes Martin, a great drawing, and so forth. Robert Ryman, we needed a major work by Robert Ryman in the collection and so forth. And then there's certain other California artists that should have been strongly represented in the collection.

RATNER: I know you talked about the fact that there was this pluralistic idea of the various areas that you were collecting in, so the acquisition policy, I think, was very broad. I wondered if that changed at all over the years, the parameters, sort of, for the acquisition policy.

One of the reasons that I was asking that is because in 1991, there's something that I read about a new permanent collection strategy, and for lack of a better term, it sounded a little bit politically correct in a way, and so I might have misread it. But what it said was that you needed to "rigorously adopt a nonsegregated and nonhierarchical approach to the presentation of the broad range of significant artistic practices that characterize contemporary art in the permanent collection." So I wondered what that really meant and what led to the need for clarification at that point.

KOSHALEK: It's one of those dilemmas that museums face, and that is that they are offered by individuals, at different times, works for the collection. The greatest difficulty is saying no, because when you do say no, you tend to offend the individual who felt that this work was important in their own collection and would have been important in the collection of MOCA. And so you sometimes sort of take works into the collection without the same rigorous sort of analysis and understanding of how it fits within the total conceptual sort of framework for which this collection is being built. We outline certain sort of aspects of collecting collections and in depth and so on, and a select number of artists.

I think at different stages along the way, I think we started to every once in a while to have doubts, whether we took works into the collection that maybe didn't belong there or weren't of the same quality as the rest of the collection, and we knew we did. I mean, we knew we did. And sometimes they were done for the wrong reasons, political reasons and so forth, and I won't get into any details, but there were works that should have never entered the collection.

But there were people constantly asking this question. It was not only curatorial staff in the museum, but it was also people like Bea Gersh and Lennie Greenberg and people who really understood what a collection of importance means, [a collection] of significance. So we were always sort of talking about this, and should we de-accession certain works. Is this an artist that should be in our collection? Sometimes it would even come down to very practical things like, you know, do we have enough storage space for this material, right, and should we become

even more restrictive. And so I think that 1991 sort of document was to start to think about this.

But then, at the same time, we were getting concerned that the world of contemporary art was expanding in terms of its pluralistic quality, and I always felt that there were so many individuals that needed to be in this collection, because they made a rather interesting contribution, because we were not in this period of where there were different movements or styles or whatever. So it's easy to collect Abstract Expressionism to a certain degree if you have the resources. It's easy to collect Pop Art, to a certain degree.

But in the seventies and the eighties, this thing started to collapse, right? There were no cohesive sort of groupings where you could say, "Okay, this is a group of work that we must have." And so it was mostly then individual sort of directions and individual tendencies and accomplishments that we had to deal with. So at the same time, we were getting concerned that we were missing something here and that we also were, again—I was—well aware of the Museum of Modern Art.

We know that the Museum of Modern Art in the beginning, with Alfred Barr—and the ghost of Alfred Barr still haunts the Museum of Modern Art, unfortunately—but that they had a very sort of wide-ranging sort of acquisitions policy, and they did all the right things. I mean, he was visiting the Bauhaus at the right time. He was in Russia at the right time. He was in Europe. He didn't deal with Asia or Latin America to the degree that he maybe should have. He had some kind of

reluctance to deal with American art during that period to a certain degree, but that he did extremely well there in touching the right moments and the right instincts.

And then MoMA lost it in the sixties and the seventies and the eighties in that they didn't collect as comprehensively as they should to really document what that period meant in terms of artistic contributions, from artists' contributions, and we didn't want that to happen. So we wanted to be maybe more sort of broadminded, at the same time being concerned whether we were taking in works that weren't of the same quality. But this is the problem you have in a contemporary museum. I mean, I don't know exactly, but there's a wonderful quote of Alfred Barr when one of the trustees asked him, "Why do we have to buy all of these works?"

And Alfred Barr said, "If we buy ten works, and ten years from now one of those works has value, it's worth buying the other nine." I mean, hedging the bets.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And so it was one of those dilemmas and arguments and paradoxes that you confront in collecting for a museum that we were trying to sort out. We knew we made some mistakes by taking certain things in the collection, but we also didn't want to make mistakes by missing something that would be critically important ten years from now. So it was a real difficult balancing act.

So we had a lot of conversation with the Acquisitions Committee, interesting conversations, conversations I enjoyed enormously, because it was about ideas and it was about the building of an institution and a collection. And if there's anything I find myself to be interested in, is this idea of building institutions. I like this idea. I mean,

this is where my interest is, but building a unique institution, one that's more original than most. And so these kind of conversations and discussions and dialogues were of interest to me.

But it's still going on, I'm sure, and it will go on ten years from now. They will be having the same discussion. So every once in a while we would draft a document. And it was also my feeling that the board can only deal—and the staff the same way—can only deal with questions like this if there's something on paper to react to. That's why the Playbook in the beginning, that's why a lot of this text was written, and all these documents and white papers were written to a certain degree, was it gave us, the board and the staff and even the press, to a certain degree, something to focus on in terms of the discussion and say, "Is this right? Is this wrong? Do we have the right idea? Do we have the wrong idea?"

So we did that on photography. We did it on works on paper. And it was quite interesting actually. But this is one of the— Well, look at MoMA. I mean, it's got a huge collection. How much of all the work of that collection is critically important right now? That's interesting. So that will always be there. That question will always be there. That paradox will always be there somehow.

Then we also tried to make it reflect the exhibition program, right? And so the exhibition program was wide-ranging. And we haven't gone into collecting architecture, but there's this exhibition program. And one of the things we learned from the Pasadena Art Museum was that they did all these great exhibitions like the [Marcel] Duchamp and Warhol, and they never bought any work for the collection.

And so we didn't want to miss that opportunity also. So it was this whole complex thing of how we played what cards we have and how we try to get it right. You don't get it right every time, but you have to make decisions, which you also like doing.

RATNER: In December of 1995, a work by an African American artist, David Hammons, was proposed for acquisition.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And curator Elizabeth Smith said, "Currently, MOCA's collection has a very limited representation of works by African American artists, and the curators have identified this as a major shortcoming and hope to redress this balance over time. Acquisition of this important work by the foremost contemporary African American artist would be a major achievement in this context."

The committee opted to purchase a work by Josef Kosuth instead at that time.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: And this situation raised some interesting questions regarding the strength of the collection and responding to external pressures, or standards of building a collection.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: I just wondered if you could talk about that, the kind of true goals and how you blend these things.

KOSHALEK: Well, it's a complicated thing again, but, I mean, I think when we first started MOCA, we said it was a truly international museum, it was going to be truly international, and then when we realized as we were moving forward that it wasn't

truly international, that was number one, and that we hadn't had much presence in Latin America. We didn't.

I mean, the curators at MOCA would know, and so would I, what's going on in New York, what's going on in Europe, but we didn't not know what was being done in the studios and the galleries and the museums of Latin America, for example, or Mexico. And we live in Los Angeles. We also did not have the kind of knowledge we needed in terms of Asia, and so we found we weren't truly international. So that was one of the problems that we confronted that we felt we had to deal with.

Towards the end of my tenure, we spent a lot of time traveling through Latin America and through Mexico and through Asia to start to build a sort of a base of research so that we could start making some decisions with regard to acquisitions and introducing ourselves to collectors and the people who could help us do this and so forth. So that was number one.

Then we also realized that the collection did not have the kind of diversity it should have had, and this was something we learned as we went along. Now, we also find that in terms of the collections that were gifted or we acquired, there wasn't much of a diversity factor in those collections either.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And so this wasn't being compensated for, either through the gifts that we were being given or through the acquisitions like Panza or the Friedus Collection that we were acquiring, and so we realized that we were also then at a difficult problem that we had to sort of confront and to deal with. Elizabeth was somebody

who was out front on that issue and proposed to David Hammons and, as you saw, it was not agreed to, and they went for Josef Kosuth, who was also a very good artist, but it didn't solve this problem.

We still at MOCA— I shouldn't say *we*, but that MOCA still has this problem, and most institutions in this country have this problem, and that is this question of diversity and where representation comes from, whether it's the Hispanic community or the African American community or the Asian community, whatever it might be, right? This is where the museum, I think, under my tenure did not accomplish as much as we should have, and I'm being quite honest about that. We should have done more there in that area. We were slow to react, and then we were unable to sort of accomplish something major here that would have changed that thinking. So that's a point, in terms of my tenure, that we did not succeed at in the time I was there, the roughly twenty years I was there, and I wish we had done more there, actually.

But I also think it was reflected in the exhibition program. It's not just the collection that we didn't really accomplish this greater diversity that I think is essential; we didn't accomplish it in terms of the exhibition program either during my tenure, and that's one of the areas in which I wish we could have done more, actually. And we didn't. Boy, that's interesting, isn't it? That one, we didn't catch. Also, it's very hard to convince boards that diversity is important and necessary.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: Now it's easier, and you have certain people who have entered the board of, say, MoMA, like Cisneros, who has a strong interest in Latin America,

comes from, I think, where is it, Venezuela or Brazil, and has made a commitment. But you find that institutions have great difficulty, trustees, staff, and the institution itself, in dealing with this issue of diversity and whether it's representation on the Board of Trustees or it's representation on the curatorial staff, or it's the collection or it's the exhibition program.

So it wasn't just MOCA; it's all museums have this great difficulty, and they're not able to— I don't think we still found the right solution or there's one institution that's accomplished what needs to be done here. And these single institutions—

[Interruption]

KOSHALEK: But I don't think that if you start a Latino museum or an Afro-American museum, that's okay, and that's one thing, or an American Indian museum, and that accomplishes something. But that's not what I think is necessary. What's really necessary is that the collections at MoMA, the collections at the Whitney, the collections at MOCA, the collections in San Francisco, wherever that might be, have this greater diversity of representation, because, again, these museums are not representing the reality of the world in which we live.

I mean, the majority of population in the city of Los Angeles is Hispanic. I don't think there's any major really representation at any of the museums in this city of work by artists of Hispanic descent, and that is a problem, because they bring a different kind of energy, a different kind of thinking, a different kind of emotional sort

of impact, that the collection should have and that the public should have the right to experience access to.

RATNER: I know you have to wrap up, but what was the discussion like at that particular meeting on the Hammons versus the Kosuth? Was it simply a question of quality that they were talking about, or why they decided on one over the other?

KOSHALEK: I think, if my memory serves me correctly, that the work that was being proposed by David Hammons in the minds of certain people was not a major work by that artist. And then what happens is also this question comes up where one work by David Hammons solved the problem, or should we have a different strategy that says that we want to find a way of having a much more comprehensive representation that really is not just one artist, but has a strong representation of diversity in the collection. So that question also came up at the time. Should we try to start this with one work, or should we reconceptualize this and say, “Okay, no. We should have a group of artists that join the collection at the same time and find somebody to provide the funding for it,” and that it would be David Hammons, plus, plus, plus, plus, plus, plus, and that would be a much more significant gesture than just one work.

This whole idea of tokenism and stuff came up, and I don’t know what that all means, to tell you the truth, but I think it was those two things, this question of the quality of that work as representing the body of work that he’s done, and I think the idea of whether we should come up with a plan or a strategy where there was a comprehensive acquisition that brought really truly diversity to the collection. It’s

like getting one individual to the board that represents diversity is not a good thing, and it should be more individuals than one. And I think that came up also.

But we never really got there, but I don't think— Very few institutions have gotten there, even today. And I think this is still a challenge for MOCA.

Unfortunately, we didn't get there.

RATNER: Okay. I know you have to go. Thank you.

KOSHALEK: You're welcome.

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KOSHALEK: I don't think I have much to add here. That's the problem. I was there, but I don't remember.

RATNER: Okay, well, we'll do our best.

KOSHALEK: It's like Dennis Hopper said. Somebody asked him about the sixties and what he remembered of the sixties, and he said, "If you remember anything from the sixties, you really weren't involved." [mutual laughter]

RATNER: That could well be true.

Okay. Well, today's Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2003, and we are again at Art Center with its president, Richard Koshalek. When we last met, we were talking about the issue of diversity in a museum and how difficult it is to achieve on boards, curatorially and within collections, and you said this was an area in which you were dissatisfied with MOCA's achievements and that this was a subject that came up several times at MOCA.

For example, in June of 1988, the Governance and Nominating Committee concurred that the current lack of minority representation on the board was a significant omission and that special efforts needed to be devoted to identifying and recruiting potential trustees from minority communities. I wondered how this was addressed, because the same issue is revisited in a significant way after the riots in 1992. You commented last time that it's hard to convince boards, and I don't know if

you meant most boards or MOCA's specifically, that diversity is important, and I just wondered why at MOCA you felt this was such an uphill battle.

KOSHALEK: Yes. I think even today in institutions, whether it's museums or colleges or whatever, there is a lot of discussion about diversity on the board, and somehow they are unable to sort of motivate the institution or the leadership of the institution or for the institution to somehow sort of deal directly with this subject.

At MOCA we did bring certain individuals on the board who did represent diversity. Danny Villanueva was one of them. I'll get his name in a minute. Bob Davidson, Robert Davidson, just to mention two. Ignacio Lozano. These were extraordinary individuals and who were involved in the community in many different ways. Robert "Bob" Davidson was a major donor to Spelman College. There's a building, administration building, is named after him. Ignacio Lozano, who was the editor of *La Opinión*, was very active in [Walt] Disney's [Corporation] board and so on. Danny Villanueva was very active.

But for somehow to engage them into the institution where they felt that they had a meaningful and a leadership role to play didn't seem to be possible, and I cannot explain why, actually, because the people who were the trustees of the institution aren't people who would have a problem with this. But there's still something about the history of institutions in this city, whether it's the Music Center, it's a museum, and this is not just dealing with diversity in terms of the black community or the Hispanic community, but also the Jewish community to a certain extent, and that history is very difficult to overcome. I think the problem is there, sort of, this long

history that you have to overcome, where they actually do feel that they are truly welcome, that they're not just token representation of their communities, but also that the institution is concerned about their community. Judy Baca was also on this, one of the trustees at the time.

By that I mean what is the collection policy of the institution that represents diversity? What is the composition of the curatorial staff where you do have curators who have an interest in that, in those different areas and constituencies in terms of following what artists are doing and going to artists' studios and so on? Where are the collectors on the board who collect this material and make that kind of commitment?

So it is a very, very difficult problem to solve, and I think in my tenure at MOCA we never did solve that problem, and I think even today they have not solved that problem. So these individuals left within short order, and it was not so much frustration, but just the inability to connect to the overall psyche of the institution and to believe that it had a meaningful role to play with regard to their community. We never did solve that problem, and I don't think it's been solved today.

I know institutions are struggling with this problem, with this concern, let's put it that way, still; I mean today. USC [University of Southern California] just recently— Stan Gold became the president of USC, first Jewish president of a major university. Interesting.

So the question of diversity is a very large question. If I had it all to do it all over again, I would truly set up a total new task force that would be made up of curatorial individuals, community leaders, trustees, and we would deal with this issue

in a very direct way and come up with a proposal, long-range proposal for dealing with it. But only then if I would have brought all the different constituencies together might we have gotten an understanding of what the total problem was here. And we never saw it. We never got it, unfortunately.

As you know, L.A. is the most diverse city, one of the most diverse cities, in the United States, and if we don't have it on our board and we're dealing with contemporary art and contemporary issues and the reality of the contemporary world, long-term the institution will be damaged by that somehow. The Music Center, LACMA, they all have this problem.

RATNER: It's interesting to look at a little more in depth.

KOSHALEK: Maybe citywide initiative, right, where all the institutions participate. Might be interesting.

RATNER: Yes.

Okay. We also spoke a bit about acquisition policy last time, and I also wanted to follow up on that a bit. Peter Norton registered some concern with Fred Nicholas regarding MOCA's audit policy, or lack thereof, and according to Fred Nicholas, the original purpose of the policy was to prevent powerful collectors from dominating the Acquisition and Program Committees. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about what Peter's concerns were.

KOSHALEK: I don't think they were correct, and I'll just say this straightforward as I can. I think that the Board of Trustees and the Acquisition Committee in my tenure at MOCA was really never dominated by the powerful collectors, truly never

dominated by the powerful collectors. I don't think there was ever a moment in my tenure there that a trustee or a group of trustees, powerful or not powerful, came to me and said, "Richard, Richard, Richard, the collection has to go in this direction. We have to enhance this part of the collection. We have to do this." Never once.

Now, the staff had all kinds of concerns about the collection and which way it was going. We brought up one issue, this question of diversity, and where the decisions were being made, where the weaknesses were. In my tenure at MOCA, fortunately, I found that the Board of Trustees were very, very open to letting the staff, the professional staff, the curatorial staff, and the director provide the leadership in terms of defining what the collection should be and what areas we should expand into.

Now, that doesn't mean that once those proposals were given to the board and these things were outlined in front of the board, that certain trustees did not raise questions. There are individuals on that board like Beatrice Gersh and Lennie, Lenore Greenberg, who have very strong opinions about what they collect and what they think the institution should collect and what will have value not only short-term, but long-term, and we hear those opinions, but that's why they're on the committee. But never once, never once, did I ever see the committee really say, "We want to set the agenda for what the acquisition policy of this institution is."

I think this comes to a certain degree from the fact that Peter Norton was a very unique collector and still is, and I applaud him for that. I really do. I think Peter is somebody who was willing to take risks in terms of his own collecting. He was willing to focus on young artists, artists that weren't recognized, and to buy the work,

and served as not only a collector of that work, but also a patron and an encourager of young talent, and it was an extraordinary role for him to play.

But I would say because of that and because of his sort of overwhelming commitment in that area, which I actually thought was quite courageous and had the potential to make a valued contribution to not only MOCA, but other institutions, that to a certain degree he was out of sync with the other collectors on the board, the other collectors being the Lenore Greenbergs and the Beatrice Gershes and so forth, the Doug Cramers. He was out of sync with them because of his collecting sort of interests and their collecting interests, and they tended to be more concerned about lasting value, more concerned about acquiring the work of established individuals than, say, Peter did.

So Peter was a risk taker. Peter was willing to take those risks. He was a patron of young artists in a major way, significant way. I don't think I've ever met anybody like Peter Norton as a collector who was able to make that kind of comprehensive commitment, that total commitment. But he was out of sync with the other collectors on the board, and I think that's where it might come from. And he is still out of sync with the vast majority of collectors in the country because of this commitment on his part, something I actually applaud. So I think that's where it comes from, to a certain degree.

I would say that a good number of the trustees on that board, on the Acquisitions Committee felt that what Peter was collecting was not of value and would not be of value long-term and how much of that should an institution like

MOCA sort of take responsibility for. You've got to be very careful there, because Peter might be right, and if one out of ten of the artists that he does collect turns out to be important in the future, it's worth collecting the other ten, and it's worth making that commitment. And Peter was willing to make that commitment. But there's no doubt about it, he was out of sync with the ideas and intentions and collecting instincts of the other trustees. He's unique that way.

RATNER: Would you say that had something to do with the fact that he didn't stay involved with MOCA for too long?

KOSHALEK: I think Peter did not stay involved? No, I don't think so, actually. I don't think that was the reason at all. I think the reason was that it was a matter of personalities. Peter's a rather eccentric individual. I think Peter's also a very complex individual. There were a lot of issues having to do on his side, as I understood it from conversations, about his wife being black and whether the other trustees were accepting of that. I don't think the other trustees really were too concerned about that.

I think there was a concern whether Peter was being accepted by the other trustees, in his own mind. I don't think this goes just to the fact that he was on the board of MOCA and his acceptance of those trustees. I think he's had this sort of conflict with the larger world, whether he's accepted by the larger world and certain sort of segments or constituencies or individuals in that larger world, and I think this is a personal battle of his that he's been fighting for a long time.

I think it had a lot to do with me. I think he left the board because our personalities were not such that we were going to ever become close, that we were

ever going to have a sort of institutional dialogue that I think maybe Peter felt he should have had because of the role he wanted to play. It's something you learn in the world, is that you can work with a large number of people, and you can sort of— They can be on your board, and you can be the director of the institution, and you can try your very best, which I think I did with Peter, and with— I had difficulty with three trustees: Max Palevsky, Doug Cramer, and Peter Norton. There were maybe more, but I don't know about them or it never really surfaced in a very sort of public way.

But I actually think that if you instinctively don't like someone, that you can try to work with them, and you can try to be a sort of good colleague and a good citizen and try to be responsive and include them and have them participate. But if you instinctively dislike them, sooner or later that's going to show. It's actually truly going to show. There's no way you can hide this over a long period of time, especially if you're in a situation where you're dealing with very intense issues like institutional leadership and what direction the institution needs to go, I mean what are the goals of the institution and so forth. And I can honestly tell you that I instinctively disliked this man.

So, long-term, it was not going to work. It was going to show sooner or later, and it surfaced, I'm sure, many times. There were meetings that we had that were very difficult, very, very, very difficult meetings that we had, and they usually were focused on the institution and the issues of the institution. My point to Peter in just about every one of those meetings is, "I can't give you a perfect institution. It doesn't exist." And I said, "MOCA is an institution. The people involved aren't perfect. I'm

not perfect. Mistakes are made. We're all trying our best. But I cannot give you a perfect institution that fits your model exactly."

And I think he found that to be the case at the Whitney. I think he found that to be the case, maybe, at MoMA and other institutions also. But he never believed that, and I think he believed that I didn't try hard enough to resolve some of the concerns that he had having to do with his wife and the other trustees, having to do with including him in a much more major way so he had not an equal voice to the other trustees, but had a much more dominant voice. He is truly convinced that he is right. That's all right. I mean, that's why he's been successful to a certain degree in the world, and he has.

But what I want to say about Peter is, instinctively I did not like the man, and there was no way long-term I was going to cover that up, even though I tried at times, and other trustees like Fred Nicholas tried to bring us together and make it work. But it just doesn't work in the real world. It just doesn't work.

It's not about human reason, actually. I mean, we all talk about the fact that people are reasonable, and institutional leadership and board discussion is based on people being reasonable and so forth. It's based on human nature, and human nature is the key. We are all very different, and I don't put the blame on Peter, I don't put the blame on myself, but we were not going to get along. There was just no way long-term that Peter and I could sit in the same room and be colleagues and move the agenda of the institution together in a harmonious way. It just wasn't going to happen, and that's just the way it is. Human nature's that way.

So who won? I don't know. We both lost, probably. I mean, I lost someone who could have made a major contribution to the institution in terms of supporting younger artists. Peter maybe lost also because he left a situation I think he was very strongly interested in, which involved contemporary art, and he was involved in the situation at the time. We were building MOCA, basically, and his contribution could have been significant. But that's the way it is. I have no regrets. He maybe doesn't either. But we did have some very, very intense, difficult confrontational moments, I'll tell you. You wouldn't have wanted to been there, I can tell you.

RATNER: I don't know if one of them might have to do with de-accessioning, but I do know that there was a memo to Peter that talked about having a carefully considered de-accessioning program which should be embarked on to improve the permanent collection. I'm wondering what precipitated the need for "a carefully considered de-accessioning program" at that late date. It's already 1992, so the museum's been up and running for quite some time. I wonder if it related in any way to there was a 1991 permanent collection strategy, and you commented that some works had been accessioned for political reasons.

KOSHALEK: Yes. This happens within every institution at times. Certain works enter the collection that—and you try to avoid this as much as possible—that enter the collection for political reasons, for other reasons than just the fact that it would be essential for the collection, or it's worth taking a risk on this work if it's a young artist to move it forward.

But also I can tell you that there were actual situations. For example, when Barry Lowen gave his collection to MOCA, I had a whole series of conversations with Barry Lowen about the collection and what works he felt were not of importance by [Jean-Michel] Basquiat. I know that was in the picture. It was one of them. And by a number of other artists, and I'll try to think of the names. He felt that he wanted to keep the collection intact, but that there are notes in the file that say very clearly that "Based on my meeting with Barry Lowen, he feels that we should try to upgrade that representation by those artists in the collection and that de-accession should be part of that picture." He mentioned who those were, and it's a small number of artists. So that was also part of it.

Then there was certain individuals who had given works to the collection where we felt that we could have a much stronger work that would represent that specific artist. It was really looking at how do we increase the value of the collection, how do we make the collection be as relevant as possible and have the highest quality of work. That is part of it.

So it's works that sometimes enter the collection for political reasons. One example is a work by a lady named Elizabeth Keck, and the last name will tell you something. Then there's other work that entered the collection, given by collectors who felt that the works, like Barry Lowen, that it should be upgraded and that there should be a de-accessioning. Then there's other works that once we look at the total picture, so, for example, if you get Andy Warhol's telephone or you get the Jasper Johns map from Marcia Simon Weisman and you have the combines from Bob

Rauschenberg, maybe there's some work that needs to be sort of de-accessioned to improve the total collection and to give the total collection sort of the strength that it needs.

So it's a very complicated picture. We talked about it often. We didn't talk about it early on. As you know, the museum started with an exhibition program dealing with performing arts and so on, the whole concept of the Guerilla Museum, because we didn't have a collection. So we started out with the exhibition program, a pattern similar to that at the Walker Art Center, by the way, where I worked before, where they started to build a reputation for the institution through its programming and then build the collection as you went forward.

But then once we acquired the Panza Collection, things changed, and I think right after we acquired the Panza Collection and then we started to get the Barry Lowen Collection and so forth, this idea of collecting collections, which was something I believed in strongly. You can waste a lot of time getting a single work. Not that you don't do that, and you can make a large amount of effort in that direction, not that you don't do that, because that single work might be very important, but the idea of collecting collections was my concept of how you build a collection for an institution.

We started to talk about de-accessioning on a regular basis, I think. But the museum had a small collection. There was nothing in the Panza Collection you would de-accession. There were certain things in the Barry Lowen Collection that he wanted de-accessioned and upgraded. There were certain works in the— The Schrieber

Collection, there was nothing that you would de-accession. But there were other collections that came along.

I think that's a healthy thing for an institution to constantly keep thinking about where this collection is and what is the quality of this collection, where are your strengths, how do you build on those strengths, and if you have works by certain artists, how do you upgrade those works if you feel it's necessary. You can find a consensus for this to a certain degree, not just a consensus within the institution. But if you start to consult people outside the institution, scholars and so on, you can find a consensus for how this pattern works and how this fits. So it was something that was on everybody's mind for a long period of time.

I don't know if I answered your question.

RATNER: You did. So you didn't get into any sticky situations with the de-accessioning, then, ultimately?

KOSHALEK: No, zero, zero, because I don't think we did very much. I don't think we did. Did we do any deaccessioning during my term?

RATNER: Not that I can—

KOSHALEK: I don't think so. I don't think so. Actually, it came up over and over and over again, and we discussed it, but I don't think we ever got to the point of de-accessioning works from the collection, and there should have been some work, some activity there that we didn't get to, actually.

Well, I'll give you a good example, just off the record. Well, on the record; doesn't matter. But I got a call one time from the Brooklyn Museum, and they were

looking for a director, and I said, “I’m not interested. I don’t want to live in Brooklyn,” and so forth. But we sat down and met with some of the people, and I gave them the suggestion that they have this huge collection, this huge collection. Never, never, never will they have the ability or the resources to show it, either space, curatorial expertise, time, money, whatever. So I said, “What I would do if I became the director of the Brooklyn Museum is I’d bring in the foremost experts from around the world to meet with the curatorial staff of the Brooklyn Museum, and we would determine what the Brooklyn Museum from this vast collection really, truly needed to hold onto that would be of great benefit to the public, and look at it in light of what’s at the Met in terms of Egyptian material, whatever, and try to get a sort of a very comprehensive look at what they should have.”

Then I suggested to them that they should de-accession the work that will never, ever be seen, ever be researched, and so on, but only to public institutions, not to private individuals so it gets lost from the public realm. And I said, “That money should go for two purposes. It should go for building the collection, strengthening the collection. It should go to building curatorial strength and supporting curatorial fellowships and endowed positions, and it should go for public education with regard to the collection, not just to add new works to the collection,” which is, you know, the American Association of Museum Directors has this policy if you saw something, you have to buy a work of art. I don’t agree with that.

I can honestly tell you they were horrified. But here we sit at the Brooklyn Museum, and they’ve still got the same damn problem. They do not have enough

money to support the institution's curatorial initiatives. They do not have enough space to actually show the collection they have, and it will never see the light of day. And the public does not have access to this material, which I think is the biggest crime.

The fact that you want to retain ownership of a work of art that you will ever, never, never show, I think, is a crime. I truly do. And I think the public deserves access to this work. Can you imagine what could happen in cities across the country where they could build collections if some of this material was de-accessioned, that would be of educational value to schoolchildren, to the public, and so forth? So I think it is a very shortsighted, naïve, and, in my mind, not a very original thought with regard to how to deal with their collection.

So here it sits in the basement, in dust, probably not being cared for as well as it should be, and yet they won't move, and they've got terrible financial problems. Well, there it is.

So the whole question of de-accessioning is one that takes serious consideration, but there's creative ways of de-accessioning work that builds strength within your collection, not only strength within the collection with individual works, but curatorial effort, public education. But then also builds strength within other institutions throughout the world with that material. Otherwise, they might as well just return it to Egypt and put it back in the ground, right?

RATNER: Right, right.

KOSHALEK: Nobody's going to see it. Well, there's another story.

RATNER: During your tenure, several trustees that we've mentioned over the various sessions were intimately involved with museum life, and their influence was felt in a variety of arenas. Some stayed committed for many years, others for only a few. Eli Broad was the first chairman of the Board of Trustees, and he was deeply involved in all the early stages of the museum's development. In some correspondence to Fred Nicholas from February of 1992, you commented that Broad had extremely strong opinions regarding various trustees and committee leadership.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: I'm wondering how you would describe his impact on the museum, your relationship with him, and his interaction with the staff, the trustees, and his role as an advocate for the museum.

KOSHALEK: Eli Broad, in the beginning, was the reason—one of the reasons; let's put it that way—that MOCA was able to come into existence. There's just no doubt about it. He is the founding chairman. He deserves that title. He took the risk. He stepped forward and assumed the responsibility for providing leadership, and he made contributions, many people feel not to the scale, considering his net worth, that he should have. But he made one of the first million-dollar contributions early on in the founding campaign.

He led that campaign, no matter what anybody tells you. From Andrea Van de Kamp to Merry Norris, to whatever, that campaign was led by Eli Broad and that campaign succeeded because he put his name on the line, went to the meetings, talked to people, and presented the case for MOCA. He had a very strong opinion of what

the museum should do, and he felt that it should be focused primarily on the permanent collection, that it should not do an extensive exhibition program because that's expensive, that we should only take one or two blockbuster exhibitions a year that brought in attendance.

He felt that the curatorial staff should remain very small. I think even in the early stages he felt education and the whole educational sort of initiative of MOCA was not important and that it should be almost similar to the way he deals with his collection today, right? If you ask him today, if you interview him today, he'll say the same thing. He'll say the same thing. He's been consistent for twenty-five years in this opinion, and I disagreed with it totally and completely.

I believe you've got to engage the public in an educational initiative. I think you have to have an exhibition program that supports the work of young artists, emerging artists, and established artists and as an educational sort of part of the component to the program of the institution. I also think that the collection's important. But I think there's a relationship between doing the exhibition program, acquiring work from the exhibitions, and putting it into the permanent collection.

So I see a museum he also would be very much against in those early stages, probably still today, of getting into disciplines such— I think he would have limited the institution, if he had the total control, into painting and sculpture, maybe works on paper. But there would be no programming in architecture, no programming in film, no programming in performing arts. That was not his thing. And I had this idea that we needed a pluralistic program, one that reached a different audience. So if we did a

film program, a different audience shows up. We do a dance program, a different audience shows up. He did not agree with that at all, and so forth.

So we, all the way through, had a very, very, very major disagreement on what the agenda for the institution was. But yet Eli was supportive all the way through in terms of his own resources, his own leadership capabilities and capacities, and even before I left, he made another million-dollar gift to MOCA, and now we are good friends.

I can honestly tell you, also, that he tried to fire me a number of times in a very serious way, and he made the move to do it. He did not succeed because the other trustees stepped in and stopped it, but he did do that.

RATNER: More than once?

KOSHALEK: More than once, yes, yes, yes. Those are other stories, but he actually tried every sort of— Or at certain stages he tried every possible way to get rid of me, and it was blocked by people like Carl Hartnack and Fred Nicholas and Bill Kieschnick and Lenore Greenberg, but he wanted to do that because we did disagree.

Eli is somebody who is a very strong leader. He believes in people with— He's convinced that individuals who have large egos are the people you want to be involved with, because they cannot fail. They have too much at stake to fail. He does have a large ego. He's also very controlling. He wants it to be his way. He defines very, very precisely what the agenda of his corporation or his own foundation or an institution he's involved in, like MOCA, what it should do, and he's very consistent about that, and there's no room for other opinion.

And we disagreed. We truly disagreed. We disagreed on just about everything having to do with the agenda and the program for the institution. But when it came time to acquire the Panza Collection and Panza wrote me the famous letter in June saying, “Richard, I have to do something about the collection,” the first person—I sat down and I looked at the board and I looked at every trustee, and I said, “Okay. I want to get this collection for MOCA. I think this will set the standard for MOCA. It will get us international recognition. It gives us great strength in the fifties, the sixties, and the seventies. The price is reasonable, roughly ten million dollars. Panza wants it to stay together. He wants it to be in L.A., so we have an advantage there.”

I decided that if this was going to happen, there’s only one person that could have helped me accomplish that, and that was Eli Broad. So the first person I went to, and we had lunch at the Regency Club and I took the photographs of each of the works that Panza had sent me, and I said, “Eli, this is what we have to do.”

And Eli instantly said, “We have to do this.”

This was at a time when MOCA was a very fragile institution, did not have many resources, and he was willing, again, to take that kind of risk. So he’s that kind of thinker. But this fit in with his thinking that we should be a permanent collection museum, right? But still he was willing to do it, and he was extraordinary in helping make this happen.

So this man has pluses and minuses. The pluses have been of great benefit to the institution, his fundraising ability, his leadership ability, his appreciation of the importance of collection, his work with the Panza Collection. But there has also been

minuses, and it caused a lot of conflict a lot of times, his strong positions having to do with other trustees, with myself for sure. In the end he did not, I don't think, leave MOCA feeling as good about the institution as he maybe should have, considering his contribution. But he never gave up in his support, contributed another million dollars, was always at openings, and so forth.

Interesting now, both of us have become very good friends, but it has to do with architecture, and it's through our work on Disney Hall. It's through our work on LACMA and picking Rem Koolhaas to be the architect for LACMA. It's having to do with our work on the CalTrans Building and picking Thom Mayne to design that building, and I co-chaired that committee at the recommendation of Eli, who is close to Governor Gray Davis, and this was an important project for Gray Davis. So we now are good friend, but it was a very difficult time, very difficult time.

And at least twice he tried to fire me, and one time I actually thought he succeeded. It was an interesting time, and then you have to go to board meetings and sit across the table from this person. Life can have its very difficult moments somehow. Have you met him?

RATNER: No.

KOSHALEK: Have they done an oral history on him?

RATNER: They haven't, but they should.

KOSHALEK: They should. Also, whatever you do, do an oral history with Sherri Geldin. It's critical. She was in the middle of it, and she's got a great memory. She wrote all the founding documents. She was there before I was. If they miss an oral

history with Sherri Geldin, they're going to miss a good part of the history of this place.

RATNER: Yes, yes. That would be good. What about Bill Kieschnick?

KOSHALEK: A giant.

RATNER: His role and influence.

KOSHALEK: A giant, critically important when the board was having great conflict, having to do with Eli's leadership, and we were at a critical stage of getting ready to open the Bunker Hill building by Isozaki, the California Plaza Building by Isozaki. We needed a very strong leader, and it turned out to be Bill Kieschnick.

I went to the meeting. We wanted, first of all, Bob [Robert] Anderson, and we went to the meeting to see Bob Anderson and to talk about his becoming a trustee, and he said, "No, I wouldn't. I can't do that. That's not going to work for me," even though he was very supportive of MOCA. He said he recommended Bill Kieschnick.

I remember going down the hall to meet Bill Kieschnick for the first time, and Bill told us right off the bat, "I have no interest in contemporary art. I have one painting in my collection by Grandma Moses." He said, "But I believe MOCA's critically important for this city, for the city of Los Angeles, and this is a civic responsibility that I'm taking on, and I'd like very much to join your board."

He did everything right every step of the way. This is a man who has a very balanced view of the world and his role in it and has an ability to provide leadership and bring people along, to get to bring people in a collective way to focus on a problem and to solve it. This is somebody who I actually personally admire

enormously and as somebody who really did make a difference, did make a difference at critical moments when there was a lot of internal difficulty and bringing the board together.

I'll never forget a lecture, a speech, he gave to the board and the staff to talk about "The board does this, the staff does this, these are the staff responsibilities, these are the board responsibilities, and we're going to learn how to get along here, and we're going to respect each other." He gave an incredible presentation. But he is somebody who is extraordinary, an extraordinary individual, who actually appreciates— He never questioned the agenda of the professional curatorial staff and the director of the museum, never questioned it. He'd ask questions, but he never questioned in the sense of "You've got it wrong." Eli would, for sure. But Bill would always assume that the professionals know and we're here to support them, and trustees have a certain role and it's not to micromanage, and it's not to get involved in what the administration or director should do, but it's to provide larger leadership, the intergenerational leadership that is necessary for this institution to have a future. This is somebody else who should be interviewed, and he's now quite elderly.

The other person who was like that was Carl Hartnack, who was then the chairman of the board of Security Pacific Bank. But Bill is a leader, truly is a leader, and then became the CEO of ARCO and so forth, a remarkable individual, actually.

RATNER: Fred Nicholas became chairman of the board in 1988, and he played an enormous role at the museum in a variety of capacities. You two seemed to have had

an excellent rapport, and I wondered how you would describe your relationship with him and his impact on the museum.

KOSHALEK: His impact on the museum. I think the interesting thing about when you're building an institution is at different times certain people sort of walk through the doors and there's an opportune moment and they provide leadership. And Fred was one of those people.

Fred stepped in in the beginning when there was this conflict over the architecture, having to do with Isozaki and Max Palevsky, and there was a meeting that went on for two days. At the first part of the meeting, Isozaki presented his case for what he wanted to do and felt that he had been compromised by Max Palevsky and the committee and that the building that he had designed that we had presented to the public was not his design. He presented what the design should be and how he'd like to proceed and so on.

It was a very difficult forum, very difficult forum. The meeting was at Eli Broad's offices on the freeway, the former Kaufman and Broad Building. Very difficult meeting, went on for a whole day. All the trustees were there. Iso, at that time, did not speak perfect English. A very complicated meeting.

The next day, Max Palevsky came into the meeting, and Max Palevsky sort of went through his complaints and concerns about Isozaki and asked the board to fire Isozaki. Then an argument broke out that was— A discussion, let's put it that way, broke out that was not very pleasant. Max Palevsky, actually, at one point in the meeting pointed his finger at me and said, "You are the reason for all this goddamn

trouble,” and saying that, “You, Richard, are supporting Isozaki here and encouraging him, and you are the reason for this goddamn trouble.” At one point in the meeting that did happen.

But the man that stepped into that very difficult situation and who has an unbelievable bedside manner in dealing with people in conflicted situations, he brought this picture together. Then the board decided— A man named Rocco Siciliano, I remember his exact line, he said, “Let’s end the masochism and let’s take a vote.” And they voted seventeen to three. Leo Wyler, Bill Norris, and Max Palevsky voted to get rid of Isozaki, the rest of the board voted to keep Isozaki, and then there was one abstention, which was Eli Broad. He didn’t vote.

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KOSHALEK: I think the reason the vote came out seventeen to three is because I think Fred did his homework, and I think Fred began talking to trustees. He understood the situation. He understood that you have to respect the architect, you have to support the architect, that trustees and committees can't make decisions about what this building should be.

After the vote was taken, Max left, and then he filed a lawsuit against [MOCA], which is well documented in the press, and Fred took over the building of Bunker Hill. He brought myself back into the picture. At that time, Max had taken me out of the picture because we disagreed. Actually, there was a phone call maybe two months before where he told me, "You'll never attend another meeting, you're no longer on the committee, and you're out of this."

So I was out of it, which was at the time quite interesting because it was very disturbing to me at the time, but in the end, it turned out to be a good thing, because when the lawsuit surfaced, my answer was always, "I wasn't there and I have no comment and I wasn't involved," because he actually took me and threw me off the committee in a very nasty phone call, actually.

Fred took over, and the first thing Fred did was bring me back in the picture. I think a great building came from it, and that's Fred Nicholas that engineered that all. Then we worked together on the Temporary Contemporary, and he supported that and worked with Frank Gehry. Then we worked on Disney Hall together, and he's the one

who asked me to chair the architecture committee to pick Frank Gehry to do Disney Hall. Now he's working with us here at Art Center College of Design on the building of our south campus.

This is an extraordinary individual. I once asked Fred, I said, "Fred, what do you want to be written on your tombstone?"

And he said, "I want it to be written on my tombstone that I was a nice man," and it's totally, totally true. But he's not just a nice man; he is somebody who is able to get things done, to convince people that every situation is a win-win situation and that we have to move forward and we have a higher goal. He always saw a higher goal.

I actually think—and we've written about this in this book on Disney Hall—that Fred's involvement in MOCA and Disney Hall had to do with, yes, those institutions, but it had to do— And I think he saw this. It had to do with making a contribution to the city of Los Angeles, and if we're going to change downtown, and you have a lot of people now who are speaking up about their commitment to downtown, right? Eli Broad talks about this and Robert McGuire talks about this and so forth. But the one person who I think instinctively saw that there was another benefit to having MOCA succeed and the Music Center succeed and for there to be architecture at a very high level of achievement, that would benefit downtown Los Angeles and the city in its image symbolically and whatever around the world, that was Fred Nicholas. So he has this vision that he doesn't sort of explain, in a way, but it's there.

Then he has this commitment to people and bringing people together. The situation was so complex at Disney Hall with the county and the Music Center and the architect and the funders and the donors. It was so complicated at MOCA because we had the CRA, we had the developers, we had the Board of Trustees, we had the staff, we had the artist community, and he is remarkable at dealing with those kind of situations and getting everybody in the same room and sort of finding the correct solution, but always with a sense that we have to do something of the highest quality. It's in him. It's in his bones somehow.

He's truly, truly a unique leader, and he has never, ever in the twenty-five years I've known him ever, ever turned on me. Now, he's told me many times, "Richard, you're dead wrong," but it's said in a way that you can accept it. This is somebody I would get very emotional about, because he's quite remarkable. Are you going to interview him?

RATNER: It would be great if they have the funding to do it.

KOSHALEK: Yes, because it's Disney Hall and it is MOCA and now it's Art Center. But what a civic contribution this man has made. I mean, they should name a street after him. It's incredible, yes.

RATNER: In March of '93, Fred Nicholas handed the gavel to David Laventhol, and then Eli Broad rotated off the board.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: How would you describe those two changes?

KOSHALEK: First of all, Eli rotated off the board, and underneath the surface there was sort of— He had, at that stage, upset a lot of trustees, and there was a strong feeling that he should rotate off the board. I don't say he was pushed, but he was not truly encouraged to stay, and I think he sensed that and felt that and so forth. So that was a very complicated issue at the time.

David Laventhol was another one of these individuals that believed in your civic responsibility. He was the publisher of the *L.A. [Los Angeles] Times*. He had, again, not to the same degree that Fred did, the ability to bring people together. He did believe in the professional staff and support them at every step of the way. He was a very strong spokesperson for the museum in the business community, because he believed, he truly believed in it. He wasn't just going by script; he truly believed in it.

He has an incredible ability to read people. You would never guess it from meeting him, but he takes a reading—I guess it comes from being a journalist. He was, as you know, a very acclaimed journalist. I mean, this man's career in journalism is sort of well recognized, and books have been written and his contribution in New York at *Newsday* and so forth.

But he has an extraordinary way of understanding people's motives. What you find in a situation like MOCA is that you can sit around the room, the boardroom, and you can talk about a subject and people will express themselves, but you have a very difficult time understanding what their true motives are, myself included. That's what makes it so complicated, because people will say things at a board meeting, and they

will be thinking just the complete opposite, right? Or they will say, “I agree with that agenda,” and they know damn well that their agenda is something different.

So this is another thing that I learned in dealing with trustees in museums, is that people really never, never reveal their secrets, never, and that there isn’t such a thing as a candid— When somebody says, “I want to be candid here,” watch out. Or if “I want to be frank with you,” watch out. But they never are. They never are, and then they go away and they find ways to try to manipulate the situation or to influence other people or to deal with it in a different way. So you have that complexity there.

David is one of those people that can sit in a board meeting and he can watch people. I think it comes from being a journalist. I think if you’re a journalist of the stature of David Laventhol, you start to understand people very well and you start to read between the lines and you start to sort of— You’re always a bit suspicious of the motives of what’s being said. David, in terms of the MOCA board, he could read, better than anybody I’ve ever seen, the personalities of the people there and where they might be coming from and what their true, true, true thinking is, and then he was able to work with that.

So he, at the time, was an extremely, extremely positive force, sort of almost like a chairman psychiatrist for this board, and I think because of that, during his tenure the board was very productive and a lot was accomplished and there was a lot of sort of goodwill. Not that he would agree with what they were thinking, but he would somehow have a way of recognizing what the person is truly thinking, and there’s a magic in that. There’s a magic in that, because, first of all, you sit across the

table from somebody and they say things, and you sort of, at first you want to— At least I do, you want to take them for, “Okay, that’s what you feel. That’s what you believe in,” right? “You’re being honest with me,” right? That’s very seldom the case, by the way.

RATNER: That’s disheartening.

KOSHALEK: It is, but that’s human nature, again, and that’s how the world works.

So that’s the complexity of all of this, I mean when you’re dealing with a Board of Trustees, is how do you understand twenty-five, thirty-five, forty-five different individuals and their motivation and their intentions and their convictions here with regard to this institution. Some people are shy, don’t speak up, don’t like to express it in public, and you’ve got to understand all that. You have to put that all into balance, and you have to somehow put it into balance and yet have your own agenda for the institution and try to work it through, all of this— It’s like a pinball machine.

David had that great skill, that great skill to do it. There’s a letter in my office, still, right now, that he wrote to me just before he left as chairman, that I prize. But he had that ability to read a board and to really try to understand to as great an extent as possible, because everybody has secrets and they don’t even reveal those secrets to their wife, to their son, to their daughter, to their family.

Most people die— I mean, there’s this wonderful man, and I’m going to get to, who’s trying to invent a computer that will be able to download your brain five minutes before you die, and he thinks that we’ll get there, right? At that stage, we will really understand. If that happens, we will really understand the secrets that people

keep and never reveal, and what their intentions are or were, that were never revealed in the larger realm, in the larger world.

And that's what's so complicated about being involved in an institution like a museum or even president of a college, understanding all that and trying to—

Sometimes you get surprised. You know, Peter Norton was surprising. So there it is.

But David is a remarkable man, too, and a very accomplished journalist and then the publisher of the *Times*. This is the kind of leadership cultural institutions need, actually, because they're selfless and they think of the institution. They put the institution first. They don't put themselves first. There's a good number of people involved in MOCA and its history that always put themselves first and not the institution first. David, I remember, said something that was quite interesting. He said, "We should always ask what's best. If we've got a problem or a situation we're resolving here, what's best for MOCA, not what's best for each one of us individually," and he had that in him, and that's rare. That's rare. So this was a very important leader.

See, this is why institutions survive and do well, because these people step forward at different times in the picture, whether it's an Eli Broad or Leon or it's a Lenore Greenberg or it's a Count Panza or it's a Fred Nicholas or it's a Bill Kieschnick. All of these individuals are important at a certain time in the total picture, some more difficult than others; more complicated than others, let's put it that way.

RATNER: Speaking of complicated, Doug Cramer was quite involved for many years, and he served as chair of several auctions as well as president of the Board of

Trustees. Some correspondence I read indicated that a few trustees were wary of his motives and felt he made promises when he had no authority to do so.

In a personal and confidential letter from Mort Winston to Fred Nicholas, Mr. Winston registers some concern over Mr. Cramer's trustee suggestions and he hopes that "No"—I'm quoting here—"inappropriate promises have been made to or extracted from them, especially with regard to the proper role of collectors in shaping the museum."

KOSHALEK: Do you remember who those people were, by any chance? Were they mentioned? I'd love to know who they were.

RATNER: You know what, I don't think it said, but I don't remember for certain. I don't think it said. In fact, actually, I'm positive it did not say.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: What was that all about?

KOSHALEK: Well, this is one of those individuals that we talked about earlier on, and Doug Cramer, in my mind—and I'll be very straightforward about this—was not a constructive force at MOCA, but a very destructive force at MOCA. I think this came from the fact that this man and his involvement in MOCA had only to do with his own personal agenda, just the opposite of David and Fred Nicholas and Kieschnick. This was his— He got involved because of his own personal agenda. He wanted to become chairman of the board at one stage, and I opposed it. I would never have done that. That's not my decision. A director of a museum doesn't get involved in determining the president of the board or the chairman. That's the trustees' duty.

But I objected to this very strongly, that he become the chairman of the board, because I knew once he did, that our institution would go through a phase during the period in which he was chairman that would be like a series of programs from *Dynasty*. This man was dishonest. This man was perverse. This man had nothing but a personal agenda for this institution. This man was constantly behind the scenes stirring up difficulty, stirring up difficulty constantly, constantly. It wasn't just once or twice; it was a pattern of this kind of behavior. He is the perfect person to have produced a program called *Dynasty* or been involved in it, because that's how he lived his own life. And that's not how you can run an institution and find any kind of harmony.

He was a collector, yes. He collected certain artists. He was the one collector that was involved in MOCA as a trustee who was always constantly, constantly manipulating the situation so he could gain favor with dealers. His relationship to Mary Boone, we should be doing such-and-such an artist show because Mary Boone would like to have such-and-such a show at MOCA, and then Doug would get favored treatment or some damn thing, you know. It's a very complicated thing there.

He would be constantly dropping suggestions. I remember Eric Fischl came to me once and said, "Richard, why do you hate my work?"

I said, "I don't know what you're talking about." I said, "We did a show of your work here at MOCA."

He said, "Well, Doug Cramer tells me you dislike my work enormously."

And I said, “Well, that’s Doug Cramer. I do not dislike your work,” you know. But there would be this constant, constant conflict that surrounded this man, and then he brought into these conflicting situations individuals at the institution, whether they’re trustees, curatorial people, myself, and so on. It was a nightmare, a nightmare.

It went on for very long, because he had a collection and everybody thought he would give the collection to MOCA in the future. I never thought that was going to happen, because it just wasn’t going to happen. This person, if you really analyze this person and their role at MOCA, and you really look and talk to the people involved, you will find that this was a very destructive force within the institution and with regard to its future, and it was someone who truly wanted to determine the agenda of the institution that was his personal agenda, and would use any amoral, perverse, whatever tactic to get there. So for me to talk about this individual is probably filled with a little bit more hostility than just about anybody, and I tend to get along with people quite well. But this person should have never been on the board, and his contribution was not the productive, progressive, positive force it should have been.

RATNER: He apparently tried to get you to resign also, I think.

KOSHALEK: Yes, yes, yes, yes. I can understand why, and that does not surprise me. Where do you hear that, though? Where did that come from?

RATNER: There was a letter.

KOSHALEK: I had a lot of—

RATNER: It just said there was a letter regarding a role of Doug Cramer in your potential. Oh, no, you know, actually, you know what, I misspoke there. And it was regarding the role of Doug Cramer in your potential resignation due to his demands and behavior.

KOSHALEK: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, and if he would have become chairman of the board, if the board would have said, “Richard, we are making Doug Cramer chairman,” I’d have resigned the next day, resigned the next day, even though I had put into this institution fifteen, sixteen years of my life, but I wasn’t going to spend another four dealing with this kind of *Dynasty*, kind of *Love Boat* drama. I don’t need that kind of drama in my life. Talk about reality TV.

RATNER: Audrey Irmas was the first woman who was chairman of the board. How would you characterize her leadership style and her effectiveness?

KOSHALEK: Audrey is a beautiful individual. She is somebody who has more care for not only the people that she knows, but the institutions she’s involved in. If you look at her charitable contributions and involvements in this community, it deals with everything, with the homeless to whatever, in a very serious way. She is one of the most generous people, not only in terms of her resources, but her spirit. She is not a strong leader, because she doesn’t have that kind of corporate experience of running a board or managing a board, but her leadership is based on her conscience and her convictions, and it’s based on her belief that you are put into this world to be a positive force and to care for the institutions that matter and to care for the larger world, the public, the larger public.

There is nobody, nobody, nobody, who would ever question Audrey Irmas's motives. They're as pure as can be, and there's just no doubt about it. There's absolutely no doubt about it. Because of that, because of that, she is a leader, and she's a leader that people follow because she sets an example, an example of the highest sort of principles. And because of that, people do follow.

She's not a leader because she has original ideas or strong ideas or a strong position to advocate or has had executive experience; she's a leader because of what she stands for, and I think she was a very important example after I left, after I left, for a new group of individuals that came on the board. Who is the guy—? Spock?

RATNER: Nimoy. Leonard Nimoy.

KOSHALEK: Susan [Bay] Nimoy is just one of those individuals. I think she was the model and the inspiration to those people to be generous, to be collaborative, and to respect just about everybody in the room, and that's Audrey. That's truly Audrey. And her gifts to Art Center were extraordinary in terms of contributions, in the millions. So this is again one of those unique individuals.

I met her on a beach, actually. I was at a party at Marcia Simon Weisman's on the beach in Malibu, and two people came walking up the beach. It was her late husband, Sid Irmas, and Audrey Irmas. That's the first time I met them. Her husband was also quite remarkable, who I sort of admired greatly, as much as Audrey. He died tragically a while back, and when he did die, I got the phone call from Audrey. I was at the Beverly Wilshire Regent Hotel at a breakfast, and she said, "Sid just gave up. He didn't want to suffer."

I mean, it was a tragic loss for her, because together— I mean, there's something about couples. When two people come together, I always think that you can judge it by just looking at them visually, if they seem to sort of be comfortable that way. But when two individuals come together and they become more powerful together than they were as single individuals, and that they really do click and they really do complement each other, when Audrey and Sid entered a room or Audrey and Sid were together at a meeting or a dinner, they were an extraordinary presence. But it was together. It was together, actually.

This was one coming together of two individuals that was totally correct and right and very powerful, very powerful. They were a force together, and Audrey is a force by herself also, and so was Sid. But they just— Remarkable, remarkable people, no doubt about it.

RATNER: Is there anyone else you would characterize as a key player that hasn't been mentioned in—

KOSHALEK: Lennie Greenberg, for sure, Lenore Greenberg, but everybody knows that, and we talked about her along the way.

RATNER: Right, we did.

KOSHALEK: And a beautiful man named Carl Hartnack was critically important in this whole process as a very quiet force. He's the one that actually told Max Palevsky that he was leaving the situation.

Marcia Simon Weisman, which we've talked about in great detail. But that's it. That's it, basically. You've touched them all, basically, as significant individuals.

There was a lot of others that had roles to play, but these were the significant ones, whether positive or minus, negative. Mort Winston also had a very nice role, very important role to play.

I notice here you have Bain and Company, MOCA benchmarks.

RATNER: Yes, I'm going to get to that.

KOSHALEK: I know nothing about it.

RATNER: Well, you maybe will remember when I get to it.

KOSHALEK: Okay.

RATNER: You mentioned something related to this just a minute ago when you were talking about Bill Kieschnick, and I don't know if it's this. But one occasionally hears that our Board of Trustees interferes far too much with the staff of the museum.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: The *Herald-Examiner* wrote an article in May of 1982 that said, "In a surprisingly clear assessment of itself, the board voted to alter part of its own governing structure and to clarify the relationship between the trustees and the professional museum staff by giving the staff full power over the day-to-day operations of the new museum."

KOSHALEK: True.

RATNER: So what was going on prior to that?

KOSHALEK: Eli, I think. I think it stems more from Eli's involvement as chairman and setting a pattern that trustees have a lot more to say about how this institution's run and to micromanage it and so forth, than is sort of the way it should be. That

situation got to be very complicated and at times was filled with some hostility and conflict and so on, but the pattern was set. There were some people like Doug Cramer who wanted to continue that pattern of behavior. Bill Kieschnick is the one that stepped in and said, “We’re going to look at this differently.”

RATNER: So that’s where Bill comes in.

KOSHALEK: That’s where Bill comes in, and he did change the thinking there. That was that famous presentation to the board, and everybody— Since he was the head of ARCO and since he’s also unbelievably, unbelievably articulate, that he was able to convince the board that we needed a change of thinking here.

That’s how all these institutions get into trouble. I mean, there’s a whole history of it. LACMA has got a whole history of this kind of conflict between the professional staff and the director and the Board of Trustees and interfering with each other’s responsibilities. I mean, LACMA has lost quite a few directors.

In southern California, the worst example, it was the Pasadena Art Museum under Robert Rowan. Every major director— Not every, but if I list all the major directors in the United States that left Pasadena in conflict over with Bob Rowan—

RATNER: I think I’ve interviewed most of them.

KOSHALEK: It’s Bill Agee; it’s Jim Demetron; it’s Walter Hopps; it’s Jim Elliott. The list is endless. Tom Leavitt. All these extraordinary people who went on to do good things, great things, in museum work, because of their conflict with Robert Rowan, left the situation. I mean, that can get to be— And once you have that kind of turnover, then funders get concerned, collectors get concerned, the press gets into it.

You cannot build an institution that has a certain stability and able to accomplish an agenda that takes time. So Bill Kieschnick understood that totally, totally, totally, and that's where that came from.

RATNER: You mentioned last time that you felt it was important to have different personality types on a board, and, of course, there's no such thing as a perfect board. But you also talked a bit about the elitist nature of museum boards.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: So given all that, I'm wondering what criteria you feel board members should meet and then how you would rate MOCA's board overall in terms of their ability to—

KOSHALEK: To do it.

RATNER: Exactly.

KOSHALEK: I think the whole concept of Boards of Trustees and their relationship to institutions has to be rethought. It used to be— I think we're still living with a model that is from the past, and it was a model that certain people who were the elite in the community served on these boards. They tend to be a small group of their own community, right? They not only served on the boards of these major institutions, but they belonged to the same country clubs, they lived in the same communities, they vacationed together and so on. And they had a role to play because they had enormous wealth and influence, and that was that they had to provide the support for the institution when it was needed. That model worked to a certain degree in the past.

Even directors in those days were people who came from moneyed families, to a large extent. It's a generalization to a large extent, but there's some truth there.

Then things started to change, and they started to change with the National Endowment for the Arts. So then staff could apply for grants and funding could come to the institution. The trustees didn't even have to be involved. Then you started to set up within museums— When I worked at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in the late sixties, early seventies, we did not even have a development office. There was no such thing as an advancement or development office and a director of advancement or director of development to go out and raise money for the institution. There wasn't even a public relations department, which was interesting, at the Walker, and that's in the seventies.

And then this concept started to emerge. I think it came out of the university system, and museums started to set up development departments with professionals and they started to raise the money for the institution. So the role that the board had played exclusively in funding and supporting that institution was now starting to be diminished, and so the trustees then started to move their responsibilities or their interests in different directions, like getting involved in the program, getting involved in selecting the architect, whatever that might be. So they moved away from the support thing to a certain degree, saying, "We'll leave that to the staff. It's an unpleasant task, anyway, and we'll start getting involved in all these other things."

And that's where this confusion comes between trustees and what their role is and responsibilities, and staff and what their roles and responsibilities are. So that's

where this all started to change a bit. I think that what's desperately needed now because of all this change and because of the situation that museums are in today in the first part of the twenty-first century, where they're all under tremendous strain and tremendous stress, you've got an institution as powerful as the Metropolitan Museum in New York, which has everything you can imagine. I mean, you can spend the night there. And has this huge tourist sort of income and so forth and so forth and so forth, it's still running deficits, huge deficits, right? Then you've got smaller institutions that have great difficulty in terms of survival and so on.

That the whole model of what a board should be, should be studied in great detail, and I think we need a new model for the future, and where we define the responsibilities of board and staff very clearly, very precisely, because that's why we're having difficulty finding museum directors. Museums across this country are having great difficulty finding people who are talented, who want to take on that kind of conflict and management, and get into those kind of situations.

So this has to be rethought totally. What size is the appropriate size for a board? What's the composition of the board? What are their responsibilities? How long do they stay as a trustee?

But maybe there's even a very different model that needs to be evolved here, because I think for an institution to go to a community and be relevant within a specific community, it's got to be an integral part of that community, and that starts at the board. You have to have people that represent all the different constituencies of that community to really have a successful institution.

I cannot think of a board now in my mind that works to the degree that it needs to if these institutions are going to survive in the future and their problems aren't going to be more exaggerated. I don't think the Music Center; I don't think LACMA; I don't think MOCA; I don't think the Met; I don't think MoMA. That doesn't mean some of these institutions aren't accomplishing things. We did. At MOCA we accomplished a lot. But I think to sustain these institutions, when we talk about this institution is accomplishing something, yes, MoMA is going to get its building built, right? MOCA got its buildings built, right? MOCA was able to build a collection. All of those accomplishments are important.

But the sustainability of these institutions is the major question and how they're going to prosper into the future. Very few are like the Getty, and even the Getty has its conflicts right now and feels that it doesn't have enough resources to do what it's going to do and so on and so on and so on.

So I think we need a very extensive study here, and I think we need to come up with a new paradigm for what Boards of Trustees should be, how they're composed and how they relate to the institution, and come up with new models for community involvement, community support, and community leadership within these institutions.

We didn't get there at MOCA. We're thinking about it here at Art Center, and hopefully you'll see significant changes. Hopefully. That's what the meeting was this morning, by the way, to discuss.

RATNER: Hollywood had a fair representation on the board over the years. We mentioned Doug Cramer, and there was Bud Yorkin and Dan Melnick and some others.

KOSHALEK: Ron Meyer.

RATNER: The entertainment industry generally hasn't been overly philanthropic, and I'm wondering what your experience was in this regard and how actively you pursued these relationships for MOCA and how beneficial they were.

KOSHALEK: The entertainment community, MOCA would not exist without their involvement. There's just no doubt about it. All you have to do is go look at the donor wall. Now, when people talk about the entertainment community, they talk about Walt Disney and Michael Eisner. They talk about Sumner Redstone and Viacom, or they talk about the Bronfmans and so forth at Universal Studios.

But the entertainment community is much larger than that, and if you take the support that we got from the entertainment community from, for example, Lenore Greenberg, whose family is connected to the entertainment community, the Gershes—I'm trying to think of some of the other individuals—[MOCA] would not exist. MOCA would never have existed. So the entertainment community was there.

But what wasn't there was the major studios and participation from the major studios, and that's where the problem was. So the entertainment community, MOCA being contemporary, dealing with contemporary art, without it we would not have existed. But it's having a very broad definition of what you mean by "entertainment

community.” Were the studios helpful at all? Zero. Not even into helping us develop a film program. And there is something about that which we cannot understand.

Calvin Tomkins one time referred to the money of the studios and the studio leadership as “scared money,” and that it could disappear overnight. Their jobs are not going to— They could change overnight. But studios have a way of largely burning up all their assets and living in a way that other corporations wouldn’t do. But this is not just MOCA. Music Center’s had great difficulty getting major studio support. LACMA’s had major difficulty. So that’s where the problem is, I think, and you have to be very careful there because of how you define the entertainment community, I think.

RATNER: Board rotation appears to have been an ongoing and contentious issue for several years.

KOSHALEK: Oooh, a lot of people resigned over it.

RATNER: And in November of ’91, you said, “MOCA must be very selective and aggressive in pursuing trustee candidates. It should have a rotation policy in place, which is clearly defined to trustees at the outset and strictly enforced.” Then two years later, in 1993, an extensive amount of time was given to evaluating and reworking the trustee rotation policy, and the number of trustees dropped from forty to thirty, automatic rotation changed to two consecutive three one-year terms. So obviously there’s no magic formula here.

KOSHALEK: No.

RATNER: MOCA thoroughly researched other museums' policies in this regard. So I wondered what the issues were surrounding rotation, because various early versions featured escape clauses so some people could stay. Then finally, in October of '93, it required rotation off after six years with no exception except for incoming officers. And you seemed to have been a very strong advocate for rotation. So what was your reasoning and why did this warrant so much discussion and engender such strong opinions?

KOSHALEK: For me, it came from the fact that I wanted the board to be a productive force, and we found that we had certain people on the board that contributed insignificantly to the institution. Then there was a small group of people who made significant contributions, major contributions. And I wanted to change that. I felt if MOCA was going to become a major institution, we had to get our house in order, and it was a question of diversity. It was having to do with competition. It had to do with rotation of people. I mean, how do you ask somebody to leave the board? The only graceful way is to have a rotation policy, so you could say, "Okay, you've been there three years. Now you're going to rotate off," right?

Also a statement of ethical principles, because I think that we were having conflict there, and I mentioned a number of the trustees that were trying to sort of manipulate the situation with a personal agenda, and that we needed some statement that they would all sign. This became very contentious, very contentious. I think some people saw it as my trying to control the board. Some people thought it was my way of saying, "Okay, Richard's going to get his people on the board, and we're going

to be rotated off and so forth.” But it was based on a lot of research and a very clear understanding of what successful institutions did do and the kind of rotation they did have, and the kind of composition they tried to put together for the board and the idea of a statement of ethical principles. So that if something surfaced in the press, we can actually say that we have studied this subject of ethical behavior on the part of the trustees and we have a sort of guidelines for what to follow and a committee that deals with ethics.

It became a very contentious issue, but we weren't going to give up on it. We truly weren't going to give up on it, and we pushed it as hard as we could, and there were a lot of casualties. Mort Winston, the man that led it, extraordinary man, was a casualty. Some trustees resigned in opposition to it. But I think once we got it through, I think everybody was convinced that it was a good thing after they saw it in action for a period of time.

Now, what we did get sort of accomplished is a small fraction of what I wanted to get accomplished. I wanted us to do, in the beginning, a much more major rethink of the Board of Trustees and its role and so forth. I was not able to get there, but I think it would have been— And I used the example that lets us— The argument, let's put it that way, lets us as an institution set the example for the rest of the world, right? Let's have every other institution look to us and say, “They're thinking, rethinking this question of the model of trusteeship and Boards of Trustees and they are rethinking all aspects of it and they've come up with some conclusions that we al—.”

And I actually wanted to take it into a national dialogue and set it up through the American Association of Museum Directors, which ran away from it totally, or do it through the Getty, which I thought the Getty should hold a series of symposia on this whole subject. And I didn't get that done, but I wanted to take it national.

But we got some things done, and it wasn't just me. There was leadership there from Mort Winston, who was very strongly behind this. But, boy, did the opposition stand up very quickly, and I know a number of people resigned over this because they thought Richard was trying to control the situation.

But I was just trying to find a new model for trustee leadership and trustee participation and set an example for the rest of the country. I thought we were a young institution and a new institution and we'd have great flexibility to accomplish that, so that's where I was coming from. We got some of it done, and it worked extremely well.

One thing we did find, which was amazing, one of the arguments was that if you have a good trustee and they stay for six years and they have to automatically rotate off, and if they're a very good trustee, other institutions are going to get them involved in their institutions, and you're going to lose some very good people. You don't want to do that, because they're hard to find. We found that the people that did rotate off over for a year, actually, most of them, the vast majority of them, actually were more involved and contributed more to the institution during the time they were off than when they were on the board, because they wanted to get back on the board. So it was a good exercise, actually. It was a good thing. The argument that you'll

lose these people, to me, didn't become a reality. They wanted to get back on, and they did more during the period they were off than they did when they were on probably the year before. Or they kept up their commitment, let's put it that way. That's maybe a better way to put it. They kept up their enormous commitment, their dedicated commitment to the institution.

RATNER: Let's see if I could squeeze this in. You mentioned that statement of ethical principles and the memorandum of disclosure.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: The thing about that that seemed to be particularly controversial in terms of adopted that was related to sections BO3(A) and BO3(B), which stated that "Trustees and employees must tell the director of any purchase they believe MOCA may wish to purchase, and if so, they must sell that work to MOCA for the price paid. And then MOCA must pay in cash and complete the acquisition within ninety days of written notice to the director."

Then Part B was "No trustee or employee shall represent that the acquisition of a work of art is or is intended to be a present or future gift to MOCA unless prior to making such a representation, arrangements for such a gift have been made with MOCA."

What was going on there?

KOSHALEK: Well, number two, certain trustees—and I won't mention any names—would go to certain dealers and they would represent the fact that, "Yes, I'd like to acquire this work for my private collection, but in doing that, I'm a trustee of the

Museum of Contemporary Art and I will make it a gift to the museum.” So then they would get access to a major work with the sort of promise to the dealer and to the artist that it would end up in MOCA, and there would be no conversation with us. We would know nothing about that. There would be no agreement with us, and I find that to be unethical.

That happened over and over again, and I could give you precise examples, which I won't, involving precise—I could even name the trustees, and that happened. So we wanted to clear that up for damn sure, because that is not the way the world should work. It's unfair to the artist. It's unfair to the dealer. And to a certain degree, they're being lied to. Not that their work in the future might not end up at MOCA, but the person wasn't making any guarantees here.

And the second one was it that sometimes museums get— The first one, BO3(A), trustees and institutions come into conflict over a major work that the institution would want and the trustee also wants. When you get into those situations, if you are a trustee of an institution, the institution has to come first. Otherwise, don't be a trustee of that institution.

That was the most controversial aspect of all. Everybody was, I think, willing to a certain degree to agree to BO3(B), because, you know, well, who will know, right?

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: But BO3(A) was whole 'nother matter, and that was a lot of discussion and opposed very strongly by Doug Cramer, for example, Douglas Cramer. But did we get it passed? I guess we did.

RATNER: Yes.

KOSHALEK: Yes. Amazing, we got that passed. We must have caught half the board asleep at one meeting.

RATNER: I think we're going to run out of tape here. You've got a lunch, so we'll wrap it up here for today. Thank you.

KOSHALEK: Thanks.

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APRIL 4, 2003

RATNER: Unfortunately, given your really hectic schedule, we won't have the opportunity to talk about the exhibitions with which you were specifically involved that were critical, but I would like to take a few minutes to talk about MOCA's exhibition philosophy.

KOSHALEK: Great.

RATNER: You came to MOCA with many years of experience in what seems to have been a well-developed and broad vision of what it means to be a museum of contemporary art, and MOCA's exhibitions and related programs and publications reflect your inclusive point of view. Clearly, the inaugural exhibitions and programs for both the TC and California Plaza would send out a message and set a tone regarding the identity and intentions of this museum, and careful thought must have preceded the decision as to how to proceed there. What guidelines and goals were used in planning MOCA's inaugural exhibitions, programs, and events, and what image did MOCA wish to project, and how well would you say it met those goals?

KOSHALEK: Ah, big question. You said it so well, actually. That's well written.

What we did is at one of the first early board meetings we had at MOCA— And the board then was not as large as it got to be, but it was quite small, actually. I think there were maybe ten or twelve people, maybe more. We went around the table and we asked them what MOCA should be and what should be the exhibition program at MOCA, and we got, whatever it was, ten or twelve different opinions of what it

should be. It was very interesting that everybody had a different point of view, and they were all individuals who had thought about it, who had a certain amount of knowledge about museums, traveled to different museums around the world, or they were artists like Robert Irwin or Sam Francis and so on.

So we decided that we needed to find a consensus somewhere, and we wrote what we called the Playbook, and in there we outlined the exhibition program. One of the things that was important to me is that the exhibition program sort of reflect the reality of what the contemporary world was all about so that it had to be all multi-discipline in a way. It couldn't be just painting and sculpture; it had to be works on paper; it had to be architecture; it had to be performance; it had to be design; and that it had to touch all of the film; had to touch all of these different areas of concern with regard to what was happening in the contemporary world.

And the idea was that if we did that, hopefully we would appeal to multiple audiences, and we'd have a pluralistic audience for the institution, so that if we did a film program, a different group of people would show up than if we did a photography exhibition and so forth.

We wrote the Playbook, and I think in the Playbook we outlined a series of exhibitions we wanted to do. Each one was sort of in a way symbolic of the future evolution of the program. So one was, for example, Alexis Smith was in that original book. And the idea was that we should draw strength from the region, that it was institution-poor and artist-rich, and that part of the exhibition program, not all of it,

but part of it, should deal with artists from this region and sort of show their work and so on, and we selected Alexis Smith as the one artist that would symbolize that.

For the area of architecture, we have mentioned the Lou Kahn exhibition. I think in that book we also mentioned the Automobile and Culture exhibition, which was sort of crossing from painting, sculpture, into automobile design and car design and so forth, and L.A. being an auto city, based on the car and so forth.

So the idea was to have as much diversity as possible, to draw strengths from the region, but at the same time to be international. That program began, and we did, I think, just about every exhibition. We did the car show. We did the film. The only one we didn't do, I think we had a proposal in there for miniaturization.

We were well aware that the world was changing, and there was in 1959 a beautiful speech given by Richard Feynman at Caltech. It was called "There's Still Room at the Bottom," and it was a brilliant presentation. What he was talking about was nanotechnology. He didn't call it that at the time, but he was speaking about nanotechnology and the science of small and so forth. So we picked up on the idea that maybe there's an exhibition here that deals with miniaturization, and it's a design exhibition. We never got to that one, we never got that one done, but the whole idea was to have this sort of very balanced program.

One of the reasons why the exhibition program was extremely important was, there was no permanent collection, and so until the permanent collection got built, we decided that we would stress the exhibition program and build on the exhibition program. Then when the Panza Collection came, that started to change in terms of our

thinking, but it took a while for it to change, because the exhibition program became, I think, a very dynamic program and one that sort of brought international attention to MOCA.

The purpose of circulating shows— And we did this very aggressively, and I don't think they're doing it anymore. I think they're doing it on a limited basis, because it does have some expense associated with it, does take additional staff, but it also does bring in income, was that we felt that that we wanted to take exhibitions from certain museums. We drew up a list, I did, of twenty-five of the major museums in the world, and that we wanted to do business with those institutions before, like in a ten-year period. It was like the Museum of Modern Art and whatever.

So we said, "Okay, we will take shows from those institutions, but also we want our exhibitions to go to those institutions, and we want to build a reputation for MOCA beyond the four walls of this city or that building, beyond the limit of this city, so we didn't build the wall around Los Angeles." That, actually, worked extremely well, and we sent shows just about everywhere. I mean, around the world. Flavin went to Bordeaux. The *End of the Century* show went to Tokyo. The Kahn show went to the Pompidou in Paris. The Kahn show also went to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. We were able to sort of accomplish what we needed to accomplish.

So it was both the idea of having a very inclusive, as you said, program that included all the different aspects of contemporary reality, but also drawing strengths from the region, plus sort of having an international agenda that allowed us to circulate shows and take shows from different parts of the world and so forth. So it

was a very ambitious sort of goal for a young institution, which at the time did not have the resources to do very much.

I can tell you a great story about the late Carter Brown when we brought the Panza Collection, and it was announced in the paper. The press conference, actually, was held at City Hall. Tom Bradley made the announcement.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: But he asked us where we got the money to pay for the Panza Collection, and we said, “We don’t have it.” And he was dumbfounded that we would acquire a collection and take that risk and not have the money to pay for it, but we found the money. We were an institution that had to take those kinds of risks, and so we were always pushing the limits of what the institution maybe could sustain at a given moment in time and just sort of keep expanding, widening the circle.

Sometimes we got ourselves into a little trouble financially. Sometimes we overreached. But in the end, I think in the just short of twenty years that I was there, that we were able to establish it as an international sort of institution that had a role to play in defining what was happening in the world of contemporary art. And then goes back to, you know, I think, the Wooster Group, goes to Elizabeth Streb, whatever. So it was actually fun to evolve.

The other thing that was very important to me is that I worked at the Walker Art Center, and at the Walker Art Center every exhibition was determined by the director of the museum. He would say, “This year we’re going to do this, this, this, and this, basically,” and then we would all be assigned to work on a specific

exhibition, and we would do it. So the program was really sort of, to a large extent, generated by one individual's thinking of what contemporary art was.

And I never wanted to have that happen. I wanted it to be a collection of voices, of different curatorial points of view, so that there was even greater diversity in terms of how many individual voices participated. So there was somebody like Ann Goldstein, who had a very strong interest in conceptual art, and she did that exhibition. Then she's now going to do the minimal show, which is another great interest, which was actually started during my tenure. Then there was Paul Schimmel, who had an interest in performance and what was happening in Japan and did *Out of Actions* and had his point of view with— What was the show that caused all the trouble, the Charles Manson one?

RATNER: *Helter Skelter*.

KOSHALEK: *Helter Skelter*. He had that kind of interest, and that was another voice being expressed through Art Center. Then there was Alma Ruiz, who had a strong interest in Latin America and so forth.

It was my feeling that if you got the right people and you had this collection of individual voices, that the museum would be far more interesting than if it was just my thinking. The shows that I sort of proposed and originated had to do with Richard Serra, Ad Reinhardt, Lou Kahn, Arata Isozaki, exhibitions like that. So I had my different point of view, too, and got it sort of to be part of the agenda of the institution. But I wanted all these other voices to be part of it, too.

Julia Brown early on had a very strong interest in Michael Heizer, a very strong interest in Allen Ruppersberg, before anybody else did, and had sort of a way of sort of relating to the individual artist as opposed to the large-scale exhibition, conceptual exhibition. So she worked extremely well in building bridges to the artists' community and doing exhibitions of the work of Allen Ruppersberg and Michael Heizer and, I think, the first Robert Therrien exhibition and so forth. So all of these different voices added to the complex sort of program that was MOCA, actually, at the time. So it was that. Those are sort of the agenda items for me.

And Pontus [Hulten] played a role early on, but he never really did. He had sort of an interesting point of view, but very I didn't think appropriate for MOCA, to tell you the truth. He was interested in artists like Richard Stankiewicz. He was interested in Dorothea Tanning. He was interested in Tinguely, who's an artist I didn't like a lot. But it was a more of a European, more of a— He had a different sensibility, and, to tell you the truth, I didn't think it was correct for a contemporary museum in Los Angeles. I think we needed to have a different agenda, and, to a large extent, that worked out. So that's that story.

RATNER: Fred Croton was quoted in the *L.A. [Los Angeles] Times* in September of 1983 saying, "They might end up an international success and a local failure. There is so much educating to do." How accurate a statement was that in 1983 and later?

KOSHALEK: 1983?

RATNER: Yes.

KOSHALEK: Oh, that's very interesting. 1983. Because we had just opened the Temporary Contemporary.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: Did he say it like November?

RATNER: September.

KOSHALEK: September. So just before we opened the Temporary Contemporary. Very interesting. It was always a concern of ours, and he stated it quite clearly, and I think a number of people in the artist community and Los Angeles felt that we were more interested in the international sort of agenda than we were the regional agenda. That's always the case.

I think to a large extent, we got greater recognition beyond Los Angeles than we did within Los Angeles in terms of coverage and people's interest in the museum. We tried to balance those two forces out, the idea of having a regional commitment and having an international commitment, and I think we did quite well at that, overall. We couldn't get to a certain number of people. Also, there were certain people that we would never really have included in our exhibition program, and there were certain artists that some people thought we should show at MOCA that we didn't feel we should, and you make those calls. You make those judgment calls, and you try to see a balanced sort of exhibition program over a period of time and not within just one year, but within five years. You try to say, "Okay, over the next five years, what will we accomplish?" We had sort of four of those different periods of five-year sort of segments where we tried to see where it was at.

And then we'd always be into this game of how many exhibitions of permanent collections should we show as opposed to temporary originated exhibitions. There were people like Eli Broad who felt that we shouldn't do, really, an exhibition program or an education program; we should only bring in blockbuster exhibitions two times a year to up the attendance and then show the permanent collection. So there was that point of view that was in the picture also.

But to a large extent, we were able to determine what that program was, and I think over the roughly twenty-year period it was actually quite successful. But there was always that possibility that we'd be a regional failure and an international success, and I think some people probably think we were more—I mean, I remember going to see Ed Moses and asking him to do an exhibition at MOCA, and he said, "I never thought you'd get to me. You're too interested in artists outside of Los Angeles." But Ed is an incredible man and a fantastic artist, and we did a wonderful retrospective of his work, and somebody I admire very much. But it's very hard, because it's only one institution.

Then we used to always talk about the fact that we should always see MOCA in the context of Los Angeles, and there's the Getty and there's LACMA and there's the [UCLA] Armand Hammer [Museum] and there's the Norton Simon [Museum of Art] and there's USC, and that we should only be seen as part of that overall context, and that each institution does something that contributes to what is Los Angeles and what is the museum context in Los Angeles.

We were always trying to encourage that thought, too, that if we can't do it all, LACMA can do something. One of the ideas we had, actually, which I think was a good one at the time, was that we would deal with the latter half of the twentieth century and LACMA would deal with the early part of the twentieth century. It was always my feeling that they did extremely well when they were dealing with Malevich and German Expressionism and so forth, and that they should sort of play that game and not overlap at the end of the twentieth century in terms of contemporary art with MOCA.

That point never got across, but we were always promoting the idea that the Getty does a certain thing, LACMA does a certain thing, and I think one of the problems was that it was very difficult for LACMA to redefine itself after the Getty emerged, after MOCA emerged, and now after the Armand Hammer's sort of emerged under Annie [Ann] Philbin.

We kept saying to different people there, like Bob Maguire and so on, that they should really define themselves differently now, redefine their role, in relationship to the Getty and in relationship to MOCA, but that never really happened. They saw themselves as this encyclopedic museum and that they were the only—I think it was hard for them to understand that they weren't the only institution now in L.A. that had an international stature. It was them, it was MOCA, it was the Getty. And that still hasn't been done, and I still think it needs to be done. I think all the institutions in the city need to really define their role in relationship to the other institutions in the city now; Norton Simon, for example, also. But it doesn't happen somehow. So we

always figured the museum scene was much more than just MOCA in Los Angeles somehow.

That's a very good quote by Fred, actually. It's a nice warning signal. In a way it is. It's a wonderful warning to send. He was a cultural attaché or whatever he is, yes, Minister of Culture of Los Angeles. I see Fred every once in a while. I'll have to remind him of that. That's a good quote.

RATNER: I wanted to ask you a little bit about an unusual aspect of one of MOCA's seminal exhibitions, which was *Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses*, which was installed at the Temporary Contemporary from October '89 through February 1990, and it was both a critical and a popular success. It allowed MOCA to reveal sort of the intersection of contemporary art and daily life by collaborating with the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency on an architectural design competition for forty units of low-cost housing in Hollywood. I wondered whose idea it was to sort of replicate in a fashion an intensive case study model and what kind of support or resistance did you get to that idea.

KOSHALEK: It was my idea; so was the show. It actually came from the fact that we were trying to decide what architect in southern California we'd do an exhibition with. We had a lot of discussion having to do with whether it should be Charles and Ray Eames, whether it should be an early exhibition of Frank Gehry, who was starting to emerge, and other architects who were working in southern California, [Rudolph] Schindler, for example.

And we decided that instead of just selecting one architect to focus on or one designer to focus on, that we'd focus on a movement or a group of artists and do a thematic show. So that's why the idea of 1945 to 1960 and the case study exhibition emerged. We could show a lot of artists. It was a very influential period of time and body of work that sort of influenced architects like Richard Rogers—Lord Richard Rogers in London—and so forth.

So we thought this was a way to start our exhibition program, not with Lou Kahn, not with Frank Gehry, not with Charles and Ray Eames or Schindler. So we came up with the idea that that's what we wanted to do, and about the time that was being organized— And Elizabeth Smith organized the show and did a superb job of doing it, and that was, I think, her first exhibition ever. I think that's the first exhibition she ever did, and we built two full-scale house models and so on.

But at the same time I became aware of an article or exhibition that was held by the Museum of Modern Art, and I think the essay was written, or the article was written— The case for it was written by Alfred Barr, and it said, "Why can't New Yorkers have decent housing?" It was something like that, and I'm not sure. "Why do we have to have the tenements in New York?" or, "Why can't New Yorkers have decent housing?" And it was a look by the Museum of Modern Art at that subject in New York.

So I figured, okay, if Charles [John] Entenza did this and did this wonderful thing after the war and was right on the money, I mean, sort of new design, new technology, new materials and so on, and then I loved the idea of his building the

house, selling it, building a house, selling it, and so on. And he could do it in those days, because land was available and so on. I said to everybody, "What is the contemporary problem we're confronting today in Los Angeles?" And we were told by the city of L.A., the Community Redevelopment Agency, it was low-cost housing. So that's how the idea emerged to do a case study sort of process to deal with the problem confronting us today as opposed to the problem confronting John Entenza in 1945, and that's how we came up with the idea. Then the idea was to actually get it built.

I can honestly tell you that there was a tremendous amount of opposition at that stage from the board of MOCA. There was a very strong feeling that we're not developers, that we're not builders, and that we shouldn't be getting involved in that world, that we could propose ideas, but that we shouldn't get involved in actually getting forty units of low-cost housing built, and that it was not the museum's role. But we went ahead with it anyway, and we got it built.

But the best project there in that process was Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung, and they did a brilliant proposal for housing, low-cost housing, sort of collective housing, because it was more than one unit. There's a lot of discussion. I just read an issue of *Japan Architect* on collective housing in Japan. But they had the best scheme.

But the Community Redevelopment Agency was very conservative, and we had great difficulty getting this through the Community Redevelopment Agency. So the compromise candidate became Adele Santos, whose work is wonderful, and the

housing was a big improvement over market-rate housing, even in that area, but that it wasn't to the level that I wanted it to reach, actually.

So we got to a certain stage, we got it built, but we didn't reach the level I wanted us to reach, actually, in terms of innovative design in collective housing, and we would have got there with Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung, but we didn't pull it off.

But that's how that all evolved, actually, and I think it was an article by Alfred Barr of the Museum of Modern Art, who I read often, actually. Any time I could get a chance to study the archives or read anything about any museum sort of past director, the two people I sort of learned more from than anybody were Rene D'Harnoncourt, who was director of MoMA, about installation and all of his interests in primitive art and so on, American Indian art and so on, and then, of course, Alfred Barr. This man had a vision that still today has great merit, and he saw the museum as an activist kind of institution that dealt with artists, that dealt with living artists, that dealt with problems like housing in New York City, that dealt with photography, that dealt with film, and wrote a script for what the Museum of Modern Art should be, that still today has tremendous merit. I think anybody is who going to enter museums even today needs to read extensively the writings and the thoughts of Alfred Barr.

Those catalogs were so small and so significant. It was unbelievable. And today we all have to produce these very large books that we can hardly carry home on a business trip and we have to send ahead or whatever. But he produced these beautiful books that were so superb in terms of content and in terms of sort of explaining a very complex world of modern art and design. But still, today, I think

he's the one museum director that defined in the twentieth century the role of museums, and there's a lot in MOCA that comes from Alfred Barr, and it's not just the case study situation. You should do an oral history on him.

RATNER: A little late.

KOSHALEK: Somebody told me a very cute story about him, I think it was Ivan Chermayeff, just before he died. Unfortunately, it was a sad story in his life. But that Alfred Barr came down—Flavin used to always tell stories about Alfred Barr, because Dan Flavin ran the elevator at the Museum of Modern Art when he was beginning.

RATNER: Oh, really?

KOSHALEK: He used to always take Alfred Barr to the top floor to his office. Every time Alfred Barr got on the elevator, he had a question prepared for him. He said he saw that as a seminar in the elevator on the way up to Alfred Barr's office. So every time Alfred Barr got on the elevator, Dan Flavin, as a young artist, would ask him a question about something having to do with modern or contemporary art, and then Alfred Barr would explain it on the elevator going up, which I thought was a great thing.

Somebody put him in a taxicab. He was at the MoMA. It was near the end of his life, and they put him in a taxicab. It's a very sad story, actually. They said, "We'll see you later, Alfred." And the cab didn't move. The cab didn't go anywhere.

So finally Alfred Barr rolled down the window and said, “I don’t know where I live. I forgot where I live. Would you please tell him where I live? I don’t know where to tell him to go.”

It’s sort of a sad story, but it’s this extraordinary man, and at the end of his life he suffered from Alzheimer’s, and the same thing, most people. It’s a horrible thing. But I love Dan Flavin’s idea that it was—an elevator seminar with Alfred Barr.

RATNER: Yes, that’s wonderful. Was that the only project of that type that MOCA ever engaged in?

KOSHALEK: Well, the next one we took on was the Art Park, and you know the whole idea of what we’re trying to do here now at Art Center in downtown Pasadena with what we call the south campus, which is the Glen Arm power plant and the Douglas Aircraft facility and so on, that idea actually first emerged surrounding the Temporary Contemporary.

RATNER: Right. I remember you mentioning that.

KOSHALEK: And so we were going to create this art district and that we were going to have artists’ studios there and so on. Now I think we can make it happen here in Pasadena, and I think we’ve got a good chance to do that. So it’s a dream that we’re still trying to realize.

But the idea of the Art Park was something that we really wanted to promote, and, as you know, there were all kinds of plans by developers and through City Hall in Los Angeles to develop that area, build a government office building, all of this stuff. Finally, we realized that we should take it into our own hands and we should create

what doesn't exist in the city, is an art park, and a real interesting situation where performances could happen and so on.

So we brought the community together, and we brought the Japanese American National Museum, whatever, together, and then we had Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung do a proposal, which was brilliant. The idea was to create in front of the Temporary Contemporary this extraordinary park, and then the Children's Museum could have been there and so forth, and, again, bring back that original dream.

But it didn't—I left before it got finished, and these projects take somebody who truly sort of wants to put in the energy, the labor, and deal with the frustration and have the ability to just sort of constantly bring it up on the agenda to push it and keep pushing it. Otherwise, it doesn't happen. It's not something that happens by itself, and other people won't do it, in a way.

If you believe in an idea like the Art Park or the Temporary Contemporary, you have to sort of take responsibility for that idea, and that's taking responsibility for actually having the idea, but also taking responsibility for getting it done. After, I think, I left MOCA, there was nobody there that really took responsibility for the idea and the project to get it done, and so it hasn't happened. I hope it still happens.

But that was one of the projects we got deeply involved in, and that was another way to sort of deal not with housing, but with the urban situation that existed in downtown L.A. We saw this as being not just a place for performance, but a place for art fairs and all the community kind of things that sort of would add energy.

I think, you know, when you talk about attendance in museums, and we were downtown and we were sort of a pioneer, in a way, being downtown, this is before Disney Hall and the Music Center was there, but I think that you can build the building and you can— This is the lesson we learned, actually. You can build the building like the Temporary Contemporary, or you can build the Bunker Hill building, but you also have to build the neighborhood. You have to build the surrounding community, because otherwise this thing— I remember for the opening of *Available Light* at the TC, we hired students from CalArts to form a line from the parking, each holding a flashlight, that would guide the people to the TC, because we thought they'd be afraid of the dark in downtown L.A., and it was dangerous and so on. So there was this line of students holding flashlights that people followed to get into the building and to leave and to go to the parking lot, because there was this great fear of downtown Los Angeles at the time.

So I think, as an institution, you have to take responsibility for your building and what you do within it, but you have to also build the community, and that's what we're trying to do with the Pasadena project. It's not so much that we have the Douglas Aircraft facility for public education, but then we're going to try to have the power plant become a learning center, exhibition space for science, technology, art and design, bring Caltech into the picture, and Occidental into the picture.

But then at the same time, we're doing the proposal for Arroyo Parkway, to re-landscape and redesign Arroyo Parkway and have a major street that goes near our territory and connects as you come off the freeway. So I think that was one of the

lessons we learned with the TC. You can have this isolated facility in downtown L.A., and it can be the perfect situation for contemporary art and so forth, but unless you do something to change the community around it, you're going to have difficulty, because people are going to see it as entering a foreign land, in a way.

So we've learned that here with Art Center and we learned that with the TC, and that was the reason for, again, Art Park emerging and trying to bring that dream together, which we actually had in 1983 to have that be that art complex, but we felt we had to change the neighborhood. In New York, you don't have to do that. If you're on West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, you don't have to worry about it. But if you're in downtown Los Angeles, you have to have that concern.

A lot of museums are lost in park situations, and that actually came from my experience at Hudson River where the museum was in a park called Trevor Park, a beautiful park on the Hudson River, gorgeous park. But it was surrounded by one of the worst sort of neighborhoods in transition. It was like the South Bronx, and all the buildings were burned-out and so forth.

So we realized that unless we changed the neighborhood— First of all, we realized we had to change the agenda. So we did all our lecture programs at different institutions in Manhattan throughout Westchester County.

RATNER: Right, I remember you mentioning that.

KOSHALEK: Because otherwise nobody would come.

But then we realized we had to change the neighborhood, so we did an exhibition called *Warburton Avenue: The Architecture of a Street*, and we formed

neighborhood groups and all of that. So we tried to do the same thing in downtown L.A., and the Guerilla Museum was part of that, actually, in L.A., the idea of closing streets and using parking lots and abandoned buildings and creating energy and activity in downtown L.A. in different places to get people there. So we didn't get as far as we wanted to on that, but we had the right idea, I think.

RATNER: You mentioned Disney Hall a minute ago, and I wanted to ask you a little bit about that. MOCA exhibited on its plaza, I think, models and drawings for Disney Hall. That was a project you had extensive involvement with, and I think you organized it yourself.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: Apparently, some people were surprised at the level of MOCA's advocacy for this project, and you said—I'm quoting here—"I think museums tend to run away from that type of dialogue. They won't take a strong curatorial stand, and we were willing to do that." Why do you feel most museums avoid taking, as you say, "a strong curatorial stand," and are there other instances in which you felt MOCA stepped to the plate in that regard?

KOSHALEK: I think this was extremely important, because I actually think that museums tend to hide their expertise and hide their knowledge within the four walls of the museum, and I think it, actually, to a large extent is at the benefit of a small select group, a small select sort of segment of the community. I think that there is this great fear that they're going to offend somebody by taking a position, whether it's a position

that has to do with urban planning or has to do with Disney Hall, or has to do with changes in the neighborhood, or has to do with low-cost housing.

I think most museum directors tend to be quite fearful of taking those kinds of positions, and that is because they don't want to offend anybody who they think might be a potential donor. A lot of times, donors to major institutions like museums are very conservative in their thinking, so that any kind of liberal point of view or more inclusive point of view can cause them to be concerned about the institution.

There's also this very strong feeling that museums should be focused solely on what they deal with, and that is, works of art and collections and exhibitions and publications and scholarship, and that they should have not a larger role in terms of social activism. I believe just the opposite, and always have, actually.

This was true when I was at the Walker Art Center and did a show called *9 Artists/9 Spaces*, which dealt with artists like Siah Armajani and Barry LeVa and Robert Cumming, doing projects in the city to reach a different audience. We did it at the Hudson River with the architecture of the neighborhood.

We did it in Fort Worth, actually, where we commissioned photographers to document the history of Texas. Steven Shore worked on that project, and Gary Winogrand shot all the photographs of the rodeo, and then we had [Henri] Cartier-Bresson scheduled to come to photograph Texas. Then I lost my job, so it didn't happen. But the idea that you engage beyond the four walls of the museum and in the community, and it's easier said than done.

So when Disney Hall became an issue and it looked like— It became an issue— I'll give you the copy of the article, by the way, we wrote for the book on Disney Hall. But I think what happened is there was a leadership vacuum in downtown Los Angeles, and that was a good thing and a bad thing. It was a good thing because the leadership that did exist, I don't think would have ever supported Frank Gehry as the architect for Disney Hall, a new concert hall. The bad thing was that the power structure was gone, and in terms of getting something accomplished and something built, there was a vacuum. And until the new leadership emerged, this vacuum had caused this project to be postponed. It's going to open, as you know, on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, of this year, 2003, and that's about sixteen, seventeen years after we had our first meeting with the architecture committee.

So once it really got stalled— And the idea actually came, there was a meeting I had with Diane Disney Miller, and the meeting was with her and a number of other people that she was involved with in terms of the Disney Hall project. It was at a restaurant on the Westside, and I can't remember the name, but I'll get it. Jackson Hole? I can't remember.

She said, "Richard, we're giving up on Disney Hall. I'm tired of this. We've spent so much money. The building's not going to get built. There's no leadership in downtown Los Angeles. I'm going to withdraw my support of Disney Hall, and I'm going to leave this project behind."

At that time, I said, "Don't do that. Give us one more chance. Give us one more chance to try to do something here." I said, "What I'd like to do is an exhibition.

I'd like to do an exhibition on the Plaza of all the models. I'd like it to be on the Plaza because I don't want people to pay to see it. I want it open twenty-four hours a day, so anybody can come at any time and see it." I said, "We want to generate press, and we want to generate international press, and we want to see if we can bring this thing back to life, and that new leadership would emerge," which turned out to be Richard Riordan, to a large extent, and Eli Broad.

So she said okay, and then she said she would fund the exhibition. So she actually funded the exhibition, because there was nothing in the budget and there was nothing on the schedule for that to happen, and we did the exhibition.

Then we had the good fortune of Nicolai [Ouroussoff] arriving as the architecture critic at the same time. I think the first article he wrote as the architecture critic—it's either one of the first or the first article he wrote—had to do with that exhibition and the importance of Disney Hall, and somehow it got punched to the front page of the *L.A. Times*. So it appeared on the front page of the *L.A. Times*, and Nicolai's article, plus a lot of coverage by people like Joseph Giovannini, who had then moved to New York. And the exhibition, I think, generated the new interest in Disney Hall.

Also I think the fact that Bilbao had opened had a part to play in this also and that it had such international success, and L.A. was a bit embarrassed that it could have been before Bilbao. So I've always been a strong advocate, and now at Art Center we're doing the same thing, and we've got a program called International Initiatives, and underneath that, there's a program called Design Matters.

We're working with the United Nations and UNOPS at the United Nation, which spends five billion dollars a year on projects around the world, but no design factor, no architecture factor. That's not considered. So we're entering that sort of dialogue, and we're taking a strong sort of positive, I think, constructive role and setting an example for the students here who will be designers in the future that, yes, they can work in the studio, yes, they can work for business and corporations, but they also have to work for the benefit of society, and they have to have that on their agenda also.

I think institutions have to set that kind of example, and there are very few that do. I think science museums, for example, could do so much here, so much to explain sort of away to a certain degree the anxiety and the apprehension that large segments of our public population have with regarding to nanotechnology or artificial intelligence or robotics or genetic engineering. These are subjects that are of great importance, and science and technology won't be stopped. So these ideas are going to evolve, and they're going to evolve faster than the individual can keep up, in a way, or cope with. So I think institutions like science museums have a role to play here, but they have to move beyond their buildings, and they have to move beyond very limited curatorial instincts, and they have to have much more exploratory sort of ambition with regard to the larger world and the public.

So we took that very strong stand. One of the criticisms we received a lot, or one of the criticisms we received in doing that, was that a lot of people on MOCA's board felt I was raising for the Music Center, and a number of trustees actually did

come to me and say, “Richard—.” And the interesting thing was, because of the exhibition, Riordan and Eli announced all the first major gifts at MOCA, not at the Music Center, but at MOCA. So they would come to the exhibition, and then there would be a press conference, and they’d announce a gift of five million from Bank of America or ARCO or whatever, and so a number of my trustees sat down with me and said, “Richard, you’re actually raising money for the Music Center, not for MOCA.”

I kept saying, “We’re raising money for MOCA, too, because if Disney Hall gets built, it’s going to improve our neighborhood, and it’s going to make us more viable and much more of an attraction. And we have to have that long-term view.”

No, there was some serious criticism having to do with that, that doing that exhibition, the Music Center should have done that. And the Music Center should have maybe done that, but the leadership didn’t think that way. I think the leadership in the Music Center, except for Ernest Fleischmann, to a large extent was afraid of Disney Hall and afraid for all kinds of reasons. I think there was fear with regard to the architecture. I think there was fear with regard to whether they could support it, maintain it, and operate it. There was concern at the county about whether it could even be built.

So the Music Center, except for a few people like Ernest Fleischmann, was quite apprehensive about what was happening with regard to Disney Hall and the design that had evolved in Frank’s office. It also needed a shot of confidence and a shot of penicillin to sort of get behind this project, and to a certain degree that exhibition and the attention it drew and the front-page news and so forth made a big

difference. And I believe in those kind of exhibitions very strongly. I hope I live long enough to do more.

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APRIL 4, 2003

RATNER: Due to the impending construction of the First Street North Plaza, MOCA was obligated to temporarily close in June of '92. Well, the TC was.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: By September '93, the construction was yet to begin due to a myriad of delays in seeking city approval, and ultimately the project was halted. There were some allegations in the press, supposedly from a museum source, that MOCA didn't have the money to reopen the TC. I know from some research it didn't seem like the museum was unhappy, at least for part of the time, about saving some money by operating only one building.

Then while it was closed, the museum board and staff did some soul-searching to determine the TC's future course and taking into account that it needed some renovating in terms of security system, upgraded fire and safety, and climate control and what have you. Then a variety of options were discussed, including closing it permanently, moving to a satellite location on the West Side, where many of your constituents resided, reopening the TC and a West Side venue, or opening the TC with occasional auxiliary programming on the West Side. I wondered what your position was there, and how was the decision made to reopen and remain exclusively in the original location.

KOSHALEK: So interesting, actually, because the Temporary Contemporary was supposed to be temporary.

RATNER: Right.

KOSHALEK: And we only invested a million-five in it. It didn't have air conditioning, humidity control. I mean, it wasn't the perfect environment for works of art, although there never was too much objection from lenders or anybody with regard to that, and so it was really never sort of treated as anything permanent. Then it became sort of liked and respected around the world and became a model for people like Charles Saatchi and what he did in London and so forth, and so there was this feeling we should try to keep it.

Then this construction project came along, and they were going to build parking and they were going to have parking underground, coming up on all three sides of the Temporary Contemporary. So we had to close it because it was going to sort of a dangerous situation to be in. But we came up with a program, which we never got, actually, but which was called *Dirty Nights @ MOCA*. It was going to be done by Julie Lazaar, and it was her idea, actually. But the idea was that during the time in the evening when the construction was stopped, that we would go into the building and we'd do this program called *Dirty Nights @ MOCA*, and you'd enter through the back door and so on. We'd show films and performances, and it wasn't what everybody thought it was, but it was a wonderful way to get everybody's attention. But we weren't able to get that done, actually, but that would have been a wonderful way to use a construction site and then a building that was endeared..

There was always this debate within MOCA that we should, at certain times, since this thing was temporary, we should close it. Now, one of the reasons we went

to David Geffen and asked him to give the five million was we didn't want that to be the case. We wanted it to stay open, and we wanted it to be, as much as possible, a permanent fixture of MOCA as possible. So that's why we went to David Geffen and got it named the Geffen Contemporary. It was going to be called the Geffen Temporary Contemporary, but then David Geffen asked that we dropped Temporary, because he also wanted it to be long-term.

But this debate has been raging within MOCA forever among the board, whether we should close it, open a West Side branch and do the same thing on the West Side. During my period of time there, there were, I think, multiple searches for a building equal to the Temporary Contemporary on the West Side, and I know Fred Nicholas got involved in this. We looked at a lot of buildings on the West Side, but we never could find anything with the magic of the Temporary Contemporary, and this has a lot to do with downtown L.A. and this sort of feeling about downtown L.A., that you just don't go there.

My daughter's working on a paper at the University of Pennsylvania for her master's degree in urban planning, and she's looking at Los Angeles from 1850 to 1920. She found this wonderful quote that she read to me not too long ago from Pico. What was his name, his first name? I can't— Mr. Pico, whatever.

RATNER: Pio Pico or something like that.

KOSHALEK: Something like that. Pedro Pico, I don't know. But he, way back when, in that period of time 1850 to 1920, was quoted as saying, "I never go downtown. I would never go downtown," right? Way back when, he was saying this,

right? So this idea of not going downtown or downtown as being a place that people didn't go or wouldn't go has always been a subject of debate and discussion in Los Angeles.

So there was always this desire on the part of sort of half the board to stay downtown and to stay in the Temporary Contemporary, people like Joel Wachs and Mayor Tom Bradley was there. Then there was this desire from people on the board from the West Side, the Eli Broads, the James Burrows, the Gil Friesens, and so on, to move to the West Side. It's a debate that's still going on, and there's talk now that MOCA is going to close the TC and they're going to open a branch on the West Side. There's talk of this going on right now as we sit here, and that discussion will go on forever.

I actually think that we didn't close it because of lack of money. It would have still gone. Although MOCA, towards the end of my time there, was starting to have some difficulty generating revenue, and it had to do with the economy and it had to do with the board was getting sort of tired and we needed new people on the board. I think that has happened, to a certain degree, with Susan Bay Nimoy and new trustees, Audrey Irmas, made a huge difference there, in that institution.

But the Temporary Contemporary should never be closed, is my mind. But if it's going to stay open in the future, they're going to have to invest money in it, and they're going to have to do something with it. Now, if we had a branch on the West Side, would that bring us the kind of money that everybody thinks we would get from the West Side audience? Possibly. I mean, they opened at the PDC [Pacific Design

Center]. But it's too insignificant to have any impact, right? You'd have to open something on the scale of the Temporary Contemporary and make that kind of commitment on the West Side; otherwise, it would not have any impact.

Now, LACMA's on the West Side. Are they having financial difficulty? Yes, they sure are. Is the community supporting LACMA on the West Side? Not to the degree that it should be supported. Their building program is in trouble. They're running deficits right now, and so this talk about the West Side being the solution to an institution's problems, like MOCA, not necessarily. I mean, Armand Hammer cannot find the money to finish its construction project with Michael Maltzan. That's on the West Side. So I'm not sure. It sounds like the easy answer, but I'm not sure it's the answer.

Then if you look at the audience for MOCA and you study the membership, you'll find that the largest membership is, yes, from the West Side. But there's also a very large membership from Orange County, and there's a large membership from Pasadena, San Marino. If you look at the support base for MOCA, the Betye Burtons and the Gordon Hamptons and so on, those people came from Pasadena and San Marino.

We always saw the institution as not just being a West Side institution, but being an institution that connected to all parts of this region and this city. If you say that's the case, then downtown's the best place for it. So I think they should try to maintain both of them downtown, but that debate will go on forever. Someday somebody will make a decision, and they might move to the West Side or they might

not. They might close the Isozaki building. They might keep the Temporary Contemporary and renovate that. They're looking at another site now downtown across the street from the existing Isozaki Building, because they feel they need to expand. That debate's going to go on forever. Hopefully, that will be silenced a bit by the opening of Disney Hall and new energy downtown.

Yes, that's always— Oh, boy, it came up so often, I can't tell you. We'd go to the West Side and ask people for money. They'd say, "Well, move it to the West Side." But there's something about people who live on the West Side, they ignore a good part of the rest of the city, like San Marino and Pasadena and Orange County and so on. That had been going on for a long time. But LACMA doesn't get the support it needs from the West Side and neither does the Hammer, so we'll see. We'll see.

RATNER: You just mentioned David Geffen and the money for that, and I wanted to ask you a little bit more specifically about that. Around 1986, you and Fred Nicholas met with David Geffen, but I think because David Geffen and Max Palevsky were friends, the meeting was pretty short and—

KOSHALEK: He threw us out. He actually threw us out. He actually told us to leave, yes.

RATNER: So then around 1991, there appears to be a thaw in MOCA's relationship with Palevsky. You write him a letter requesting support for the Robert Irwin exhibition. Although he declines to participate, he states that he was pleased to hear from you and wishes you well. I wondered, was it following that correspondence that you reinitiated contact with David Geffen, and how did that relationship develop?

KOSHALEK: The restoration of the relationship with David Geffen didn't have anything to do with Max, actually. The first meeting did have a lot to do with Max, there's no doubt about it, because he mentioned Max's name and "Max was a friend of mine" and on and on and on. And he told us to leave his office.

Then every catalog we ever did at MOCA, ever single catalog we ever did at MOCA, I sent to David Geffen, every single one, and with just a note, just a note saying, "Thought you'd enjoy seeing this. If you need passes for the exhibition, or whatever, if you'd like a tour with the curator, please contact us." And we never heard from him, never once. Then finally we got a letter from him, and I can't remember which catalog it was. We got a thank-you note from him.

So we came up with the idea that maybe there is a chance to get David involved, because we always wanted to have David involved for all kinds of reasons. One, he was a major collector. Second of all, he believed in what we were doing. He was interested in it, appreciative of it. He was connected to people who I respected enormously, like Thomas Mayne, who he relied on for advice and consultation, and Kirk Varnedoe from MoMA and so on. So we really always wanted to have David involved and felt it was unfortunate that he wasn't.

So we sent him just a very simple little letter, simple letter, and it says that for five million dollars— A number established by the board, by the way. I took a little criticism for it not being ten, but that was the number the board actually set, and which I thought was the right number at the time. I mean, the first person we approached said, "I'm not going to give you five million dollars to put my name on a building

that's going to turn to dust," which was interesting. So nobody was that interested at the time.

But we sent a simple letter to David, and I wonder where that letter is, but a very simple letter saying that we're going to name the TC for five million dollars, and if he wasn't interested, I didn't want to bother him, but if he was interested, I'd love to send him a proposal. And we got a call back almost immediately saying, "I'm interested, but my plane is leaving shortly, this afternoon, and if you could get the proposal to me, I'll read it on the plane."

So what we did is we took a drawing of the Temporary Contemporary, a big drawing, black and white drawing. We thought if we showed him, sent a photograph to him, he wouldn't do it, right, because the building looks so shabby in the photograph. So we sent him a drawing, and then on the drawing we put the name "The Geffen Temporary Contemporary." And we sent it to him with a brief letter saying, "For five million dollars, we'll name this building," and so on, "after you." And we rolled up this long drawing and we sent it to the airport.

He supposedly, I'm told, rolled it out on the floor of the airplane and saw it and saw his name on the building on the drawing. Then we got a call from the airplane saying that he would like to see us when he got back. He had two or three concerns, and one concern was he wanted Temporary taken out; two, could he pay it over five years. And that was not a problem. And then what was the third concern? There were two. Those were the only two, I think, and so that's how it worked out.

But it was sort of always believing that David belonged at MOCA and then always working to keep him in touch with what we were doing and send him every book. If he kept the books in his library, he must have every single book that was produced during my tenure at MOCA, which has got to be about a hundred volumes. So he must have, if he kept every one, they must be on a bookshelf somewhere, one hundred books, at least, from MOCA that I sent to him.

It finally worked and he finally did participate and so on, and then we actually, before I left, we were working on an exhibition of his collection that we were going to show at MOCA. Richard Meier was going to design the installation and there was a model produced, and a catalog and all of that was sort of outlined. Then it dropped, actually, somehow.

But David is somebody that had to be involved, but in the beginning it was very difficult. His office was on Sunset Boulevard when we went to see him and he threw us out. He actually threw us out. Physically—I mean, not physically. He just said, “Leave. There’s nothing for us to talk about.” But he let us come, so he could tell us that. He could have said it over the phone.

RATNER: In 1999, and I’m not sure when in 1999, MOCA commissioned a study by Bain and Company.

KOSHALEK: Yes. That’s after me.

RATNER: It’s an international consulting firm that analyzes operations of nonprofit institutions such as museums..

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: Even if they were hired by the board after you left, they were looking at what had been going on while you were there.

KOSHALEK: True.

RATNER: So I wondered why you felt the board felt there was a need to have a company like this come in and do an analysis for them at that moment in time.

KOSHALEK: I think it's a number of things. First of all, towards the end of my tenure there, I was getting a bit exhausted and tired, and we were sort of having a little difficulty sort of keeping the momentum going, and I think that had a little bit to do with my sort of being sort of after nineteen years tired of it all and the same sort of debates and arguments and discussions about West Side, downtown. God only knows what, right? Exhibition, permanent collection, so on and so on.

I think also the board, at the same time, was exhausted. The people who had provided the leadership in the past, the Fred Nicholases, even though he stayed on, the Lennie Greenbergs, the Betye Burtons, were also getting sort of exhausted, and we were starting to fall beyond financially, fundraising-wise, and so on. Also, we never, ever reached the attendance levels we wanted to. We never got to the point where we thought that the attendance was appropriate considering the importance of the program we were doing, and we were battling this thing about downtown Los Angeles, is this a good place to be, and all those arguments and so on.

So I think that when I left, there was a feeling with the new director that they should take a look at the institution and see what they're doing right, what it was doing right, what it was doing wrong, where was it failing, where was it sort of falling

behind, and so forth. They brought in Bain and Company because— I think Bain and Company had never done this kind of nonprofit work, I don't think. And I think this was encouraged by a man named Gil Friesen, who became the president and wanted to do this.

I think what Bain and Company sort of found was that, to a certain degree, but they also made recommendations that led to even greater disaster, and that was that whole public relations campaign, spend money to make money, you have to invest more in marketing, and so forth. I think it led to, I mean, huge deficits like they have now, and they have gone into the endowment significantly and so on.

So I think in the end, the recommendations turned out to be a disaster. But I can see why the board wanted to do it and why they felt there was a need to do it. But the conclusions that were drawn from that report from Bain and Company, and that's something that you'll have to get into with Jeremy [Strick], but that they were the wrong conclusions.

The board tried to follow through with it, and they went into serious deficit and into the endowment. They never again, still to this day, have reached the audience levels that we feel is appropriate, and I don't know what to say about that all, actually. I mean, you see an institution like MOCA and you sort of give it everything you have to make it work and you bring in as many of the right people as possible, and sometimes you're in a situation like this city where downtown is a very big negative factor, in terms of any institution, the Music Center, whatever.

But also you have a city here that has multiple sort of peer groups, and you can never bring the city together as a cohesive sort of leadership group to support institutions. And I think that's why LACMA's having trouble, that's why the Armand's having trouble, and that's totally different from my experiences in Minneapolis at the Walker Art Center with the Daytons and the Kohls and so on, or in Texas with the Basses and so forth, where the community could coalesce around a certain peer group and then the institutions would be supported.

The only reason MOCA got built downtown was because of Tom Bradley and the developer putting in the twenty-three million dollars to build the building. I mean, if that hadn't been there, MOCA would have never gotten built. There would never have been enough energy in this city to do it.

[Interruption]

RATNER: Okay.

KOSHALEK: We were starting to have difficulty at the end, and there was a leadership problem. And it was partly my problem, being exhausted and tired, and then we went away to London for six months. But then it was also the board, and the board leadership had now changed, so that's a different thing. I'd love to read it, though.

RATNER: You had apparently considered leaving MOCA on several occasions.

KOSHALEK: Yes.

RATNER: I wonder what led to your final decision, and then what was the reason for, I believe, I think you gave like a five-year lead time.

KOSHALEK: Yes, yes, for two reasons. One reason we gave the five years was that I felt institutions sort of got themselves into trouble because they would not have a succession plan in place and that the director would leave, and then there'd be a two-year search for the new director and the development effort would stop, the fundraising would stop, the leadership would stop, the program would sort of be stalled, and we wanted to prevent that.

Also, after being there for so long, I felt that you needed to tell the board when you were going to leave, and I always wanted to pick the time when I left. I didn't want them to pick the time, because I went through that in Fort Worth. So I gave them five years' notice that I would leave at such-and-such a time and that we were going to stick to that, and we did. So they had five years' time period to know that, that we were going to leave.

We were just totally exhausted. I mean, I think when you invest that much time in an institution and you put that much energy into it, and also when you're building it and you're trying to construct two buildings and you're trying to build a program and to build a staff and so on, you put even more energy into it. And I tend to expend more energy on these things than most people do. So after nineteen or eighteen years, I was actually truly totally exhausted.

I almost could not sit through another board meeting to hear another discussion like we were having about West Side, downtown, this trustee, that trustee, should this person come on the board, where's the new leadership in L.A., right, how is membership? At board meetings I would have to psych myself up at the end and just

say, “Okay, you’re going to have to go through this discussion, even though you don’t want to, and you’re going to have to sit still and be patient and listen and talk and carry on a conversation,” right?

I’m sure if I went to a board meeting now, the same issues would be being discussed. I mean, who should be a trustee? Why isn’t membership higher? Where is the attendance? Why hasn’t Lucien Freud done more? Should we have taken out more ads? Should we move to the West Side? Should we sort of play down the permanent? Should we do more popular exhibitions as opposed to doing Lucien Freud or whatever? Right? It’s a very interesting game that goes on, but after that long period of time, you just don’t want to have that discussion anymore. That’s what it is actually, somehow. It’s very interesting. It was time. I actually, maybe, stayed five years too long, to tell you the truth.

RATNER: How well would you say you succeeded in rethinking the idea of a modern museum, as quoted by Calvin Tomkins in an early direct mail piece?

KOSHALEK: I think we did it. I truly think we did it, and I think we did it in a very difficult environment. I mean, if we were going to rethink the idea of a modern museum in New York City, it would have been a different thing. I think trying to do it in L.A. is a very difficult proposition, and I actually think we succeeded. Are there certain things that we didn’t get done that I wish we had gotten done? Yes. Are there certain mistakes we made along the way? Yes.

But I think we did, with the Temporary Contemporary and with Isozaki’s building, first of all, have a much larger— Just the idea of commissioning an architect

like Isozaki to do a building for a museum, that idea didn't really exist before that. I mean, even if you look at the history of the Museum of Modern Art, they never selected, you know, the great architects or a major talent to do a museum building for them. It was always somebody else, in a way. I think, to a certain degree, MOCA taking Isozaki to do its building and the press that it got for that, taking Frank Gehry to do the TC and the concept of the TC, just in terms of architecture and buildings, that made a huge contribution to the larger world of museums.

I think after that, every city said to itself, "Okay, if we're going to build a new museum, we have to get a major architect. It can't be just another building." And I think MOCA had a lot to do with that. I can't think of any other— Chicago, you know, built a contemporary museum; never, ever commissioned a major architect. Houston built a contemporary museum; never really did it on the scale of MOCA. Boston kept trying; they never did it. Now they're getting there with, I think, Diller and Scofidio. So I think we were the first to actually get that done on that scale and with that magnitude and with major architects.

Then if you think of building the collection in the eighties and the nineties and how difficult that is, and the criticism of just even the Getty now in terms of what they've done with their collection, I think it's unfair criticism, but that they haven't, with all the resources in the world, haven't been able to build a collection equal to the Norton Simon.

So here we are, able to get the Panza Collection, able to get the Schrieber Collection, able to get the Barry Lowen Collection, and to build a collection of that

magnitude and that quality in such a short period of time and with very little, very few resources. I mean, most of those collections were gifts, except for Panza. I think that was a huge accomplishment.

Able to build a program that really emphasized architecture and design, only MoMA and Walker Art Center had done it before us, and then the Walker Art Center gave up on it after the Friedmans left, and MoMA never really did it on the scale that we did, like the Lou Kahn show or the case study exhibition or so on.

The ability to have a museum that sort of encouraged artists in this city, the Charlie [Charles] Rays, for example, and Jorge Pardo and artists of that generation and artists before that, to put together a program where somebody like Charles Ray can have a show at MOCA and then emerge in the larger world as an artist of consequence. I think doing that was a very important thing. Robert Therrien is another good example from early on. I think that's extremely important.

The idea of an institution being an advocate in the city in which it lives, whether it's Disney Hall or low-cost housing, I think that's all part of rethinking the institution. If I had it to do over again, knowing what I know now, I could have done it better. I could have done it even to a much greater extent with greater complexity and greater sort of contributions being made by MOCA.

But considering the time we were, the age I was, I was thirty-eight when I became director of MOCA, that we accomplished a tremendous amount against unbelievable odds. I mean, not just the fact that it was in L.A. and people don't pay attention to L.A., but that there was hostility from LACMA in the beginning, and

other institutions, and the corporate leadership, the Ed Carters and so on to MOCA even happening. Then there was the fundraising difficulties in this city and the lack of a single peer group and multiple peer groups. Then the fact that it was downtown. I mean, all of these sort of things sort of playing against you in this card game of building an institution, and yet we were able to succeed, and that internationally now, I don't care where you go, if you mention MOCA, they say Los Angeles. They really truly do, if it's in the world of art.

And I know our trustees know that and I know artists know that, and so on. To have the trust that gets built up between an institution and collectors or an institution and an artist. Richard Serra trusts MOCA. Richard Serra had one of the greatest exhibitions as an artist ever at MOCA. Robert Rauschenberg trusts MOCA. They believe in the institution, that if MOCA is going to do something— Robert Goldberg, for example, we gave him that major, major exhibition.

These artists— You go to Japan and you meet artists of the Gutai Group, right, they understand MOCA and appreciate MOCA. Architects do. So to have that trust and that sort of confidence in the creative community with regard to an institution is the greatest accomplishment of all. Usually they are mistrustful of institutions or they don't think they'll ever do what is necessary. Bill Viola, for example, an artist in Long Beach, first major show at MOCA, now at the Getty, Museum of Modern Art, Pompidou. That was started by MOCA in a way.

And then you just take the curatorial leadership that we had. You've got Elizabeth Smith, chief curator in Chicago. You had Kerry Brougher, chief curator at

the Hirshhorn. You've got Kathleen Bartels, director of Vancouver. You've got Sherri Geldin, director of Wexner. You've got Julia Brown, head of the AFA. You've got Kim Kanatani, head of education at the Guggenheim. All of these people came out of MOCA, and they went into the larger world and made a contribution.

So when you think of all of that over a nineteen-year or fifteen-year period of time, that's a lot. Now these people go out there and they rethink the Wexner Center. Or they rethink what's happening in Canada and Vancouver. So I think it did accomplish a tremendous amount.

But I think its greatest challenge is ahead of it right now. I think right now is its greatest challenge, because after a period of time, whether it's the leadership that gets tired, and that's board or that's myself, the institution tends to get tired, just as by itself. I think we know very well that the Music Center is exhausted in a way. There's no new ideas there. There's no new energy there. Disney Hall could revive it to a certain degree, because it's a significant gesture, it's a major gesture, in this community. So Disney Hall has an important role, potentially, to play. But I would say most people would describe the Music Center, except for Esa-Pekka [Salonen], as tired and exhausted.

So institutions have this natural period of time in which they do some extraordinary things, and then it's the most difficult thing to continue that momentum. MoMA, for example, under Alfred Barr did remarkable things. I mean, rewrote the history of art, right? They weren't able to continue it. The ghost of Alfred Barr is still haunting the Museum of Modern Art.

MOCA's a similar situation. Its most difficult moment is right now, how it defines itself for the next twenty years, and how it finds the energy, the resources, and the creative sort of inspiration to be something in the next twenty years, except just maintaining itself, which it can do. MOCA didn't maintain itself in that period. It was building every year. It was adding to its agenda, whether it was internationally or whatever, touring shows, whatever, and I think that's the most difficult thing.

I think the Hammer has a good chance to do this, with Annie, but it's going to be very difficult. I mean, she's not able to raise the money to the degree she wants to for the building, for the program, even though she's on the West Side. But it's an interesting thought, isn't it?

But institutions have this problem. I think the Whitney is tired now, right? I think it's exhausted, and I mean that creatively and not just the people. And that's the hardest thing to overcome.

I mean, I think, in a way, if we create this new institution in downtown Pasadena in the power plant, it will have a certain lifespan again, like maybe twenty years where it will be building and mixing science with technology, with art and with design, and the general public in a much more interactive environment. Then after a certain period of time, it's going to sort of run its course in a way, and then how do you reenergize it? And that's the key. That's the key. You need a new battery sometimes. And I think MOCA does, and I think the Music Center does. And that's difficult. That's just as difficult as building it from scratch.

But just the complexity of it, I mean, all the people who are involved in this thing, and the different personalities, their different personal agendas, their different sort of roles they play within the community, their relationships to each other, all of that had to be balanced out over a fifteen- to twenty-year period for MOCA to get where it was. And, boy, is that difficult, is that difficult, to make that all happen, engineer all that.

You deserve a Purple Heart for that. And there's so many casualties. Pontus Hulten was a casualty. Max Palevsky was a casualty, and Doug Cramer, to a certain degree, was a casualty. There's all of these people along the way that have either stayed with it and a part of it, continued with it, or got hurt and got damaged and sometimes even destroyed by what happened. So it's like the war in Iraq, right? You somehow keep moving it forward, but along the way, you lose a lot. I mean, look at Max Palevsky. He never emerged again in this community as a leader, right? Never again did he emerge in this community as a leader, and he had the potential to be a major player.

Pontus Hulten never returned. I mean, he never, ever found his floor again. There was never another Pompidou or never another Stockholm. He never was able to sort of overcome this experience, and it's not a good one. I'm sure if you taped an interview with Pontus Hulten, he would not say good things. It was a very bad time for him, difficult time for him.

Whew. I wouldn't want to do it again. It's too difficult. It would be easier to climb Mt. Everest, much easier to climb Mt. Everest.

RATNER: Given all that, what aspect of your tenure would you say gave you the greatest pleasure?

KOSHALEK: After all of that, the engagement with different individuals, and I'll just even mention names to you. The relationship with Arata Isozaki, that has been lifelong. Just saw him in Japan. He just spoke to the alumni group of Art Center College of Design in Tokyo, and we remain very close friends. The relationship to Frank Gehry. The relationship to people who worked on the curatorial staff who have gone out and are now doing extraordinary things. The Elizabeth Smiths. Even the John Bowes, now at DIA [Foundation], doing extraordinary things. The Erica Clarks, the Sherry Geldins, the engagement with those people, the chance to work with those people.

Then if you bring the artists into the picture, my relationship to Bob Irwin, my relationship to Richard Serra, and artists like that, and the good fortune to having been able to work with these people, to build an institution, to help them with their work, whether it's their curatorial work or it's their own works of art, their own work as an artist. All of that is about the greatest satisfaction.

And in the end, the buildings don't matter. It doesn't matter where the buildings are, to a certain degree. What matters is there was that social interaction that produced something and produced a certain amount of energy and vitality and made a contribution to the history of contemporary art. That's what matters.

I mean, my relationship to Eva Lambois based on the Ad Reinhardt show; my relationship to Bill Rubin, former director of sculpture at MoMA; based on the Ad

Reinhardt show. These things matter to me more than anything. Most of these friendships are still there. My relationship to Pat Riley. I mean, it's very interesting. Or to Alex Katz. That's his wife there. [gestures] That's Ada. We put her there. She's in a good place. So it was that kind of that experience.

Then there was some bad experiences. But even Eli Broad, we're very good friends now. I'll be attending his surprise birthday party when he turns seventy. We're working together on different things like the CalTrans Building and Disney Hall.

So I think it was those experiences that mattered the most. And then the idea that I was able to survive it is also very important, because a lot of people did not survive it, truly did not survive it. Pontus Hulten was one strong individual, so was Max Palevsky, and they didn't survive it, and they didn't have a role to play in the end. So, I don't know. Wouldn't want to do it again.

Somebody asked me to write a book on the history of MOCA, and I said no. I said, "I'd rather forget than try to remember." And there's something about that. In a way, you want to— After you do leave, you have to forget. You have to just let it be, and it exists somewhere there in the past, right? And when people come up to me and say, "Richard, you did something great at MOCA. You helped build MOCA. MOCA is you," right, I never, ever have been able to make that leap, ever, because I've always seen it as being an institution where there were multiple voices and not just my voice. So I was never, ever able to make that connection.

There was just an article in a magazine in Europe, and it said, “MOCA is Richard. Richard defined MOCA and its future,” and so on. And I can never make that leap. I can never get there, because there were too many other people that made a contribution here, so that one person didn’t do it. Although I think the Museum of Modern Art, to a large extent, Alfred Barr did do. But he had a lot of help with Rene D’Harnoncourt and God only knows what, right? So it’s a different thing.

So I guess in a way, it’s the institution, and it’s not the institution as an institution; it’s an attitude. It’s an attitude towards artists. It’s an attitude towards the creative individual. It’s an attitude towards the creative community and their contribution to the larger world and the value that we place on these people who do make creative contributions no matter what discipline, architecture, design, painting, sculpture. That’s what MOCA’s all about. That’s what we created. We created that attitude of care, concern, and respect, and so forth for the creative individual somehow, and that’s where you get your sort of satisfaction.

And that’s what happens at Art Center, because these are the people that will go out and do the work in the future. They’ll design the cars of the future and whatever, the tape recorders of the future and so on.

RATNER: How would you characterize the growth and quality of the Los Angeles art scene since your arrival in 1980, and in what ways would you say MOCA influenced L.A.’s cultural climate?

KOSHALEK: I think by recognizing the creative individual as the key element in everything MOCA did, whether it’s building the Temporary Contemporary, the

Guerilla Museum, everything I did, I think, had to do with putting the creative individual at the center of attention, and the attitude we talked about just recently as an institution, and how do you brand that. I mean, how do you brand an institution like MOCA? How do you brand an attitude, right?

And I think the respect we showed for the creative individual has not only been sort of beneficial to artists that have been involved in the program at MOCA, but has been beneficial to artists at large, and that is that anything that an artist needed done, if we selected them to do a show at MOCA, we did. We brought in a tree for Bill Viola. Remember that? We brought in a swimming pool for Richard Wilson. We did whatever was necessary. And that commitment to the creative individual is what MOCA's all about.

So my feeling is that the contribution is one in which, in the larger world, if you show that respect for the artist, then that respect will sort of spread, sort of become pervasive in the larger world, among collectors, among the press, among other artists. And it goes way beyond MOCA, in a way. This was one of the few institutions that does show that sort of uncompromising sort of respect for the individual artist, and that's, I think, what it's about. But we don't want to ever do it over again.

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APRIL 4, 2003

RATNER: *Globalization* is a term heard frequently in a variety of arenas, and in terms of the art world, I wondered how you would characterize the impact of globalization.

KOSHALEK: Another word I'd use is *internationalism*, as opposed to *globalization*. Globalization is something that we've been involved in discussing sort of extensively at the World Economic Forum in Dallas where it's a big subject, major subject, usually focused on business and its impact globally on societies and cultures around the world. But there's no denying the fact that it is a force in the world, and it's going to continue to be a force in the world. It has been largely determined by economic sort of drivers and corporate government situations.

We just came back from China. Sixty percent of the people in China are under the age of thirty. They add the population of Australia to China every year, every single year. The population of Australia every year in China is added. Sixty percent are under thirty. Our country, 60 percent of the population are over thirty, or even more. The way globalization now has impacted China, the change in China now is not being driven by the political leadership; it is being driven by the economic markets and by the economic forces and it is changing China drastically.

Now, this kind of change and globalization driven this way has a great impact on the culture of China and the cultural and artistic aspects of China, and there has to

be a great amount of caution, because globalization, it's— Somebody explained it to me, and I think it's a great phrase. They say it's a local tango and a global dance that we're involved in. But if we lose the local tango, we're going to lose what is valuable in our larger world. And that's the great danger, because the idea of one sort of large global context that doesn't take into consideration the regional distinctions, whether it's China or Japan or whatever it is, is going to be a problem.

We see this in cities now. If you travel through Asia, and you go to Beijing now, Beijing looks like Las Vegas. Shanghai looks like New York City, almost, right? I mean, Singapore, the character, the Huatongs, for example, in Beijing, these extraordinary sort of communities, courtyard communities, that don't have all the modern conveniences but have a social interaction that we don't see in most cities, are being destroyed now for the Olympics in 2008 and so forth. There's forces at work now to preserve the Huatongs or some historic district. But they were built on the idea that there was an outer courtyard, an inner courtyard, and then the family, three generations from children to grandfather, grandparents, all lived in this same sort of situation, and it goes back to the, I think, Ming Dynasty. It goes way back.

These are being destroyed, and the city of Beijing now is being turned into a city like Las Vegas, and this is unfortunate. This is truly unfortunate. If globalism causes that kind of damage and is that destructive of a force, the reaction against it is going to become even stronger. We know what's happening in terms of languages around the world and so forth.

It has to be this local tango and this global dance, but we have to protect what is of value in a culture, and it can't be overwhelmed strictly by American culture or the most powerful economic culture that exists in the world. And that's what's starting to happen. You visit artists in China and you go to their studios, and they're reading *Art Forum* and they're reading *Art in America*, and it's a little unfortunate.

So there needs to be some way— And I think reality will catch up with this all. There needs to be some way to protect, like just in Beijing [with] the Huatongs, protect the sort of long history of extraordinary works of art that have been produced there, and where there's a connection to that past history that is reflected in the contemporary reality, as opposed to it just being overlooked, dismissed, or destroyed.

And that's the greatest danger of globalization, and it's happening. It's happening. The cities of Asia are being destroyed in terms of their unique identities. It's amazing what's happening. Whew. Beijing is being totally reconstructed. And they talk about the different sort of economic revolutions that have impacted China, right? And the first one, I mean, to a certain degree was the introduction of the bicycle, right? Then came the introduction of electronic products, right? And now it's the introduction of the car, and Toyota does a campaign in China, Beijing, now. You see billboards that say, "Forever farther. Forever freer," and it's the idea that what we're promoting here by buying Toyota is not a car or the automobile, but a lifestyle change.

This lifestyle change is changing all aspects of the Chinese culture. I can take you to places in Beijing, and you'll swear to God you're in a shopping mall in Del

Mar [California]. I mean, it's just— You won't believe it. I mean, it's the same Subway stores. There's four thousand outlets of Kentucky Fried Chicken in China; four thousand. So when that starts to happen, it can actually destroy an existing culture of great value. We need to have that diversity in the larger world.

Globalization has its positive aspects, but it also has, like everything else, its negative aspects.

RATNER: Given the current economic and political realities, as well as technological advances, where do you think contemporary art is headed and what do you feel is the role of the contemporary art museum in the twenty-first century?

KOSHALEK: I think, considering what's happening in the larger world, what has to happen is that there has to be a greater and even increased sort of engagement, respect for, and involvement with the individual. And that's what art teaches us, because any artist who makes a contribution has an individual voice that they're willing to express, and to express that individual voice takes tremendous confidence and it takes tremendous courage in a way to express yourself personally, individually, and to dig deep inside your own personality and to understand your own individual psychic and express that in the larger world.

It is becoming more and more difficult to do, and the forces to have everybody conform to a certain global model or global sort of idea is destroying this individual sort of survival, in a way. I think that contemporary art's role is going to be even more important in the future because it's going to continue to stress that individual's voice—individual voice—and that then can never be lost.

There's all this talk now about there's artists' collectives and they work together and they produce work together, and this collective in Canada and that collective in Canada and so on, and you find it also in the world of architecture. But also if you look under the surface, you find out that there's one individual's voice that is being sort of expressed through this collective and is the lead voice, in a way.

I love the— We gave a talk to the students here at Art Center, and we talked about Jackie Robinson, because he came from Pasadena. We talked about the fact that Jackie Robinson changed the game of baseball almost totally, and he affected the lives of millions of people. But how did he do that, right? He did that, number one, because he had skills as a baseball player. But there were more— There are hundreds of other baseball players who have greater skills than Jackie Robinson does, as a baseball player, just the fundamental skills of whatever it takes to be a baseball player.

But what he had was those intangibles of courage and conviction, and that's what actually allowed him to change the game of baseball. Where did he find the courage to do what he did? Where did he find the conviction to see that there was something wrong and to change it?

I think designers and artists and creative individuals are going to have a much greater role in the larger society as opposed to just in the institutional framework, so that if you say, okay, there's MOCA. And then surrounding MOCA are collectors, to a certain degree, and curators and so on, that's a very small world, in a way. Artists have had their impact, largely, in that small world, that very insular sort of isolated situation, and I think in the future you're going to find that the artist is going to have a

much greater world in a larger world, in changing people's perceptions of how we live, how we confront the future in terms of technology and science and so forth, and how, no matter what, we get out there five years, ten years, fifteen years, the individual voice is still the critical component that allows for human survival and allows for us to have a much more humane society.

So how do you teach at, say, Art Center, or how do you communicate through a museum like MOCA those intangibles of creative sort of contribution of courage and of conviction and of the value of an individual voice? That's what's happening in China. What's happening in China to a certain degree is the idea of the collective society, that we speak with one voice, that all the property is owned by the government, the government speaks for all of us, right?

That collective voice now is starting to just fall apart and very gradually, and the existing political leadership, even though it's young, it's the new leadership now. Jintao and so on, they're in their sixties as opposed to their eighties. They have a whole different point of view, but they know that the world they have sort of grown up in of this collective voice is no longer going to stay intact and that it's going to be the individual voices, the entrepreneurial voices in businesses, the artistic voices, creative voices, expressing political opinions and opinions about society and so on.

All of that is going to change their society drastically, and they won't stop, even with Tiananmen Square in 1989, right, or the Cultural Revolution that happened before 1960. They weren't able to stop the individual voice from being expressed, and it's going to continue to now increase because there's a greater freedom because

of globalization and the opening up of the World Trade Organization and the Olympics and all that.

So you're going to find museums are going to have to change their thinking. They're going to have to radically change their thinking, and they're going to have to play a much larger role both regionally and internationally. They're going to have to let the individual voice be heard way beyond the four walls of their building and the small world in which they're isolated.

If they continue to be isolated in the world they are now, we're not going to see them as relevant institutions in the future. They're going to be irrelevant. They're going to be totally overlooked. And I think it's starting to happen. I think if there's an attendance problem with museums, that people feel— There's conversation that people are exhausted with the art world and everything that goes on in the art world, right? I think what they're saying is we're exhausted with the institutions and what they stand for and the small isolated world in which they participated, and that we have to see a larger vision here, and that the individual voice is going to lead, is part of that larger vision. That's what's changing.

So the artist is going to become— The creative individual is going to become even more important. They are going to be the alchemists of the future. They are going to change the world in radical ways in the future. We see it. The mayor of Rio de Janeiro was an architect. He's changing the *favela* problem. The mayor of Barcelona that changed that city was an architect, creative, not a politician, but an architect. Maybe both, politician and architect.

We find that political leadership now to a certain degree is reactive and they react to problems and they don't sort of anticipate the future. We need the creative individual who anticipates the future, has courage and conviction to deal with what needs to be dealt with, to provide the leadership in the future.

That's one of the things, the messages that we send out at the World Economic Forum, is that they've been listening to the corporate world and the business world, and that's something to listen to. They've been listening to the political world and the leadership of government in different parts of the world. But they better also start listening to the creative community and the creative leaders, because they truly are the alchemists that will change the future. We're getting a little exhausted with—and that's where the reaction is coming from, the anti-globalization forces—with the business model and the corporate voice, with the political model and government model and government voice.

Look at the opposition to this war in Iraq. I mean, you look at—I mean, 94 percent in Japan, or 86 percent in Germany, or 92 percent in France, 30 percent in this country, which is interesting. But this opposition is not just coming from students anymore; this opposition is coming from the middle class. It's coming from all segments of society.

So I think there's this opening, this window of opportunity, for the creative community to make a greater contribution. But they can't do it if they're going to be isolated in museums and isolated in colleges and isolated within a small world of collectors, dealers, and so forth.

That's just my thinking about that, and I think it's going to happen somehow.

Wouldn't you love to see an artist be an editor of a newspaper?

RATNER: Absolutely.

KOSHALEK: It would be very interesting, somehow.

RATNER: In summary, how is it you would like to be remembered for your role at MOCA?

KOSHALEK: I would say just bringing together a large segment of people, individuals, who had a desire to express themselves, whether they were the trustees, curatorial-minded, or artists, to accomplish something that made a contribution to the history of our contemporary world, no matter how small that was or how minor that is compared to the larger world in which we live and compared to other institutions that also make significant contributions, whether they be universities or whatever.

But I think it's just bringing that coalition of the willing. I say that with great reluctance. But bringing that coalition of the willing together to make a contribution to contemporary art and to the contemporary world and to maybe having done that, written just a few chapters in the history of what contemporary art is and stands for. I think it's recognizing those individuals and having a chance to sort of work with them, that is what I'd like to be remembered for.

I asked Fred Nicholas the same thing. I said, "What do you want written on your tombstone?"

He said, “I just want people to say when I’m gone that ‘he was a nice man.’ Isn’t that a great way to be remembered?” And he said, “What do you want written on your tombstone, Richard?”

And I said, “What I don’t want written on my tombstone is that ‘He was a good administrator.’” [mutual laughter] So there, that tells you a little bit about, you know— I mean, if I had any trouble at MOCA or if I have any trouble here, it’s because I don’t believe in the concept of being a good administrator.

I think you have to be sort of— There’s a difference between management and leadership, and what the country needs is leadership. I think it’s going to start coming from the creative community to a much greater extent. Architects, I mean, Tadao Ando, he gives a speech and he talks about not his own work. He doesn’t talk about his own work. He talks about the Kobe earthquake and what he did after the Kobe earthquake to build shelters, transitional housing, and what he did to plant trees, a million trees in the city of Kobe or something. He talks about the fact that they destroyed an island, natural landscape of Japan, a complete island, to build the Kansai Airport in Osaka, and he went back and replanted it and re-landscaped it and redesigned it and brought it back to its natural state with a museum there that deals with the ecology and the future of the ecological movement in Japan. So here’s an architect that’s not talking about the single house anymore; he’s talking about a larger role to play in society.

I’ve just been asked by *Casa Brutus*, which is the major popular design magazine in Japan, to do an issue on the work of Tadao Ando. The article is not going

to be about Ando and his work; it's going to be about Ando and people and how he engaged schoolchildren, how he engaged political leaders, how he engaged builders to raise the standards of what they do in terms of apartment housing, or government leadership in terms of the island, for example. It's called Awaji Island.

So I think that he's just one example of a creative individual who is expanding the vision of what their range of responsibility is, and I think that's what you're going to see is an expanded range of responsibility for the creative individual, whether it be a designer, an artist, an architect, performer, musician, whatever, in the larger society. I think confining the music of the L.A. Philharmonic to a concert hall is too limiting now. It's needed and it's a good thing, but it's also too limiting somehow.

It's interesting what happens in places like Afghanistan, right, and what happens in Iraq and so on in the future. It's going to be interesting to see how that all evolves, right, how their culture survives from all of this.

RATNER: Anything else at all you'd like to add?

KOSHALEK: No, that's it.

RATNER: Okay. Well, unfortunately, due to your really crazy schedule here, we won't have the opportunity to discuss a number of additional topics, but we're really, truly appreciative of the time that you —

KOSHALEK: Thank you. Thank you.

RATNER: —gave to the Oral History Program and your recollections and insights on the evolution of—

KOSHALEK: Yes. It's all fiction, you know. It's all fiction. I mean, I was asked by *Vanity Fair* to comment on what books I'm reading, and so I got the *New York Times Book Review* section and I looked up all the books that are top bestsellers in the nonfiction category, right? And they are like *What Color Is Your Parachute*, or whatever it is, right, they are all these self-help books, basically, that are on the bestseller list. So I called up *Vanity Fair* and I said, "All the works I'm reading right now are fiction, and here's a list of them."

And the person from the magazine said, "No, no, no. They're nonfiction."

I said, "No, they're fiction. They're all fiction." So, in a way, we all make it up as we go along, from our end of the telescope how we see it.

But the way you've done it has been superb. So I say thanks to you. The way you've done it is superb, and your contribution here is actually equal to mine, if not greater.

RATNER: Thank you.

KOSHALEK: The questions are just as important as the answers, I think, in writing the history here. I think that's true, actually. I think the questions you ask and how people read this in the future, and if they write from it or it has any contribution in the future, the questions are going to be just as important at defining that history as the answers somehow, the questions you asked. You emphasized certain things, de-emphasized certain things, and that will define this thing just as much as I do. I was just an eyewitness.

RATNER: It's a good story.

KOSHALEK: I think it's a good story, yes. It's just one, though.

RATNER: Thanks so much.

KOSHALEK: You're welcome.

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