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PASADENA ART MUSEUM: LOIS BOARDMAN

Interviewed by Joanne L. Ratner

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

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CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: August 18, 1931, Chicago, Illinois.

Education: B.A., Reed College; University of Lausanne; art classes at Ecole Migro, Switzerland, and Chouinard Art Institute, Los Angeles.

Spouse: Robert L. Boardman, married 1950; two children.

CAREER HISTORY:

Program director, Pasadena Art Museum, 1967-74.

Director, California Design, 1978-85.

AFFILIATIONS:

California Institute of the Arts, board of trustees, 1972-74.

Pasadena Art Alliance, 1969-present.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Joanne L. Ratner, Researcher/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: Boardman's home, Pasadena, California.

Date, length of session: April 19, 1988 (129 minutes).

Total number of recorded hours: 2.15

Persons present during interview: Boardman and Ratner.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This interview is one in a series related to the history of the Pasadena Art Museum.

Ratner reviewed a variety of materials directly related to the Pasadena Art Museum, including minutes of the board of trustees from 1965 to 1974, minutes of the executive committee from 1968 to 1974, calendars of events, exhibition catalogs and reviews, scrapbooks, newspaper and magazine articles, California Design files, and essays, brochures, and speeches pertaining to the museum's early history. In addition, Ratner read relevant interviews conducted by the UCLA Oral History Program for its Los Angeles Art Community: Group Portrait series.

The interview followed a thematic outline, but within each subject area the discussion generally proceeded chronologically. Individuals discussed include directors James T. Demetrion, Thomas G. Terbell, and William C. Agee, curators John R. Coplans and Barbara Haskell, and trustees Robert A. Rowan and Eudorah Moore. Boardman discussed in detail the involvement of volunteer organizations such as the Art Alliance of the Pasadena Art Museum, the Encounters program, the museum's education department, and the move to the new building at Colorado and Orange Grove boulevards.

EDITING:

Rebecca Ziegler, Gold Shield, Alumnae of UCLA, intern, edited the interview. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

The edited interview was sent to Lois Boardman in January 1989. She made some corrections and additions, verified proper names, and returned the interview in January 1990.

Richard Cándida Smith, principal editor, prepared the table of contents. Paul Winters, editorial assistant, prepared the biographical summary. Alex Cline, assistant editor, prepared the interview history. Teresa Barnett, editor, prepared the index.

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 noncurrent 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

APRIL 19, 1988

RATNER: Before we begin our discussion of the Pasadena Art Museum, I was hoping you would tell me something about your family and background, where your family is from and when and where you were born and educated.

BOARDMAN: I am an only child, and I was born in Chicago, Illinois, in August 1931. I was raised in Glencoe, Illinois, and I went to New Trier High School and I went to Reed College in Portland, Oregon. After college, I went to the University of Lausanne in Switzerland--and got married. I met my husband [Robert L. Boardman] there, got married, had my first child, and decided that I was going crazy because I didn't have anything to do. And I was running around looking, going around Europe, and I decided that I would go to school. Because I like to work with my hands, and I had no other recourse, being in Switzerland at the time, I decided that I'd take some art courses. So I did, at Ecole Migro, which is the-- Migro is like Safeway. [laughter] And I also at the time went around--Pushing my little baby in her baby carriage, I went around Europe looking at art shows. I saw the first show of Sam Francis at Kornfeld and Klipstein in Bern, and I went around and saw all the various things that were going on at that time. That was in 1954, '55, '56, which was just the

beginning of the art scene in Europe after the Second World War.

RATNER: So you were right in there at the beginning.

BOARDMAN: Well, I saw what was going on. At least, because it was all new to me, it was really amazing, because I had no formal art education before that. It was all so new to me! And it was really kind of interesting because I was looking at it through childlike eyes.

RATNER: How did you end up at Reed?

BOARDMAN: Well, as I said, I grew up in the Midwest, and it was like a pin in a map. I decided I wanted to get away from my parents, and the farthest way I could get from my parents was Reed. I hadn't even considered the University of Hawaii. Had I known about it [laughter] I would have gone there. I had been admitted to Mount Holyoke [College], but I didn't want to be in a nunnery, because that's the way it seemed to me at that time. I wanted to have a coeducation in a small school, so that's why I ended up at Reed. And it was a very, very interesting time at Reed, because it was at a time-- The college at that time was a very small liberal arts school and it had a very good reputation, and they were all so original. It was a very interesting time at Reed College. I don't want to go off on Reed College, but it was an extremely interesting period of time there because there was a lot of intellectual

ferment. Like in any college campus, we saw people coming and going, like Stephen Spender and [W. H.] Auden and various other people. And even though I never concentrated in the arts, in the visual arts, I was very much aware of the art scene, especially the literary arts. It was a very amazing kind of a crazy place. It was, to me, the only place like that. Later on, when the hippie generation came on, people were always talking about hippies. Well, I never thought that they were different, because they were my college friends, and I felt that that was a very familiar kind of a place for me.

RATNER: What had been your major there?

BOARDMAN: Anthropology. Cultural anthropology.

RATNER: And so why did you go to Switzerland?

BOARDMAN: Well, after I graduated, my parents offered me a trip. And I felt, you know, I didn't want to go to work quite yet! I didn't want to, you know, become a secretary or have to consider going to graduate school, because at that time girls-- You know, if you didn't go on, if you just majored in liberal education, there wasn't really much that you-- Unless you did go to graduate school and fit into a kind of mold, there wasn't very much that you really could do. So I decided that was a way out. And besides that, I had several boyfriends, and I didn't want to make any kind of choice. [laughter] I wasn't ready yet!

RATNER: Okay. So you're in Switzerland, and then somehow you get to California. How does that happen?

BOARDMAN: Well, I met my husband who was going to medical school there. We moved back to Chicago for a year after he finished his schooling, and he was an intern at Cook County Hospital. It was just an awful experience. We brought a child and a dog back to Chicago. I never saw him for thirty-six hours at a time. And it was just awful because we had a fourth-floor walk-up. We couldn't live in other kinds of housing because we did have the two no-no's, a dog and a child. We had to find whatever kind of housing we could get, so we had a fourth-floor walk-up. I would drive him to work and then we'd come back, and I thought this was not a life. And then we were snowed in all that winter. My parents had subsequently moved to California. So we thought, "We're moving to California! This has got to stop!" I was very depressed because I'm a weather determinant, and if it's a cloudy day I get very morose. So this was it. And that's how we ended up in California. Bob was an intern at [Los Angeles County] Harbor [UCLA Medical Center] for a while because he was a foreign medical student and he had to repeat his internship. When he was a resident at L.A. County [University of Southern California] Medical Center, we lived in San Marino.

RATNER: So you're living here for a while before you're ever involved with the Pasadena Art Museum. And what was

your perception of the museum prior--?

BOARDMAN: Well, before that, let me go on. Because then, while-- I had a child--I had two children by then--and I was still scratching because I'm that kind of a person. So I enrolled at Chouinard [Art Institute]. And I went as a night student in ceramics because I was really interested in using my hands. And I'll tell you how I got there. I was there for three years in the ceramic department. I decided I'd make a studio at home and work here. And then after a year of doing that, I was clanking in and clanking out with clay and going to the market and feeling very fractured with my time, because I was giving so much time to the Girl Scouts. I was a leader, the Girl Scout leader, and I was also a potter, and I was going to school at night, all at the same time. And so a neighbor down the street said to me, "There's an Occidental [College] support group for the art department. Why don't you join it?" So I did. And at the first meeting, since I always have a big mouth, they said, "Well, why don't we have a fund-raiser?" So I, who had just been reading a book on underground film, said, "Sure! Why don't we put on an underground film festival?" So they turned to me and said, "Do it." So I did. And it was the second underground film festival in the history of the country, which I found out later. It occurred over a weekend at Oxy [Occidental

College], and we had over twelve hundred people signed up for two days.

And on the basis of that, I got a call one morning from somebody, a voice that I didn't even know. And they said, "Would you be willing to do the programs at the museum?" I was sitting on the bathroom floor, answering the phone, and I thought, "Well, I can't be dumb!" So I inquired a little more, and I found out, they said, well, that your obligation was that would you do the programs at the museum and also be on the board of Encounters, which gave me the clue that it was the Pasadena museum.

RATNER: So what had you known about the Pasadena museum before that?

BOARDMAN: Not very much. I had been in a California Design show. I had made ceramic knobs, and I didn't know too much about it. I had been around it, but I had the feeling that I really didn't know the-- You never know until you really get involved in a place that it's there and all the workings of it.

RATNER: So you agreed?

BOARDMAN: Yeah! I had nothing to lose, and I thought it would be fun. The thing that has always dominated my thinking about doing things--there are two things: would it be fun and would I grow. Would I intellectually grow, would it be interesting, would it captivate my interest?

Because I can read very fast and I'm a quick study. It served me really well on that job because I could get involved in a certain kind of a thing, a project, and skim through it and then, at the end of the project--do the kind of reading that was necessary for it, and then, when that was finished, go on to something else, rather than in an in-depth kind of a thing. So I'm a master of nothing.

RATNER: [laughter] Had anybody held this position before?

BOARDMAN: I'm not sure. I have no idea. But no one seemed to.

RATNER: Were you hired as a volunteer or as a paid--?

BOARDMAN: I was a volunteer at first, and then, later on, I was a paid person. It got to be a fifty-six-hour-a-week job. All in all, there wasn't really one day that I was off. And it was, you know, it was a really high-pressure job. I was in charge of the auditorium later on in the new museum, and I was also on the boards of several of the different organizations that were involved in the museum.

RATNER: What was the general philosophy of your job, or that department? What were they-- Did they tell you anything? What did they tell you when you came in? [laughter]

BOARDMAN: No! They just said, "Go!" They said, "Well, we thought it would be interesting for you to do this, and you do whatever you want." I defined the job. And the job, as

I defined it, was to make it interesting and make it lively, and the test was that if I enjoyed doing it that other people would enjoy coming to them. Sometimes that was the case; sometimes it wasn't. But it was very interesting because the things that are now enjoyed in the thousands, that people are doing in great numbers and people who are speaking and events that happened subsequently and have gotten a big crowd, I used to put on to four or five people. And it was just, I don't know, the time wasn't right for it. Timing is everything, and I found that to be true.

RATNER: So what exactly were your responsibilities?

BOARDMAN: Well, I was on the Encounters board, which was the music group, and we brought contemporary music to the museum. At one time I was on the education department board, and that was very interesting. But my job was really to bring in programming other than anything that was on the wall. Anything that was not on the wall was really my responsibility.

RATNER: So you conceived and implemented and--

BOARDMAN: Yes. Well, there were two things. If there was an exhibition that was scheduled, I thought about it, and then I tried to augment it with programming. Then, if there were-- Then there were other programs that I tried to devise that were above and beyond the things that were

connected with any single exhibition. For example, I put on the James Joyce Liquid Theater. It was a touchy-feely kind of a theater that I'd heard about, and since I had wanted to see it and I didn't want to spend the money to go to it, I decided we'd put it on at the museum. And it was very interesting because later on it went to New York to rave reviews. And I think there were only three people that enjoyed it at the museum besides myself, including one janitor!

But it was that kind of programming that we did. We did theater, we did dance, we did lectures, we did movies, we did multimedia kinds of things. I did a series on collecting, which was really an interesting series, and I don't think it's ever been done since around here because it was so off-the-wall that no one would have ever thought of it. It was just collecting and what made people collect. Because it seems to me that it's not what people collect, it's the heartbeat of the collector that's really so interesting. It was probably because I had studied anthropology and I'd had psych courses that I found that it was really fascinating for me. Gwenda Davies, who was at that time the curator of education, and I put this little class on which lasted for-- We coordinated it together, and it lasted for sixteen weeks, sixteen straight weeks. And what we decided to do was to do this class once a week, and

it would be to get various people who collect, but not just contemporary art, but who have the, kind of the fever, the collecting fever, together.

And so we, first of all, started off with Bob [Robert A.] Rowan. And we heard him talk about how he collected contemporary art. He would call up Leo Castelli every single day, and it was like a tote sheet. He would just talk about buying and selling.

We had various people who were-- We had one woman who we didn't put on, who had two apartments in Alhambra, and she collected contemporary prints. She didn't spend more than ten dollars a week. She and her husband had been doing this for something like twenty years. She, when we went to visit her-- She was a redhead and weighed something like three hundred pounds. And she used to sing. When she used to sing German lieder, then she collected dark, sad prints. And when she sang Elizabethan folk songs, she collected very happy prints. She had one of the best print collections I've ever seen. But she had them stacked in this-- She owned the apartment house; she had four apartments. She had them stacked in all the apartments, under beds, around, all over. She was really weird but wonderful, and we felt that although the class might understand that, we didn't want to give them-- We didn't want to make them think that she was a joke, so we never

showed her, nor her collection. But that was the kind of person that we had.

We had people that collected barbed wire. And there is a thread running through collectors: people have a passion for collecting. We showed the passion. We visited Margaritte Staude, who had this huge statuary that she had loaned out; it was like the lions in front of the Metropolitan Museum [of Art, New York City]. She had them by her pool. She had loaned one of them to the [Los Angeles] County Museum [of Art], and she didn't like the way they were handling them, so she called up the then director of the museum and said, "I want it back by next Tuesday." So he returned it. But this was the kind of person that we showed collecting. It was a very interesting kind of a class because it didn't focus on contemporary art; it focused on people. And that, to me, was the fascinating thing about it.

RATNER: What kind of turnout did you get for a class like that?

BOARDMAN: We had something like twenty people that were very, very faithful. They thought this was so weird they couldn't stand it! And they couldn't wait for the-- In fact, people come up to me today and say, "Remember me? I was in your class!" [laughter] It was a weird class, but it was interesting! And, you know, I think that people

should really do something like that, because people are too involved with-- They're too rigid in their thinking about what they collect. It's interesting for collectors to meet other collectors. It's really-- The impulse of why people collect is much more interesting to me.

RATNER: So what were some of the other programs that you remember as particularly interesting?

BOARDMAN: Well, I had envisioned, at the time when earthworks were coming on, I felt, "Well, it would be really interesting to do our own." I always wore black. I always wear black and pearls because I figured that if I went to jail, I could always be well dressed! [laughter] And there are moments that I'll tell you about where I almost did go to jail! And one of them was this earthworks thing. Well, it started out that I had met this laser artist by the name of Tom Fresh, who now is into Indians. At that time he was a laser artist. And I said to him, "You know, this would be really interesting if we could work something out." So I said, "How about"--since I had known something about laser--"how about going up on top of the water towers at the beginning of the Pasadena Freeway and shooting a laser through them?" He thought that was a keen idea. So that was part one of the program. Then I called the city and we arranged for Tom to climb up there and put the lasers in so that there would be two or three

lasers that would go up into the sky and would be the beginning of this event.

The second part of this event would be to take those flashing yellow lights that you have on construction sites. I called a local radio station in Pasadena and I said, "Could you give out signals?" And they said, no, it was against the FCC [Federal Communications Commission]. But you could divide up the people, if you wanted to do something, give them each a number, and the station would, at the prescribed moment, say "for the group number one song," then group number one at the museum would respond by moving out on the street within their configuration. Because what I wanted to do was to have a group of people watching from the top of the old museum and have a group of people divided into teams, set them down on the street, on Los Robles [Avenue] in front of the museum [laughter], with these flashing lights in different configurations, but never knowing what the configuration would be because it would be-- If you had number one configuration, it would be one thing; if you had number two configuration, it would be something else. So we had them divided up and we got signals from the radio station, who said, "Now, number one!"

And so we went out there. I had unfortunately forgotten to notify the Pasadena police. And so,

subsequently, the traffic was held up for twenty-five blocks around the museum, which also was very interesting. I just hadn't thought that this would happen. And my black dress and pearls came in handy, because at that moment I had really locked up traffic. It was a Saturday night and I'd really locked up traffic in Pasadena. And the chief of police came storming in, and he said, "Who's in charge here?" I said I was. I'll backtrack a little bit, because the third part of this was to take large balloons-- Not really balloons; they were blow-ups that would fill a room. And this was just to see what people would do. And these were the fathers of Pasadena, you see. This was very curious. But everybody was very accepting. This was in the sixties, and it was really fun. And so after he said, "Who's in charge here?", I took him into the museum. And there were the fathers of the community in this room with all these balloons, hitting these balloons. So as I opened the door I said, "And sergeant, this is art." And as I opened the door, these guys were hitting the balloons, the blow-ups, and he looked at me in a very skeptical way and he said, "If you say so, lady." But the unfortunate thing was for Tom Fresh climbing up into the towers. It was a hot night, and the lasers didn't really show up that well. That was too bad.

But it set a tone, and it was a very kind of an off-

the-wall-- But it made a very cohesive museum. It attracted people. People that did these kinds of things had a great deal of fun, and they were interested in doing other things, as you can well imagine.

RATNER: Yeah! Any other ones that stand out in your mind?

BOARDMAN: [laughter] Well, I'm only telling you about all my fiascos! Well, we had some more conventional ones. We had some things. We had some concerts. And we had people. The Encounters had all kinds of new music. I felt that the sixties were an experience for me personally. I sat through [the films of] Andy Warhol, fifteen hours of Andy Warhol; I sat through [the music of] Terry Riley for twenty-four hours. I will never go through another experience like that, because what the sixties taught me was that you don't have to go off to Tibet or you don't have to go off to India to meditate. You can do it in an amphitheater with the music of Terry Riley, or Andy Warhol maybe. You just--your eyes roll back. And I also have seen so many boring things in the name of art! But anyhow, there were interesting things, and they were really kind of conventional. Things that people now would say, "Oh, geez, that's just really the mainstream." But I take a yawn and a walk when I see this coming because I've been there.

But when they were building the new museum, I decided that what we should do would be to-- The one big event of

the year is the [Pasadena] Rose Parade [Tournament of Roses]. And I thought what would be really interesting would be to set up a soup kitchen at the base of where the new museum was going to be and serve out free soup to people. So I got Campbell [Soup Company] to donate these great institutional cans for the purpose because it was great TV coverage. I called the army and I tried to get them to give me a field kitchen. And they told me that they weren't-- Most of their field kitchens were in Vietnam! [laughter] So I couldn't get a field kitchen. But they said to try the National Guard because they liked to camp out. So I did get the National Guard, and they told me that they really didn't have any handy. So I had to improvise. It was a real production. We set up wires from Ambassador College and we had everybody bring over coffee pots from all over Pasadena. We heated up water, we got some water donated from Arrowhead [Drinking Water Company]. Anyhow, to make a long story short, it was a hot night, and no one wanted soup! We only had tomato soup, and from then on, all the preparations in the cooking at the museum were based on Campbell's tomato soup! But it was really kind of fun to think about those kinds of things. They brought people together that would laugh over it all.

We also had put on EAT. I don't know if you know

about EAT, but at one time there was a group in Los Angeles which I belonged to, and it was called Experiments in Art and Technology. And they went on to the Osaka World Fair, and they did experiments in--they were very successful in bringing together technological art. And we put on all kinds of programs at the museum in support of this group. There were artists and there were scientists. Elsa Garmire, who is the head of the laser program at USC, was part of the group. We had people from Bell Laboratories, Bob [Robert] Irwin. There were a huge number of people who participated in this, and when we put on programs at the museum they were extremely successful. So that was, you know, there was a wide variety of things that were going on.

RATNER: What kind of assistance did you get from the staff on implementing the programs?

BOARDMAN: Well, as I told you, Gwenda [Davies] and I had done a program. I really had everybody's approval, and, for example, if I went to Eudie [Eudorah] Moore, and she would say to me, "Now, we're doing this exhibit 'Islands in the Land.'" We, I, worked on, I think, twenty-seven different programs for that exhibit. I went out and I went down to New Mexico and I brought people back, and I brought crafts people from the South. I started a program there at the museum and in the schools. I demanded that the crafts

people, or others that participated, would also go into the Pasadena schools, because I felt that that was really very important, that kids could benefit from this. And from then on, I started really getting programs together so that there would be a school outreach for the museum, because I really did feel that that was important. But there was a lot of-- You know, everybody was very cooperative. And I tried to fit myself to them more than they tried to fit themselves to me. If they had an idea, they would come and talk to me. It was a very free and easy kind of a thing, and very unstructured. And I just tried to be as loose as I could, and if a good idea came up that wouldn't hurt anybody and would be fun, I'd try to do it.

RATNER: To whom were you directly responsible?

BOARDMAN: Whoever the director was.

RATNER: The director. I put together--although it seems like you've hit most of it--I did put together a partial list, just, you know, from the information I had, of some of the programs that were held. I thought it would be more fun to see what you remembered offhand first.

BOARDMAN: Let me get my glasses so I can see it.

RATNER: Okay. [recorder turned off]

BOARDMAN: --that were unconventional, the ones that I

remember which were really the most fun. And here are all the ones that you showed me, this grouping of the other ones. Charles Mattox was a good friend of mine. He had started out being a pupil of Arshile Gorky. He and Fletcher Benton were computer artists. And we put Charlie on at the museum, and he spoke very well. He's a very interesting man who's still alive in New Mexico. And I think he's retired now from the University of New Mexico. We went to visit him one year, and I think that was, that killed him, killed our relationship, because I brought the kids. [laughter]

We did want, I did want to do a whole series on things that dealt with technological art. And that was really important to me because I thought it was a very interesting phenomenon that most people really weren't aware of. And the problem was that technological art in Los Angeles ended at-- There was an exhibition [part of the Art and Technology program] that [Maurice] Tuchman put on at the L.A. County Museum of Art which killed, absolutely killed the movement. And he put together inappropriate people. People that had no relationship to, had had no understanding of what technological art was. And as someone at the time said, it set it back twenty-five years, but I think it's probably longer. It was a very, very interesting movement. And it was, I found myself-- I felt very privileged to be part of

it, and to meet those people that were involved in it.

Milton Babbitt. That was part of the Encounter series. And the collecting, I did mention that, and we'd talked about it.

RATNER: Right.

BOARDMAN: And then I forgot to mention that at one time I'd been put on the board of Cal Arts [California Institute of the Arts], which really helped me. It was a very interesting time at Cal Arts. This was just after [Robert] Corregan, who was the first president of Cal Arts. Bob Corregan was a very interesting man that they had brought in to Cal Arts. He was a teacher and, also, he was kind of a nut. But he was able to bring together really very top-notch people to start a school in the experimental--

* * *

[This portion of the text has been sealed at the request of the interviewee.]

* * *

Anyhow, because of the affiliation with Cal Arts, I knew a lot of the people there. I inaugurated two programs, or one program actually, using Cal Arts people and the museum auditorium, in I guess it was 1969 or '70. At that same time I also started a program with a man by the name of Paul Vangilisti, who was a poet. And the two of us did a whole-year poetry series [Specimen '73] where we-- These were multi-media kind of things. The poets would read and we would have whoever it was, appropriately, either dance or sing. If it was a poet whose poetry lent itself to dancing, we would have a backdrop of dancing. We worked it out so that there was film as a backdrop to the poetry and augmented the poetry. We published a book with it. And then, if there was poetry and dance, poetry and music of any kind, we got saxophone players in, we got all kinds of people.

The Cal Arts thing was for children. We put on all kinds of performances on Saturdays for children using the talent, the young people from Cal Arts doing multimedia presentations, because the concept of Cal Arts has been to try to make the arts interactive. And it had limited success up till now. With the new president that's now coming on board, I think it will probably be more successful. Because it was trying to bring all the arts together and to have them augment each other so that you would have a real integration of the arts. And this was also the thought of the Pasadena Art Museum at one time, but then it got off its track at the same time.

So these two institutions--the Pasadena museum, Cal Arts--the two institutions really had a lot in common. They didn't realize it, but they did have a lot in common because they had both started out trying to do the same thing. I felt really I was well placed, because I realized this, and that I could try and bring some of these kinds of programs into fruition even though a lot of people didn't realize what I was doing.

Okay. Let's see. We had learned people come in and talk about various-- People like--Carlo Huber talked on [Alberto] Giacometti. We had all kinds of different mimes. Let's see, we had the Drums of Ghana, because that was at Cal Arts at the time. I never felt that we couldn't

explore anything in the arts, that anything, unless it was brutally obscene, should not be examined. So we had all kinds of things that had either been in the bulletin [**Pasadena Art Museum Calendar**], or we would get on the phone and call people and say, "Hey, this person has just come into town, and if we can pull together a crowd of three people, we can have him at the museum." Which we did too, because a lot of the things are not on here, not on this sheet that you have given me. We had, let's see. [long pause] There were a lot of things that were left off of this list.

RATNER: Yes. Yes. I just pulled what I could get off--

BOARDMAN: Yes. Let's see, we did a whole thing with a dancer. What was her name? Toni Basil. She was really terrific.

RATNER: I wonder if some things just missed the publication deadlines for the bulletin. Some of the bulletins were missing, of course, but it's interesting that the more experimental things that you've been mentioning I didn't have on there.

BOARDMAN: Yes. Well, for example, this thing with Barbara Morgan was interesting, because I went over and I read her tapes at UCLA [interview by the UCLA Oral History Program] in the--she's in the oral history--she was one of the first graduates in the first class at UCLA. It was interesting to read that. But these are all the--

RATNER: Conventional.

BOARDMAN: --conventional things. And we had all kinds of screw-ups. I think everybody does. Because projectors wouldn't run. I was constantly running around. We had a beautiful auditorium.

RATNER: In the new building.

BOARDMAN: In the new building. In the old building, everything broke down. I was not a multimedia person to start with. At that time, I learned how to do a soft-shoe if the tape broke and the film flickered or something happened. I was in my black dress and pearls, nervously wrenching my hands. Even in the new building we had a lot of screw-ups that happened with the equipment. I guess you can't help it. But it was really [makes sound indicating frustration], I don't know. I don't know what to say about any of these.

BOARDMAN: Oh, that's fine. I just thought I would show it to you. But mostly I wanted to know what you remembered off the top of your head.

BOARDMAN: [laughter] The screw-ups I mentioned! There were a lot of things that were really kind of fun things to do. It was an interesting time. Participating in those times were really interesting because it was fun. And it wasn't serious. At least, I never felt it was serious. The only time I went to lectures, and John [R.] Coplans and

Shirley Blum put on a series of lectures for the Fellows of Contemporary Art. Well, John Coplans was actually--you couldn't understand a word he said. To me, the idea of lecturing is to communicate. And I must say that he was absolutely-- I've read him subsequently, and when he talks about things that he understands, he can explain it to you. But if he doesn't understand it, it's garbage. And I'll tell you, these art historians, they can give you such garbage. They could say things so much easier. To me it's a sign of genius when you can explain things simply. And I'll tell you, it tells you something about them.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

APRIL 19, 1988

RATNER: Before we flipped the tape, we were still talking about some of the programs. Did you want to add anything else, or should we move on?

BOARDMAN: Why don't we move on.

RATNER: Okay. I thought we--

BOARDMAN: If I can remember anything else, I'll butt in.

RATNER: Yes. Definitely. Because of your position as a staff member, you were at the museum, as you said, just about constantly. So you came into contact with various members of the staff over the years that you were the program chair, and you saw several directors come and go. And from your perspective as a staff person, I'd like to know how you would assess their performance. What was the general mood in the building while Jim [James T.] Demetrion was director?

BOARDMAN: Jim Demetrion was a professional. To me, he really was one. Of the three that I worked under, Jim was the most professional. He was serious. He knew his field: German expressionism. And he was really a together person. And I think that the one failing that he might have had was-- Well, no, I won't say that. I think that it was-- I thought he did a good job.

RATNER: How was the morale when he announced his

resignation?

BOARDMAN: Well, I think that the times were such-- I'm really having a hard time remembering what the times were, but I think that to me that was a time of utter confusion. I think that it was confusion because then they went and picked someone who really wasn't, who was the diametrical opposite of Jim Demetrion, who was not-- He was not an administrator, he was not a professional.

RATNER: This is Tom [Thomas G.] Terbell you're talking about?

BOARDMAN: Yes, I'm talking about Tom. He was a nice guy. But he didn't know it from--he didn't-- He just didn't have what it would take to be a professional art person. And it wasn't his fault. It was the fault of the board. I think the board of the Pasadena museum was always remiss. And they never-- Many of them have subsequently learned from their mistakes because many of them went on to form the board of MOCA [Museum of Contemporary Art]. And at the time they allowed Bob Rowan to have the major say of what was going on. He shouldn't have had that. They allowed a lot of things that shouldn't have happened happen. And I think that one of the mistakes was to-- They just let it all flow past. I mean, it was like it was a current of water that they didn't have any control over, although they could have. I think they were really

remiss. And I think that was one of the mistakes, to put in Tom.

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[This portion of the text has been sealed at the request of the interviewee.]

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BOARDMAN: The board of the museum had seen that the money coming in for California Design was-- She [Eudorah Moore] had been on the board and had been forced off the board. And the museum board had seen that this was the only really profitable department. Although we did turn a profit in the programs that we were able to kick back into the common pot, because we had to. Unlike California Design, the

auditorium programs had to-- The moneys that we kicked in came out of the common pot, but not California Design. They had their own budget. And that had always rankled, as you've probably heard before, had always rankled the board. And Tom was the one who was to be the enforcer, and that was, you know, a terrible way. It all added to the demise of the museum, I think, and to the end of fun and games.

RATNER: How would you rate Bill Agee as both a curator and a director?

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[This portion of the text has been sealed at the request of the interviewee.]

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RATNER: So how did the staff feel about the timing of his departure?

BOARDMAN: Well, I think they sort of expected it. We all, Eudie and I, we would watch, we were sitting out and we saw the-- I was out in the main office and Eudie had an office by herself. I watched all these people coming and going, and I figured out, I had known that they had made forays

before to Norton Simon, but nothing had come of it. But I realized that these people, the board, were not clever enough to go really seeking new kinds of solutions, that they would then go back and try and re-plumb the waters that had been, re-fish the waters that had been fished before. They couldn't go out and cast their nets someplace farther on, or maybe they just didn't have the opportunity to do it, I don't know. But I watched these men in their business suits coming and going, and I realized that they were negotiating with Norton Simon, and I realized that this was probably what was going to happen, and I would think Bill was smart enough to see it too.

RATNER: Okay. I'll ask you a little bit more about that in a while. I wanted to finish up, if you don't mind, with some of the staff people. John Coplans served as curator under Demetrion, and then for a short time under Tom Terbell. And he really seemed to generate sparks. What made him so controversial?

BOARDMAN:

[This portion of the text has been sealed at the request of the interviewee.]

But then I went down to Irvine with Susan Peterson for a lecture. Susan Peterson was a friend

of mine who was the head of the ceramic department at USC. She subsequently has gone off to Hunter College and is the head of the ceramic department there and is an educator and she's written several books. And at the time, before she was at USC, she had been both at Chouinard and at Otis [Art Institute of Parsons School of Design]. And while she was at Otis, Susan had been part of the group with Peter Voulkos and John Mason and the group that was associated with the ceramic department at Otis. And John Coplans got up and he was talking--this was when he was talking about abstract ceramics, abstract expressionism in ceramics. And he had promulgated this kind of thinking, which has gone on to be mainstream thought because of John Coplans's exhibition that had started down in Irvine. And Susan--I can remember this--Susan, who was part of the movement, sat up in the balcony, rolling in the aisle because she-- One thing about scholarship that I've learned to realize, it's the person that writes it down that is the one, is the real thing. Maybe it's not correct, but it's the person that actually puts it down on paper who everybody believes. And she was absolutely hysterical, laughing about this. So I, you know, I didn't know. But she seemed to know all about this, and she was-- I said, "Well, what do you mean by this, Susan?" She was telling me chapter and verse about things that were wrong. And so

I believed her.

But anyhow, then John Coplans came to the museum, and one night, one night I can always remember-- John Coplans, as he left the museum, also wrote a real awful, really terrible article for an art magazine, and it was so awful that it was suable, which, subsequently, someone did sue. They didn't sue Coplans, because as they said, he had nothing. But they did sue **Artforum**, and they got a judgment. The two architects of the museum [Thornton Ladd and John Kelsey] got a judgment against him. But Coplans was so ugly in that article. He talked about Eudorah Moore, who is absolutely fair--couldn't be the more opposite--a hundred percent away from it. He libeled her by saying that she was anti-Semitic. I mean, it was just such a terrible thing. And in the article he whitewashed himself while damning everybody else. And I think people just don't like that kind of talk.

But aside from that, I can remember John Coplans as being really kind of a creep. He was a real creep.

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[This portion of the text has been sealed at the request of the interviewee.]

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And he can be nice. He was a photographer, and now, I understand, he still is. But I have no, I just, I've always never-- I can't be anything but a hundred percent honest, and I see things honestly, and I can't come back now and say that he was a great man.

RATNER: What were the circumstances surrounding his resignation?

BOARDMAN: Well, I think I mentioned the fact that he was stealing, and the fact that he, as I remember--and I may be

wrong--but as I remember, he was caught with his hand in the cookie jar. And then they called him on it, and then he countered--I can't remember--he countered, he wanted his pay. And they gave it to him. But I think they really wanted him out. I don't remember exactly at this point. But I remember it was bad.

RATNER: What about Barbara Haskell?

BOARDMAN: Barbara was always a professional. She was young. She was extremely aggressive. She was a friend of John's. She was his protégé in some ways. And I think that she, also, I think that I-- You know, I think all institutions, or most institutions, are on one hand good because they have aggressive people, but on the other hand, sometimes the aggression gets out of hand. And I think Barbara was a very aggressive woman, and still is probably, although she's probably mellowed by now. But I think that she was smart. She's very smart, as opposed to most of these people. They were not that smart. She's a very bright woman. And I think she knew. She was smart in what she did. I never really had too much to do with her because I stayed out of her way. I felt that that was the best thing to do. I did my job, and I tried to feel-- Like Adolf Eichmann, I did my job. She did her job and she did it well, and I think that she was, in many ways, she wanted her position to be known, and she was not-- She, in many

ways, did things which I would call, sometimes--she did them in aggressive ways. That's all.

RATNER: Okay. While you were on the staff, the new building was under construction. And you mentioned already a little bit about the auditorium. But maybe you could tell me a little bit more in terms of staging your programs and the various events. How did this, the new facility, measure up?

BOARDMAN: Well, acoustically, it's divine. It really is. Now, I understand, it's not used at all as an auditorium. But acoustically it was a great, it was a really good, good facility. And it was really needed in Pasadena. I think that we couldn't do full-stage plays. It was not equipped for that. But it was just a beautiful instrument. Both Ladd and Kelsey had really thought-- They had brought an acoustical person to really think it out, and it was a good facility. Beautiful facility. And for what it was supposed to do, it was really adequate. We had a stage, we had a film area where a large screen could come down. It was great for music. It was really great for music. It was great for small performances. It was just perfect for what it was set up to do. As I understood the way that the museum had first been envisioned, as a coming-together of all the arts, it would have been very good for that.

RATNER: What was the general mood of the staff both prior to, and then immediately following, the move into the new building?

BOARDMAN: I think elation. I mean, they were glad to be in there and I think that they wanted to. I think money's always important. Money was always a problem. People got along, more or less. They had Fred [R.] Parker, who was doing photography; they had Barbara Haskell, as I remember. My mind is really going fast. But I think, from what I can gather, at least my perception myself was that it was a great opportunity. I can't speak for anybody else but myself. It was a great opportunity to see what we could do and use the whole facility, because we did. We had things like regattas for kids in the pond. We did everything. It was a facility we could really use.

RATNER: Okay. I thought we'd kind of both back up and move on by talking about your role as a member of the Art Alliance [of the Pasadena Art Museum] as a separate thing from being a staff person. From reading the Art Alliance minutes, I discovered that in May of 1969 you attended your first Art Alliance meeting.

BOARDMAN: Yes.

RATNER: What was your perception of that group prior to becoming a member?

BOARDMAN: Well, a lot of them have become my friends since

then, so I don't remember what my first perception was, but I thought they were kind of fun, and they were doing interesting things. I thought I could utilize them and that they would like to participate as well in whatever purpose that I wanted for the museum. I mean, for what I was doing at the museum, I could come in there-- They were social, and at that time, I wasn't. I was, you know, just doing my own thing, and I made friends with them. I liked them. They were nice people.

RATNER: Do you remember when you were asked to join?

BOARDMAN: I remember who asked me, and I'll tell you a little bit about that too. It was a woman by the name of Pat Clavier, who was a member of the Art Alliance, who subsequently left--skipped town, as a matter of fact, because we loaned them money. And they skipped town with it. But Pat and her husband, Philippe, were interesting people because they were really into-- They had lived in a Greene and Greene house up in Hillcrest, which we inherited after having to buy it because we had loaned them money and we got-- We were the first people that loaned them money and-- Although it turned out that three years afterwards, people were still coming up to us and saying, "Do you know where the Claviers are? Because we loaned them money."

RATNER: You, as you and your husband, or--?

BOARDMAN: Yes.

RATNER: Oh. Oh. I thought you meant the Art Alliance.
BOARDMAN: No, no, no. We had loaned them money. He had been in a business that really didn't take off. And so she was the one that asked me to join the Art Alliance. And the Claviers were interesting people because they had all these kinds of off-the-wall events at their house. That was a time of really off-the-wall kinds of things. You look back and say, "Why the hell did you do that kind of stuff?"

But there was one event where I got [an] IBM card in the mail. Now, this is a digression to some extent, but it will set the background of the Claviers and it will set the background of the times. And I got [an] IBM card that said, "Come down to the L.A. [Los Angeles] Conservancy of Music [and Art]." It was an IBM card. So I went down there and I saw-- This was right after the Chicago riots, the [1968] Democratic convention. The reason I know it is because what happened at that thing. It turned out to be one of those kinds of events that you could never, ever duplicate. Even a movie would find it difficult. The Grinsteins [Stanley and Elise], for example, were, for some reason-- It started, it opened with a motorcycle cavalcade in and out of the building by undressed motorcyclists with crash helmets, but body-painted. [laughter] It ended up-- Among the participants were the Grinsteins and various

other people that you would never think. I can remember the Blums [Irving and Shirley] were there. And the reason that I knew that it was near Chicago was because during intermission we all retired to a bar across the street, and as we emerged from the bar, we saw the police out in front. And Claes Oldenburg picked up a bottle and said, "By God," he says, "I'm going to get those pigs." That was in Chicago, and he hit this bottle against the curb and he says, "I'm going for them." Well, it turned out that the reason that they were there was because the motorcycle noise had disturbed this violin recital upstairs, so they came to investigate.

But it ended up with Barbara Smith in an act that my husband will never forget. It was called "Chicken Salad." And Barbara Smith and this young man had made this large piece, had this large Styrofoam piece of bread, and then they put some lettuce on it, and then they put themselves on it and then they covered themselves up with a large Styrofoam top, being a sandwich. The lights went out, and there they were, totally nude, making out in bed. They were the chicken salad. My husband will never forget that one. Meanwhile, the Claviers had performances like that at their house, which was really interesting, as you can well imagine. And we had things, what was it, the happenings. What--?

RATNER: [Allen] Kaprow.

BOARDMAN: Kaprow was always hanging around. We had all these happenings that went on at the Claviers' and other places, and it was--the Claviers were always part of that, and we were part of that because of the museum, and it was quite interesting. Anyhow, that brought me into the Art Alliance! That was the reason I got in. And it was fun, you know! They were always open.

RATNER: I noticed in reading the minutes that, not every year, but it seemed like the members, the new members at the annual meeting, would be greeted in some kind of unusual or special way. Do you remember how your group was introduced?

BOARDMAN: No. No. I don't remember who was in the group. I think-- I can't remember. But I don't remember that at all.

RATNER: Okay. What was the philosophy of the Art Alliance in relationship to the Pasadena Art Museum?

BOARDMAN: To serve. They were there to, the women, well-- Someone once said, in Pasadena, that there are two very strong groups. There are the Art Alliance women and the Caltech [California Institute of Technology] men. And that's true. I think that's really true. At that time, they were an extremely strong group of women that got a lot of-- They were very effective in what they wanted to do;

they got done.

[This portion of the text has been sealed at the request of the interviewee.]

And I think they were a very strong group of women that wanted to get things done and saw their role of doing things that they could contribute to the museum.

RATNER: What kind of problems were there for you, if any, in being both a staff person and a member of the Art Alliance?

BOARDMAN: I never had any trouble being-- Because I was a staff person, I was on the board of Cal Arts, and I was a member of the Art Alliance, and it all seemed to help me rather than hinder me. It was very good for me because I knew what was going on. I think that information is power, and if you want to do a good job and you want to be effective, you have to have all the kind of information that you can get. I really did want to do a good job, and I really wanted to be helpful, and I thought that that was the way that I could do it.

RATNER: Okay. I'd like to ask you a few more questions regarding the new building, but from your perspective as a member of the Art Alliance. With the move to the new facility, there was some concern--I read this in the

minutes--amongst the members of the Art Alliance that the Art Alliance's role in relationship to the museum would--

BOARDMAN: Diminish.

RATNER: --or would change in some way because of the expanded quarters and staff and programs. What do you recall about those conversations, and how were they resolved?

BOARDMAN: I don't remember how they were resolved except in a natural way. But I do remember that people are always worried about change. And I don't think that-- I think that they, being who they were, they had no-- As time proved me right, they had no worries that they would lose anything. The physical old Pasadena museum was such a small place and had such a kind of a homespun kind of a feeling about it that I think that they really felt that they would lose that kind of quality--that it would get glitzy. The same people were always involved in it, you see. There wasn't that much-- It was just the facilities changed, but the same people were, by and large, there, and that's what really made the difference. And they had other facilities that were grander, but the people that were running it were always the same, and to me it still had that same kind of homespun thing. It just was a different facility and looked better. I don't think that they had any-- I heard them voicing these things, but I never paid

them much account.

RATNER: What was the general consensus regarding the new facilities, particularly the lunchroom and kitchen area, which, I guess, the Art Alliance used a lot?

BOARDMAN: Yes, they did use it a lot. I can't remember what the thing was. People came in from the community and we served lunches to various groups that came through, and--

RATNER: As a money-making--?

BOARDMAN: I think it was a money-maker. I'm sure. It was a service thing, but I'm sure it did make some money. And they, we, if there were any groups that-- It was just a good way of-- As Jane Brewer says, there were the cookers and the lookers. And so many of the ladies in the Art Alliance really weren't involved so much in art as they were in cooking and domestic things, that it provided a facility for them. And in retrospect, it probably was one of the kinds of things that is needed today by the Art Alliance, because it made them a cohesive whole. And I can't remember if the facilities were inadequate, but I thought they were pretty good. I remember the refrigerators were great. I think they did bitch a bit about the kitchen, but I can't remember it too much.

RATNER: Okay. What role did the Alliance play in the opening ceremonies and parties?

BOARDMAN: I think they played a lot. I mean, they were

the ones, they were the backbone of it. And they, I'll tell you, they're very funny, because it's a social group. And they were in their element. They just loved this sort of thing. And they were always bickering back and forth, and it was always really kind of-- They always tried to give themselves top billing, and they should have. I mean, because they were the hands-on people, and they did all these kinds of things. They should have been the ones that were the-- The other people didn't. I think there might have been some discussion between the board and the Art Alliance as to what their role was, and at one time they might have felt that they had a lesser role, but I think that they came out okay, from what I remember. But I'm really not the best one to judge this because I-- That seems to be a great blank in my head. I don't know.

RATNER: Okay. Was there anything else you wanted to add about the opening ceremonies?

BOARDMAN: No, I don't remember that much. I don't know why I don't remember. Maybe I repressed it, but I don't remember that much. Terrible that I don't remember.

RATNER: Yes; it was kind of a big deal!

BOARDMAN: Yeah! [laughter] And I don't remember why I don't remember!

RATNER: Okay! Well, that's all right. I wanted to talk a little bit about the deteriorating financial situation at

the museum, particularly from the viewpoint of the Art Alliance. It became evident rather quickly that the museum was in trouble once the building opened. And, once again, from reviewing the Art Alliance minutes, it seems that the Art Alliance really went the distance for the museum in terms of both financial and volunteer support. For example, in addition to the $25,000 that they gave to become a founding member, they also donated an additional $40,000 during the June 1971 negotiations with the county of Los Angeles, as well as loaning another $25,000 at the same time. And this doesn't include the approximately $45,000 given between '71 and '73 for the exhibition budget. And while the minutes and dollars donated make clear the level of commitment, I'm wondering, especially with the continuing announcements of the mounting deficit and then the staff cutbacks which began to happen, whether or not there were some dissenting opinions amongst the Art Alliance about continuing to be so supportive.

BOARDMAN: I think there were. But I think that they were really beaten out, because I think the thinking was at the time that the Art Alliance, their sole obligation-- They couldn't conceive of themselves as anything but handmaidens of the museum at that time. And I think that there were people who did feel that why, you know, why throw it all away? But on the other hand, they were beaten out because

they couldn't think that far ahead other than the handmaiden situation; that if they had, they would sink with the museum--although they obviously didn't--or they couldn't conceive of themselves as outside of the museum support system. And I think that there were people who did feel, and maybe if they vocalize it, they did feel they were just throwing good money after bad, which did happen. But they were certainly not in the ascendency. And people were so busy with themselves. It was a really funny place. A lot of the kind of things that happened, people really just lived in a dream world in Pasadena. I mean, you think back on it, they really were-- Maybe they didn't care, I don't know. I think they did care. But they just couldn't conceive of anything but what they--and they had ego all tied up with this. I mean, it was just a tremendous ego involvement, that this was something that they were putting on and that they couldn't-- Something was going to be pulled out of a hat. That they couldn't conceive of themselves as being anything but the young and the restless.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

APRIL 19, 1988

RATNER: Before we flipped the tape, we were talking about the Art Alliance [of the Pasadena Art Museum]'s feelings about the deteriorating financial situation. Did you want to add anything else about that?

BOARDMAN: Well, yes. I think that some of us did say something. On the other hand, there was the kind of an ostrich philosophy, sticking-your-head-in-the-sand kind of a philosophy, which I think also is a kind of philosophy that permeated the board on a certain kind of level throughout the institution. I think that the Art Alliance was of a social class, a certain socioeconomic class that--the same as the board. And they had the same kind of feelings, which I think is partly economic and partly social. I think it's a very interesting phenomenon when you see this. People don't want to hear bad news. They don't want to deal with it. A lot of them have inherited money and they don't want to, they can't, they're not aggressive people. They're aggressive to some extent but they can't deal in an aggressive way with the problems that are overwhelming like that. They didn't have any inventive solutions that they could pull out of a hat.

RATNER: At what point prior to the [Norton] Simon takeover did the Art Alliance begin to feel that maybe they weren't

as flush as they had been and should, maybe, curtail?

BOARDMAN: I think there was a period just before that they started-- I think--and I may be wrong, because I'm really searching on this one--that they did feel that it wasn't all just fun and games, that they had to think about their future, because they began to think that it was their--that there was a big fight going on about the moneys. And they started, I think there was-- Everybody wanted all the moneys from not only the Art Alliance but from all the other kitties as well, from the California Design kitty and from just about every--all the [Pasadena Art] Museum money. They lumped all the museum money in. It's surprising that Norton Simon didn't want their bodies as well, because that was, from what I understand, part of the-- Anyhow, he didn't want their bodies to come on board, but they just wanted his-- He just wanted their money. And they, I think, at one point, felt that-- It got towards the end that they really didn't want to give the money, but they were forced to do it. And so everybody walked with their pockets empty.

RATNER: I think it was, from what I can tell, because they were legally standing committees of the museum, they--

BOARDMAN: That they had to do this. That's right.

RATNER: Yes.

BOARDMAN: But actually, if they-- I think there was some

talk that maybe we could just steal in and grab our bank accounts and walk out, which might have been illegal, but it might have stood us in good stead to get out into the world. Although California Design was not a legal-- I guess it was, at that time, a legal-- Was it a standing committee of the museum? I'm not sure--

RATNER: No, that had been incorporated separately for a long time.

BOARDMAN: But he did take their money.

RATNER: Oh. I didn't realize that.

BOARDMAN: And so everybody walked out without money. There were a great deal of problems with that money. No one saw the handwriting on the wall.

RATNER: I want to get back to that. But on a happier note, as you've mentioned, the Art Alliance was really the major fund-raising support and backbone of the museum.

BOARDMAN: The hands-on group. There was the Men's Committee, there were the Fellows [of Contemporary Art], but the Art Alliance really were the workers.

RATNER: Right. And it seems, from what I can tell, that it raised the most money.

BOARDMAN: Yes.

RATNER: And it was renowned for many of its projects. And I was just wondering if you could maybe tell me about a few of them, beginning with the treasure sale [Treasure Chest].

BOARDMAN: Well, the treasure sale was marvelous. It was a junk sale unlike any other junk sale around. I can always remember that, the stuff that--they collected everybody else's, their own junk and everybody else's junk--but many of the things were treasures. And they were marvelous things that people threw away that were quite valuable. They got a name for, a reputation for having really great stuff. Most of everything that all of us have has come from the Art Alliance, and which we probably would never have bought had we not gotten it at bargain prices. And a lot of people across town, from all over the city, have really gotten marvelous kinds of things, which then went back and was able to fulfill the projects that the Art Alliance then went into. But it was-- I don't know who conceived of it in the beginning.

RATNER: It began before the Art Alliance was even a group, actually.

BOARDMAN: Was it? I have no idea where it was started, but it was a terrific junk sale. And it wasn't junk; it was really treasures. I can remember people coming and clawing over merchandise and fighting over the merchandise. And when the gun went off, everybody had their own, had put their eye on certain things, and they whisked to that room and they got that particular hot item and gave it to their husband and the husband paid for it,

and they were really happy. I can always remember one of our members--my husband getting instructions to get a silver service, but it was plate silver, and one of the members fought him for it. There was a lot of fighting! [laughter] There were a lot of fisticuffs and fighting. People really get very heated over objects. They do like their things, and when they have their eye on one particular thing-- There had been a lot of cheating, and of course people always say that somebody cheated over something. And they probably did. But I can remember that one time when my husband was told to get one thing and then didn't want to disappoint me, so he got something even better.

There were a lot of sales, the Art Alliance, and there were picture sales that the Art Alliance had, and there were a lot of fights. I can remember one particular auction. It was a silent auction. They had silent auctions along with the Art Alliance and then they had the treasure sale and these parties; they also had live auctions. And one particular thing was a silent auction over a painting. And Jonathan Scott, who was Virginia Steele Scott's husband, got into a fistfight over a painting with one of the members of the Art Alliance, whose wife also wanted that, and people were actually pulling them apart. It was a real to-do.

RATNER: Goodness! They made quite a lot of money off those auctions also.

BOARDMAN: Yes, they did. And people donated services. They donated houses. They donated-- You know, it's the kind of things that people do.

RATNER: And how involved was the Art Alliance as a whole in pulling these things off?

BOARDMAN: Everybody had to pitch in and work. Everybody. This is the beauty of that group. The Art Alliance now is an aging group. And I think that's probably-- We're an aging group, which sort of mirrors the national age kind of thing. Now we have a few younger members, but I think basically we're all of a certain vintage. In fact, somebody once said that what they should do is they should have an Art Alliance rest home. [laughter] They should have their own rest home on Orange Grove Boulevard, and that they should have a-- Because we've all gotten to know each other so well, and we're all such friends that we have this big bottle. And it would be like Russian roulette. If you take the lethal bottle-- You'd be given the lethal pill out of the big bottle if we felt as a group that that should be done to you. [laughter] But it was a very, very together group, and everybody worked. Or if they didn't work, they were shamed into it, you know. And I'll tell you, there's nothing as sarcastic as a group of women who

feel that one woman isn't pulling her weight. You really begin to feel it and hear about it. And there's nothing as bitchy as a bunch of women.

RATNER: Any other projects that you remember in particular?

BOARDMAN: I have remembered so many things that-- I can remember standing out in the street, handing out badges for the Pasadena museum. They had a store--they sold things--on Lake Street; a garden, I think it was a garden shop. I remember the parties the Art Alliance put on which raised money, the trips that they had just to get to know each other, working in the kitchen, all kinds of projects-- The various projects that the Art Alliance did were, to me, nothing but-- I think raising the money was secondary to being with a group of women who were bright, who were aggressive, interesting in certain ways, and where you could always find out what was going on, if that was important.

RATNER: It seems like, from what I can tell from the minutes, very often the group had interesting speakers for their meetings or went on--

BOARDMAN: We did. As program chairman one year, I can remember-- Because we had the museum at the time, you see, we were able to bring people in. And now the Art Alliance is a roving group, it's outside of a permanent place. So

they can't have this kind of thing. But we did, we tried to bring in and tried to educate our members on all aspects of the contemporary art scene. We had lectures, we had a series of lectures. There was an educational thing for our members. We tried to make them aware of not only the-- I think we also brought in other kinds of arts as well. But I think that our main goal was really trying to educate them and trying to give them programs that would keep their interest and would really enlighten their lives. I mean, make their lives a lot better.

And they also, in turn, then, participated in painting and spackling for California Design. They worked on various installations. They were always a hands-on group of the museum--I mean, even in the new museum. At the old museum, they really worked, doing janitorial functions and working with the young kids. They filled a real niche as aides for the paid staff, and they were invaluable. They were really terrific. And that was really a major function. And because they were able to work in the museum doing these various jobs--some of them were menial, some of them weren't menial--they felt real participation in the museum. They felt that they owned the museum. They had an ownership kind of a feeling about the museum, which is really not the case now, and I don't think is the case in most institutions. Because once you, I think you have to--

In most institutions you have to participate in these kinds of things so that you can get back. That's why they were so involved, because they really felt so much a part of that institution. And I think that institutions that just think that they can call on people just to give money are very short-sighted.

RATNER: Okay. I want to go on and ask you a little bit about the Art Alliance's relationship with the board of trustees and the staff. So these are, again, questions from your perspective as a member of the Art Alliance. I'm wondering-- I mean, I don't know if it's possible for you to separate out these, your recollections, but how did Tom [Thomas G.] Terbell, for example, interact with the Art Alliance? How did the Art Alliance as a group feel about him as a director?

BOARDMAN: Well, I think that on one level, and among the membership, that the people who were the most involved with the museum-- And you asked me before about the interrelationships. Well, a lot of the people who were in the Art Alliance were on the board of the museum.

RATNER: Right.

BOARDMAN: And a few of us were also on the staff. And so you couldn't separate-- I think that the people who were on the board and the people who were on the staff had one perception, and the people who just came in once a week or

once a month or whatever was their involvement had something else. And I think that the perception of the board, although I can't crawl inside their skin, was--it varied, it varied. And then I think it varied with how they interacted with him at that particular moment, because I think that as time went on it maybe deteriorated a little bit. But I think that you can't-- I can't describe to you how polite some of these people are and how fun-and-games the whole kind of thing is. I mean, I have-- It's always amazing to me to see how polite people are when you know that you should shake somebody and say, "God, I can't stand this!" You know, "You're just a dolt!" But people are extremely polite. And they can see things that happen and, again, they can-- Some people can see things and don't do anything about it; some people never can see things.

I think this is the case when it came to Tom. And I think that he was just-- Tom was a good person. Tom was a good man. And I think that the job was just too much for him. He was not prepared for it.

* * *

[This portion of the text has been sealed at the request of the interviewee.]

* * *

But Tom was just not up to it. Very nice man, and I'm sure that he was just-- He later went on to marry the librarian, Yolanda [Mezey Hershey], and I think they've been very happy ever since. But I don't think that he-- He was not a malicious person. I just think that he was just inadequate, that's all. Some people saw it and some people didn't.

RATNER: How about Bill [William C.] Agee? Of course, you have your own perspective on that. But how did he interact with the Art Alliance?

BOARDMAN: I think he came off better. And he at least understood-- He was not one of them. Tom was one of them. He was somebody who had some money; Bill was, in quotes, a "scholar." Bill knew something that they didn't know. Bill had, he was-- I think some of them saw that he didn't come in until three in the afternoon, but during Art Alliance meetings when he had to talk he came in. But both he and Tom would come in later and later. And that's not a way to run a museum or anything else. But Bill had the presence that Tom didn't have. Bill came off as someone that could educate them, whereas Tom couldn't. Bill came off as someone that they could try and persuade, but they couldn't manipulate in the same way that they could manipulate Tom.

RATNER: What was the reaction to his departure?

BOARDMAN: Inasmuch as anybody cared about anything, I don't think it was surprising. At least it wasn't from my perspective. It wasn't surprising. Whether it was surprising to anybody else, I can't remember. But to me it was like all the rats were leaving the sinking ship. And why not him?

RATNER: What kind of interaction did the Art Alliance have with the curatorial staff?

BOARDMAN: Limited. You know, everybody was, everybody knew everybody else. It was, as I say, you know, a lot of people were hands-on. A lot of people would wander down and talk to people. There was always this kind of small-town kind of-- People were manning the desk. This was another thing, upstairs, there were always volunteers from the Art Alliance and from other service groups always around. And they were manning the desk, they were doing things, and they were always interacting. So on the surface there was always a good esprit. The people who were on the board might have had a bitch now and then about certain kinds of things that were going on, and then they went off and did what they had to do to. And the Art Alliance board, if they got it into their head, they would go to the director and they would talk to him and they would get things done. But people were always around. They were serving lunch. They watched people come in and

out of the museum. They saw who was there. If there was somebody that was famous that had wandered in, they wanted to be part of it. They were all part of the scene. And when Andy Warhol came through, they participated in that.

When there were openings of the-- The things that were the real fun that the Art Alliance did were the openings that you haven't talked about. And that's where they really shone. They really, I mean, they loved to dress, they loved to go whole hog on everything. They planned it down to the littlest detail. The people were-- They were fascinated. The thing that always amazes me is the fascination with artists and the idea that artists are a special class that need special pampering, and that they were a certain kind of a genius unlike any other kind of a genius. I mean, we were surrounded by Cal Tech [California Institute of Technology] and various other places where people were really bright. And they didn't show the same kind of respect or the same kind of tolerance that they did for artists. I mean, it was always amazing to me. I did programs-- For example, I put on Bob [Robert] Sinsheimer, who became the provost of [University of California] Santa Cruz, who talked about design in nature. And interesting kinds of subjects that these people, you know--and really genius people. We had people talking about design in nature as it was around earthquakes and listening to the

bowels of the earth and various other things. These people were really bright. But they weren't given the same kind of awe and honor and so forth that artists were given. And the openings were absolutely fantastic. And all the things that-- They were great excuses for people to dress up and to be outrageous and to have a lot of fun. And they were [fun], they really were. People didn't spend a lot of money on it as they do in some places now. But they sure used their inventive talents to really shine.

RATNER: You hear people talk about the openings almost as much as you do about some of the exhibitions.

BOARDMAN: And you hear artists talking about the openings, because they were wowed by them too. I mean, they were, also, the fact is that it was-- The art community was a much smaller community, and this was one of the opportunities for people to get together. It was like one grand salon, and you never knew who was going to be there and you never knew who you were going to talk to. There was a classless society of people who--this is something that is very interesting that also reflected contemporary art in our country--that a way to get ahead in our society was to join a museum. Museums have become a way of upward mobility. And this is very true at the museum, and at the Pasadena museum it was a very easy way because at that time the art community in Los Angeles was very small. There was

a tremendous, different group of people who were getting together, rubbing shoulders with one another. There was just a mix that was exciting. And you never knew who you were going to mix with next. And the Pasadena Art Alliance was the window to New York. So you had people coming across the continent to be there, so that you were mixing with all these people who were making the news in the art scene. So it was a kind of-- The excitement was tremendous, the level of excitement was tremendous. Because you had this kind of mix that is maybe now ho-hum, although I probably think it's as exciting in various other places. But it's gotten larger. And you don't have the same kind of intimacy that you had at that time. But they were fun! What did you hear about them? Tell me and I'll augment it.

RATNER: It's just that one of the things that people always bring up is the openings.

BOARDMAN: For that reason?

RATNER: Yes. Yes. And then there are old newspaper clippings people have saved that comment as much on the opening as the works of art themselves.

BOARDMAN: Well, they were! You know, you had millionaires talking to bums. You had hopheads talking to-- You still do, but, you know, it was really fun.

RATNER: Yes, it sounds like it. It's too bad it couldn't--

somebody didn't have the foresight to videotape any of them!

BOARDMAN: They didn't have videos.

RATNER: Right. I know.

BOARDMAN: That was one of the years before!

RATNER: Before video! Okay. You've already mentioned Norton Simon and his arrival and what happened with that. But I had a few more questions I wanted to ask you related to that. The Art Alliance learned at its meeting on April 24, 1974, that Norton Simon would be running the museum. Alfred Esberg, who was a trustee and one of the negotiators, came and spoke to the Art Alliance about it, and he said that the role of the support groups at that point in time looked very good, that nobody had anything to worry about. I wonder what the reaction was to his announcement.

BOARDMAN: Well, ho-hum. I think that there were people who said, "Oh." I mean, it's just like any group that would buy this line, hook, line, and sinker. I think Alfie really did believe it. I think that they, he-- Subsequently, he and Bob [Robert A. Rowan] and I guess Gifford Phillips went on to be the trustees of the museum. And I think that they really felt a certain kind of--that they could throw their weight. They didn't realize that Norton Simon had his own agenda and that he

certainly had a stronger agenda than they. They were basically not as smart. And I think the Art Alliance felt that-- The people that were in the know were making their preparations to leave, and the people who were not-- There are always followers and there are always leaders, and I think that this was just the case here. I mean, if people are basically suspicious, like me, then they would realize that it's not going to happen.

RATNER: What kind of rumors were floating around prior to this meeting?

BOARDMAN: Every kind of rumor possible. I think I had known at the time that this was the case, because I had been doing my homework down in the basement. I watched all those men in their business suits going back and forth, and I even-- Eudie [Eudorah Moore] and I even got their names and figured out their relationships to Norton Simon. I didn't say anything to anybody, and I don't think Eudie did either, but we knew. You know, we weren't stupid. We knew what was going to happen. And so we were thinking about that too, and what we were going to do, and what we could do. Because later I became director of California Design. As you probably know, the organization went on, already incorporated, outside the museum to organize other design exhibitions. I had thrown my hat in after that with the design department because I really felt that it was the

most interesting and had the most integrity of the whole part of the museum.

RATNER: In May of 1974, so just the following month I guess, the issue at the Art Alliance meeting was raised of incorporating--that the Art Alliance should incorporate as a separate entity. But they deferred that decision, and it wasn't until October that the group actually decided that they should, in fact, incorporate. Do you remember what the pros and cons were?

BOARDMAN: I don't remember exactly, but the pros and cons are always that the Art Alliance can't move fast, and there are some that say, "Well, maybe we should wait and see; maybe we're acting too fast; maybe he'll reconsider; maybe we can strike another deal with Norton Simon and stay on," and so forth. I think that the feeling was mostly that they were reacting rather than striking out on their own. It's always fearful to go out. It's much easier to stay and try and negotiate with what you have. But I don't think there was any talk of affiliating with another institution; I can't remember that. It was just, you know, fear of the unknown.

RATNER: We'd mentioned earlier that Norton Simon kept the money of the various groups, and I have here that it was about $50,000 of the Art Alliance money, so it's understandable that they were upset about that.

BOARDMAN: You know, you can't, if you want to go out and you don't have any dough-- There were some people that didn't care, that felt that they had-- They were people who said, "Let's go out. We've made it in the past, we can make it again." And there were some that were fearful because they had all that money laid back and they didn't want to give it up. I don't remember if there was any talk of suing him, because I don't think there was. But it did cross my mind. But then, because, as you say, as I remember, it was part of the museum's money, they didn't feel that they should or they could. But I still to this day feel that if you raise it, you should spend it. And what they should have done was spend it beforehand.

RATNER: Yes, before they left. During Bill Agee's term, the Art Alliance gave money for the publication of a catalog for the Galka Scheyer Blue Four Collection, and then with the Simon takeover, that project was temporarily put on hold. And the Art Alliance sent a letter to Mr. [George] Peters, who was the new director for a time, requesting that the Art Alliance money held by Norton Simon be used for this catalog. And it took a while, but the Alliance received a letter back stating that this wasn't possible because the project was now on hold and that those funds would be used for operating expenses. The Simon people did, however, offer to put an Art Alliance plaque on

the bookstore--which had formerly been the kitchen, I guess--and the Art Alliance felt this was unacceptable, and they asked that their plaque be restored to Gallery 9, which must have been their original gallery that they were a founding member for. But when the catalog was finally published in 1976, I looked in the introduction, and the Art Alliance is thanked--

BOARDMAN: Yes.

RATNER: --in the introduction. What was the reaction to this whole situation?

BOARDMAN: I think it depended on who it was. If you had nothing to do with it, I think everybody was just-- I think, no matter who you were, you were appalled by Norton Simon's callous treatment of the museum and the museum personnel. I really do. I think that not only the Art Alliance, but I think that the treating-- I think that I've touched on this before. I said something about how he was willing to take the money but not the people. But I think his whole treatment of people was thought of, at the time, by all of us, as really abysmal. I don't think he's a people person, nor does he care. I feel that he was an uncaring person. But after all, this was his museum. He bought it, and why shouldn't he do with it what he wanted to? But as a human being, just as a statement of being another human being, I don't think he had much-- He didn't

care. And if he wanted it, you know, if they raised the money-- But it's his money now: "It's my museum, I bought it, and I can do whatever I want with this whole place, and I'm just going to throw them a crumb by giving them a plaque." And I think that was the real fact. I think that he never once, unless he really, you know, if anybody is able to put the skids on Norton Simon, I think that would-- I think that if anybody ever was able to change anything, it was by some kind of pressure, and maybe they just hit some kind of a note so that he threw them a crumb. But he really didn't care. And why should he? He bought it for his own reasons. And that's the kind of person he is.

RATNER: How was the staff itself feeling at this point?

BOARDMAN: Well, I think everybody was trying to jump off and trying to do their own thing. Some of us went down and collected unemployment and stood in line. Watching each other collect unemployment was a very interesting phenomenon. And I think a lot of us did it not only to eat. I didn't have to, and Eudie obviously didn't have to do it, and Barbara [Haskell] didn't, really. But we were really angry, and we figured we might as well do it because screw him. We paid in; we pay out. And get it out. And everybody was trying to find their own future and salvage what they had. Barbara went off to the Whitney [Museum of American Art]. Eudie and I went off, and since California

Design had incorporated early, we were able to start with the California Design show ["California Design 1910"], which really was kind of great because it was the first show of-- It started the restoration movement on the West Coast. We unleashed this kind of phenomenon of all these preservation people by that one exhibition, good or bad. I don't think most people realize it, but that "1910" show was really the start on the West Coast of the preservation movement. And I think that everybody went off. The guards stayed. The people, the administrators went off and did their own thing. Everybody, like anybody else, just left and left him to his own devices. He didn't want any part of them.

RATNER: Well, despite the end of its affiliation with the Pasadena Art Museum, the Art Alliance, as we've said more than once, contributed quite significantly to the--

BOARDMAN: They did. We did.

RATNER: --to the life of the Pasadena Art Museum. I was just wondering if you could kind of summarize its contributions.

BOARDMAN: I think the Art Alliance was the backbone of the museum. They were the work horses of the museum. I think in summary that's what it was. They provided the icing. They provided a lot of money. They gave their blood, sweat and, many times, tears over the museum, and they really

felt great involvement within the structure of the museum. And I think that if anybody sees this tape afterward, this conversation afterwards, I think that the real thing is that you have to realize that the Art Alliance were a great participating group. If anybody ever wants to use this tape as something [illustrating] why they should have involved groups, or how they should involve groups, I think they should have groups like the Art Alliance of Pasadena, and they should utilize them fully and give them their head and let them go and do things. I think that the beauty of the whole Art Alliance-- The whole museum experience was the beauty of letting people who were talented utilize their talents and give them full reign and let them go and do their own thing. I think that was one of the things that was so extraordinary about the Pasadena museum, that people who could fulfill-- Whatever their vision was of their job or whatever they were doing, they could do it without having somebody looking over their shoulder-- They did have somebody looking over their shoulder, but as long as they used their heads and did it in an intelligent fashion, they could. That's why it was so successful.

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RATNER: Did you have anything else you wanted to add about the contributions of the Art Alliance?

BOARDMAN: No. They were just a bright bunch of women. I don't know if I've painted a picture of them, but they're an extraordinary group of women. Each one of them was talented on her own. Each one of them had great gifts and have great gifts and are interesting people. And I just thought that they were able to collaborate in a way that could make this institution work.

RATNER: They did continue to exist after the museum closed, and could you tell me a little bit about some of the things that they have done since that time?

BOARDMAN: Well, the Pasadena Art Alliance has stayed in Pasadena; it's kept its name because it's Pasadena-based. It's raised money. It affiliated one time with the Baxter Art Gallery at Caltech and it put on exhibitions there, not quite in the same way that they did at the museum, because it only was art, it was not working within the Caltech organization. It was in a basement situation. It didn't have the high visibility that the Pasadena museum had, and time has sort of passed it by. But what it's become now is basically a fund-raising group that is still together. But like a lot of institutions that have-- Their

people like each other and they stay together based on inertia rather than anything else. But they're still a nice group of bright women who are getting older. But they're raising money for various institutions. And since then, they've still put on the treasure sale. They've put on art events where they sell art. Besides the treasure sale, they try and raise money. They put out a very successful series of books. And now, at this moment, they're putting out a guide to art in Los Angeles. They've done, you know, an extraordinary-- They've raised over a million dollars since they left the museum.

RATNER: My God--wow!

BOARDMAN: And so they've done an extraordinary amount of money-raising, and they've become a money-raising vehicle, basically. But they don't have the kind of excitement that they once did. But it's not their fault.

RATNER: Well, finally, I'd like to know what you've been doing since then. You mentioned that you were involved with California Design.

BOARDMAN: Yes. I went on to become the director of California Design. And then, when Eudie Moore went to Washington as the craft coordinator for the National Endowment [of the Arts], I was still the director, and then she put me on a panel. She put me on a task force in the crafts. And for a year I traveled all over the country

getting to know craftspeople. I have interests in American folk art and American crafts. And I've also-- At California Design I was involved with industrial design, which I'm less interested in. But during that year that I traveled for the Endowment, I really got to know a lot about contemporary American crafts as it-- But I didn't get to know a lot about-- It raised lots of questions for me.

Because I knew all there was to know about crafts in the society in America today, which is based on a money economy. But it made me question about other places where crafts were not as money-oriented, where people were beginning to emerge out of the barter and exchange. If you were involved with crafts, you made it for your own consumption, and then the next step, you maybe bartered if you saw something by somebody else, and then you started to use money as an exchange vehicle. I became really interested in this, not so much because I wanted to do something with it, but I really wanted to see-- It's always been my own quest. I really have always wanted to do things not so much for other people, although those are by-products, but I really want to grow myself, and I'm in a position where I can do this sort of thing. So I went off and I started wandering around the Third World. And I went to Thailand. I walked through the Golden Triangle of Thailand with my eye out for the crafts, watching this--

because that was a marginal society where people were just coming into using money as an exchange vehicle--and watching people. And then I went off to Bhutan, where people were still in a barter [system] and still making things for themselves. So I've been sort of footloose and fancy-free really, with an idea of maybe someday writing a book on the crafts of the world, world crafts, but not necessarily having to do it, and that's what I've been doing.

RATNER: That sounds fascinating.

BOARDMAN: It is! It's fun, besides! [laughter]

RATNER: [laughter] Yes, that sounds fun, too!

BOARDMAN: You have to be in good condition, that's all. You have to be walking and to be able to talk to people. But that's the fascinating-- I'm really involved with people, I really like people, I've always been a people person. I'm involved with seeing what makes people tick and what makes people want to do things and why they do things. And I also appreciate hand work, because I think when people work with their hands they're working with their heads and they're working with the spirit that makes up humanity. That's all.

RATNER: Great. Well, those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else at all that you'd like to add?

BOARDMAN: Next week I'll probably think of them, but I can't, I really can't.

RATNER: Okay. Well, thank you very much for myself and on behalf of UCLA. It's been a pleasure.

BOARDMAN: Well, thank you for asking me.

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