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Interviewed by Sarah Dziedzic
Storm King Oral History 007

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Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
January 23, 2018	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Dziedzic: Today is January 23, 2018, and this is Sarah Dziedzic, interviewing David Collens for the Storm King Oral History Program. So, David, as I was saying, we're just going to start with a few artists today and jump in that way, rather than go chronological. And the first artist on our list is Alice Aycock. So I'm just wondering if you could talk about how her work came to be in the collection. Maybe we can start with how your relationship with her began and what your sense here at Storm King, you and Peter Stern, was of her work before her sculpture came to be part of a collection.

Collens: With Alice Aycock, I was aware of her sculptures [00:01:00] and drawings for many years, and the relationship with Storm King started with *Three-Fold Manifestation II* (1987, refabricated 2006), which was at the Doris C. Freedman Plaza in New York, on 59th Street and Fifth Avenue. And it was part of the Public Art Fund program for exhibiting sculptures in that particular location. Alice created the sculpture for the Public Art Fund, and she had support from collectors to do that. At that point it was probably the largest sculpture they put on their Fifth Avenue location that kept on rotating each year different sculptures.

We went to see it, Peter Stern and myself [00:02:00], as I recall, and we thought the scale was terrific, at just 30 feet high, approximately, and overall size would be wonderful for Storm King. And it departed the Doris Freedman Plaza for Storm King when its time was up for being in that location. We got to know Alice, and we put it in what are now the di Suvero fields—before the Mark di Suvero sculptures were in the South Fields. It was in the fields before any di Suveros were in the South Fields at Storm King, and it was very close to the maple allée. You'd walk from the Museum Building down the maple allée, and see [00:03:00] the large Alice Aycock, white sculpture, and that was a wonderful location for it in the beginning.

It was a terrific sculpture in terms of scale and also expanding the collection at Storm King with certainly a woman artist and an excellent example of Alice Aycock's work—which it still is to this day. It's a very important historical early piece, from 1987. It has moved location from the South Field as the fields evolved with Mark di Suvero's sculptures and exhibition of Mark's that took place in 1985, a 25-year retrospective of his sculpture and drawings. At that point we moved the Alice Aycock to the North Hill [00:04:00], which was available, and it's been in that location to this day, since being in the field. It's in our highest point at Storm King. People walk to it since it is not accessible by tram. It's accessible by walking

or biking around, as well. So people enjoy going up to see it in its present location. And all these years later, it's still one of the important Aycock sculptures, which I think was inspirational to many of her recent outdoor works that she is creating for public places. She's really excelled as an artist, creating outdoor sculpture for urban locations and [00:05:00] collections that are in beautiful landscapes.

Dziedzic: Can you go into a little more detail about the conversations with Alice at the time that, I guess, you and Peter had gone to see it, and just how those exchanges began about, "Well, maybe this could come to Storm King next?"

Collens: I believe it went with the idea that it was on loan to Doris Freedman Plaza, even though Alice had support from outside sources to build it. It came to Storm King on loan and shortly after was a gift to the Art Center from Alice Aycock and was a perfect example of an [00:06:00] outstanding sculpture to be in this collection, scale as well as really expanding the collection. It's not always about scale at Storm King—yes, we're looking for certain examples of works by a range of different artists, but I think Alice understood the Storm King landscape, where she first placed the sculpture in the South Field. And then we moved it to the North Hill and—actually, the North Hill is the location I thought it should first go. Anyway, that did not happen at that point in time, so we put it in the field, and then several years later it went up to the North Hill where it still is, as I mentioned. People walk up the hill to see it and take in [00:07:00] the view of the surrounding landscape as well. And it's an excellent location with views of Storm King, Schunnemunk Mountain, and the sculpture park itself.

Dziedzic: Did it come up at all, this public sculpture versus outdoor sculpture, those intersections? Was that a conversation at all?

Collens: I don't think at that point in time there were many artists really working and doing public sculpture for urban locations. The Lippincott Foundry, where many sculptures were fabricated in the early years, and Don Lippincott worked with a wide range of artists that were doing large-scale works, and many of the sculptures [00:08:00] would go into urban locations—by Louise Nevelson and other artists—Barnett Newman and Claes Oldenburg and Robert Murray, David von Schlegell. Don worked with a long list of artists when he had the foundry, for many years, and that was one aspect of what was happening with public sculpture and what people were used to.

Storm King was started in 1960, and large-scale sculpture needed places to go besides urban areas, and Storm King certainly had the landscape being worked on by Bill Rutherford, our landscape architect, and our founder, Ted Ogden, and Peter Stern, and eventually myself. Forty-five years of landscaping. We were a wonderful [00:09:00] site for particular sculptures that would enhance the Storm King collection

and also having the artists understand what our landscape was about and being able to react to it, whether it was a commissioned sculpture or an existing work.

Dziedzic: Speaking of landscaping, did you have any thoughts about work that Alice Aycock had done earlier in her career that had been grouped into earthworks or Land Art? You know, I guess, it sounds like you've made the case for why this particular sculpture would be great at Storm King in terms of its size and the presence that it has, but did you have any discussions at the time about some of the older work of Alice's which [00:10:00] did eventually became part of the collection?

Collens: We didn't discuss some her architectural sculptures that were either underground or—and I remember seeing exhibitions in Nassau County Museum in Long Island, of several artists doing earthworks, and some were underground. It was a wide range of artists, both men and women, and fascinating, but we did not discuss Alice's early work and reconstructing an earlier piece. Storm King at that point in time was really focused on *Three-Fold Manifestation II* and also understanding the history of that sculpture as well, which was fascinating and inspirational to this day for her more recent [00:11:00] sculptures that she showed on Park Avenue a couple years ago.

Dziedzic: So then shortly after *Three-Fold Manifestation II* came here, she had an exhibition here, in 1990 of drawings and sculptures [*Complex Visions: Sculpture and Drawings by Alice Aycock*, 1990]. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Collens: That was a retrospective exhibition of Alice's that took place in 1990, and it was very challenging with her early work in the Museum Building, some of the work being motorized, and other work had a live bird installed as part of it, and to keep everything going was very difficult. She created an outdoor sculpture for the exhibition, which was very complicated, [00:12:00] south of the Museum Building, on the lawn, with the overview of the maple allée, where all the artists like to have their sculptures in that one location. And that's true to this day. It's probably the most important location at Storm King, where the Museum Building and the maple allée line up just before it drops off on the top of the hill, to the south. Artists really enjoy creating sculptures for that particular location, an access where you can see it from down below or walking around the top of the hill. It relates to the exhibitions always in the Museum Building.

Her exhibition was very complicated, as I said, with large-scale drawings, sculptures that needed to be turned on, the motorized ones, at certain [00:13:00] times of the day only because their motors were fragile and they were old. We had to maintain all this, and the bird had to be in its cage in the gallery for only certain hours a day because it needed to go into an office with air conditioning; it was so hot in the building. No climate control at all, and just opening windows and putting fans on. And, I might add, where

the bird was, the windows were painted black because that was part of the environment that Alice wanted. So it was even hotter in that particular space, as I recall.

Dziedzic: Was that the first time there was a live animal as part of an artwork at Storm King?

Collens: To my knowledge, [laughter] yes. I think that was the only time.

Dziedzic: [laughs] First and last. [00:14:00]

Collens: But I might add, it was a great exhibition. Very difficult to monitor and maintain and circulate the visitors throughout the building, being fragile sculptures that had sharp edges and so forth to them. People were fascinated when the motorized sculptures were operating, and it turned out to be one of the great exhibitions of her career. She has not had many large exhibitions at museums of her work.

Dziedzic: I want to ask about the indoor/outdoor dynamic. Did you feel that—or glean from the visitors, or from Alice herself—that there was [00:15:00] a balance between the indoor work and the outdoor work? In terms of maybe describing some of the thought processes that go into the outdoor work, or feeding into each other as a intellectual resource for interpreting the sculptures?

Collens: Well, I think the galleries in the Museum Building at Storm King, which used to be a private house, are wonderful with the French doors and connecting to the landscape outside, both from the first floor of the building, with the French doors and the casement windows on the second floor having an overview of the property on the top of the hill. The sculptures that artists who are using the building install outside are a wonderful combination, a flow between the exhibitions that take place indoors that really support exhibitions [00:16:00] for the outdoor sculptures. That makes it, I think, very special, and the artists understand that. It's not the ideal exhibition space. Sometimes you can't bring sculptures in because they're too large, and they won't break down into enough smaller sections to bring them in through the French doors. So you find another sculpture. But all the artists enjoy using the building. It's a little quirky, but it's enjoyable, and you don't always set up exhibitions chronologically like other museums. And that's fine. We emphasize the landscape and the outdoor sculptures at Storm King. We have for years.

We connected the galleries in the museum to the outdoors for the first [00:17:00] time in 1976 with the David Smith exhibition. And, I might add, when I first arrived, the first-floor galleries were covered with plywood walls covering all the French doors in Gallery 1, for example, and there was no connection to the landscape. It was a white gallery space, box inside. And I thought that really didn't make sense, so I discussed it with Peter Stern. We got a carpenter and opened all the openings where the doors are,

presently, and took out the plywood—connected indoors and outdoors for the first time in years. It really transformed the exhibitions and the building, being able to connect. And a lot of the windows on the second floor [00:18:00] were boarded up as well. So we took off all the plywood from the second-floor windows and connected the building to the outside landscape.

Dziedzic: Was the woodwork exposed at that time too, or was that also covered up?

Collens: That was, I believe, covered up as well. Because it was—on the first floor with all the paneling in Gallery 1, 2, and 3, one needed a neutral background for showing drawings, sculpture, paintings. And Joyce Rutherford at one point worked and changed the plywood over to sheetrock and really very architecturally figured out how to nail the sheetrock up without disturbing the wood [00:19:00] paneling and behind the sheetrock, but gave us that neutral space and really did it in a much better way than when I first saw it.

Dziedzic: This came up when we were interviewing Mark di Suvero, but the showing of drawings at all for some of these artists was kind of—Storm King was the first place where drawings and sculptures had been shown together. So I'm wondering about that—was that something that you offered to artists, or something that they brought up when the indoor space was offered?

Collens: It's something that I thought would be a wonderful combination, to see sculptures and drawings together, and at that point in time, that is true, it wasn't done. You'd see strictly shows of drawings or sculpture. There was no mix. And [00:20:00] for the di Suvero exhibition, we put out on the floor—and Dick Bellamy, his dealer space on 110 Chambers Street—we brought as many drawings as we could from his studio in France, in Chalon; a studio in California; New York. And we had 25 years of drawings out on the floor in a very large space and made the selection from that point. Seeing 25 years of drawings, which was a very large quantity, on the floor, and just kept on paring it down to what we could use at Storm King. It was not something you'd see together at all in galleries or museums at that point in time.

Dziedzic: And that [00:21:00] happened—that was 1985, right?

Collens: Nineteen eighty-five.

Dziedzic: Was that one of the first times where Storm King started to invite artists to show drawings and other kinds of materials inside?

Collens: It always seemed appropriate to me to show paintings or drawings, photographs, whatever flat work was relevant to the sculptures. But primarily sculpture indoors and outdoors of course. But the flat work did start appearing in different exhibitions.

Dziedzic: It seems especially helpful—to loop back to Alice Aycock—to have that kind of—you know, so much of looking at artwork is often interpretation and translation, but to have the drawings there—that's an issue with regard to architecture (an architect will have so many more drawings than actual constructed buildings, so often we can only imagine the building based on the drawing). And to see a drawing that translates then [00:22:00] to the actual sculpture, the object, seems like it's really a rich resource.

Collens: I think it was fascinating for people to see, even if the drawing didn't relate exactly to a particular sculpture but was close. And sometimes drawings that sculptors do are after the sculpture's made. Or it could be a working drawing, or done before and working out a detail of a particular sculpture. It's hard to say. But it was wonderful to see drawings by different artists and see their sculptures as well, both in the Museum Building and outdoors. There was a clear relationship.

Dziedzic: You mentioned Alice not having a lot of museum shows. Do you recall her response to having this opportunity to show her [00:23:00] work in this space? Did she consider it a museum show? Did she—

Collens: Oh, she clearly—

Dziedzic: —what sort of impact did you see that the exhibition had for her career?

Collens: Well, I think over the years this exhibition of Alice's has taken on a life of its own and is an important exhibition in the history of Storm King as well as Alice's career. I think some exhibitions are more important to the history of Storm King Art Center and the artists than others, naturally. But this certainly was an important exhibition maybe at that point in time. When it was done in 1990 it was a very difficult exhibition to install, both indoors and outdoors, maintain through the season. And in retrospect [00:24:00], there's no question it was a highlight of her career. And she's done other exhibitions and so forth at various museums in Europe or this country, I believe. But this was an outstanding effort on everybody's part.

Dziedzic: How did it end up that she had her retrospective here?

Collens: Yes, I figured out that I thought she would be a terrific artist, seeing *Three-Fold Manifestation II* and knowing the history of that particular piece and what her thought process was with that sculpture at Storm King. And seeing her drawings and other indoor work as well, and her willingness to create an outdoor sculpture which was, again, a very complicated piece. But people can interact with it and so forth. [00:25:00] It was very enjoyable, and people really were fascinated by the machines operating, but it was challenging.

Dziedzic: Yes. And, I guess, let's make our way to *Low Building with Dirt Roof (For Mary)* (1973/2010).

Collens: *Low Building* was part of her show in 1990. And that was near the Museum Building, on top of the hill, in a location that we've used for several other sculptures over the years. It was very close to the south side of the building where the patio is, just off the patio area. And we constructed it according to Alice's blueprints and plans. It was the second time, I believe, that it was reconstructed [00:26:00] from its original site in a Pennsylvania farm field where she did it originally in 1973. It was a temporary piece, and we built it and had to rebuild the roof halfway through the exhibition because it was very heavy, and the roof became saturated with water, and it started failing. So we had to take all the dirt off, rebuild, and grass it over again—but a wonderful sculpture.

People were fascinated by *Low Building* on top of the hill, and we kept it there for the exhibition one season, and then asked Alice for our fiftieth anniversary to rebuild *Low Building* at Storm King in [00:27:00] 2010. And we put it in a very different location. So it had a connection to *Three-Fold Manifestation* on top of the north hill, and one could see it from *Low Building—Three-Fold* looming up on the north hill at 30 feet high and walk up the hill to see the sculpture, if you were standing at the *Low Building*. We rebuilt it with slightly heavier wood and improved the supports for the roof so we wouldn't have roof failure again, all with Alice's permission. And she in turn gave us the sculpture as a gift last year, in the summer of 2017. [00:28:00]

Dziedzic: Is that the work—in that it started out ephemeral, or temporary—is it the sort of thing where Storm King is the only institution that will own that work, or is it the thing where another institution or site could choose to—or Alice could choose to—create it somewhere else?

Collens: No, I think that's a good question. Alice gave us all the blueprints and drawings for *Low Building with Dirt Roof*, so it's a unique work, and it will only be at Storm King. We can rebuild it in other locations as appropriate. We can take it down when we have different issues with the wood, and it doesn't have to be [00:29:00] in its present location, maintained there forevermore. We can take it off exhibit and rebuild in another location, if that's what we select to do.

Dziedzic: Does it have a certificate of authenticity—in the sense you always own this sort of document, and then occasionally you may choose to manifest the work? The way that some Minimalist work came to define itself. Does it—does it carry on that tradition in that sense?

Collens: We have all the rights to move it, rebuild it, as appropriate. But we don't have that type of certificate, no. [00:30:00] Alice was thrilled to have this sculpture at Storm King, in the Hudson Valley, and was concerned about her earlier work. And there's another one also in the Hudson Valley, at Art Omi, which was a reconstruction, and one could go see that. It's a cement block sculpture that is underground, and you crawl through it and go down a ladder and crawl through the tunnels and come out in a different location, of course. But those are the two examples of early pieces that are in different collections.

Dziedzic: And you can go into this house, right?

Collens: No, it's very low, of course, so it's not particularly high and very hard to go into, and certainly I [00:31:00] probably don't [laughs] recommend going in. You know, it's fine to look into it, but you never know when a woodchuck is [laughs] taking up residence or other animals.

Dziedzic: [laughs] That's true. And so the year after the retrospective that we were discussing, there was a group show that had to do with architecture. It was called *Enclosures and Encounters: Architectural Aspects of Recent Sculpture*, in '91. I wondered how much of Alice's work had influenced that next year's exhibition.

Collens: Oh no, that's interesting. You know, I've always been fascinated growing up in New York with architecture and noticing a wide range of [00:32:00] artists that were inspired by architecture, and with their sculptures. I wanted to incorporate that into an exhibition and with a wide range of sculptors—like Siah Armajani, for example, and many others. It was a group show, both indoors and outdoors.

Dziedzic: When did Siah Armajani's work come here? Was it around that time?

Collens: Well, we borrowed the Armajani sculpture (*Gazebo for One Anarchist: Emma Goldman*, 1991) for that exhibition. It was just one section, again, placed on the south side of the Museum Building, with the view of the maple allée. People could enter into the sculpture and go up a few steps, open the door, enter, and close the door and be able to sit down, and the view through the window, open steel sculpture painted, I think [00:33:00] teal and white, as I remember. You'd be sitting there and facing south, and people enjoyed that interaction with the sculpture as they do with the Armajani that we presently have (*Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini*, 1992).

Dziedzic: The ability to go into a work is pretty novel—artists who have taken advantage of that opportunity to invite, I suppose, or to build that space.

Collens: Oh, I think that interaction's important, if the artists like that and want to have that connection to the public. Definitely so.

Dziedzic: And you mentioned this a little bit, that Alice's work was included in *5 + 5: New Perspectives* (2010–11), the anniversary exhibition. [00:34:00]

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: So how was she chosen for that? I'm curious about all the artists in that group, but—

Collens: Well, the fiftieth anniversary exhibition, there were five artists that had major exhibitions at Storm King, and five artists that had never shown at Storm King before, and wanting to give artists an opportunity to do work at Storm King as well. And Alice and Ursula von Rydingsvard, Chakaia Booker, and Mark di Suvero and Andy Goldsworthy were the artists that were selected to be part of the exhibition that had major shows in the Museum Building as well as outdoors. That was the criteria for the artists that were selected. [00:35:00]

Dziedzic: And so had you overseen all of these—the exhibitions that these five artists had had at Storm King?

Collens: Yes. When—you know, we have a small staff—even to this day [laughs] it's still a small staff. It's grown, in comparison to when I first came to Storm King. But with the exhibitions I did all the curatorial work and installation and the lighting and the full design of where the sculptures and flat work would go in the Museum Building, so oversaw all that.

Dziedzic: And the first time around, when these artists had their exhibitions too, right?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: And [00:36:00] now the five artists that were invited to show their work at Storm King—I know Alyson Shotz—

Collens: Oh, there was Stephen Talasnik, Alyson Shotz, Darrell Petit, Maria Elena González, John Bisbee—

Dziedzic: Was there a sense to pair these artists, the younger artists? What sort of connection did you see between the original five and then the invited five? [00:37:00]

Collens: Well, the artists that had major exhibitions at Storm King, some of them created special works for the exhibition, like Andy Goldsworthy, with the wall that he created (*Five Men, Seventeen Days, Fifteen Boulders, One Wall,* 2010). And Ursula von Rydingsvard, with *Luba* (2009–10). So that was terrific, and Alice recreating *Low Building with Dirt Roof*, which was at Storm King in 1990, and reconstructed in 2010.

The artists that had never shown at Storm King—I think it was about materials as well. Darrell Petit [00:38:00] had a very large stone sculpture—he primarily works in stone, from Stony Creek Quarry in Connecticut—and we brought over a very large stone sculpture, two vertical sections titled *Kiss* (2008) that came together, and you could walk through the base of the sculpture. It was vertical, maybe about 16 feet high. And Stephen Talasnik, using bamboo, created a special work (*Stream: A Folded Drawing*, 2009–10). So I think it was a combination of different materials—Chakaia Booker was one of the artists from the permanent collection that was part of the show and created a special work as well for the exhibition (*Foci*, 2010). So I think it was a combination of different materials that artists were using and whether [00:39:00] they were permanent collection artists that were part of the show or artists showing for the first time.

Dziedzic: This is a broad question, but it seems like Storm King is very good at making use of what it has in its collection, in a sense, and maybe reframing it, and having another opportunity for people to hear about it and come see it. How much of that is out of necessity, and how much is really a deliberate choice to stick with what's already in the collection?

Collens: I think there's always been an interest in carefully expanding the collection and adding new sculptures to the permanent collection. And one has to remember that the sculptures stay outdoors all year long, since we have very little indoor storage [00:40:00] at Storm King. At some point that will change, but we don't have purpose-built buildings, and we're using different spaces for indoor storage that are not necessarily appropriate, but doing the best we can. And we like to rotate sculptures when appropriate as well, like all museums do, and that's very hard for us to do, not having good indoor space. So it really goes into wanting to broaden the collection with different artists that I think understand the Storm King landscape. It's not for all artists, and not for the sake of just having large-scale sculpture at Storm King. I think there's a lot more to [00:41:00] it than that.

The relationship with artists is very important to us and always has been and continues to be, even more so. We're very sensitive to the artist's needs and respect that and try to execute and work with them on

sculptures that they want to build, whether it's younger, less established artists or working with more established artists that are showing at Storm King. So I think it's part of our philosophy, really, to have a strong working relationship with sculptors and do the best we can in exhibiting their work, both in the Museum Building and outdoors. [00:42:00]

Dziedzic: Who do you think of as peers in terms of collecting? I'm thinking about the history of this place as starting as a private collection, and then really becoming an institutional collection open to the public. So, have you seen or sensed that change since the time that you've been here, and who do you think about now in terms of peers? Is it institutions? Private collections?

Collens: You know, it's very hard, because when we travel to different locations in this country and Europe we always like to see sculpture gardens, sculpture parks, private collections, and so forth, whether they're public or private, and see what is happening with landscape and sculpture. And you [00:43:00] come back to Storm King, and really it's unique. There is nothing like it. People come to us, and they're inspired by Storm King Art Center, and they go off and create their own museum, or they create their own private sculpture park, inspired by what they see in the landscape, some of the works in the collection, the way the sculptures are exhibited. There's something that catches their eye. They don't want to recreate a Storm King wherever they are in the world, but there's something that inspires them to do something that is similar to Storm King, or parts of it, with landscape or a collection or certain artists.

Dziedzic: Yes, I guess that was a trick question. [laughs]

Collens: But it's fascinating to come back and [00:44:00] see Storm King, and it's really very different than any place I've seen. And we all enjoy going and seeing other locations and meeting other staff members at different museums and having that dialogue.

Dziedzic: How much of Storm King sculptures are either not on view or lent out? It strikes me as being a rather low percentage, since there isn't storage space.

Collens: Right. An excellent question. We have very few sculptures that are on loan at the moment. And I think that's very much the case of what happens. There are requests for loans on occasion, but it's [00:45:00] very expensive to move sculpture. Moving it, insuring it, and so forth is difficult and challenging. And keeping outdoor sculpture in excellent condition, whether it's painting or other surfaces that need maintaining, is always very challenging with the materials. So loan requests occasionally come in, and some are very surprising, like Chrissy Field in San Francisco with SFMOMA wanting to borrow Mark di Suvero's *Mother Peace* (1969–70), when we had finished doing a full restoration to the sculpture, with Mark's permission, a few years earlier. SFMOMA was inspired by the exhibition we did, [00:46:00] *Mark di*

Suvero at Governors Island, in New York in 2011 and 2012, and they had a perfect site when they closed the museum for renovation and the large addition they put on. The museum was fully closed for three years. And they decided to do an exhibition of di Suvero inspired by Governors Island at Chrissy Field, overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. They borrowed eight di Suveros, including *Mother Peace*, and it was a spectacular exhibition of large-scale sculpture, which everybody in San Francisco enjoyed seeing and walking around and bike-riding and jogging around the Chrissy Field area by the Golden Gate Bridge with beautiful views of San Francisco Bay and the bridge and seeing the di Suveros. It was a terrific photo opportunity, and it [00:47:00] really just resonated perfectly with the landscape and the bridge and the water.

Dziedzic: And it's such a different landscape from here, and yet they still—

Collens: Very different, and we said, "Sure! You can borrow it." [laughs] And we prepared to send it there for a year. That was a very unusual request for a large-scale sculpture. We've lent David Smiths to LACMA several years ago. Very difficult to move sculpture. But we did that for a major David Smith exhibition, we wanted to participate in that. Presently we have the Roy Lichtenstein *Mermaid* (1994), America's Cup Sailboat, at Middlebury College for [00:48:00] two years before it goes for restoration and comes back to Storm King in spring of 2019. But there're not many loan requests because I think people realize the difficulty of moving and the costs of a loan.

Dziedzic: And what about in the other direction? Work that Storm King shows that's on loan? Is that from institutions or often from the artists themselves?

Collens: I'd say really wide range. It depends whether it's indoors or outdoors, of course. And we borrow works from artists and different estates for exhibitions, like the Estate of David Smith, where it was very involved with the David Smith [00:49:00] exhibitions, as well as private collectors and other museums. But it depends on the artists we're working with and where we can borrow the work from.

Dziedzic: Let's go to talking about Ursula—unless there's anything else that comes to mind about Alice Aycock that you think we should discuss.

Collens: No, I think we've covered Alice. Certainly an important artist doing public sculpture, and for a long time really had no gallery and really carried on and now has, over the last [00:50:00] several years, had gallery representation and I think is focused on outdoor sculpture, beautifully fabricated.

Dziedzic: So am I correct that both of Ursula's sculptures here were commissions? Was the first one a commission?

Collens: *For Paul* is a sculpture that evolved over the years, and part of the sculpture was shown at RISD, but it was not the way it looks today. It was considerably smaller, and she took it to her studio in [00:51:00] 1992. She had her first museum exhibition at Storm King, both indoors and outdoors (*Ursula von Rydingsvard: Sculpture*, 1992). And until that point she had shown in many gallery shows in New York and other locations. That was terrific. And went to her studio in Brooklyn—her old studio, not her present one—much smaller—and had seen her work in different galleries and other locations. I thought she'd be a terrific artist to show at Storm King, and just the right point in her career. And indeed she was.

She created many sculptures for the exhibition at Storm King, and, again, understood the landscape and the building. She really [00:52:00] excelled at it artistically, which was so extraordinary to see, and had a large group of sculptures. There were three large sculptures outdoors, including *For Paul*, which we purchased after the exhibition. It was on top of the hill, near the Museum Building, and about 15 feet high, and graphited cedar wood, her signature material. One would walk around and look at it. There was a very large horizontal sculpture, only about maybe 30 inches high, that was quite large, near the Museum Building. And then there was a third piece that she made for Storm King as well. Those were the three outdoor [00:53:00] works basically, and there was a smaller sculpture that we borrowed from a private collection on the patio, *Three Bowls* (1989). And indoors were a wide range of her cedar sculptures. It was a special exhibition, and people loved it, seeing the diversity of her work and how she used the material, and the building had a wonderful smell from all the cedar wood as well. [laughs] That exhibition put Ursula on the map, with excellent reviews.

Dziedzic: It won an award, I believe.

Collens: That is correct. And her career just moved forward from that point, with gallery [00:54:00], museum exhibitions, outdoor commissions for sculpture in different sculpture parks and museums. Been fascinating to see what she's done to this day—she has an important exhibition opening in Philadelphia in the spring of this year, at the Philadelphia Museum and The Fabric Workshop. But artistically it's wonderful to go see her studio in Brooklyn and see her working on the sculptures with a very small group of people.

She created *Luba* for the 2010 exhibition, and it was sited just south of the Museum Building, the location that the artists always use, the view of the maple allée. [00:55:00] I asked Ursula to create a sculpture for Storm King, and I went to see *Luba* in the process of being created, and it was very clear to me going to her studio—she cleared out this one section. She'd never even built a sculpture in it, but she needed a [laughs] higher ceiling and so forth. So she cleared out a storage area to build it. And she couldn't fully assemble *Luba* even in the [laughs] area where she was creating it, because the ceiling wasn't high

enough. But I walked around on a wood scaffolding and everything around it. It was extraordinary. I knew it was a very different sculpture.

That's what I was really hoping for, was giving artists the opportunity to create a sculpture for Storm King that would really push their artistic career forward. And certainly that's what [00:56:00] happened with *Luba*, using bronze for the first time and wood together in the same sculpture, and cantilevering out the way she did. It is quite different. The wood and bronze now blended together after several years, and you can't tell which material is which at all—what's the bronze, what's the wood. It's all blended in terms of color. I think it's really artistically a breakthrough piece that inspired many other works in that direction in 2010, when it was completed and brought to Storm King. We were fortunate to be able to purchase the sculpture for the collection. So we have two pieces, two sculptures, that are very different, of Ursula's: *For Paul*, from 1992, and *Luba*, from 2010. And [00:57:00] she works in bronze and is very successful with bronze sculpture. Carbon fiber is another material that she's worked with. But I think still her signature work is out of wood.

Dziedzic: A lot of her work wasn't originally meant to stay outdoors. Is that right?

Collens: Well, she builds work for outdoors. And she's really learned how to use cedar wood and create sculptures that are wood for outdoors. Very few artists do. But Ursula's one of them. And it's either created from the beginning for being outdoors—and we've had no problems with *For Paul*, which has been outside since 1992. We do basic maintenance to it like we would any sculpture, and it's holding up beautifully and has plenty of air circulation, sunlight on it. [00:58:00] And we do other graphiting and work on it to keep the wood in good shape, and the same thing for the more recent piece, *Luba*, from 2010.

Dziedzic: In what sort of tradition do you see her as an artist, or her work fitting into here, in terms of the collection?

Collens: That's an interesting question. I don't think it's quite that clear. A lot of the sculptures we have were created by the artists by hand, whether it's Mark di Suvero cutting steel and being in the tradition of David Smith, with the way he has worked all the years, and inspired by David Smith. Or [00:59:00] Ursula using wood and having very tight control over the process of working. I find that fascinating. I think Ursula's work is—I can't quite pinpoint it into a certain area of sculpture. And I don't think it has to be framed that way as well. But I think it changes the collection and is certainly inspirational the way it fits into Storm King's landscape and the landscape that we've built, particularly for *For Paul*. We built a hillside to put it on, when we moved it from its first location on top of the hill for the exhibition [01:00:00] to where it is now. We had a house mover be able to lift it up and bring it over to the new location because it's only doweled together. There're different units that are stacked up and doweled, and so it's not bolted

together and so forth, and had to be gently [laughs] lifted and moved to a new location, and proper water drainage and supports underneath it were very important.

Dziedzic: How often does Storm King use a house mover? I feel like this has come up a lot. [laughs]

Collens: Yes, we moved the George House, which we're sitting in right now, with a house mover. And we lifted a di Suvero sculpture up, again, with the same person, to be able to put new concrete bases under the di Suvero so [01:01:00] it would be level on *Mother Peace*. And then we got the person to move Ursula's sculpture to its new location, a hillside that we built for it. Ursula was so excited about the new location and added another approximately 17 inches on to the height of the sculpture, so when you look down upon it, it's the right height to look into it. It was a little low for the new location before, so she came up with her assistants and all the wood and all her equipment and spent a week here adding the extra 17 inches to it, which blends in perfectly now. It was the right move.

Dziedzic: You mentioned that it changed the collection, *Luba*, by [01:02:00] acquiring it. So I wanted to ask how it changes the collection, to your mind.

Collens: Well, certainly, with materials it's changed. And we have very few wood sculptures that are outdoors. I can't think of anybody but Ursula's two sculptures that we have that are wood outdoors. I think in terms of the collection and—yes, museum collections, the way they expand within certain traditions—it's made some changes there. I think having women artists is terrific as well, and pushing in different directions aesthetically.

Dziedzic: [01:03:00] How did you end up identifying Ursula for having a major museum exhibition here, a retrospective?

Collens: Well, as I recall, I started with going to see gallery shows of hers in New York, which are terrific. And looking at the scale and the quality of the work and so forth, and I thought, after going to see her studio in Brooklyn—which was on the second floor of a wood frame building, as I recall, with Judy Pfaff on the first floor of the building—and Ursula creating these large-scale sculptures at that point in time, and [01:04:00] her energy was inspirational to me, to see aesthetically that—I mean, as an artist she was really ready to move forward and plunge into working outdoors in a very different way. And she had the understanding and willingness, and really the spirit to do it. It was at the right point in her career aesthetically to be able to come to Storm King and see the Museum Building and the outdoors on top of the hill and really go back and be challenged artistically to produce new work. And she did that. And had a very hard time [laughs] getting the sculpture out of the second floor [01:05:00] for the Storm King exhibition, and had to take the window out and put in a block and tackle, put a truck next door, and just

got everything down off the second floor, and took out the floor—her floor—so she could get a large-scale sculpture out through Judy Pfaff's first-floor space for the Walker Art Center. She was just bursting at the seams in this second-floor studio and trying to get the works out of the window, or cutting a floor out to get it onto the first floor for—in Judy's studio and out the door. It just—I think the materials and the quality of what she was doing was just really inspirational.

As it is, I love going to her studio every year, a couple times a year, and see what [01:06:00] she's up to and the way she expands her career in terms of drawings, sculpture. It's really evolving and terrific to see. She's had other shows over the years—at Yorkshire Sculpture Park there was a very large exhibition of her bronze sculptures, her wood sculptures, indoors, outdoors. And now this show coming up in Philadelphia.

Dziedzic: Did she have a gallery at the time of the retrospective?

Collens: At the Storm King show? She did. She was just changing galleries, actually, at that point.

Dziedzic: Okay. I was thinking that would be an awful lot of trust [laughs]—a very [01:07:00] a direct relationship, I suppose, between the artist and Storm King.

Collens: I think it was really a relationship between Storm King and Ursula, because she was just at the point of leaving one gallery and joining another one, of course. She's been with Galerie Lelong for a long time, Mary Sabbatino. But that was just in the early stages there, so—

Dziedzic: And how did the dialogue between her and Mark di Suvero happen—the actual dialogue that's in the di Suvero book?

Collens: Oh.

Dziedzic: And then, I suppose, the broader [01:08:00]—she was honored by Socrates Sculpture Park, I believe, or had work there in some exhibitions?

Collens: She's on the board of Socrates Sculpture Park and has been for a long time, and has been a, I think, close friend of Mark's for many years. And we thought for the di Suvero book, after thinking about various possibilities, that having a dialogue with Ursula and Mark would be terrific, and it took place at Mark's studio. [laughs] No one was present, except the person that occasionally ran in and made sure the batteries were working on the recording device. But there's a nice energy between Ursula [01:09:00] and Mark and I think, of course, respect as artists and so forth that they have.

Dziedzic: Ursula really seems to have a lot of—her personal biography is part of her work, in a sense: how she defines her practice, her hands-on practice, and also the materials as well. She talks about being a refugee, and so I wondered if there was any connection with Peter Stern, in terms of his early biography too. Did that ever come up in terms of their discussions together?

Collens: That's an interesting point. Not that I recall. [01:10:00] But I think there is certainly a wonderful relationship there, and I'm sure they did discuss that. Totally different backgrounds, and when they arrived in the United States, different points in time for both of them. But I would think in conversation that probably did come up between both of them. Nothing that I did hear, though.

Dziedzic: Yes, many things will bring you to an appreciation of an artist's work. I just wondered if that had been—

Collens: But that background certainly is inspirational to Ursula to this day, and living in the camps and—you know, in a very different way than, say, Magdalena Abakanowicz. But I think it's there, and [01:11:00] Ursula does do a lot of reading, and I've seen her bookshelf that was a lot of books on that period of time and the Second World War and so forth.

Dziedzic: Well, let me ask you, David, do you think we have time to move into talking about Chakaia Booker?

Collens: Oh, I think we should start, sure.

Dziedzic: Yes, I wanted to ask about how Storm King's relationship developed with her, or with her work.

Collens: Well, Chakaia had shown at Socrates Sculpture Park. I don't remember if that's where I first saw her work or not, actually, but she has a close connection to Socrates, where she [01:12:00] likes to go and teach in the summertime to the children, different camp groups and programs that they have. She's been always very involved with Socrates over the years.

Dziedzic: She had some work there in the late '90s, I believe. Did you see it that early?

Collens: Probably. If she had any gallery shows or group shows in New York I probably saw that. But I think probably through Socrates or Peter Lundberg—who was an assistant to Mark di Suvero at one point and is an artist in his own right and has done—been involved with establishing [01:13:00] sculpture in different locations over the years, but is primarily back, I think, to doing his own sculpture in Australia or

China or this country. Travels around a great deal, but was an assistant to Mark di Suvero for eight years. So I think that's—yes, somewhere along the line [laughs] I've seen Chakaia's work and met her.

Dziedzic: I would ask this similar question of her too, or of *A Moment in Time* (2004). How did the decision come about to acquire that work, and what was Storm King's interest in it?

Collens: It was acquired after the exhibition. That sculpture was on the second floor in [01:14:00] Gallery Nine for the exhibition of her work. And she did a wonderful exhibition both indoors and outdoors, using her signature material, automobile tires—some were steel-belted, others were not—but slicing them and attaching them to a metal frame. And she really, like many of our other artists that have come to Storm King, put all her energy into the show, both aesthetically and physically, with a small team, creating work for the museum.

Gallery 1, the large gallery on the [01:15:00] first floor, had a special work she designed for the interior of that space as you walk through. Made it very [laughs] clear to her that you can't damage anything in the building—the parquet floors, the walls, or anything. And she kept on bringing all these [laughs] different rubber sections in that needed to be bolted, and was so protective of the building. And it was just wonderful to see, and ended up with this large 30-foot sculpture that you could walk all the way around, circulate, like a serpentine shape to it. But I said, "People can't always walk [laughs] all the way around. You need a cut-through." So she made a cut-through partway, in the gallery space, so you could take a shortcut [laughter] to get to the other side. It was a terrific piece, and quite large, and consumed the space very nicely. [01:16:00] And the outdoor sculptures were terrific as well. And she's gone on to have many shows in a variety of different locations—the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, Millennium Park in Chicago most recently.

Dziedzic: You said that *A Moment in Time* was shown originally indoors.

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: How did that decision get made, I guess, to show it indoors, and then to site it outside?

Collens: Well, she created it actually as an outdoor sculpture, has a stainless steel frame to it. I think she at that point was with Marlborough Gallery, and the person at Marlborough that was very familiar with outdoor sculptures said, "You know, I think you should really change from steel frames to stainless steel for outdoor sculpture." And she started doing that, [01:17:00] and changed the frame and other materials that she was using to fasten the rubber together so it'd be far more durable and be good in different climates.

Dziedzic: She has a lot of work that's outside. I think that's part of the use of the automobile tires. Was this around the time that she started to shift all of her work to be more durable in this way?

Collens: Well, she went to Rutgers University and was—basically I think grew up in Newark and at that point in time rubber tires and spare tires were [laughs] very available in that area. So it was a material that she started using when she was in art school.

Dziedzic: Was any of her [01:18:00] earlier work, the worn garments, was that part of the indoor exhibition?

Collens: No, I mean, to this day she changes—I think her headdress is always different. This is, again, I think family tradition for her. And that's how it started with that. She has a pocketbook that's made out of rubber tires and so forth. But that's the way I've always seen her.

Dziedzic: And her work is also extremely deliberate in terms of its critiques of class and also color, identifying as an African-American woman and [01:19:00] identifying with her family and their tradition as well. How was that involved in the kinds of materials that were associated with the exhibition, or was it?

Collens: Now, as I recall, virtually everything was out of tires that she sliced. Her studio when we did the exhibition was on Broadway—maybe about 137th Street? And I remember driving there. She said, "Oh, just park in the garage," about a block away or something. Anyway, I drove up there to see her one day in this very small studio, and she was cutting all the rubber, and it had an incredible smell to it, and a very safe building, because I think the police department was [laughs] on the first floor, and it was a large building. But I got [01:20:00] up there, and I thought I was seeing a robbery, but it was *Law and Order* being filmed! [laughs] I was very nervous about being up in that area. But it was only *Law and Order*. [laughter] Television program being filmed.

So we went to see her. And she kept on working outdoors in the hallway; she just didn't have enough space. It was very small. She stacked everything up and brought it up to Storm King. We also showed some bronze sculptures that she did at the Polich Tallix Foundry with Dick Polich, which were wall sculptures, extremely heavy, that also used the rubber tires, and they bronzed it. So that was the other material that was used. And she's done drawings and so forth and expanded a bit, but [01:21:00] I think it's all usually the color black that is her signature color, and using rubber tires is the signature material for her. But there are references, being African-American and to different activities and situations that have taken place.

Dziedzic: How did that exhibition come about? I think it sounds like you identified her as being an interesting artist, and—

Collens: Right. No, absolutely. I think primary to me was the artistic work and not always the history behind and the titles and what it represented to her [01:22:00], in all due respect. I was interested in the creative process. She really hadn't done museum exhibitions, had some gallery shows. And I thought she was at the right creative point in her career, like Ursula, to really take on the challenge of an exhibition at Storm King.

Dziedzic: And in a sense I can see the ways in which you described Ursula's work being very unique in terms of materials and form, that also being similar maybe with Chakaia as well, in terms of using tires and—even though I guess that's—there's a tire or two in Mark di Suvero sculptures. [laughter] But—

Collens: Indeed. [laughter] Yes.

Dziedzic: —but using them in an incredibly different way and [01:23:00] having the process, in a sense, be part of it, much like Ursula too.

Collens: And actually, I should add, Mark and Ursula are also close friends and—

Dziedzic: And so the piece that was on loan for the fiftieth anniversary exhibition, *Foci*, how was that selected?

Collens: Well, again, she created the sculpture 30 feet, the largest sculpture she's built, to date, actually. It was a little late because she kept on working on it. And she didn't know how long it was. Now, clearly, an outdoor sculpture, that wasn't the issue, but trying to figure out where to put it. It went down to Allentown, Pennsylvania, where she had this very large factory building, at that point—she took on the responsibilities of the building. She's still in Allentown but a different space. It became [01:24:00] too difficult to maintain this old factory building and make sure it didn't freeze during the winter and the roof wasn't leaking and all those details. So she's moved within the last few years to a much smaller space, I gather. I haven't seen it.

But I went down to see what she was doing, and she had no idea how long it was, so we measured it, and it turned out to be 30 feet. Then she covered it with her signature material, the steel-belted or the tires, and came up late. But it was really a terrific sculpture. And it was here for a couple years. And at one of the openings Chakaia went up to Mark di Suvero and said, "Oh, Mark, I'm catching up to you! I just made a 30-foot sculpture!" [laughs] It was so funny. [01:25:00] [laughter] She couldn't wait to tell him how

large her piece was. It was significantly larger than anything she's ever built before and created. And for Mark, he just creates sculpture—whatever size it is, it's human-size to Mark. That's the way he thinks about it. But yes, she was so excited to go up to him and tell him about *Foci* and how tall it was. [laughter]

Dziedzic: How did she get up there to put the tires on it?

Collens: I think it was built horizontally. It was very difficult to get out of this large building, because they built it in interior space, and then trying to get this 30-foot sculpture horizontally out, weave it out of large doors and everything, became a challenge, and onto a truck.

Dziedzic: I was wondering if she was taking crane-operating lessons [laughter] from [01:26:00] Mark.

Collens: Totally horizontally built, as I saw.

Dziedzic: Were there issues in the building with her interior sculptures, in terms of weight? You mentioned that some of the wall sculptures were really heavy.

Collens: Oh, we had to really support them underneath and use fastening devices. It's still a challenge, using the Museum Building to this day. And I think we're more aware of its limits. I mean, it was clearly built as a residential house, and yes, it's concrete, stone, and wood, but it was still built to residential standards, not industrial buildings or what a museum would use today. So we're far more aware of that, I think. I never thought about it particularly. We brought in what we had to, on the second floor [01:27:00], first floor, and so forth.

Dziedzic: It comes up sometimes in terms of apartments, even. You know, the load that they can hold, because everyone starts going upwards, and—

Collens: No different for building, and we're aware of this far more now at this point in time than we were. So we're sensitive to that. I wasn't totally insensitive, but it raised awareness, definitely.

Dziedzic: And then, I guess, from your perspective, how has Chakaia's career developed since her show at Storm King, in terms of the work that she's made or places she's shown?

Collens: Well, now, I think she's moved forward. She's not with a gallery at this point still. She left Marlborough Gallery after a number of years and has had shows at Millennium [01:28:00] Park in Chicago, which is, I think, probably just finishing. That was there for a year, outdoors. And different, I

think, college and university art museums, and she's shown outdoors in different locations. But I think it's hard without a gallery. More challenging.

Dziedzic: Well, I guess let's also talk about Grace Knowlton today, and then I think we'll wrap up, probably.

Collens: Yes. How we doing on time?

Dziedzic: It's 11:06. How's that?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: Okay.

Collens: That sounds good.

Dziedzic: So Grace is the earliest of all the artists that we've talked about today. Her work has been at Storm King the longest. But you were also here at that time. Do you remember how this acquisition [01:29:00] came about, of her work?

Collens: Well, Grace actually predates me, [laughter] I have to be honest. It started with, I think, my predecessor, when Grace's *Spheres* (1973–75/1985) arrived at Storm King. They were, I believe, all clay, that Grace created at her studio in Sneden's Landing, just outside of New York, near the Palisades Parkway, exit 4. And she has lived there since, I guess, mid-'60s or so. Still in the same location, same house.

Dziedzic: Who was your predecessor, David?

Collens: Dorothy Mayhall was Director.

Dziedzic: I saw there's this [01:30:00] work of hers in the collection too.

Collens: There is. It's an indoor work, yes. She was an artist as well.

Dziedzic: So do you know how that relationship began with Grace Knowlton?

Collens: I don't know the connection, how Dorothy met Grace. I'm going to have to research that out. But her *Spheres* arrived in the early '70s, and for many years were near the Kenneth Snelson *Free Ride Home* (1974) in the little valley there. They were tucked in by the curve of the driveway, where on the left-hand side is a very large oak tree, and they were just down the hill in a little valley there. They were all ceramic, as I recall. [01:31:00] And beautiful, because Grace created them at her studio, and she could glaze, and she had a kiln and everything at that point. And they were large. So they were wonderful—and not particularly good for our climate, with freezing and thawing and snow on them and everything, and they started, I guess, breaking up.

Then Grace started creating sculpture out of fiberglass, which was very interesting and not a particularly healthy material to use. And they weren't perfectly round or anything. They were regular shape and very textured. So we borrowed some of those. Then she started going to concrete, being a better material [01:32:00] to create sculpture for outdoors, and not a health hazard to make it. But we brought some of the larger ones out. They kept on changing as some of them broke up, and that was part of the process, and she'd repair them as much as she could up here. She'd bring them up on a little boat trailer because they were large, [laughter] and they just nestled and tied up on the boat trailer and got towed up here with a truck or something.

Dziedzic: I saw that she—so *Spheres* arrived in the early '70s, and then they were officially acquired later. But that was even before her first solo show, that I could find record of.

Collens: Yes, they kept on changing as the weather got to them and she couldn't repair them anymore, and sizes [01:33:00] and so forth changed. We have, I think, a couple of the clay ones inside. They're really beautiful, and I didn't want to endlessly leave them out. She never had a solo show at Storm King.

Dziedzic: Right, but even her shows in SoHo were after her sculptures were acquired here. So we'll have to see, maybe there was a personal relationship.

Collens: Oh, very much so, always with Grace. Yes, it was hands-on in that sense. She worked in copper, with smaller sculptures that she made in copper. And they'd be 40 inches long, that she did herself, and put them outdoors, and always the spheres out of the materials I mentioned. And photography, drawings. Very important to her [01:34:00] career.

Dziedzic: I know there was an issue with her sculptures over the summer, is that right?

Collens: Oh, yes. Grace always has been very easy to work with. I've known her a long time, and I actually knew her before I came to [laughs] Storm King, in my previous career, I have to confess. [laughter] I have to reveal.

Dziedzic: [laughs] Personal relationships abound.

Collens: Yes. So she was upset when I moved them from near the top of the hill there by the Snelson in that little valley to the more recent location (in the North Woods) a number of years ago. Everybody wanted to be absolutely dead center where [01:35:00] all our visitors were going by the sculptures, whether it's on the driveway or somewhere in front of the building and whatever. Anyway, it worked out fine. I moved them to the location that they were for a number of years. And she came up and made no changes, loved it. [laughter] That was fine. Mike has worked with her on the restoration work of sculptures, and so it was a wonderful relationship with Grace. And she's about 85, I think, now. Close to it.

Dziedzic: So the sculptures that had been out are being restored, rather than replaced by a new set of spheres?

Collens: Oh, yes. No, she could not do that at this point in time. So yes, Mike knows what to do. We've discussed it with her. I've been down to see her. I think Mike and I probably will go down. He's spoken to [01:36:00] her on the phone, and someone will drive Grace up here, when we start getting ready to do the repair work on them and do it outdoors, during the fair-weather season. So she'd love to come up. She was at the Storm King Gala, I guess, last October—a surprise—with her daughter.

Dziedzic: Was her work included in group shows at Storm King, or what was the history there?

Collens: I think Dorothy Mayhall must have had it in one of the *Sculpture in the Fields* shows, I would guess. I think that's how it started, probably, Sarah.

Dziedzic: Yes, I know there were some exhibitions that are "Recent Acquisitions of Storm King" or something like that. But I don't have [01:37:00] the details.

Collens: I mean, there were 100 sculptures on the right- and left-hand side of the main driveway when I first saw Storm King. And other locations as well, but the critical mass were on either side—various aesthetics, sizes, stages of decay, and so forth.

Dziedzic: Wow.

Collens: It was a very different Storm King when I first saw it, in terms of the sculptures outside that either Storm King owned, which were not very many, and the ones that were on loan. And the landscape was not the way you see it today. Oh, you say it's great today, but it evolved, year after year. I mean, that's what people find hard to believe. Forty-five years of landscaping. Relentless. No let-up. [01:38:00]

Dziedzic: And it's happening now, too, to open more space for visitors, I suppose.

Collens: Yes, in a very different way than the creative landscaping of Bill Rutherford over here, and putting in the parking areas, and planting the trees, and—yes, taking space that is not particularly usable for the sculpture area.

Dziedzic: So when you first arrived, *The Arch* (1975) wasn't—

Collens: No *Arch.*

Dziedzic: —wasn't out. [Alexander] Liberman wasn't out.

Collens: Well, the Liberman *Adonai* (1970–71, refabricated 2000) was there. *Adam* (1970) was there. *Adam*'s always been on top of the north hill—except when it went to National Gallery of Art in Washington for an exhibition. Another Liberman, *Eve*, was here, but we traded *Eve* in, I guess to help out when we bought *Iliad* (1974–76). And we had a [01:39:00] smaller Liberman that was here as well, I think, called *Free*, if I'm not mistaken, but I could be. And the Robert]Grosvenor was here (Untitled, 1970), and David von Schlegell (Untitled, 1972); a small di Suvero that we returned to Mark, *Pre-Columbian* (1965/2004); small Alexander Calder that we, again, traded in for *The Arch*, plus cash.

Dziedzic: So those were all on the—and the David Smiths—all on the side—

Collens: All 13 David Smiths—were behind the building. But some were indoors by that point. I can't pinpoint exactly when the five came in the Museum Building. But it was before I got here, I think.

Dziedzic: So in a sense you could drive, look at the sculptures, turn around, and leave.

Collens: Yes. It was top of the hill, and there was nothing really in the fields, except [01:40:00] von Schlegell, the open cubes, the untitled sculpture, which was commissioned in 1972. Bob Grosvenor, untitled sculpture, commissioned in 1974. All Lippincott fabrications.

No, it was the top of the hill. There was no Isamu Noguchi. Yes, some other pieces looking north towards the north hill. *Adam* was up there. Some other minor sculptures were hanging around. [laughs] Whatever they were. I don't know. Sol LeWitt was here, *Five Modular Units* (1971, refabricated 2008), in a very different location.

Dziedzic: And were those—

Collens: Mostly loans.

Dziedzic: Those early commissions—did Peter negotiate those, or was Ted still doing—

Collens: Ted.

Dziedzic: —all the—

Collens: Oh, yes. Ted Ogden.

Dziedzic: So he was making the choices to move forward with those artists.

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: [01:41:00] Who was he turning to for advice in terms of that? It seems like David Smith was sort of his first sort of formal—that was how his art education started.

Collens: Yes—I've always understood that there wasn't a formal advisor to either Ted Ogden or Peter Stern. And at one point the connection to David Smith was through his niece, Judy Bullitt, and her husband, Lewis Cabot. She was Judy Cabot at the time. But anyway, they knew Clem Greenberg, and that was the connection for going to Bolton Landing. But very clear that Ted Ogden made his own [01:42:00] selection. It wasn't Clem Greenberg saying, "Oh, you can consider this piece, this, this, and this one, whatever, one over there, three over there." No, he went up, took the photographs that we have, his Polaroid shots, and made the decision according to what aesthetically appealed to him. Different than what I originally thought, because I didn't know Clem well, but I had to deal with him for the David Smith show in 1976 (*David Smith*), which was interesting. Anyway, I'm surprised that's the way it happened.

I think it's terrific, because it's a wonderful collection of 13 sculptures that Ted Ogden selected. Actually, there were 14, because Ted Ogden kept one, as he always intended, for his personal collection. Thirteen went to Storm King, and Ted Ogden had a smaller one, which was sold to buy the Calder [01:43:00] that

was known as *Seven Foot Beastie*, but Sandy Rower changed the name because he found research to indicate a slightly different name. But it was a beautiful early Calder, stabile, and that was traded plus cash for *The Arch.* And then the Calder family gave *Seven Foot Beastie* to the Whitney Museum of American Art immediately after getting it back.

Dziedzic: So you think he went with his—continued his aesthetic in these commissions.

Collens: Oh, yes, he went with his instincts, right or wrong, what he related to in terms of materials of sculptures, the aesthetics. [01:44:00] Very much so. And I think he wanted to, hit or miss, collect what he thought was good for this museum and landscape. And certainly inspirational, seeing Bolton Landing, no doubt about it. He went to other places, whether it was Kröller-Müller Museum, which Lisa references. But I think—true or not, I don't know if he was there. It doesn't matter. But I think the inspiration of seeing David Smith a year after he died with virtually all the sculptures outside—what Bob Murray captured in the film is what Ted Ogden saw. I mean, wow! Doesn't get any better. [laughter]

Dziedzic: Yes. It's really beautiful.

Collens: And I think you [01:45:00] could translate that from the Adirondacks—175 miles north of here, four hours' trip going up to Bolton Landing—to the Storm King landscape, farm fields, mountains of the Hudson Highlands. It resonated with him. That's the point. More than any other site he could have seen. Maybe he went to Scotland and saw the Henry Moores up on the sheep farm, which I saw with Andy Goldsworthy. Inspirational. There're two or three sculptures there, of Henry Moore's, way up on this hillside. But seeing David Smith at Bolton Landing, I think that was instrumental and just so key to thinking of Storm King. [01:46:00]

Dziedzic: All right. Well, let's end there for today.

Collens: Good.

Dziedzic: [laughs] All right. Thanks, David.

Collens: I'm off-duty?

Dziedzic: [laughs] You're off-duty.

Collens: [laughs] Thanks for breakfast.

Dziedzic: Oh, yes, of course.

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center Archives**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
July 18, 2018	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Dziedzic: Today is July 18, 2018, and this is an interview with David Collens for the Storm King Oral History Program, the second session. So, David, I wanted to ask you how you first learned about Mark di Suvero's work.

Collens: The history of Mark di Suvero and Storm King goes back to 1968, when Storm King purchased *Pre-Columbian*, an early sculpture of Mark's from 1965, that was purchased from an estate in California and brought to Storm King by the caretaker at that point, who went to California [00:01:00] and dismantled it with other people and shipped it to Storm King. And *Pre-Columbian* was in our collection, and it was a wonderful early sculpture from 1965 of Mark's made out of wood, rubber tire, steel. And it turned, as well. And it was a smaller-scale sculpture that was on the grounds—very hard to take care of because of the materials outdoors in our environment. Mark created the sculpture originally at Drakes Bay in Northern California on the beach along with several other sculptures. And there are some wonderful photographs of *Pre-Columbian* and other early wood sculptures of that period, with the ocean crashing in on the beach, that are really classic [00:02:00] photographs of early di Suveros. And it was a terrific piece to have in our collection.

We lent it to the Whitney Museum exhibition of Mark di Suvero in 1975 and brought it back after that exhibition. And when we decided to purchase two works of Mark's that would be appropriate for outdoors, being *Mon Père, Mon Père* (1973–75) and *Mother Peace*, we traded *Pre-Columbian* to Mark in exchange for the two larger steel sculptures that were really perfect for Storm King—the scale and being in the fields at Storm King—which Mark pioneered, actually—being in the fields—plus [00:03:00] cash for the two larger sculptures.

Dziedzic: Where exactly was *Pre-Columbian* installed here?

Collens: It was in several locations over the years at Storm King, and I remember probably the most recent location being between the Noguchi and the David Smith collection, where we always put up a tent for the May opening. It also at one point, I believe, was on the hillside near Claes Oldenburg's and Coosje van Bruggen's *Wayside Drainpipe* (1979)—in that area.

Dziedzic: So when you first started here, that's when you learned about that history of Mark di Suvero here? [00:04:00] Or had you heard about his work before you started at Storm King?

Collens: No, I learned about di Suvero being at Storm King.

Dziedzic: You mentioned acquiring some of his works, but can you talk about how some of his other sculptures were here on loan—that Peter Stern arranged?

Collens: Yes, I can. Mark came back from France, where he had been living in Europe for several years during the Vietnam War as a protest, and he came back in time for his exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. And his exhibition took up one floor of the Whitney, in addition to having [00:05:00] several outdoor sculptures scattered around New York City as part of the Whitney exhibition. Peter Stern went to the opening for the di Suvero show and saw Mark and asked Mark what he was doing with the approximately 14 outdoor sculptures that were around in various parks and in front of office buildings throughout New York City—and Prospect Park, Battery Park, the Rose Garden in Central Park, in front of the Seagram Building—they were all over. So Peter asked him what was happening to the sculptures after the show. They could only be in New York for a certain period of time. Mark said he was going to fold them up and put them in storage. [00:06:00] And Peter immediately asked Mark to bring a group of sculptures to Storm King, which he did in the winter of 1975.

Dziedzic: And you were here then, right?

Collens: I was at Storm King. And the decision about what sculptures was really left to Dick Bellamy, Mark's close friend and dealer, Mark, and myself—to come up with a list of sculptures to bring to Storm King. And we came up with a list of five large-scale steel sculptures that we brought out to the Art Center in the wintertime and installed them in the spring.

Dziedzic: Do you remember your first meeting [00:07:00] with Mark?

Collens: I don't have a clear recollection of the first meeting—and where that took place, whether it was at Storm King when the sculptures came out or in New York.

Dziedzic: How did the sculptures that were here on loan in '75 get sited?

Collens: Mark came out and looked at Storm King. And we gave him freedom of where to put the sculptures, considering the scale—some of them were up to 40 feet high, like *Mother Peace*, and others were anywhere from, I would say, [00:08:00] the 25-foot range to 40 feet in height, *Mother Peace*

probably being the tallest. And they were painted steel; some had unpainted steel; there were moving elements to them, as well. And we selected a group of five sculptures that came to Storm King. And Mark started looking around, and he found a location in the field below the five ionic columns from the top of the hill, and he spread the five sculptures out below the columns in different directions. And it really was an immediate success, with Mark's uncanny eye for [00:09:00] placing his own sculpture, as he has done at Storm King—and I've worked with him on placement of sculpture during different exhibitions over the years. But it really was wonderful to see the di Suveros. There were five large-scale pieces, and they arced around. And the juxtaposition of them when you were underneath them, walking around in the fields and seeing them, was really quite an extraordinary sight.

Dziedzic: I read in Peter Stern's oral history that Mark was okay with people looking down upon his sculptures—not just looking up through them. I know that he physically opened up the South Fields, in a way, for sculpture to be placed there, [00:10:00] but did that attitude towards viewing the sculptures open up some possibilities for different sculpture placement at Storm King, or different kinds of sculptures?

Collens: Well, first I would say that Mark's sculptures had the size, being steel I-beams, and the expansiveness of each work in the height, where you could stand at the columns and you would look straight out to *Mon Père, Mon Père* and you were the same height [laughs] as the upper portion of the sculpture. So most artists don't want their work looked down upon—and I think that's a very good point you made, Sarah. With Mark, you were standing on top of the hill looking straight out to large-scale sculptures of his. And that was really quite extraordinary—to see really a bird's-eye view of them [00:11:00] from being on top of a hill. And they were still rising up, vertically—some of them. And it was a combination of different sculptures. There was *Mother Peace* and *Mon Père, Mon Père*, which Storm King eventually purchased, and *One Oklock* (1968–69), *Are Years What? (For Marianne Moore)* (1967). And there were, as I recall, a total of five—and all different shapes and sizes. And it was really a remarkable experience for people to see the sculptures of di Suvero at Storm King in the fields—the scale. And he really pioneered into new territory at Storm King for placing sculpture. [00:12:00]

Dziedzic: Were any of those first loans the kinds of sculptures that he has where you're interacting with them? And was that something that was permitted in those early years?

Collens: I'm just trying to remember if there were any swings on the sculpture—I don't think so. But with future exhibitions, we did have sculptures where there were large swinging platforms that people were able to interact with, yes.

Dziedzic: What was the visitorship like when you first started?

Collens: It was very low compared to now, of course. And people knew about Storm King. They were still coming year after year. [00:13:00] For many years, it was word of mouth—as it is today, to a certain extent. And people love coming up to the Art Center and new people finding it by chance or through reviews of exhibitions and travel articles and other possible ways of finding out about Storm King. It certainly was under 50,000 visitors a year.

Dziedzic: Yes, let's talk about some of Mark's exhibitions over the years. So in 1985 there was a retrospective, *Twenty-five Years of Sculpture and Drawings*. [00:14:00] Can you talk about how that exhibition came about and what sort of discussions there were around that?

Collens: Well, it really started, I think, with a group of five sculptures that we brought to Storm King in 1975 and how successful that was. And we really had an unusual space for Mark to be showing. And being such a dynamic, creative artist, as he is—he's still working—I was fascinated by the range of work that Mark did in terms of sculpture, whether it was large-scale sculpture, a sculpture two feet high. He was very adept at working in steel, and that fascinated me. And his ability to do the work himself, in very similar fashion to David Smith, who Mark knew—he went to [00:15:00] Bolton Landing and was inspired by David Smith.

So I was interested in bringing the di Suvero drawings together in an exhibition with the sculptures for the first time. And we brought drawings from his studio in France and his studios in the United States together and put them out decade by decade and came up with about 45 drawings of various sizes that we showed in the Museum Building on both floors, along with indoor sculpture, as well, to complement the drawings. Outdoors, we used the top of the hill next to the Museum Building, as well as the fields. And we brought in approximately 14 sculptures from all over the United States for this exhibition. And it took about a month [00:16:00] to install, because we brought Mark's studio from New York City to Storm King—his crane, his welding equipment, and all of his assistants, as well, of course, to help assemble the work. So this was an extensive project, to install the outdoor sculptures, which we borrowed from private collections, public collections—from Mark, as well—from different parts of the country and brought them to Storm King. And that was the first time such a large group of his sculptures had been shown together.

Dziedzic: Was it also historic for Storm King, in a way?

Collens: I think it was historic both for di Suvero as well as for Storm King—mounting such a large exhibition. We really had tremendous acclaim from various art critics. [00:17:00] And Mark, just seeing the sculptures at Storm King—whether they were originally made at his studio in Chalon in France or the California studio or in New York or various other locations in the early years—really was very familial to

him. And that was the term he used, looking at the sculptures at Storm King that had never been together before.

Dziedzic: I can't help but notice that there's a pattern every 10 years, for a few decades, of retrospective exhibitions of Mark's work. Can you talk about that? I know there was one in '95 and 2005, and then we get into some unique territory after that.

Collens: Well, again, emphasizing the creative [00:18:00] aspect of this particular artist, I've continued to be fascinated by his work, seeing exhibitions in galleries in Europe and so forth. I was always intrigued with moving forward with other exhibitions, and he certainly was an artist that deserved that and could handle the landscape at Storm King as his sculptures were getting larger. And the 1985 retrospective—as I said, we showed the drawings for the first time with the sculptures. That was not the way exhibitions were being done—it was strictly a sculpture exhibition or maybe a drawing exhibition. But they were integrated into the indoor exhibition in our building. And I, 10 years later, wanted to show the paintings [00:19:00] of di Suvero, which I had seen for a number of years, and most of them were too large to put into the building at Storm King—into our gallery—so I found examples of three that we could fit into the first-floor galleries. And we showed his paintings for the first time in the United States at a museum, along with more recent sculpture, both indoors and outdoors.

Dziedzic: Which exhibition was that—with the paintings?

Collens: Nineteen ninety-five (*Mark di Suvero*).

Dziedzic: I guess I'm wondering, how did that work, every 10 years, to come back together? I mean, was there a dialogue in between that time? And how do you coordinate this? You know, "Well, surprise! We want to do another one!" And [laughs] [00:20:00] "It's the anniversary!" How did that all work out?

Collens: Mark and Dick Bellamy are two people I was constantly in touch with, and I went to see Mark's exhibitions in Europe, other locations. And I was really very interested in the way his sculptures were progressing—not just in scale, but the quality of what he was doing with steel and the way he was exploring the metal, and the use of steel by bending it and cutting it and bolting it and other means and methods. So that was really, I think, a decision I made—Mark's an artist that one can really investigate in many different ways. [00:21:00] And I thought that would be very interesting to the public, as well—not just museum people and art world people, but a broad range of individuals.

Dziedzic: Are there other locations where his sculptures are—throughout the world—where you feel like they're also very successful in whatever unique landscape, or city?

Collens: I've seen Mark's work in France and in various locations. And they work very well. He has worked in France—he did work in France before he gave up his studio for over 20 years. And the French sculptures have a very different, I think, aesthetic to them, for some reason. It's something I've been thinking [00:22:00] about and I'm very curious about why that is, but I think there is something different about the sculptures he builds in France versus in the United States at his two different studios. I find that quite interesting. But his work has always been very successful, I think, in urban areas, whether it's in Cannes in southern France or other smaller cities and towns that he's exhibited work in. It fits in beautifully without being confrontational, and I've found that also quite interesting. The scale, the aesthetics of it—it works very well.

Dziedzic: So let's talk about [00:23:00] Governors Island—that exhibition. And I'm curious to know how that came about, and also just to have you talk about what was unique about it, basically.

Collens: With Governors Island, we were invited by Governors Island to do the exhibition. And Ronay Menschel was the chair of the Trust for Governors Island. And at that point, in 2011 and 2012, Governors Island was not developed to the point where it is today. And they were interested in bringing more people out and having a sculpture exhibition with the appropriate scale to really bring people out, to launch Governors Island [00:24:00] to another phase as they were preparing to develop the landscape and have a larger visitation by the public.

Storm King raised the money for the exhibition in a very short time. We brought out 13 sculptures to Governors Island and different locations—we had to find the sites. Picnic Point, overlooking the Statue of Liberty, is where the larger-scale works were, with just a spectacular view of the water and the Statue of Liberty very close in New York Harbor. And we worked around many difficult situations, getting the sculptures and the cranes and all the equipment we needed on a ferry to Governors Island to do this [00:25:00] exhibition. And it really was a resounding success. We were there for two years with different programs and events. It really, I think, brought the island to a different point in preparation for their landscaping they did over the years and sculptures they've commissioned in their art program.

Dziedzic: Was there a special ferry that was going from his Long Island City studio to Governors Island?

Collens: The ferry basically went from Lower Manhattan—next to the Staten Island Ferry is the location for the ferry that goes to Governors Island. They're open to the public far more than they were in 2011 and 2012 when we were there. And they've [00:26:00] finished working on the landscape—most of it—demolishing buildings that were very close to the di Suvero sculptures by the Statue of Liberty area,

Picnic Point—those are all gone. So it's a very different landscape today than when we were out there and doing our project.

Dziedzic: What was it like to work with, I guess, a different landscape—in terms of figuring out where the sculptures would go and discussing that with everybody involved?

Collens: You know, certainly it was a challenge. Working out there, there were a lot of restrictions—once we were out there with the equipment and installing and not disturbing property—because part of it is owned by the [00:27:00] National Park Service, so we had sculptures on their property. We couldn't dig into the ground at all; we had to place the sculptures on steel plates in those areas not disturb anything—being a National Park Service site with a fort out on Governors Island, being an old Army base. And other areas, we had a little bit more freedom. But it was just a difficult site to work with for positioning sculpture as well as getting equipment there.

Dziedzic: Do you have any thoughts about doing an off-site exhibition in the future? Or lessons learned from this particular exhibition about considerations for something similar in the future?

Collens: Well, it's always something to be considered. [00:28:00] At this point, I'm not sure we would do something off-site. It was the perfect time for us to do it, and certainly helped to raise the profile of Storm King. And it's nice to partner to do an exhibition and programming when appropriate. But one has to weight that with other projects.

Dziedzic: What made it the perfect time?

Collens: I think it was perfect in our history with what we were doing at Storm King, and excellent for Mark di Suvero. And Governors Island was—everything really came together just before they started their major landscaping and they were closed for a couple of years while the landscaping took place, when they were demolishing buildings and using the building material for creating hillsides and [00:29:00] so forth. It's a very different type of landscape today than it was when we were there in 2011, 2012. And it certainly was fun to be there. It looks very organized and elegant today with landscaping for large crowds that go there, and a lot of programming.

Dziedzic: Well, speaking of big changes in the landscape, coming back to Storm King, can you talk about the process of clearing the South Fields and the sorts of discussions with Bill Rutherford—and just what that process looked like when that happened?

Collens: With the landscaping at Storm King, basically we landscaped for 45 years—it was year after year of [00:30:00] landscaping. And in the South Fields, we had Mark's work in the fields, as they are today. However, Bill Rutherford was focused on the fields for several years and really having the fields still grassed but not wet, so people could walk through them, and putting appropriate drainage into the fields—unlike the 1985 exhibition of Mark's, when we were taking his sculptures into the fields and we would get stuck with the crane because it was too wet and have to get towed out of the field with a heavy piece of machinery for the crane and other pieces of equipment. So Bill came up with a plan to drain and channel [00:31:00] the water out of the fields and create places for di Suvero sculptures. And every year, I would have to call Mark up and ask him [laughs] to move a large-scale sculpture—which, after a while, he wasn't so enthusiastic to do—to get it out of the way of the machines and gravel and shaping the fields so it would be a better experience for visitors.

Dziedzic: So a lot of the changing of the landscape over the years was not just about changing the shape—changing the topography and the views—but also what you couldn't see underneath—just stabilizing the ground and taking care of the drainage?

Collens: We have plenty of gravel at Storm King, and it really was a project so that we could circulate people through the di Suvero fields [00:32:00] in the future and other areas in the fields that are not being used for sculpture at this point in time. But it was really building Storm King for the future—draining the fields and being able to properly exhibit the di Suvero sculptures, as well.

Dziedzic: So I had known about there being a little bit of—so, to talk about *Pyramidian*—that there had been some earthmoving to present that sculpture in the best way, but was there also some invisible work, too? [laughs] I'm not sure how this works, but I imagine that you might find out that there's a drainage issue only after you have the sculpture placed. [laughs]

Collens: I'd try to check with Bill Rutherford before I put a sculpture down. I was curious about certain landscapes and just wanted his opinion. And he [00:33:00] was a really very special and gifted landscape architect that worked very closely with our founder, Ted Ogden, and Peter Stern, and then eventually myself, as the landscape architect at Storm King. And he, on occasion, got involved with the artists, as well—whether it was Andy Goldsworthy or Magdalena Abakanowicz or Mark di Suvero—in terms of what the material was like and what the ground conditions were like in different locations. And he was extremely helpful in that respect.

And *Pyramidian*—we had a location, we thought, for this wonderful 60-foot sculpture that came up to Storm King. And we had it stockpiled—all the I-beams and everything—on the allée by the dirt road. [00:34:00] And we had three days of rain before Mark was going to move it into the particular location that

we landscaped for it. And Mark, early in the morning, started moving the steel I-beams to get them in position for erecting the sculpture. And it was so wet and we had so much water draining to the north in the landscape, he called me over and he said, “This is just too wet. We can’t get the I-beams out there without destroying everything onsite in terms of the landscape, and it’s dangerous for the equipment.” So he found a location on the highest point on top of the hill and asked Peter Stern and myself if he could assemble the sculpture in that location. And we immediately said yes. [00:35:00] We got an outside contractor to come in and prepare the site very quickly—the same day, a few hours later—and started assembling and moving the sculpture to the top of the hill to where you see it today.

Dziedzic: So that decision was in part because everything else was too wet?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: [laughs] Wow.

Collens: It was—yes, just by chance. And the water in that area—the way that land is situated, it drains to the north. And after several days of rain, it was extremely wet, and we went to the high ground.

Dziedzic: Do you want to talk about how *Mozart’s Birthday* (1989) and *Mahatma* (1978–79) came into Storm King’s collection?

Collens: Let’s see. With [00:36:00] *Mozart’s Birthday*, it was a sculpture that was in a collection—Maurice Cohen in Michigan, along with several other outdoor sculptures. And Maurice Cohen was a collector that Mark knew and had a very large indoor collection, as well, of paintings and other work. And there were a few outdoor sculptures. And Maurice Cohen and his wife gave us a gift of three sculptures after Mr. Cohen died, and it was the di Suvero, Dennis Oppenheim, and Ronald Bladen—it was a gift of three sculptures at the same time. So we trucked those out of Michigan to Storm King. [00:37:00] And Mark is somebody that knew Maurice Cohen very well, and there was a discussion of where the sculpture should go in the future, and that’s the decision—to give it to Storm King.

Dziedzic: And *Mahatma* was also a gift, right?

Collens: *Mahatma* was a gift from Edward Broida. Ed Broida was a major collector from Southern California, and he lived in Florida. I knew him quite well over the years. He was the largest private collector of Mark di Suvero’s work at that point in time, many years ago, [00:38:00] primarily with sculpture. He had a full collection of di Suvero’s sculptures, from early works right up through *Mahatma* at

that point in time. And he passed away and made a gift to Storm King of his largest di Suvero sculpture, *Mahatma*. He would visit frequently.

Dziedzic: So I want to—sorry, I'm not following the bullet points I sent you at all, David, I'm sorry. [00:39:00] I'm curious if we can maybe talk a little bit about Peter. I might be asking you to speculate a little bit, but I was struck in his interview how he talks about the Kenneth Snelson sculpture. He says that it was so dramatic that he could hardly even keep looking at it—he had to look away. And I think this is the first sculpture that he brought to Storm King. But right around that time is also him asking for Mark di Suvero to essentially have "outdoor storage" for his sculptures here at Storm King. [00:40:00] This is something that I'm interested with Storm King as an institution and with you and also with Peter and with Nora, too—but how you develop your eye for what is it that you like? Your eye for sculpture. What is it that you like? How is that connected with this landscape? So before we talk about that with you, I just want to ask about it with regard to Peter. So I'm just going back to these first few pieces that I know of—the Snelson and the di Suveros—and that being pretty much the first full year of him being president of Storm King. Can you just go back to that and maybe recall what seemed to draw him and what [00:41:00] some of his goals were in terms of sculpture acquisition?

Collens: I think when Peter took over as President and Chairman of Storm King in 1974, after Ted Ogden died, that's when Peter really had the full responsibility of the Art Center and moving it forward. And he started looking at sculpture, and Snelson was the first purchase of a large-scale sculpture under Peter's stewardship. And I think Peter, working with Bill Rutherford and becoming more involved with Bill starting at that period—because the earlier period really was Ted Ogden and Bill Rutherford working together—and [00:42:00] Peter got very involved with all aspects of Storm King and enjoyed the landscape and looking for sculpture and what would fit into Storm King. And I think he clearly understood the scale necessary of sculpture—quality sculpture, I might add—for Storm King—not just large-scale—because it's big, but he understood quality.

He found the Snelson, which was first shown in New York City at Waterside Plaza, between two apartment buildings on the East River Drive—the two buildings are there and there's the concrete platform between them. There was a Snelson show, and Peter went down and saw it and saw *Free Ride Home*, that he [00:43:00] purchased—the largest of the Snelsons that were there. And we put it on the hill at Storm King—same location as it is today. I think that really Peter understood scale and quality immediately. For Storm King, it wasn't a formal garden where there maybe was a larger selection of sculpture that one could choose from that would be more traditional—it really fit into the Storm King landscape as it was being built. It required a certain scale, and I think that is something that he wanted to do—and not just collect garden-size sculptures.

Dziedzic: What sort of factors go into determining a quality sculpture?

Collens: I think for [00:44:00] Storm King, it always has been building a collection and having good materials that can withstand being outdoors and our harsh winters and hot summers. And yes, all sculpture needs maintenance, and we learn that—as everybody has—with outdoor sculpture, that's required, whether it's in an urban area or in our landscape at Storm King. And conservation is challenging, but I think Peter understood, going back to sculptures that were really appropriate for Storm King in terms of scale and materials, that it's not a sculpture park where all artists have to be included. We were very select, as we [00:45:00] are today, about purchasing or gifts of sculpture to Storm King.

Dziedzic: It sounds like there's a specific definition for Storm King, and that's what guides decisions—quality sculpture, in a way, means that it's a good fit for Storm King. Is that right?

Collens: I think so. We want to have certainly a broad collection of sculpture, with different types of materials and artists of different generations, and I think there's a difference between doing exhibitions of different artists and collecting. It's wonderful to be able to collect sculptures, but the maintenance and the care of the sculptures is really critical to have them in [00:46:00] the best possible condition, and also appropriate storage so you can rotate a collection.

Dziedzic: So you're always making decisions within the context of the collection—so in terms of what can physically, technically, financially be taken on, but also how this particular sculpture might grow the collection or change the collection or affect it?

Collens: Yes, definitely so.

Dziedzic: Thank you. So I want to transition into Noguchi. [00:47:00] So again, I read in Peter Stern's oral history that that was his definition of the best living sculptor at this time. I'm interested to hear how that commission occurred—the discussions here internally about trying to reach him and then how he actually agreed to work with Storm King?

Collens: Well, I think the introduction was through Cynthia Polsky, [00:48:00] as I recall. And Noguchi had his home and studio in New York City and enjoyed being in New York and would travel from Manhattan to Long Island City, Queens to his studio—and that was about as far as he'd want to go. I think Peter called Noguchi up and asked him about coming to Storm King. And also, I think Cynthia Polsky mentioned Storm King to Noguchi and that he should come out and see it—you know, interesting landscape and collection, you might enjoy it, and so forth. Always a little hesitant to travel too far out of New York. [00:49:00]

He eventually did come out to Storm King. And instead of spending 15 minutes and leaving, he spent all day here and had a picnic on the lawn near the David Smith area and walked around and really enjoyed what he saw. Peter discussed doing a sculpture at Storm King, and Isamu invited Peter down to his studio in Long Island City, which is now the Noguchi Museum and Garden. Peter did go, and looked at the sculptures. And Noguchi offered him various smaller-scale work. Storm King was clear [00:50:00] about wanting a stone sculpture and not steel or bronze, which Noguchi worked in as well, in different scales—but particularly enjoyed stone and Noguchi's expertise working on stone in his studio in Shikoku in Japan.

So Peter thanked him and said he'd like to really have a stone sculpture, and discussed with Noguchi what Storm King could afford at that point in time. They had a gentleman's agreement about the cost of the sculpture, and that Noguchi would do it in Japan; that it would be a larger-scale work for a hillside at Storm King that Noguchi selected [00:51:00] when he was here. Peter and I had selected three locations as possible locations for a Noguchi sculpture, and we clearly knew which was the best location. And Noguchi selected the hillside where *Momo Taro* (1977–78) is today. We removed another sculpture from that hillside and had to create the full hill as you see it today for the Noguchi sculpture. It was considerably smaller; it was not fully developed because it had a lot of brush and secondary trees on one side of the hill when Noguchi first saw it in 1977. So Peter and Noguchi struck an agreement about the price, and also that it wasn't necessary to come back from Japan for particular meetings and [00:52:00] show the progress of what you're doing with your sculpture and drawings and other details like that. It was a handshake.

Noguchi was quite relieved not to have to go through a bureaucratic situation, which he was used to with other museums in the City of New York—when he wanted to do a park with the architect Louis Kahn and Robert Moses turned them down on a few proposals for a park in Riverside Park on the west side of Manhattan. They were turned down, I think, twice by Robert Moses. So Noguchi had disappointments like that, and Peter wanted to avoid all of that. And Noguchi went to Japan to his studio with his [00:53:00] number-one stonecutter, Izumi, and started working on *Momo Taro*. And a year later, this great sculpture came to Storm King—40 tons of white granite—and avoided all the red tape and bureaucracy that Noguchi didn't particularly like. Peter sensed that and was 100 percent right. And this was done 10 years before he died, and really a masterpiece.

Dziedzic: Was there discussion about—I think you mentioned Peter going to the studio and selecting from a few different sculptures—

Collens: At one point, I think, when the agreement was made at Storm King, Noguchi did say, "Come to the studio and you can select work out of the [00:54:00] studio," and Peter very quickly said he had something else in mind—it wasn't just a sculpture that was sitting in his studio area in New York. And Noguchi spent the day here with his friend that he came out with, had a picnic, and really got very involved with the landscape and seeing Storm King—and didn't leave in 20 minutes [laughs] upon arrival, which could have happened.

Dziedzic: Do you know why stone was the material that Storm King wanted?

Collens: Well, I think Noguchi had done sculptures out of other materials: steel that he had fabricated—there's a very large steel sculpture in Cleveland, for instance—and he was accomplished at bronze. I think it was that we figured out [00:55:00] quite quickly that Noguchi's ability to work with stone at his studio in Shikoku in Japan really was very special, with his stonecutter, Izumi. He had worked in Italy, in Carrara, with marble, as well. But using a stone at his studio in Japan and all the tools and—he really was probably most creative using stone, where some of the surfaces are polished, others are left rough-cut, and so forth. And it's just a great combination of using white granite for this sculpture at Storm King, and the way it's finished. [00:56:00]

Dziedzic: Was this the first commission here at Storm King that you were part of in some way, or witnessed?

Collens: It was. There were several earlier commissions at Storm King, but this was the first one under Peter Stern's time at Storm King and his tenure, yes.

Dziedzic: Has Storm King been able to use that as a model for subsequent commissions?

Collens: I think we've always been involved and focused on the creative aspects of an artist, whether it's Noguchi or Richard Serra. It's become more formal [laughs] with paperwork [00:57:00] and so forth than, a basic handshake with Noguchi—which was terrific, and it worked in those days. I think at this point, with commissions and a process of working with an artist that we select to do a commission, there are more details that are important. And museums, at this point in time, I think, like to have a lot of archival material—

Dziedzic: I know all about that. [laughs]

Collens: —where with Noguchi, now we have a basic contract that was signed eventually with him and so forth. But the model for *Momo Taro* is at the Noguchi Museum in Japan. It's not an exact model, but

it's an early model out of clay that Noguchi made, and it shows his thought process for [00:58:00] developing the sculpture at Storm King. And we don't own that. We have blueprints for the fabrication of the base for the 40 tons of white granite and that type of thing, but we don't have any of the other information about the creative part of what Noguchi was doing. I don't think there's a great deal. But it's been documented with Bruce Bassett's film in Japan—Noguchi working on the sculpture in Shikoku and so forth. But there's a not a lot of written material on that commission.

Dziedzic: And so you became director around—that same year, 1978, right?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: How did that happen? I'm not [00:59:00] sure what your position was before, but how did that opportunity develop?

Collens: A very small staff—and my predecessor had left a few years earlier and emphasized a small staff and everything that really a small organization was doing, whether it was maintaining the grounds, working on the exhibitions—and less programming. So it was a very different point in time for Storm King. We had visitors coming, and that was well and good—we welcomed them. We weren't a destination like it is today for many people; social media has changed everything. But now, with a large senior staff and many more people working in different departments at Storm King, it's a very different [01:00:00] organization.

Dziedzic: Was that Dorothy Mayhall who was your predecessor?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: And in addition to the things that you listed, did you become more involved with exhibitions and acquisitions, or was it a lot of the operations tasks that came onto your plate right away?

Collens: Shortly after Dorothy left, we had to do another exhibition, which was in the spring of 1976. She planned a very different type of exhibition, and she departed, I believe, in 1975. And [01:01:00] that commenced organizing an exhibition of David Smith, who was an artist that also fascinated me in a different way than Mark di Suvero. And there were fewer responsibilities than today, so I had more time to work on the exhibition on my own time, and also office time, and produced an exhibition that brought the *New York Times* and *New York Magazine*—Tom Hess—to review it. John Russell at the *Times* did a review, as well, and brought a large number of people to Storm King. That was not my intention, but we did some [01:02:00] publicity with major newspapers and magazines. We got excellent reviews, and

certainly that increased the number of people coming to Storm King—to see the exhibition, to see Storm King.

Dziedzic: And it had officially become—I can't remember now the terminology, but it had changed from being a private institution to officially a public institution by that time, right? And the board had opened up too? That was right around that time, right?

Collens: Around the same period, maybe a little earlier. But it changed to become basically a different status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Yes.

Dziedzic: I was wondering, since you were describing that exhibition bringing [01:03:00] a lot of people—and attention, too—to Storm King, what the relationship was between those two things? Of, technically, in terms of your tax status, opening things up to the public, and the strategies early on to create exhibitions or programming that were geared to the public?

Collens: I think with the David Smith exhibition of 1976, one thing that made it very different than previous exhibitions at Storm King was the fact that it was a sculpture exhibition and it wasn't paintings, which had been shown in the Museum Building—and there are photographs of the galleries in the Museum Building with paintings and other flat work on the wall, and occasionally a sculpture in the galleries. My focus was [01:04:00] with David Smith's sculptures, both indoors and outdoors, and photographs that Smith took, as well, and drawings of David Smith. But I just used the building in a very different way than my predecessor did. Beyond that, the first-floor galleries were really white boxes. You could not see out the French doors to the landscape when I first saw, for instance, the large Gallery 1, which used to be the living room—it was a white box.

Peter Stern and I had very similar visions for Storm King. We got a carpenter and took out the plywood that was covering all the [01:05:00] French windows, and French doors. There were French windows on the second floor—some of the windows were covered up. I opened up all the windows that were covered on the second floor, opened up the French doors. So the building connected, for the first time in many years, to the landscape again. And the exhibition flowed from indoors with David Smith that year to outside, with a large quantity of David Smith sculptures on the top of the hill. Very similar to the exhibitions today, but that was the first time that was done.

Dziedzic: What inspired you to do that?

Collens: I guess it was really [laughs] starting to become interested in landscape. Working with Bill Rutherford and Peter Stern very closely and [01:06:00] really all of us having the same vision for Storm

King to improve the quality of what we were doing. Better exhibitions, more connected to Storm King and the history of sculpture. The David Smith Collection was purchased in 1967 and the di Suveros were outdoors; it looked very different in those days versus today—in terms of landscape, in terms of collection—but there still were some wonderful sculptures: the Robert Grosvenor, the von Schlegell—and there were some Libermans here, and Tal Streeter (*Endless Column*, 1968) and so forth. But we wanted to emphasize quality and [01:07:00] really move in the direction of sculpture, whether to borrow sculptures for outdoors from artists, museums, and start on occasion having the opportunity to collect the appropriate sculptures for Storm King.

Dziedzic: Well, thinking about the history of sculpture, as you mentioned, it seems like things were happening almost in real time—the Smiths were acquired years after they were made; the di Suveros, too. You think about how a canon is built and you think about how we need the perspective of 25 years before we can decide anything, yet some of the sculptures that Storm King was acquiring were being made right at that time. [01:08:00] I'm thinking of *The Arch*, too, being built in 1975, but Storm King working on bringing that sculpture into the collection very shortly after that.

Collens: *The Arch* by Calder came to Storm King in the spring of 1978. Very well documented. Just a perfect Calder for Storm King, and one of the last great Calders, created a year before he died. Not the largest one, but a very important sculpture that dates to—the model is from 1949, which the Calder Foundation owns, and we had it at Storm King on a few occasions. And the model of 1949 [laughs] shows the sculpture in the same form that it is today. [01:09:00] Calder didn't build it till 1975. Interesting to historically see that nothing changed on it when he did build it.

Dziedzic: I want to talk more about Calder, of course, but I'm still in the middle of this thought. [laughs]

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: Which is, spaces that are showing work that's recent are often galleries; the role of the museum is something different. Were you consciously thinking about, "what is the role of a gallery? What is the role of the museum? What do we show indoors? What do we show outdoors?" I'm also trying to go back to what the thinking was at the time. [01:10:00] And it strikes me that Storm King was being really forward-thinking by acquiring sculptures that were being made in the recent past. So that's just my—where I'm trying to sort things out in my mind. How would you think about it? How did you think about it then? How do you think about it now?

Collens: I think then, clearly, the galleries were white boxes—you know, indoor space. Occasionally, there were outdoor shows in Newport, Rhode Island and other locations—New Jersey. And there wasn't

an opportunity very often for artists to really show their work. In urban areas, on occasion, getting permits from the City of New York [01:11:00] or other cities for short durations—three months for putting a sculpture in and then having to remove it from the city park or whatever it might be. And the opportunities were far fewer, I think, in those days. You had people like Don Lippincott, one of the early fabricators, working directly with the artists, doing sculpture. And he would put them out in his fields in North Haven, Connecticut, where his foundry was, and—until they were sold, and so forth. And most of them went to urban areas, in front of office buildings, which was not always very sympathetic or a pleasant place to see contemporary sculpture or modern sculpture at this point.

I think Storm King was starting to come into its own. [01:12:00] It was founded in 1960, and just at the point that the Lippincott foundry was going into action and working with a whole range of artists, and that was inspirational. Don Lippincott has fabricated many of the sculptures at Storm King over the years. We know him well. And we were a perfect location for placing sculpture, at Storm King—in a very different type of environment—certainly a beautiful landscape, as it is today, and it was in the process of being developed. There's something very different about putting sculpture at Storm King versus an urban landscape or other types of landscapes. And we always [01:13:00] travel throughout this country and Europe to see sculpture. And we're not the oldest sculpture park around—maybe in this country we are, but in Europe, there are older ones. Each one has its own philosophy of collecting and philosophy of landscape that they want to develop.

Dziedzic: Talking about the foundry makes me think about—what's the relationship between the increasing cost of getting sculpture fabricated and what Storm King can imagine to acquire? I'm thinking of an artist talking about the expense of fabricating her work—that it's, you know, pretty expensive to make a large sculpture in bronze! [laughs] So what does that mean for Storm King? [01:14:00] How does Storm King stay flexible or change how it thinks about what is quality in the collection?

Collens: I think sculpture has become popular. There are museums with sculpture gardens in urban areas. And individuals are collecting sculpture for their [laughs] properties—beautiful, large-scale properties and so forth, country houses. That's putting a lot of, I think, pressure on for collecting, and it's becoming more appealing for people to collect sculpture. I think the price of sculpture certainly has gone up significantly, and there are many successful sculptors out working today who are selling their work to museums, private collectors, and so forth—and have it in public [01:15:00] places on a permanent basis. And there's more of a supply-and-demand situation happening. I think for us, it comes down to really carefully selecting artists that we want to at some point commission and that are passionate about the collection, the landscape, and want to be part of it. And it's, I think, a situation that, curatorially, we are very much in control and overseeing and guiding.

Dziedzic: Let's talk about the Calder hillside and [01:16:00] the relationship with the Calder Foundation. I guess I see that as connecting to what you were saying—that relationships are important, and you're working with people that understand Storm King. From what I know of the relationship with the Calder Foundation, that's an interesting and very fruitful example. So let's maybe go back to the beginning. I found a picture of you on the day that *The Arch* was installed, [laughs] so I wondered if—

Collens: [laughs] Nineteen seventy-eight.

Dziedzic: I wondered if you remembered that day.

Collens: Oh, very well—the spring of 1978 with *The Arch*. Peter Stern worked with another gallery, Larry Rubin, on trying to find a large-scale [01:17:00] Calder to bring to Storm King. I think there was a choice of two, as I recall, that were fabricated at Segre Ironworks near Waterbury, Connecticut next to Route 84. It doesn't exist today, but the Calders were sitting—many of them—next to this small building of Segre Ironworks. They were a metal pipe-building shop. And Carmen Segre struck up a relationship with Sandy Calder years ago, and Carmen Segre started working on the larger-scale Calder sculptures for Sandy Calder. It wasn't far from his house in Roxbury, Connecticut, so it was an easy commute to go over [01:18:00] there—to travel over from Roxbury to Waterbury and so forth. So Carmen started building the large-scale works for Calder, and they were out by the highway, which was always fun to see as you would drive by if you knew what you were looking at. It was wonderful to see them—some painted, some not painted, and just the shapes of them—of all sizes, sitting there.

Dziedzic: So is that where you saw *The Arch*?

Collens: That's where *The Arch* was made. It was fabricated at Segre Ironworks. And it was sitting outside for several years—three years—before it came to Storm King.

Dziedzic: How was *The Arch* selected?

Collens: As I recall, there were only two large-scale [01:19:00] works that were available, sitting next to the Segre factory. And certainly *The Arch* was the taller—the vertical one of the two pieces. The other was quite—more of a horizontal sculpture—maybe 36 feet high. It wasn't small, by any means, but it was horizontal predominantly, and—where the Calder *Arch* just had the beautiful curve, going up to its majestic 56 feet.

Dziedzic: And who was the contact in the Calder family at that time?

Collens: See, at that point, when it came to Storm King, it was Sandy Rower's father, Howard Rower, who was married to [01:20:00] Calder's daughter, Mary Rower. And they had two children: Sandy Rower, who founded the Calder Foundation, and his brother, Holton Rower, who was an artist.

Dziedzic: It seemed like figuring out how to acquire *The Arch* signified a big success in Peter Stern's terms, I think—typified a direction for collecting.

Collens: Oh, very much so.

Dziedzic: Was that your impression, as well? Did that come to be true for you as well as [01:21:00] Peter?

Collens: I think with the Calder *Arch* coming to Storm King as a loan in the spring of 1978—and it remained a loan until several years later—and the location of where it was put—the same location today as in 1978, a former farm field that Bill Rutherford just gently landscaped to raise a platform for the Calder, very subtly. Then came up with the idea of the native grasses, which are growing in that area today. But to have it as a location where everybody comes through the [01:22:00] main driveway, and to greet you—it's really a signature location and sculpture and fabulous to have in that space.

Dziedzic: And can you talk about the development of the Calder hillside?

Collens: See, with the hillside—after the di Suvero exhibition of 1985, where we had large-scale di Suveros surrounding the Museum Building—very close to the building—that were 26 feet [laughs] high, for example, and steel I-beam sculptures, one with a swing—another one had a swing, *She*, which is now back at Storm King—was at the base of the Noguchi sculpture and [01:23:00] was quite large as well. And we decided at that point, with these large-scale di Suveros so close to the building, that it would be wonderful to have more space for large-scale sculpture and a walking path to get people down to the fields, where we had other sculptures as well. So Bill Rutherford came up with an idea of expanding the top of the hill with a sculpture platform and a walking ramp that would be easy to walk down to the fields and also ascend back up to the Museum Building—if you were going from the fields up to the hillside it would not be overly steep. So he was just a genius at all this and came up with this idea of what is probably about a six-acre [01:24:00] hillside that we built. We raised it out of the farm field, 30 feet in height and overall six acres in space, to give us a place for more large-scale sculpture and a very broad walking path.

This took five years to build in the 1980s, and we finished it in the summer of 1988. And I was looking around for sculpture to put on this hillside. I didn't want to have a mix of different artists, because I had

changed the aesthetics at Storm King—or started to change that—where there was a mix of different artists in various areas, and I wanted to have one artist. And I came across a group of Calder sculptures that were available [01:25:00] to put on the hillside, and it became the Calder hillside in the summer of 1988. And we had an opening in September of that year for the Calder hillside, with three large-scale Calders and two smaller ones.

Dziedzic: Do you remember which ones they were—the sculptures?

Collens: Well, one Calder that has been here from 1988 is *Five Swords* (1976). That was one of the original ones we brought. And two of the other sculptures that came to Storm King went to the National Gallery many years ago. So they've moved and we've changed them to this day for [01:26:00] different reasons—as sculptures go to other exhibitions. We brought *Black Flag* (1974) in from the Walker Art Center years ago for the Calder exhibition of 2001, 2002, and 2003. That one came from the Walker. And earlier this summer, we just had two sculptures that we returned to the Calder Foundation and borrowed another one that was larger in scale, just to freshen it up.

Dziedzic: I keep checking the time here. It's about 3:15.

Collens: It's gone so fast, Sarah.

Dziedzic: I thought I'd been torturing you. [laughs] Well, let me see here. So I have some more questions about *Grand Intuitions* (2001–03), but [01:27:00] I could also ask those at a different time, and I know you have another meeting at 3:30. So—

[Side conversation]

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
July 31, 2018	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Dziedzic: Today is July 31, 2018, and this is session three with David Collens for the Storm King Oral History Program. This is Sarah Dziedzic. All right, so we were talking about Calder last time, and there were a couple of things we didn't get around to. So can we start with talking about *The Arch*—and basically some of the technicalities around how it came into the collection.

Collens: *The Arch*, by Alexander Calder, arrived in the spring of 1978. Prior to that, we had a small Calder stabile that was part of the permanent collection, and Peter Stern wanted to try and find a large Calder for Storm King. He reached out to Knoedler Gallery, [00:01:00] which represented the estate of Alexander Calder at that time. And the director of the gallery was Larry Rubin, and Peter set up a meeting with him. And it came to a choice of two large stabiles that were at the Segre Ironworks next to Route 84 in Waterbury, Connecticut. So we went over to look at *The Arch*, which was a 56-foot vertical sculpture, and thought that would be perfect for Storm King. The other was a large horizontal sculpture, which was sold to another client. And we proceeded to bring *The Arch* to Storm King in the [00:02:00] spring of 1978.

It arrived on many trucks and various sections, and was put together by a steel fabrication shop through Segre Ironworks, who fabricated the sculpture for Sandy Calder. It was fully bolted for the first time at Storm King to go on exhibit, and painted black. It's been in the same location, as you enter the Storm King property coming off Old Pleasant Hill Road, you have a chance to see it as you're on the road and making your turn to come into the main drive at Storm King. It's sitting there majestically at [00:03:00] a great height, and welcoming you to Storm King. It's been in that location since 1978, and it's still the perfect location for it.

Dziedzic: Now you said you painted it black here. What had it been painted with when it arrived?

Collens: When it was fabricated, it sat on steel plates outside of the small building at Segre Ironworks. And they specialize, really, in creating steel pipes and other industrial products they were making. And there was a relationship between Carmen Segre and Sandy Calder, and they started creating sculpture at the Segre Ironworks. It was very close to Sandy Calder's house in Roxbury, Connecticut, so that was an easy drive. And they collaborated on [00:04:00] creating the sculptures, which would sit outdoors next to the building. And it was always wonderful to drive by Route 84 and see Calders sitting there, some of them painted, others not painted.

The Arch was sitting there, and it had a primer coat on it, and it wasn't fully bolted. It sat on steel plates for several years. It was created in 1975, a year before Calder died, and came to Storm King in 1978. And that's the first time it went on exhibit.

Dziedzic: So essentially it was on loan when it first came?

Collens: It was on loan to Storm King. And it proved [00:05:00] to be so successful in that location, and an important Calder stabile—not the largest, but certainly the grand scale of it was perfect for the Storm King collection. And we acquired the sculpture in 1982—and we felt very fortunate to be able to do that—and exchanged a small Calder, *Seven Foot Beastie*[1], plus cash, for *The Arch*. And we negotiated with Calder's son-in-law, Howard Rower, representing the Calder family for the sculpture.

Dziedzic: And then you had mentioned that *Seven Foot Beastie*'s future [laughs]—

Collens: [00:06:00] *Seven Foot Beastie* from 1957—a black stabile, a very unusual work that Calder, I believe, fabricated. And we returned that to the Calder family. And they, in turn, gave it to the Whitney Museum of American Art, where it is today. The Whitney has a very large collection of Calder's work, and it fits in perfectly.

Dziedzic: All right. Thank you. So let's go on to talk about *Grand Intuitions* and how that exhibition came about.

Collens: The Calder exhibition, *Grand Intuitions*, was [00:07:00] a special exhibition that was selected with sculptures both in the Museum Building and outdoors by myself and Sandy Rower, Calder's grandson and the founder of the Calder Foundation. And it was 2001, 2002, 2003—it was a three-year exhibition that did not change, unlike the David Smith exhibition of 1997, 1998, and 1999, which was a three-year, changing exhibition—both indoors and outdoors each year.

The Calder exhibition was very different, in the sense that we had extensive conservation to do on the outdoor Calders—which we accomplished—therefore, we needed a lot of lead time, and [00:08:00] we left the sculptures in place for three years, both outdoors and in the Museum Building. And it was really a special exhibition that showed the Calder maquettes that he made in the galleries on the second floor, and you could see the full-scale sculpture outdoors. And people understood immediately the relationship between the indoor maquette that Calder created—they were delicate, and earlier work, so looking out

[1] The sculpture was known as *Seven Foot Beastie* during the time it was at Storm King Art Center, and is reflected in the records as such; further research by the Calder Foundation led to a change in the artwork's title, which was changed to *Seven-Legged Beast*.

the windows to the hillside and surrounding area—and the Museum Building, filled with a large selection of Calder work. You could easily identify the maquettes inside the Museum Building and see the full-scale work outdoors. And that was of great interest to people [00:09:00] who very much appreciated seeing that artist's process of the maquette and then the full-scale work and how it changes sometimes.

Dziedzic: Do you recall the conversation around how to use the indoor space? Did that change over time—until it settled on maquettes?

Collens: I think it was our immediate thought to bring the maquettes here. We wanted to really have a full exhibition of Calder's earlier work in the building that wasn't too fragile—if we couldn't have it in vitrines, or if it moved around, then we had to rely on visitor services staff to make sure that people were not overzealous in handling the work and moving the sculptures. [00:10:00] But it was really a full selection, from the 1930s up to 1976 when Calder died.

Dziedzic: I think that Sandy Rower in his interview said that it was the biggest survey of Calder's work that had been shown up to that point—and I don't think there's been anything since that has covered such a broad scope.

Collens: I don't think so. It was unusual. One aspect of the show was bringing so many pieces from Calder's property in Roxbury, which is still owned by the Calder family. And there were many pieces outdoors—many sculptures—that we had to do the conservation work that had not been seen before, in years, or ever [00:11:00] on public exhibition. But they required a full conservation treatment, so that made this exhibition and the preparation of it very difficult and challenging.

Dziedzic: Is that something that Storm King typically takes on when mounting an exhibition?

Collens: I think this was unusual—the quantity of work that we had to move, and very strict guidelines with moving and handling the work and having a paint shop that could do it under strict supervision—and then bring the sculptures to Storm King and do the installation. It was labor-intense.

Dziedzic: What was your takeaway from having a three-year exhibition that didn't change over those years? [00:12:00]

Collens: Oh, I think it was a terrific exhibition. And Calder is an artist that one can continue to explore to this day. And many exhibitions have taken place since the Storm King exhibition. Yes, it was very large and we really focused on stabiles and not standing mobiles outside, with our windy location on top of a hill. But all these exhibitions with sculpture are enormous efforts. And it was really well worth it. People

love seeing Calder's work, and I think it brought new people to Storm King—as each exhibition has over the years.

Dziedzic: And what about the title of [00:13:00] exhibition? Sandy talked about that a little bit—that it felt important to call it that at the time, and that maybe now it feels a little dated. He was very committed to the idea of relating that Calder was an intuitive artist—did you feel like that was successful in the exhibition? How did the title come about?

Collens: Personally, I really gravitate to titles that aren't quite as grandiose—you know, more straightforward, and let the work speak for itself in exhibitions. And I think that's a good point you made about Sandy Rower, who came up with the title. We looked at several possibilities, and this seemed to be the appropriate title for the exhibition [00:14:00] at Storm King.

Dziedzic: And what about that sense of Calder as an intuitive artist?

Collens: I think that was certainly demonstrated in the exhibition and his working methods, because we did have photographs by Herbert Matter and other photographers showing what the Calder studio was like in Roxbury and Saché, and Calder working. Alex Liberman took some photographs. So we had a range of photographs as part of the exhibition—I think in a stand-alone gallery, so there wasn't a mix of photographs and sculptures, but we did discreetly use photographs and document what Calder was doing and his process of working.

Dziedzic: I wanted to ask about [00:15:00] conservation—basically, conservation at Storm King, but looking at, I guess, *The Arch* as an example of developing new methods and experimenting with new materials, or new products. "Experiment" makes it sound cavalier; I know it's not. [laughs] But to me, it seemed, from talking to Mike Seaman, that there was a really dedicated effort to figure out the best ways of upkeeping the Calders broadly, and that *The Arch* and Storm King's maintenance of it has been played a really big role in adding to the knowledge around that.

Collens: With sculpture conservation, we try to use the appropriate paints—if that's the material we're talking about—in many cases, it is paint—and other products on the sculptures that are appropriate for each artist [00:16:00] and certainly approved by foundations and estates—or artists, if they're living, we want their input. And we certainly try to do our best to communicate with appropriate people and come up with the right combination of materials to use. Certainly paints are changing very rapidly, and they can be very expensive and difficult to use. And the outdoor environment makes it much harder and challenging. In the Hudson Valley or any outdoor situation, if a sculpture can't be dismantled, then we have to paint it in situ. We've tried various paints, and one can spend a great deal of money for different [00:17:00] types

of paints, and that doesn't always [laughs] guarantee that it's the best product to use. We need durability and certainly longevity with paints.

We've tried several different paints with Calder outdoor sculptures, and sometimes more successful than others. Now it's becoming more challenging with such a large visitation at Storm King, and people handling the sculpture—it's not like a Rembrandt painting, but you still can damage paint surfaces. And sunscreen is very damaging, as well, to the paints, and we haven't figured a way—nor has anybody—to remove sunscreen from the paint surface, so that is blemishing the surface of the paint. And the environment at Storm King, with the winters [00:18:00] and particularly in the summertime—the steel gets very hot. And it's challenging to really have a good-quality paint that's going to stand up to the elements.

Dziedzic: And can you talk about Mike Seaman's direct role in being the one who's involved in painting the sculptures—and his role in researching different paints and materials?

Collens: Well, Mike Seaman's our sculpture specialist at Storm King, and is doing a terrific job on painting sculptures—outdoors, and the smaller ones brought into a more controlled situation for painting when possible. We really don't have the [00:19:00] proper facilities for doing this at this point in time, so we're doing the best we can. And it's always a complicated process, because we're communicating with many different people to take care of the sculptures. And they sometimes need more than paint: they need welding; they have bases that need to be worked on—the concrete bases or other bases—and fastening devices to hold the sculpture in place.

We're consulting with a lot of other people when we go to work on a sculpture. It could be engineers and fabricators that have created many of the sculptures at Storm King, like Don Lippincott—Lippincott Foundry in North Haven, Connecticut created several of the large-scale sculptures at Storm King, and Don's always a very good resource. Or Dick [00:20:00] Polich, who has a foundry 10 miles from Storm King, and has worked on two of the large-scale sculptures and several smaller ones at Storm King. And these men have different resources, working with many of the artists at Storm King to help out with the conservation work, and other sources as well—the artist themselves, of course—that goes without saying—that we want to communicate with them—or foundations and estates. Also, the team at Storm King and our records of what we've done in the past for each sculpture and what has been recommended—and other sculpture conservators—are very important to the process. So it's really multifaceted to work and [00:21:00] take care of each sculpture at Storm King.

Dziedzic: I mentioned that I wanted to go into talking about Louise Nevelson next, but there's also a conservation connection between Calder and Nevelson, right?

Collens: I think the connection there would be the Getty Institute of Conservation in L.A. And they have been working with different estates and living artists, because they want to put together as a resource information on different paint systems that artists are using today, and also what has taken place with artists in the past, and try to develop more durable paints for outdoor public sculpture. [00:22:00] And they've also been working with the Department of Defense and using paints that were used by the military for Iraq and Afghanistan on equipment over there, and adapting that to sculpture—public sculpture—systems for painting. So this is still a work in progress.

Some paints have been approved, for example, by the Calder Foundation for outdoor use that started with this process with the Getty. And most recently, Louise Nevelson is another artist besides Calder that's involved with the Getty. And Tony Smith and di Suvero—there are many artists [00:23:00] and estates and foundations that are involved with recording the information with the Getty and being involved with this list of paints that are being used and trying to improve upon paint systems that are presently on public sculptures outdoors, whether they're at museums or other locations—General Service Administration. The government owns a lot of outdoor sculptures in front of federal buildings, and I think they're looking to a better system to paint with in the future. And currently, we're working on a project on our Louise Nevelson sculpture (*City on the High Mountain*, 1983) that is being painted with a more experimental paint that will be returned [00:24:00] to Storm King later this season. And it's going through a full conservation treatment—the first large-scale treatment since it was fabricated and came to Storm King.

Dziedzic: Can you talk about how Storm King's relationship with Louise Nevelson developed?

Collens: We've had *City on the High Mountain* in the collection since the 1980s. It's a large, 20-foot steel sculpture of Louise's from 1984—it was acquired. Nevelson worked at the Lippincott Foundry in North Haven, Connecticut for 20 years. And people really don't realize, for the most [00:25:00] part, that she did steel sculpture for 20 years, and became very adept at it and very creative. With her outdoor work, people are used to seeing the boxes that she stacked up that are wood, painted black or white—or gold, on some occasions. But we have a very important example of Nevelson's outdoor sculpture—it's not her largest, by any means, but certainly the scale of it and the aesthetic content is terrific with the Storm King sculpture—it's recognized as a very important outdoor Nevelson. And therefore we have partnered with the Getty to do this project—with painting and doing other conservation work on the Nevelson. It's the first time [00:26:00] it's been fully dismantled. And it's in Virginia right now, and we're doing welding and other corrective work to the sculpture before it's primed and painted and returned to Storm King.

We had a Nevelson exhibition to celebrate the acquisition of *City on the High Mountain*. And we had several of her outdoor works at Storm King for part of a season, as I remember. And Louise came up here and certainly approved of the location in front of the Museum Building.

Dziedzic: I have in my notes from Peter Stern's interview working with Arne Glimcher a little bit to figure out [00:27:00] what work would be purchased by Storm King. Do you remember working with him?

Collens: Very well. Arne Glimcher at Pace Gallery was Nevelson's long-time dealer since he was in Boston, before he moved to New York, and represents the estate of Louise Nevelson as well—he still represents her work. We worked directly with Arne on purchasing a Nevelson sculpture for Storm King. They were certainly in demand in the 1980s, and we were the next museum to acquire a sculpture. We had to sign up in advance and wait a long time, as I remember. [00:28:00] Peter Stern and I flew in a helicopter from Storm King to North Haven, Connecticut to the Lippincott Foundry to see the sculpture for Storm King in progress, which was certainly very interesting. And basically, Louise dismantled, I believe, three sculptures to create *City on the High Mountain*, and then added different elements to it. And it's a Nevelson where—she created this ball out of steel railroad spikes, and they were sitting around the Lippincott Foundry for years, and Nevelson decided to include it in the Storm King sculpture, *City on the High Mountain*. And that's what finished the sculpture for Nevelson—when she put the spikes on the top of the sculpture.

Dziedzic: And [00:29:00] did Storm King basically have a sculpture that was made that was available to purchase, or was there an element of being able to select a sculpture?

Collens: No—I think the scale of our work, which is 20 feet high—there were not other works available. It wasn't commissioned by Storm King; it was a process of Louise living in New York and, on a regular basis, going to the Lippincott Foundry and working on her sculptures for a couple days at a time and going back after they bolted and welded different parts of the steel sculpture together, so she could see it again—and going into her stockpile at the Lippincott Foundry to select other work to be put into the sculpture, more in a spontaneous way. And she would pick [00:30:00] different elements off of the scrap pile and include them in various sculptures. That was part of her process—and, I think, makes the Storm King sculpture very special, with the quantity of work that has been pulled off her pile of steel scraps that were collected for her—and just, very imaginative way, she included those.

Dziedzic: Was this helicopter travel typical? [laughs] Tell me more.

Collens: [laughs] It wasn't. It was a small helicopter. And always flying over the Hudson River, the wind is quite strong over the Hudson, so we were pushed off in different directions crossing the river. The

weather was generally good. But it was a difficult trip over and back, and [00:31:00] we needed to really save time—you know, two hours or more driving to Lippincott's place.

Dziedzic: It just seems really crazy! [laughs]

Collens: It was. [laughs] But I think with Peter Stern's schedule and everything, that became the best way to take a look at the sculpture that was potentially coming to Storm King. And indeed it did.

Dziedzic: I think the exhibition that you mentioned is an example of the more straightforward titles that you've mentioned you preferred—just, *Louise Nevelson: Outdoor Sculptures, 1971-1983* (1984). Do you recall how the selection of sculptures for that exhibition? [00:32:00] As an addendum, Peter Stern said something that I thought was interesting about her work as wall pieces—not just the indoor works, but the outdoor works, too—and I wondered if you might be able to elaborate on that in the context of this exhibition.

Collens: Well, the exhibition of Nevelson outdoors was all free-standing, smaller-scale sculptures—mostly black; there was one white sculpture—and probably around 10 feet high. Some were more complicated than others, of course. And she did all of the outdoor sculptures out of aluminum or steel at the Lippincott Foundry. I don't think there was an overly large selection, because the gallery was selling Nevelson work at a rapid rate. [00:33:00]

Dziedzic: And Storm King has a number of loans of Nevelson sculptures, too. Do you want to talk about how those came about?

Collens: We have two loans from Bev and Peter Lipman and the Lipman Family Foundation. There are two indoor works: one is black, a very early black wood sculpture; the other is an early wood sculpture painted gold. And the scale is terrific. They're on the second floor of the building, so they're intimate in scale. They were owned by [00:34:00] Peter Lipman's parents and were in their apartment in New York at one point. So they look, I think, quite wonderful at Storm King together. It's a wonderful loan—to see two Nevelsons indoors. And then you go into another gallery and you have a view of *City on the High Mountain* through the window and from the Museum Building. And you can see it outdoors at 20 feet high and painted black as well. It's a wonderful combination of sculptures—to see works indoors and a work outdoors by the same artist. And I think we have a few other works by Nevelson in the collection that were gifts as well.

Dziedzic: Okay. I was going to ask about *Diminishing Reflection XXV* (1966), which I think was an acquisition [00:35:00] in 1984, right after *City on the High Mountain*.

Collens: That was a gift of Cynthia Polsky. And it's a black box of Nevelson's, with plexi and different wood elements inside—very hard to see—it's very dark and very mysterious. But you can see all of the wood elements. It's about 16 inches square and hangs on the wall.

Dziedzic: Is that out upstairs?

Collens: Not at the moment. No.

Dziedzic: And then there's also *Transparent Sculpture VII* (1967–68), which was a loan in 2002.

Collens: That is plexiglass—it's a plexi sculpture that Louise had done. And she went through and did a group of [00:36:00] these plexi sculptures using very small screws to hold the different sections together. And it's very fragile, but quite interesting.

Dziedzic: And what was Louise like when she was here?

Collens: Oh, a character. And looked always terrific, with her eyelashes and elaborate way of dressing and presenting herself. And enjoyed seeing her *City on the High Mountain* for the first time at Storm King. She came to the opening of her show on a very rainy day in the summer, and the grounds were wet after a heavy rain, and she didn't mind walking through the rain after it stopped and the wet grounds. Very adventuresome, [00:37:00] and, I think, really enjoyed seeing *City on the High Mountain* in front of the building. And was, I think, very appreciative and grateful to be in the Storm King collection.

Dziedzic: How was it determined to be sited in front of the building?

Collens: There was a thought to put it on our new hillside—what is now the Calder hillside—at one point in time, that maybe it would be good in that location. The hillside wasn't quite complete, I don't think, as I do recall. But I said I thought it was too small to go on the hillside, and not the right type of sculpture—because it's really quite flat, and I guess it has a front and back and it's not very wide [00:38:00] on the sides—and I didn't think that was the right location. I built a basic model—20 feet high—that could be moved around and roped down like a tent to keep it in place for a short time. And we moved the model to the front of the building, and that really was the perfect location for it. Both Peter and I realized that. We also had the experience of another Nevelson that was sitting quite close to the building that was 32 feet high. And, for example, you'd be in the second-floor David Smith gallery looking out the window and you'd see a black wall in front of you, because the sculpture went way beyond the second floor of the Museum

Building. So it was a beautiful sculpture—it was curved like the roof of the building, came up to a point. And anyway, that went to [00:39:00] another location.

Dziedzic: Who would build these models? Who were you working with at the time to do these kinds of—

Collens: I think it was just the grounds team that could build a basic wood frame. There was nothing special about it. It was just a wood frame that was 20 feet high. And we could assemble it and then tether it down to really stand away and take a look at it and see what the overall dimensions looked like and the landscape.

Dziedzic: Was the grounds crew shared with Star Expansion at that point, or were they separate?

Collens: It was really stand-alone. We had our own grounds crew, but there were certain areas that we still needed assistance from different people at Star for various reasons.

Dziedzic: That would be the engineering kinds of issues, right? [00:40:00]

Collens: Correct—and regarding painting sculpture and what type of paint to use. Alex Liberman, for example, came and asked us, "Well, what type of paint should I use on my outdoor steel sculptures?" And after research, Peter Stern asked Lester Knaack at the Star lab, a research lab, to look into it, and he came back with a DuPont Imron paint that would be durable. And that's exactly what Alex Liberman started using on his steel sculptures for paint—and we did as well—on Libermans and other sculptures, for a long time. It's still a very good product, DuPont Imron paint. But there are other paints to use, as well, and it depends what color artists like [00:41:00] and ratio of gloss and so forth—what paint we might select or recommend. But we did early research into that and came up with an excellent-quality paint.

Dziedzic: I've seen Lester Knaack's name a couple times coming to the rescue with [laughs] some questions about sculptures. Do you want to talk about him a little bit more?

Collens: Well, he worked for Star, and he was always very meticulous, and designed the concrete bases going underneath the Nevelson sculpture, for example, and the appropriate hardware to fasten sculptures down. And he really took an interest in the sculptures at Storm King, and was here on a regular basis to advise when necessary.

Dziedzic: All right. Let's start talking about [00:42:00] Alexander Liberman. And I have a similar question about him, which is, how did the relationship with Liberman begin?

Collens: Storm King quite early had three Liberman sculptures in the collection. It started with Ted Ogden bringing over *Adonai* from Warren, Connecticut, where Alex's home and studio were—northwestern Connecticut. And seeing *Adonai*, which is—at that point, rusting—used oil tanks that were underground for a number of years. And Liberman bought oil tanks from auctions and so forth, after they had been taken out [00:43:00] of the ground and couldn't be used anymore. That was his prime material for creating sculpture. So he had dozens of tanks of all different sizes—some were painted silver and some were unpainted—stacked up in his yard. And he created the sculptures with two other people. Bill Layman and sons helped and had the equipment very close to his house in Connecticut. So on weekends, he would go out and be working with Bill Layman and a crane, welding these tanks together and creating large-scale sculpture.

Alex got involved with this later and life, and he had done photography earlier and published a couple of books—*The Artist in the His Studio*, which is a book of artists from Paris that he [00:44:00] met after he left Russia and went to Paris, and then the Second World War came, and he left Paris for New York. But he met a full range of artists that were living in Paris and took their photographs and published a very interesting book. So he's well known as a photographer, and then started moving into painting, sculpture, printmaking—all this later in life, and became an accomplished sculptor. In addition to being the editorial director at *Condé Nast* and responsible for *Vogue* magazine—the American and European editions—and *House & Garden* and other publication. Very much involved with the fashion world, as well.

The beginning of the relationship [00:45:00] was with Ted Ogden wanting a large-scale Liberman quite early at Storm King in the early '70s and bringing that from Connecticut and then purchasing other sculptures of Liberman's. And then it changed when I did the exhibition in 1977 of Alex's work (*Alexander Liberman*) and showed his paintings inside—his early paintings and his later work; his photographs; smaller-scale sculptures. We brought over *Iliad* for the exhibition in 1977, and we were able to purchase it and return another sculpture to Alex that we used to trade it in for it.

Dziedzic: That was your second exhibition?

Collens: Correct.

Dziedzic: What was your thinking around that [00:46:00] following the '76 exhibition of David Smith's work?

Collens: I started looking at Alex's work, and I was fascinated by his early paintings—that he did not actually do himself—he came up with the design and sent them for somebody else to fabricate and create to his specifications using, I believe, different materials, like Formica and other materials. And I thought

that was interesting—everybody else was using their hand to paint and so forth, and Alex was doing another process. And then Alex decided to switch and started creating paintings on his own, which were also very interesting. But that was in the early 1950s, and I was curious about that process of sending paintings out to be done [00:47:00] [laughs] to his specifications. That was quite interesting to me. And the abstract scale of the paintings, I thought, was fascinating.

So I went to see him. And he was very surprised that I wanted to do an exhibition of his work—paintings, sculptures, drawings, printmaking that he did in Italy—full range. And we accomplished that in 1977. Because he was really a renaissance artist, and that's what the reviews by John Russell, the head art critic at the *New York Times*, and Tom Hess, and others pointed out about Liberman's work. And we weren't used to that in this country—a renaissance artist who was so accomplished. So it was his second exhibition during his lifetime. The first one was at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, which doesn't exist today, in Washington, D.C., [00:48:00] where he had his first museum exhibition. And then the one at Storm King.

Dziedzic: Was there any landscaping that had to happen for the placement of these sculptures? How did that area of Storm King, I guess, get developed?

Collens: We had to do a little landscaping and grading for *Iliad* because it was so large, and it's in the same place as when it arrived in the spring of 1977, and it had never been installed before. I saw it in Liberman's yard, and it had to be fully painted. And it was just quickly painted, with rust showing through, to show Alex what orange would look like on it. I thought it was an important sculpture and I wanted to bring it to Storm King. So [laughs] we did [00:49:00] bring *Iliad* and many other large-scale sculptures to the Art Center. We were able to purchase *Iliad*, but we had to create an area for *Iliad* where there was another significantly smaller sculpture sitting. And we had to stake out a much larger footprint so we could put concrete foundations in for the large-scale sculpture versus a small little work by another artist that was sitting there for years.

Dziedzic: I hate to do this, David, but I just want to pause for a minute.

Collens: Yes, absolutely.

[Break in audio]

Dziedzic: Okay. Resuming session three with David Collens. [00:50:00] I wanted to ask about, I guess, another Peter Stern quote that I'm hoping you can elaborate [laughs] on, which is that "Liberman's resting tanks challenged and pleased Ted the most." Something that I've been asking Bea and John about was

trying to understand Ted Ogden's aesthetic a little bit. And this "challenged and pleased" was a real mystery to me and I wondered if you might be able to—

Collens: I'll try to give you some insight. [laughs]

Dziedzic: Please do.

Collens: I would interpret that to be the following: [00:51:00] I think Ted Ogden at Storm King and Star, and at Glenoden Farm, loved challenges and moving earth and seeing machines moving—whether they're digging with bulldozers and backhoes and trucks moving gravel and earth around—creating something was, I think, really part of his spirit and enjoyment. I think with the Liberman—*Adonai* was a very challenging sculpture, because it was built out of used oil tanks that were underground for probably 20 years. Alex bought them at auction—[00:52:00] bought them from suppliers that were pulling these underground oil tanks out of the ground—and stashed them. That was a material that Alex liked—slicing off the ends at very sharp angles, like *Iliad* is—and Alex could get the scale that he wanted in creating sculpture—where if it was new materials, he couldn't afford it. He made that very clear.

I think for Ted Ogden, going to the Liberman studio in Warren, Connecticut and seeing *Adonai* and having this reaction to the scale of it, the color being just rusting metal—[laughs] it was very thin, as well, after being underground for that period of time. And they would pull them out before they started leaking [00:53:00] oil into the earth and so forth, and having other issues. I think getting the sculpture to Storm King in a very short period of time, dismantling it—it was fully assembled when Ted Ogden saw it, and he wanted to have it here in a short period of time. Getting Bill Layman and Alex to get it dismantled, installed at Storm King, bases made—it was a very quick turnaround to bring it here, weld it together—and also challenging to maintain it for a long period of time. And it was being maintained at Storm King. Eventually, we started putting an oil coating on it to help preserve the steel as much as possible—and extend its life, maybe, [00:54:00] to a certain extent.

But it came to the point that we couldn't keep it going; the tanks were really starting to decay. And it wasn't a matter of just surgically removing one tank and replacing it with another one—we could have done that. That was an option. There were extra tanks the same size. We might have been able to do that. But after really looking at it, we would have had failure in other areas. We decided to refabricate the sculpture, with Alex's full approval—we would not have done it unless we got Alex, who we knew well, to sign off. And he did that two weeks before he died.

Dziedzic: And how was the sculpture refabricated? [00:55:00]

Collens: We purchased tanks the same diameter as the oil tanks that it was created out of originally from a supplier in Louisiana—because they were building offshore gas and oil rigs in the Gulf of New Mexico, and they fabricated tanks the size that we required. They were capable of doing that. We had the tanks sent up to the Polich Tallix Foundry in Rock Tavern, 10 miles from Storm King, and the sculpture was fully assembled inside the foundry, welded, and prepared for exhibition at Storm King, and dismantled after it was fully [00:56:00] assembled and welded. And the base design was prepared, and we had to create a very large concrete base for it and bring it to the Art Center and do an installation. Alex would have done this if he was able to afford using new materials—he made that very clear to us in the beginning—but that was not something he could do early in his career, so he went to the used oil tanks.

Dziedzic: Was that the first refabrication that Storm King took on? [laughs]

Collens: Yes, it was. And it really was a process of—with sculptures sitting outdoors all year long and [00:57:00] conservation and really learning what conservation means for an outdoor sculpture versus an object that is sitting in a museum with full climate control, whether it's in storage or on exhibit—very different. And it was a learning curve for us and, I think, for everybody that was collecting outdoor sculpture. You know, how do you take care of them? And I think conservators were learning—it wasn't something they were particularly trained in. And the materials artists were using, as well—it was all very challenging for outdoor sculptures. We had to start putting more effort into it. It's not just washing, waxing, taking bird droppings off the sculptures and putting wax on bronze and so forth. There's a lot more to it. [00:58:00] So we started really looking into it and ramping up in that way.

Dziedzic: Can you talk a little bit more about that community around outdoor sculpture conservation? Who were you in dialogue with in that time? I'm interested to hear how that's changed over time.

Collens: It's changed significantly. I think conservators—everybody was really looking to a variety of different people—to the individuals like Don Lippincott who fabricated sculpture early on. There were not many fabricators, and Don got into the business and was very accomplished at working with Oldenburg and Barnett Newman and Bob Murray, Bob Grosvenor at Storm King, David von Schlegell. We have a range of [00:59:00] Lippincott fabrications at Storm King. And if you fabricate a sculpture, it's different than during the conservation, but it's a starting point—talking to different fabricators, engineers—because each sculpture really required something different. There's not always a uniform answer that applies to all the sculptures. And the artists themselves—of course, some are more knowledgeable than others and care about it, and others don't—on conservation and really preserving the pieces. Very interesting to hear what artists, foundations, estates—how they weigh in on this subject.

I think everyone's more sophisticated today than years ago, in the 1980s, when we really started getting involved and trying to, on a regular basis, [01:00:00] take care of the sculptures with a consulting conservator, and learning what it was all about. And we're still learning. And the Getty—you know, once they acquired the Stark collection, which was given to them—many of the same artists that Storm King has—they had, I think, a different knowledge base to start working on taking care of outdoor sculptures that are painted and what it requires. We had several Getty grants before they had their own permanent collection of sculpture. And they kept on wondering why [laughs] we were going back so soon for more grants to paint sculptures and so forth. They didn't understand the climate at Storm King and how difficult it is to take care of outdoor sculpture—the painted surfaces and other surfaces on them. [01:01:00] But now they've become very knowledgeable on that subject and devote a lot of resources to it, with an excellent staff. But it's really a learning curve for everybody.

Dziedzic: You're saying in part because the Getty acquired the Stark collection that they then—

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: —had first-hand witnesses?

Collens: I'm convinced—it's not, you know, Greco-Roman sculpture that they could take from the galleries to conservation and put in storage, where it's always climate-controlled, and do the conservation on it and so forth. It's very different when it lives in the environment outdoors.

Dziedzic: And then the era that you're talking about with *Adonai* is early days for outdoor sculpture—

Collens: Oh, definitely so. I mean, there was a GSA program where the government was purchasing sculpture for outdoors in front of their [01:02:00] federal buildings, and there are wonderful examples of a full range of artists. But there's major repairs to sculptures that the government owns, and they had to really focus on it—take sculptures down and do the welding and repair necessary—and the painting, eventually—to work. But it's challenging—for everybody.

Dziedzic: I've seen some of the very recent documentation of conservation efforts; what was it like then in terms of documenting what you were doing?

Collens: I think it was more basic. It's important to document with photographs—there's just no substitute for photographic documentation. Written, also, of course—what's being done on a regular maintenance basis or a much larger effort to do conservation [01:03:00] is important.

Dziedzic: Is there anything else that you want to mention about Liberman at this time? Because I would like to move on to talking about Richard Serra.

Collens: You know, I think Liberman's had a very interesting history at Storm King. And we knew Alex quite well. And he really appreciated what we were doing for his work—and certainly the exhibition at Storm King in 1977 was a hallmark of his career.

Dziedzic: So last time we talked about the experience of working on a commission with Isamu Noguchi. So I'd like to hear about working on this commission with Richard Serra (*Schunnemunk Fork*, 1990–91), [01:04:00] and how the discussions came about with that, and who was the liaison to make that first contact?

Collens: Let's see. That would be Peter Stern. We decided Richard Serra would be an important artist for Storm King. And it wasn't a matter of finding an outdoor sculpture for Storm King, but it really was getting Richard to Storm King with his wife Clara and having them walk around and see what appealed to them in the landscape of Storm King. And early on, nothing seemed to really happen. And Peter, on his various trips to Europe, would always [01:05:00] go see Serra's sculptures—whether it was in Germany, France, and so forth—different locations where they were. He made an effort to see the large-scale outdoor sculptures of Richard's in Europe and different parts of this country and so forth—we both did—and really studied the sculptures of Richard's.

Then the sculpture of Richard's was being taken out of the Federal Building in New York, and we thought maybe that would be a good sculpture to move to Storm King—*Tilted Arc*. And we put a request in, as well as, I think, three other organizations, to be able to borrow *Tilted Arc*, which was owned by the federal government. [01:06:00] And Richard—we told him about it—we were open about that with Richard, of course—and he did not want us to do that, so we withdrew our letter of request for the sculpture. Then Richard came out again and started walking around the fields. Peter and I had an idea—it would be great having Serra near the allée of trees in the south, and Richard and Clara said, "Well, let us walk around on our own." And they had the topo map for the South Fields, which we gave them. And we had no sculptures in the south at all; it was all farm field. And anyway, Richard and Clara walked around and came back [01:07:00] in the afternoon and said, "We found a location. We'd love to create a sculpture with four steel plates jutting out of the ground in this old farm field." And they respected the farm field very much—they enjoyed that landscape and so forth. And we agreed to do a sculpture of Richard Serra's that we would commission in the farm field at Storm King.

Richard found out that the steelyard in Maryland was going to potentially be shut down—they were going on strike, and he was anxious to move the project forward. So in a short time, we agreed to move forward

with the project. This was in [01:08:00] 1991—in the summer of 1991—when the four steel plates were installed in the farm field at Storm King. And one plate arrived on each truck. The plates were all different sizes—two-and-a-half inches thick and from 34 to 54 feet was the largest one. They were all rectangles. And we did a lot of preparation in the field, and put in concrete to set each plate into a channel, and then they were bolted and welded in place once they were set into the channel. And special riggers came up from New Jersey, a large crane—Richard only uses certain riggers with these extremely large plates. And it was done over several days, and we just put the earth back in [01:09:00] that we saved, and used the same grass seed as the fields already had—because they were being grown for hay and baled, and so we wanted to use the same grass.

It was an important sculpture, this commission, that we gave Richard this opportunity. And he's really quite extraordinary in landscape. He really has an uncanny ability to place sculpture in landscape—very different than seeing his work in urban spaces. So he understood Storm King in a very different way, and really loved the undulating farm field, with Schunnemunk Mountain as the backdrop. And the farmer threw rocks into a pile every spring, and the trees grew up. [01:10:00] We still have the piles of rock there, and the trees. And he just liked that feeling of it being a farm field. And we still maintain it and bale the hay from that field.

Dziedzic: So he basically acquainted himself with the landscape here by going out with a map, is that right?

Collens: Yes. We were touring around—Peter and I were touring around with Richard and Clara. And he'd come up here before and nothing appealed to him. And this last visit, he said, "Fellas, why don't you go back and do some work and let us walk around." And that's when he went considerably further out than we were thinking of. And we said, "Why not?" And we installed the sculpture [01:11:00] and the four steel plates in the summer of 1991. And people were really not walking out there at that point, and we'd do special tours out to see the Richard Serra. People thought it was quite interesting, but hard to get to—and this was before we had a tram or anything. Then Andy Goldsworthy was commissioned in 1997, 1998, and then people started moving out in the fields more. And the tram roads were being put in and so forth—more accessible.

Dziedzic: And there was no earth moved for his sculpture? It was really just setting in the plates?

Collens: Absolutely. He wanted everything to remain—all the contours of this undulating farm field to remain as is, and we just had a machine cut [01:12:00] out the area where each plate was going to go and put concrete in to stabilize it and basically filled in after.

Dziedzic: Was there ever any consideration of doing an exhibition of Richard Serra's work?

Collens: I think—certainly not in the building, because we wouldn't be able to put anything in the building except works on paper. The sculptures are all too heavy for the galleries at the museum, and it's not possible to bring in. We have a very important Serra sculpture outside, and, I think there were other exhibitions that were contemplated—the Museum of Modern Art and so forth—and very busy with outdoor sculptures in different places [01:13:00] in the world that that really wasn't, I think, an option for us.

Dziedzic: Well, I think I have to let you go now. [laughs] It's 2:00. But like last time, we can think about anything else that we need to start off our next session with—

Collens: No, absolutely.

Dziedzic: So thank you so much, David.

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
August 13, 2018	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Dziedzic: All right. Today is August 13, 2018, and this is Sarah Dziedzic interviewing David Collens for the Storm King Oral History Program. And this is our session four. So, David, I wanted to start off by talking about Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. And I guess I'd like to start with *Wayside Drainpipe*. How did that work come into Storm King's collection?

Collens: I should start by saying that Claes has a long history with Storm King, going back to 1972, when we have photographs of Claes on the north hill with Dorothy Mayhall, who was the director of Storm King Art Center, and Tom and Chris Grisea, who are close friends of Ted and [00:01:00] Peggy Ogden's. And that is when he first came to Storm King—invited up by Ted Ogden, I believe. And he proposed a sculpture of pads of butter that would flop down from the top of the north hill going all the way down to the base, which was a fascinating idea. It was not executed.

Then there was a lapse, and we borrowed—many years ago—*Standing Mitt with Ball* (1973), and had the *Standing Mitt with Ball* sculpture, which was about 10 feet high; it was a first baseman's mitt with a wooden laminated ball in the center—a wonderful early sculpture of Oldenburg's. And we had that on top of the hill for 10 years, [00:02:00] and protected it during the winter against the elements. And at a certain point in time, after 10 years, it needed to go for a full restoration, because it was made out of lead, Corten steel, and the laminated ball and fastening devices holding the lead and the Corten steel together that were deteriorating after many years. And it went to the Polich Tallix Foundry—and Don Lippincott, who fabricated it, was involved with the restoration, and Dick Polich. And they did an excellent job restoring the sculpture. However, it could not go outdoors again. If it was going to be properly maintained, it would not be a good environment to put it back outside. So it did not return to [00:03:00] Storm King—much to my disappointment, since it was a fabulous Oldenburg sculpture.

We started looking for another Oldenburg, and we found *Wayside Drainpipe*, which had a very interesting history. It was fabricated by Don Lippincott, and a collector in Germany purchased it. It went to Germany for a year. The collector died. And it was fabricated, I believe, in 1978, when Oldenburg was doing the sculptures by himself—before he married Coosje van Bruggen. It's an early Oldenburg sculpture. And it's the only drainpipe that is outdoors; there are two soft drainpipes in museum collections. He was thinking of an [00:04:00] outdoor drainpipe for Toronto. And he started working and did the drawings for the colossal drainpipe for Toronto, but that was not completed. So Storm King has the only outdoor drainpipe.

And it was in Germany for a year, and the collector died, and Don Lippincott brought it back from Germany and had it on his property in Connecticut, where I saw it. It was in a field, and quite wonderful. And we decided to bring it to Storm King. We were able to purchase the *Wayside Drainpipe* with funds from the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation, through Bea and Lisa Stern. We're very enthusiastic about it. Bea has been a [00:05:00] supporter of Claes's work from early on at Storm King, and we also looked to commissioning Claes to do a project at Storm King—which also was not realized—after his wife, Coosje, died, he hasn't done any large outdoor sculptures (since her death). There are models for it that exist for the Storm King work that relates to Rip Van Winkle. Oldenburg came up, looked at sites, spoke about the sculpture, but never went beyond the model phase of it. So there are several models for Storm King that [00:06:00] Claes has in his archive.

Dziedzic: Both for the Rip Van Winkle sculpture and for the pads of butter?

Collens: Yes. I believe the pads of butter was a sculpture he thought of for a different site entirely from what he said in Europe, and that did not happen, either. And he saw the north hill and thought that would be a perfect site. And anyway, I don't know how detailed the discussions were with Ted Ogden about having it fabricated, but it didn't happen at Storm King. It would have been terrific. But we're thrilled to have *Wayside Drainpipe* in our collection. And it's a very unusual early sculpture of Claes's. And it fits into Storm King with the pan of water that's 16 feet in the air that collects the water and goes down a [00:07:00] pipe and onto a pyramid of rock that was all from our property—fieldstones that we collected and used to build the pyramid.

Dziedzic: Do you know how Ted Ogden would have had the connection to Claes Oldenburg when he invited him here? His work seems different from some of the other early works that Ogden was directly involved in bringing to Storm King. I'm thinking of the von Schlegell and Grosvenor and Liberman.

Collens: I'm not sure what the connection is with Oldenburg and how he came to Storm King. It could be through a gallery. I think Mr. Ogden reached out to different people, [00:08:00] and there were suggestions that various people made to him about different artists—like Mark di Suvero, for example. I would imagine that the Oldenburg connection came through maybe a gallery or an individual. That needs to still be researched. I mean, it could have been Paula Cooper, because the Robert Grosvenor sculpture, which was commissioned at Storm King in 1974—being the second commission at Storm King—Bob Grosvenor to this day is represented still by Paula Cooper, and Oldenburg was represented in the early years by Paula Cooper, as well, so that could have been the connection. Something we could ask her.

Dziedzic: Yes. The stones that you mentioned from Storm King's [00:09:00] property—is that something that Claes himself collected and set up? Or were those his instructions?

Collens: We had collected fieldstones for Andy Goldsworthy in 1997–98 for his walls. We have a lot of fallen-down farm walls still on the property, and we thought that would be appropriate to create the pyramid out of stones from Storm King, from our property. When I first saw it in the Lippincott field in Connecticut, there were stones just roughly stacked up from Don's property, fields and woods, that they collected. And it wasn't done in a [00:10:00] particular order and organized way, but it was just stones that were stacked to give you an idea what it would look like for the pyramid section of it.

Dziedzic: And you mentioned the models that exist for some of the works that didn't get built that were proposed here. Can you talk about your decision to include some of those materials and focus on Storm King's relationship with Claes Oldenburg for *The View from Here: Storm King at Fifty* (2010–11)?

Collens: Well, for our fiftieth anniversary exhibition, we focused on particular sculptures. And certainly, the Oldenburg had just arrived—*Wayside Drainpipe*—and we borrowed a beautiful model [00:11:00] from Claes of the drainpipe. And Don Lippincott had two watercolor drawings of the *Wayside Drainpipe*, which was fabricated at Lippincott Foundry, and we borrowed those from Don, as well as a photograph of the *Wayside Drainpipe* in the woods at Don's house, where it was originally sited—and then Don became very concerned about branches and trees coming down, and they moved the *Wayside Drainpipe* to a field where that would not be an issue, near trees and the possibility that something might land on it. So we brought together, really, a small grouping of drawings and models for the drainpipe, and we had the sculpture outside, and it was a wonderful background history [00:12:00] into it. And we're hoping to at some point receive the watercolors as a gift to Storm King.

Dziedzic: All right. Let's maybe stay with Bea's involvement in acquisitions at Storm King and talk about her proposal that she made early on—I think initiated in 1996—about working with artists John Knight, Daniel Buren, and Michael Asher. So what do you remember about this? Did she come to the Cellections and Acquisitions meeting with this suggestion?

Collens: Well, Bea had certainly a very clear [00:13:00] vision of artists that she liked and artists who she knew that she thought would be appropriate for Storm King. And she did a presentation with the thought of commissioning three artists—John Knight, Daniel Buren, and Michael Asher—to do projects at Storm King. And they would complement each other in very different ways; they were three artists that knew each other well and shared a similar aesthetic. So we proceeded to bring all three of them to Storm King over a period of time, and introduced them to the landscape, to the collection, and [00:14:00] have a weekend so they could become more acquainted with the property. Each came up with very different ideas.

We moved ahead, with John Knight (*87º*, 1997–99) being the first one. And John had known Bea for several years and had come to Mountainville, had walked around Storm King, walked around Mountainville, was familiar with Star Expansion Company, which was started and run by Ted Ogden, for many years—and then run by Peter Stern for many years, as well. And he came up with the idea of having a telescope originally—we changed it to a binoculars—on top of the hill at [00:15:00] Storm King and looking two miles to the south and seeing the top of a water tower. There was a very creative water tower that Peter Stern and Ted Ogden purchased in 1958. They just didn't want a water tower for fire protection that was not particularly interesting. They found one that was steel, and it was 153 feet high—it's still in place—with a large, round ball on the top of it.

So John Knight wanted to connect Star Expansion factory and property to the south with Storm King, which was started by Ted Ogden, and he came up with the idea of having originally a telescope that you could site on our property—on our hillside—and look out to the water tower. [00:16:00] And we had to clear trees off neighboring properties and establish working relationships with many different property owners to take down or prune their trees so we could have a clear view of the water tower. And we did that many years ago. People were very cooperative, and we helped to clean up their property, besides doing the viewshed for the telescope, as well. And it was a long project that Mike Seaman was involved with, being in the tree business before he started working at Storm King full time. That took at least one or two seasons to be able to do the pruning and establish the view to the water tower. And that is something that we [00:17:00] continue to reassess—what the view is of the tower and what we have to do to maintain it—and also, other maintenance on the water tower, since it was painted silver originally, and it has not been painted in many years. So we're looking into that, as well—what our choices are. And we do not now own the water tower, so we're trying to really figure out what options we have to maintain the view of the water tower, and going to other new property owners who have purchased houses over the years to get the view back.

Dziedzic: Given those unique challenges, and also the fact that there isn't a sculptural object that's part of this work, was there any [00:18:00] apprehension about moving forward with this commission?

Collens: Well, certainly, it was very conceptual, and John Knight is a conceptual artist. And we thought this was intriguing—the way he really wove together the history of Star Expansion with Ted Ogden and Peter Stern and Storm King Art Center, and having the telescope, which we changed to binoculars several years ago. But I think it was a different dimension of having a sculpture at Storm King than what we were used to. And it was an adjustment, but it was broadening the collection, as well. Bea came up with a very interesting idea.

Dziedzic: Can you talk a little bit more about how it broadened the collection?

Collens: Well, certainly, it was the first [00:19:00] conceptual artist we had. And having the focus two miles away on a water tower that is clearly related to the history of Storm King was quite different and a surprise to all of us—but, we thought, appropriate. And there was a publication that was done on John Knight's project at Storm King, describing it, with photographs and an article by Benjamin Buchloh.

Dziedzic: And I guess it kind of expanded the vista or the view a little bit—to then include that water tower, too. So, not just conceptually, but also kind of physically—making you look further, right?

Collens: Definitely so. We were really used to sculptures out of stone, wood, steel, other materials. [00:20:00] And John came up with a very different idea, and really traveled around, thought very hard about this. And it seemed like the right project for John Knight to do.

Dziedzic: You talked about how the maintenance of the trees was a part of John Knight's work. But I know that was also part of Michael Asher's proposal. Can you talk about what you remember about that proposal and how that developed?

Collens: With Michael Asher, he came up with an idea for Storm King—that he wanted us to review the history of spraying and the maintenance of trees, from the beginning in 1960 moving forward, and looking at all our records of how we did tree maintenance. And that [00:21:00] was very difficult for us to do—with the early years of Storm King, trying to find those records—and continue that project with him. Unfortunately, he died and we did not move ahead with the project. But I think we needed to really have a better understanding of what he wanted to do, and I think there would have needed to be more of a dialogue to take place.

Dziedzic: So it kind of stayed at its early stages—the proposal?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: I see. You mentioned that it was sort of an issue of getting together the information—which, you know, being here in the archives, I can understand how that's changed over time—that we're working on making all of this information more accessible. [00:22:00] But I think there was also a question of deciding whether to make that administrative history available to the public. That was something that Bea had mentioned that seemed to be a concern—about sharing those kinds of records, I guess, with the public. So I guess I wanted to ask if you recalled that being an issue and maybe how that's changed.

Collens: With the early records, we weren't highly organized like we are now. And this is going back many years. I think the information—the records were not all in one location, so that made it more difficult. We haven't looked for the full history of our maintenance of trees at Storm King [00:23:00] that started in 1960 when the Art Center started. And Bill Rutherford certainly was very involved with that, as well. So we'd have to bring a lot of different sources together and discuss a project like this, as well as having—I think Michael was interested in the invoices and the type of material that was being used to spray, as well. I think there was sensitivity towards how the trees and the other plant material were being maintained at the Art Center in the early years and whether this is something that we should release.

Dziedzic: Yes.

Collens: But it was hard to start because [00:24:00] the information was not in one place, and that was going to take a lot of time to research. And I think it would be easier to do now—and make a decision whether that's appropriate to have open to the public or not.

Dziedzic: And what about Daniel Buren?

Collens: Daniel visited and proposed an idea of doing 10 benches (*Sit Down*, 1998, refabricated 2010), which would be originally made out of wood and put out during the season. And they were striped, because a characteristic of Daniel Buren's work is, he's always done work that is with stripes, different colors—whether it's red or green or other colors. [00:25:00] He's done very large projects in urban areas and so forth. And anyway, he came up with the idea of doing 10 benches that were rectangular benches that people could sit on. They would be white and a very dark green stripe on them. And eventually, the wood did not age well, so we created them out of aluminum, so they had a very nice edge to them, as well. A little warm to sit on in the summertime if they were in the sun—and some people didn't want to sit on them; they didn't realize they were available. It's called *Sit Down*, the title of the 10 benches.

They were really to be a group of 10 that you would place so you can see one to the [00:26:00] other in a pathway curving around—on roads or wherever you wanted to put them. We move them occasionally to different locations, so people can see them in the North Woods; they've been on the allée heading south for many years, underneath the trees. And the idea was that all the benches at Storm King would be these striped benches, and those would be the primary benches for people at Storm King.

Dziedzic: How many benches are there?

Collens: We fabricated 10 out of aluminum.

Dziedzic: And then the other benches that are around at Storm King?

Collens: Well, we've had the English teak wood benches for many years, which are, you know, very good, very durable, and they stay outdoors all year long. And at some point, I think, they need to be changed as they deteriorate. [00:27:00] I'm not sure the English teak wood bench is appropriate for the Storm King landscape—that's another discussion. I like to have benches for people, and I'm sympathetic people need to sit down as they walk around, but we really haven't come up with the correct bench design for Storm King.

Dziedzic: And are all of Buren's benches usually out?

Collens: Yes. We have them out now in the north area.

Dziedzic: From what I've seen, they seem to move around a lot, more so than some of the other sculptures. Is that a part of the work, to draw attention to different parts of the landscape? Or is it also a sense of, well, they're more easy to move than some of the bigger sculptures, so—? What's the philosophy there? [laughs]

Collens: [laughs] They are easier—clearly easier to move. But [00:28:00] I think that was the guideline of the benches—that you could move them to different locations; they didn't have to be in a stationary location year after year. So periodically, we do move them from the allée heading south to the North Woods, and then they'll move to another location in a year or so, as well. But people like finding them and sitting on them—I think they realize they can sit on them. And it's very clear from our map and the sculptures that you can interact with, so the Buren benches are on the map, indicating you can sit on them.

Dziedzic: All right. Let's talk about Andy Goldsworthy. [00:29:00] How long had you been thinking about trying to work with Andy Goldsworthy, and how did that connection happen?

Collens: Well, I think at that point I was looking to find an artist, before we decided on Andy, that really could work with the landscape in a very different way than other artists. I was thinking of Richard Long, the British artist who would be, I think, fascinating to work with at Storm King and have him come and walk around the property—Schunnemunk Mountain—and I thought he [00:30:00] might be a good candidate to bring to Storm King. At the time we were talking about it, Joel Mallin was a trustee of Storm King Art Center, and Joel and Sherry Mallin had commissioned Andy to do the first private project in the United States—to build a wall on their property in Westchester. So they had met Andy and he had done

the wall for the Mallins in Westchester. And it was a natural fit that Andy should come over to Storm King. [00:31:00]

The Mallins suggested that he should come at some point in time, and he did, and spent time walking around the Art Center—and came back on a few occasions, doing ephemeral work—creating sculptures out of leaves, twigs, and other materials in different locations at Storm King, and photographed them. And that's the documentation that exists today—are Andy's photographs of the work that he created at Storm King in the 1990s, before he started doing the *Storm King Wall* (1997–98). And he spent time walking around in all sorts of weather conditions and doing his ephemeral work and decided what he liked about Storm King were the fallen-down farm walls.

He found a location where there was a [00:32:00] farm wall that was on the ground—it was not an arbitrary decision on his part to just build a wall around trees that grew up—and the remnants of the farm wall are still in the south. So Andy decided to build a wall where the old farm wall was, except the trees had grown up over the years, and the Goldsworthy wall was to go around all the trees and down the hill, ending at a beautiful, large white oak tree. And that was going to be the project. Andy was excited about that. And he was going to end at the white oak tree, maybe 20 yards before the [00:33:00] farm pond that was created in the early 1960s. And Andy spotted the pond, and he'd worked in a pond before in Europe, and thought that would be a great idea—to expand into the pond, instead of stopping at a white oak tree a short distance away. We thought that was well worthwhile.

He had his wallers here from England. And it took a year to prepare and organize all our stone for Andy, who taught us the type of stone he needed—and we would gather it by hand, bring it to the south location, where he would use it and line it up—and the particular order that the stone would be used by his wallers. He started [00:34:00] walling in the fall of 1997. And it was six days a week, with four wallers and an apprentice. He had mapped out on the ground using a string line exactly where his wall would go, around all these different trees—there must be a dozen trees that his wall goes around. And some of the curves were very tight, others were more open, depending on the distances of the trees apart from each other. And he created the *Storm King Wall* in the fall of 1997. It was eight weeks of walling.

And we thought, as I mentioned, it would be terrific to go into the pond instead of stopping at a large oak tree. And he was excited about that, so we went all the way into the pond in 1997. And then Bill Rutherford [00:35:00] came up with the idea that we should carry the wall on the other side of the pond and up to the New York Thruway. So Andy came back in 1998 with the same wallers and continued walling with the straight wall, all the way up to the New York Thruway. And the Goldsworthy wall is just under half a mile long. It's still one of the iconic sculptures at Storm King. We have one of Andy's wallers coming every few years to check on the wall and do some repairs. All of the stone came from our property

for both sections of the wall. Nineteen ninety-eight is the straight part, and that took five weeks to build—and many more weeks to gather all the stone for Andy. His wallers created a British agricultural [00:36:00] wall with no concrete. And you have the through stones sticking out on each side of the wall every meter to really hold it together—to bind it together.

Dziedzic: When he first started doing some ephemeral work, was there a possibility that that would be his commission for Storm King, or was it while he was thinking about something more permanent?

Collens: He spent a couple weeks walking around in all weather conditions—rain—he'd have his Wellies and oilcloth on, his camera. And we'd see him maybe at lunch or dinner. He didn't find the correct project in the beginning, but he looked through the woods, fields, and decided [00:37:00] Storm King had a lot of fallen-down walls, and it was very good-quality stone, similar to what he was used to in England, and he thought it would be terrific to really create a wall at Storm King. And this was documented in his film, *Rivers and Tides*—the creation of the wall at Storm King in 1997–98.

Dziedzic: And where exactly on the property did the stones come from?

Collens: We gathered stone from a mile away—from where the *Storm King Wall* is today. And we hired people and the tractor and cart to hand-pick the stones depending on what part of the wall they were needed for. The [00:38:00] final stones were the flat coping stones that are on top of the wall. And we lined all of the stones up down in the field, and Andy began, in the fall of 1997, to work on the creative part of the wall that goes around all the trees. It really was a very large project. And they enjoyed being at Storm King, and we continued the relationship with Andy and artists that are important to Storm King—all of the artists are. And he brings the same wallers back to do different repairs to the wall to this day.

Dziedzic: Was there any kind of landscaping that went into this? Preparation? I'm kind of curious about what Bill Rutherford thought of this wall and the process of [00:39:00] building it.

Collens: Well, Bill was very involved with different artists like Andy Goldsworthy, and immediately just had an instantaneous friendship with Andy. They spoke the same language. And Bill understood the project from the very beginning—going around all the trees—it would be perfect for Storm King—and thought we should start immediately gathering stone. "This was a big project," he said to Peter and myself, and "don't waste time." You know, get some men and a tractor. This is not a two- or three-week project gathering stone; this was months of gathering stone and bringing it to the site and preparing everything for Andy and his four wallers from England that he used. But [00:40:00] Bill thought it was the perfect Storm King project.

Dziedzic: And I guess I'll ask the question that I hear everyone ask, which is, does the wall continue under the water? [laughs]

Collens: That is the big question that everyone does ask. And it goes in 30 feet on each side of the pond, and we put some heavy boulders into the pond, thinking about frost and the wintertime conditions for the wall. So it's really quite stable. And there's always work to be done, because the wall only has a narrow channel that was dug out for it; it doesn't have a foundation, except for the heavier stone that was used for the base of the wall. And [00:41:00] it goes down a hillside, so it's soft and needs to be repaired as the wall pushes out with frost during the wintertime and ground condition changes.

Dziedzic: What has the reception of this work been like?

Collens: Well, I think it was instantaneous. When people, in 1998, the spring, heard about the Goldsworthy wall—and we did a press release on it and so forth—people would be arriving at Storm King and asking staff members where the wall was, and they would make a pilgrimage to the south to see the Goldsworthy wall. Because the first sculpture in the south was Richard Serra, *Schunnemunk Fork*, that [00:42:00] was installed in the summer of 1991—and people really weren't walking out to the south part of the property like they are today. And then Andy's wall came in the fall—late fall—of 1997, when the wall was built, going around all the trees and into the pond, and then 1998 for the straight part, coming out of the pond and going up to the New York Thruway. So people were very excited and wanted to see it. Andy's film was also released, *Rivers and Tides*, which documented the construction of the wall.

Dziedzic: It's striking me as so different than what we were talking about with John Knight and Daniel Buren—just in terms of the act of seeing the work and engaging [00:43:00] with the work. I mentioned I took the tram tour for the first time [laughs] last week, and it was interesting to see how people responded to certain things and not so much to others. I guess I want to go back a little bit and ask about the reception of the more conceptual work. How do you gauge the reception of this kind of work that's maybe a little bit less physical—less easier to engage with?

Collens: People certainly liked looking through the binoculars. And we are in the process of creating a sign with more of an explanation that John Knight has approved to be put up near the binoculars with a little bit of an explanation. But I think probably [00:44:00] it's more difficult for a lot of people to understand the connection between the binoculars and the water tower and seeing the top of the water tower two miles away. It doesn't have the same, I don't think, understanding as looking at fieldstone and this beautiful wall of Andy Goldsworthy's. People are used to seeing walls in Vermont and New Hampshire and other places—farm fields in England, Ireland, many other locations. I think there was an immediate positive reaction. Many people saw the wallers building the wall that had been coming to Storm King for

years. They would talk to the wallers. They're a very friendly group, and would explain what they were doing, and just fascinated to see them working and chipping the stone [00:45:00] so it would fit together into the dry wall. It wasn't a lot of stonework and hammering with their hammers that they liked very much that we got them, but it was really fitting stones together and binding them into a strong wall. And the face of the wall is very different than other walls. It's a British agricultural wall, so it's textured, and the stones are not flat, like other walls that you see in different parts of the country.

So I think there was a, you know, immediate reaction—a positive reaction to seeing a stone wall. And, you know, it makes you feel wonderful. And I think John Knight, Daniel Buren—it's a different aesthetic that is taking place. And probably most people don't have that understanding of [00:46:00] conceptual work and trying to tie a water tower two miles away into the Storm King property and that history that John Knight found out about and went to the factory site and walked around Mountainville—the little hamlet—and around Storm King. So he had a very interesting take on it all, I think, but harder for the general public to put together and understand.

Dziedzic: Yeah. I think art is barely taught in school, let alone conceptual art or institutional critique. [laughs] But what kind of role does that play in discussions around whether to acquire a work or have an exhibition?

Collens: Well, I think we're certainly, you know, interested in broadening the collection of sculptures [00:47:00] that we have and trying to find the appropriate artists that we think really would fit into the Storm King collection, and—whether it's commissioning or purchasing a particular piece—and doing exhibitions that will broaden the public knowledge of what is happening in the world of sculpture today.

Dziedzic: And then Andy Goldsworthy has another wall here. Can you talk about how that wall came about?

Collens: Well, for our fiftieth anniversary exhibition, we invited five artists that had major exhibitions at Storm King to do projects and create sculptures for the fiftieth anniversary, if possible, and five artists that had never shown at Storm King. And Andy's one of the [00:48:00] artists that we invited to do a sculpture for the fiftieth anniversary.

Andy had an exhibition in the Museum Building in the year 2000, which was quite fabulous, in honor of the *Storm King Wall*. And it was on top of the hill, as well, with some sculptures. And it was in the Maple Rooms, so it was really scattered around outdoors, as well as the Museum Building. And he created some fabulous work for the building: a clay floor in Gallery 1, which was very challenging to process the clay from our property and dry it out and have it crack like Andy was used to. And we had a very rainy

season, so it didn't dry out for quite a while. And a very large oak ball—fallen oak branches [00:49:00] from Scotland that he wove together. The building also had this large oak ball—one was inside and one was outside. Then we had a stone sheepfold in another gallery on the first floor. The sheepfold went through the window and onto the patio outdoors, around one of the trees. So it was really fascinating. And photographs on the second floor and other aspects of his work—in the year 2000. And it really showed what a broad-ranging artist he was, doing work outdoors.

Dziedzic: I see this work, *Five Men, Seventeen Days, Fifteen Boulders, One Wall*, would seem to have taken less time to [laughs]—to build (than the *Storm King Wall*). [00:50:00] Is that just because it was shorter? Or was there still a cache of stones from that first project?

Collens: No, we had to go collect stone for Andy for the wall that he built for the fiftieth anniversary exhibition. And he wanted to do another project that we couldn't realize—we tried. It was a fabulous idea, and we tried coming up with different boulders or stones in our farm fields—what used to be farm fields—but we found no stones in the field. We dug to different levels—five feet down, three feet, eight feet down, still found no rock. So Andy came up with the idea to do another wall, since we have an abundance of fallen-down walls on our property. So we gathered more stone [00:51:00] to do the Goldsworthy wall—the *Five Men* wall. And he had a limited amount of time to do that at Storm King with his wallers—the same wallers as 1997–98. And so it's 308 feet long, and he had only limited time, and he had to stop. So we came out with the wall that we have, which is still on loan to Storm King.

Dziedzic: Well, I think, speaking of limited time, that was probably your call to [laughs]—to return downstairs. So let's at least pause, if not end, for today, and just double-check on your schedule.

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center (various locations)**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**Video sites**
August 22, 2018	**Open for research use**

Video site 1 – East Parking

[Side conversation]

Collens: [00:02:37] This is a good example of a sculpture that needs maintenance, being bronze, Arnaldo Pomodoro (*The Pietrarubbia Group: il fondamento, l'uso, il rapporto*, 1975–76). Two moving doors were taken off this past winter and we had them in our indoor [00:03:00] space, which we barely got them into, being so large. We polished the doors so they're a bright bronze—they tarnish with people handling it and being outdoors—and did other work to the sculpture before we reinstalled the two moving elements this spring. But it's a piece that people are allowed to move. And of course they handle the golden part of the bronze doors for moving them on a track. We had other work to do with the wheels, had to replace those so the two very heavy units would move more easily. And the sculpture's a combination of Corten steel and bronze, [00:04:00] and we're constantly working on it because it's a very odd combination of materials and needs a great deal of maintenance.

Dziedzic: We spoke to that artist too, didn't we, before that conservation project?

Collens: We did. It came to Storm King as a gift. And unfortunately we didn't have time to do any work before putting it in. It was a rush installation, pouring the concrete. The site is exactly where this sculpture was on loan in 1977 to Storm King. So it's back in the same location, which is historically very interesting. And people certainly find it. They know they're allowed to move the two doors. Staying outdoors all year long, the combination [00:05:00] of the materials, as I pointed out, is very difficult to maintain. The way the materials, steel I-beams, are fastened with the bronze doors, it's a sculpture we have to keep a close eye on.

Dziedzic: Is it common for Storm King to have sculptures that have multiple kinds of materials involved?

Collens: That's really of course up to the artist, but yes, they do put odd combinations together. And the *Three Legged Buddha*'s another example of that, where we have to closely monitor what's happening with the *Three Legged Buddha* (Zhang Huan, 2007)—and the interior, which is built like the Statue of Liberty, a steel frame inside with a ladder that you can go down to inspect it. But the combination of copper and steel is a very odd combination that [00:06:00] one has to monitor and put a coating on the steel to keep the possibility of electrolysis between the two metals taking place.

Dziedzic: All right. Thanks, David.

[Side conversation]

Video site 2 – Museum Road by Alexander Liberman's *Iliad*

Collens: It started with, a few years ago, examining the concrete bases and how the tanks, which were used oil tanks, were attached to the concrete, and correcting any problems with the concrete and the fastening devices. The following year we [00:10:00] looked at all the vertical tanks. We cut hatches into each of the vertical tanks so we could get into them and strengthen the interior of these thin vertical steel tanks that had been underground for 20 years, and Liberman used to use used oil tanks, and that is the particular material that he selected. And we strengthened the interior of the tanks once we got in there with some more steel to make them rigid. And the upper parts we also took several sections out and did some new bolting systems and cut more holes for drainage and checked the larger tanks that are bolted at various angles up in the air, which really make it a very dynamic sculpture. [00:11:00] And this year, early summer, we painted it for the first time in 10 years, probably. So it really looks spectacular to have it back to bright orange.

[Side conversation]

Video site 3 – Alexander Liberman's *Adonia*

Dziedzic: When we talked about this before, David, you'd mentioned Ted Ogden being the one to go to, Liberman's—

Collens: His studio? Yes.

Dziedzic: And connected Ted's interest in it to the conservation work that was done and the refabrication. So [00:14:00] could you talk about the history of this sculpture at Storm King a little bit, and then get into the refabrication?

Collens: Yes. I think it's maybe similar to the Pomodoro in the sense that the Pomodoro and the Liberman *Adonai*, where we are now, came to Storm King very quickly. Apparently Ted Ogden saw the sculpture at Alexander Liberman's studio in Warren, Connecticut, where he had a weekend and summer home and did all his sculpture and eventually his paintings there as well. But he had his sculpture studio set up, and the decision was made to bring *Adonai* to Storm King quite quickly and dismantle it in

Connecticut—it was fully assembled—and [00:15:00] pour the concrete base, prepare the site where it's been for many years, and install it.

Sometimes I think one neglects doing more preparation when installing a sculpture and checking it out when it's done on a short-term basis versus having a little more time to really think and properly examine a sculpture and prepare it for the long-term outdoors. I think materials of sculpture—it was quite new to everybody that was putting sculpture outdoors that thought it was going to be permanent, whether it was government with the General Services Administration program, putting large-scale outdoor sculptures in front of their office buildings—everybody thought, "Oh, it's steel and Corten steel and other materials, [00:16:00] and it's going to hold up very well." And after probably 10 years people realized, like everything, it needs maintenance on large-scale sculpture. The welds need to be repaired; it needs to be repainted; you have to check the foundations, where it's attached and how it's attached to concrete and other foundation materials. So sculpture conservation started, and people didn't know a great deal about that at the beginning either, and they really had to learn about the materials that were being used by artists for large-scale work and how to keep them in good shape and safe for people.

Dziedzic: So let me ask you—these sculptures are made mostly with industrial materials. And so what was it about making use of those materials for sculpture that made their deterioration different [00:17:00] than when it was used it for its industrial purposes?

Collens: Well, I think artists many times would take materials like Corten steel, and then instead of using it—I-beams for bridges, for example, or other purposes that the Cor-Ten was intended for, to self-rust and create a coating and preserve itself when it got to a certain point—artists would take the Corten and start creating these different forms, whether boxes, or bend it into circles and weld it, and it would start deteriorating from the inside when you least expected it and fall apart on you. You didn't have a clue, looking at the outside, what was going on till it was really too late. I think they were just stretching the way the materials were supposed to be used.

But on the other hand, there're bridges [00:18:00] made out of Corten steel, and the salt from winter weather and heavily putting it on the Corten started eroding the bridges at a very rapid rate, and they had to be painted, sandblasted and painted. So [laughs] it's a combination of the use of these materials and deterioration, and people are figuring that out and having to react to it. But artists push and use different types of materials—industrial materials—Alex Liberman selected used oil tanks, which he purchased, and had a very large studio stockpile of them to be able to pick and choose the diameters and types of materials he wanted and sizes to use for his sculptures, and cut off at angles, which is characteristic of his work, having the sharp angles [00:19:00] cut onto the tanks, and you'd know it was a Liberman. That

was one of the things that he did. And sometimes he painted the sculptures, the used oil tanks; other times he would leave them rusting.

With *Adonai* it was used oil tanks that were underground probably 20 years and then above ground was a sculpture. And it started rusting at a very rapid rate. And it wasn't possible to repair it. So we had to speak to Alex and get his permission to refabricate the sculpture out of new material. He was thrilled that we did this shortly before he died. It's what he would have done if he had the resources to select and buy new material for his sculptures from the beginning. So he was delighted we were doing this [00:20:00] at Storm King. And that's what he envisioned, is new material instead of used oil tanks.

Dziedzic: It was new oil tanks.

Collens: It was new tanks that we had fabricated actually in Louisiana because they made it to our specifications—identical to the old oil tanks that we had, and down in Louisiana they were building platforms at the Gulf of New Mexico for oil and gas rigs, and they had all the equipment and steel to do the tanks for us, so that's what they did. And we had it sent to the Polich Tallix foundry about 10 miles from Storm King, and it was fully assembled inside and welded and prepared for outdoor exhibition at Storm King and brought here in, I believe, year 2000. Came to the Art Center.

Dziedzic: And it was the first refabrication that Storm King did, is that right?

Collens: It was. [00:21:00] At, you know, great cost. And we knew Alex because I had done a show of his in the Museum Building and outside in 1977. It was his second exhibition during his lifetime and it was really terrific in showing the full range of Alex's work. Really a Renaissance artist.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: [00:22:00] And are these shapes exactly the same as what Liberman had used?

Collens: They're the same diameter tanks. The one difference, which you can see on *Iliad*, all the small holes on the tanks—those are used oil tanks. And fortunately he painted those from the [laughs] beginning, and that's really preserved them, where unpainted tanks of Liberman's really continued to deteriorate, and they were very thin, and we couldn't stop that process. That's what happened to the first version of *Adonai* was used oil tanks, and there were some tanks that we noticed were sagging, some of the horizontal ones, and we thought, yes, we could replace one tank, that'd be fine; we could get a [00:23:00] similar one. But you start doing that, and it's really surgery and taking one tank out, putting another one in, and then everything around you is not in good shape, and how much longer is it going to

be before the other tanks start deteriorating? We determined that we better refabricate it. A much bigger expense, but in the long run it would be the better thing to do than dealing with many different tanks deteriorating at a rapid rate, and that could be quite dangerous, and eventually we'd have to replace all of it. But like with any artist, we wouldn't have done this without Alex's permission. And yes, he was thrilled, and we knew him well after doing the show of his paintings, photographs, and drawings in the Museum Building, [00:24:00] small-scale sculpture and large-scale sculpture outdoors.

And that's when *Iliad* came to Storm King was for his show in 1977.

Dziedzic: Well, what sort of maintenance does this sculpture need? I mean, I can see some aging on it, some oxidation, but I imagine that that's part of the work itself.

Collens: I think so. It doesn't have a protective coating on the steel. It's a mild steel. It's a half-inch thick, so it's not going to deteriorate very rapidly. But, you know, people handling, climbing, and so forth, you can see the marks on it. That doesn't bode well for the surface to really have an even surface on it when people are doing all those different movements. And it's not meant to be climbed on. Yes, it's very sturdy and solid, but the surface is important, and [00:25:00] you can't maintain a good surface quality on the steel when people are doing a lot of handling and walking on it and so forth, even though we have signage. And underneath we have worked to put the gravel back underneath it and keep it so it's attached to the ground and not suspended for the tanks.

Dziedzic: It sounds like Storm King was really important to Liberman's career. Can you talk about that relationship, which sounds like it was 25 years or so?

Collens: Oh, it really started with Ted Ogden bringing *Adonai* very quickly to Storm King when there were not a lot of large-scale sculptures around. So that was a major decision, [00:26:00] and I think Mr. Ogden had a terrific eye, and when he saw something that he wanted he was able to set the process in motion of bringing it. And he had a great location. It's been in this location since the early 1970s. And the exhibition of Alex's was the second museum exhibition during his lifetime. The first one was the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, across from the White House. That was in the early '70s. And 1977 was his exhibition at Storm King. He was thrilled to be doing an exhibition and very touched to do an exhibition at Storm King, showing the full range of his work. I thought of doing the exhibition; I met him; he was very elegant, and he was the editorial director at *Condé Nast* and [00:27:00] was responsible for *Vogue* magazine, the American and European editions, and *House and Garden* and many other magazines. Was a force in the fashion world and a very good photographer. So he really put everything into the Storm King exhibition, as we all did. It was a complicated, large exhibition to install, and we got excellent reviews. And through that exhibition we knew Alex very well.

Dziedzic: Is there anything else, David, about either Storm King's relationship with Liberman or the sculpture in particular that you want to add?

Collens: Well, he's spoken about the sculpture. I think on the side where the two vertical tanks are he refers in a film that he made about the cathedral at Chartres—visiting the cathedral and thinking of relationship [00:28:00] with the cathedral and the nave there to this one particular section where the two vertical tanks are, with the horizontal tank intersecting. He was inspired by Greek and Roman archaeology and had done photographs in Greece of antiquities, and that was very inspirational to him as well.

Dziedzic: Great.

[Side conversation]

Video site 3 – George Sugarman's *One*, 1975–77

Collens: This is George Sugarman. He died several years ago, but well known for earlier wood sculptures and then started fabricating at the Lippincott Foundry, where this one was made. It's aluminum.

Dziedzic: So when did Storm King acquire this sculpture?

Collens: I have to look that up probably (1982). Very intricate, the way the aluminum's been bent and—

Dziedzic: So this is kind of [00:32:00] like—

Collens: —fastened together and—

Dziedzic: —this is kind of a good example of what you were describing before, which is that it's an industrial material, but it's being used in a different way, and surprises can ensue.

Collens: Very much so. Now, I think it's a very complicated piece, and—this is an example: for some reason we did not have the correct color white, which is more like a cream white, and the orange color correct. That took us a while through researching with the George Sugarman Foundation and Don Lippincott, who fabricated it, to come up with what the correct colors were. We have it now fully documented, but [00:33:00] the white we had on it was more of a pure white originally. And it's very

difficult to paint and all the different sections that are fastened together that cannot be separated. So it's very challenging to do this work. I mean, it kind of reminds me of a Matisse cutout, the way it's folded and being metal, very different than paper that Matisse used at the end of his life, cutting out pieces of paper and collaging and everything. That's what this is similar to for me. I kind of find it fascinating, the density of it. You know, sculpture doesn't always have to be large-scale. I think it's a wonderful size and an interesting [00:34:00] dynamic work. It's always important to walk around sculpture to get a better feeling of what the artist is trying to achieve and what the artist wants you to see and do and participate visually in their sculpture.

Dziedzic: And when Storm King does maintenance on this sculpture, are there pieces of the aluminum that have to be replaced? Or so far is it just a matter of repainting?

Collens: It's really repainting. The aluminum is good thickness. It doesn't bend easily. And I'm sure when they made this it was a lot of welding and bending on the appropriate presses that the Lippincott Foundry had. But it's really painting that is a difficult process.

Dziedzic: [00:35:12] What is Storm King's relationship with the Sugarman estate like?

Collens: Oh, it's very good. We have contacted estates, foundations, to double-check our paint codes and what they suggest for the maintenance. Sometimes they're aware of these situations and other times not as helpful as one would like. But there's a lot of research being done by the Getty Institute of Conservation into paint for different sculptures. I don't think George Sugarman, at the moment, but they're expanding, and they're [00:36:00] working with Calder paints and what would be the correct colors for Calder outdoor paints, both red and black. Tony Smith and Nevelson.

Dziedzic: And what are the kind of different challenges that come from a sculpture being out in the fields versus under some trees, like where we are now?

Collens: Well, I think it's a process of washing and cleaning and using the right materials to wash and clean—the base also—and algae and lichens growing on wood bases as well. But it just raises one's awareness about pollen from the trees and just the dirt in the air and discoloring the [00:37:00] sculptures.

Dziedzic: I imagine the discoloration would be a little bit different in this kind of setting, a rural setting, compared to sculptures like this that would be in an urban setting too.

Collens: Oh, definitely. In cities with pollution from buses and automobiles and other situations in urban spaces, very different than our situation here. It's been a very wet season with rain constantly this summer, so that's [laughs] posing another issue with maintenance as well.

Dziedzic: [00:37:48] All right. Anything else about this sculpture, David?

Collens: No, I think we should probably move on.

[Side conversation]

Video site 4 – North Woods

Dziedzic: [00:38:20] So this is where the Buren benches are right now.

Collens: Yes, starting with this one, going all the way around, you'd see basically from one to another. And a few of them need to be realigned, but I think people like them here, you know. They periodically move to different locations.

Dziedzic: I've never sat on one.

Collens: A little hot in the summertime, being aluminum. [laughter] And they were originally made out of wood. We tested them out of a wood, and that only held up so long. [00:39:00] We fabricated out of very good quality wood and built it like wooden sailboats and everything, and still had its lifespan and—even though we took it in during the wintertime and so forth, it was difficult to maintain and not have the corners be splitting out and that type of thing.

Dziedzic: How long did the wood last for?

Collens: I think we saw wear and tear, I'm sure, after five years. You know, signs of it before that. Just the change of temperature and climate and, depending where they were, sun and then rain and—they had air ventilation, drain holes, but—

Dziedzic: Wow. You tried out everything. [laughs]

Collens: We really did. And, yeah, it was fine to test them, and then we finally [00:40:00] decided to make them out of aluminum and have hot seats for people during the summer [laughs] on that

[Side conversation]

Collens: This is George Cutts (*Sea Change*, 1996). That is our only motorized sculpture. But very popular always. Mike had to do some work on that, some welding on the stainless [00:42:00] steel and motor work, and he's contacting the artist to get more detail. We had to put the rope around—this is an example of trying to keep people away from it—even though there's a sign on the ground saying, "Please don't touch," they'd go up and hold on to the stainless steel tubes and try to stop them from turning. The motors are all underground. So he had to do some repairs to it.

[Side conversation]

Video site 5 – Alice Aycock's *Three-Fold Manifestation II*, 1987 (refabricated 2006)

Dziedzic: How often do a lot of the sculptures get repainted?

Collens: It depends on the types of paint that we use, but certainly every 10 years or less. It's like the George Washington Bridge. You start with the 10 large sculptures at Storm King—you do the Liberman, and so on. The Liberman over here's scheduled for painting as well, *Adam*.

Dziedzic: Is that the same color as *Iliad*?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: So that's what it looks like when it's—

Collens: So whether we get to it this year or not I don't know, because Aycock's going to be first. [00:49:00] So we're going to try to do touchup—challenging.

Dziedzic: So why don't you talk about how the sculpture (*Three-Fold Manifestation II*) came into the collection and then when it was refabricated.

[Side conversation]

Collens: This sculpture was a gift to Storm King, and it was first shown at the Doris Freedman Plaza on Fifth Avenue and 59th Street. And it was the largest sculpture they had on the plaza at that point in time. It was quite a presence, and people enjoyed it. It was there for a period of time. And they had to move it from the plaza, and they moved it to Storm King. It was a gift to Storm King. We thought it was a really

important gift, and we appreciated having it at the Art Center. It was a sculpture that fit into the collection—the scale of it and an important work of Alice's, even at that point in her career. It had been sited in two different locations at Storm King. It was in the fields [00:51:00] originally and then came to this site, where it is today. And it was part of the Alice Aycock retrospective of 1990 as well. She had a full exhibition in the Museum Building of work and work outdoors as well as this particular piece, which was always located quite far from the Museum Building.

It was made quite quickly in 1987 for Doris Freedman Plaza. It was thin steel and very light welds on it, and we knew it wasn't a really detailed fabrication. So after a period of time we realized it needed to be worked on, [00:52:00] and it wasn't a matter of just doing some more welding, repairing the steel. It would really require refabrication. So we raised the money with Alice's permission, and she was very helpful to the process. And this is the second sculpture we refabricated at Storm King in 2006.

Alice was a full partner in the refabrication of it. It was done in Ohio, at a factory in Ohio that she used because they knew how to cut circles, and her sculptures are really about circles, and that's always very hard for a lot of fabrication shops to do that if they're not familiar with cutting [00:53:00] circles to the particular diameters that Alice wants. And this fabrication shop in Ohio was used to doing her outdoor sculptures and could cut aluminum and stainless steel. So we decided instead of using steel to make it out of aluminum and stainless steel so wouldn't have the issues of rusting. And we corrected many of the problems of the original one. And we wanted drain holes to be larger—they're still not large enough to not get clogged up with acorns and leaves. So that's something we have to adjust when we do some work on it. And after a period of time it certainly needs to be painted, like all our outdoor sculptures. And that will be accomplished. It's on a cycle for painting as well.

Dziedzic: Can we go kind of close up and [00:54:00] point out some of the drain holes and some of the kind of deterioration? Could point out where Storm King made improvements in 2006, and now what you know needs to be done the next time around?

Collens: We certainly improved on the materials by using aluminum and stainless steel. That is an enormous improvement with these three large dishes that really constitute the sculpture. And drain holes where—from a conservation standpoint we knew we had to increase the size, and we did make them larger than the original ones on the sculpture. But they're still not large enough; an acorn or leaves get clogged and this lower portion will plug, the holes will be plugged, [00:55:00] and we will have several gallons of water collecting. And when I go around I always check the drain holes to make sure it's unplugged. And we have issues, I'm sure, with the second tier—

Dziedzic: But you can see how it's working up here.

Collens: Yes, a lot of drain holes that are plugged on the second level. So that's something that clearly needs to be improved. And painting.

Dziedzic: Is the film from—is that visible because the sculpture is white? Or is that because of how much water it holds, that it attracts dirt?

Collens: Yeah, I think that we have a lot of oak trees around, and you have [00:56:00] pollen and acorns and the leaves from the oaks coming down in the fall. And just the dirt from the area. We have a lot of visitors, and it's possible that people are liking to sit in it. But I think it's just general dirt, an accumulation of needing a full washing and maintenance.

Dziedzic: And the deterioration of the paint, is that just the elements?

Collens: I think so. It's always hard to get the right paints to hold up. And certainly this was fine for a period of time, and then when the paint starts deteriorating it's right down to the metal itself. So that's why this sculpture's [00:57:00] next on schedule for painting and improving.

Dziedzic: And when this gets painted, will there be a need to go back to Alice Aycock, to the artist, again, to check in with her? Or is it more just a matter of you know what to do, it doesn't need to be refabricated, and you can undertake it independently?

Collens: Well, we're independent on that. As a courtesy I think we might tell her, "This is what we're doing to it." If we switch paints we might certainly let her know that we've come up with a better paint system. And we're always looking to better paints. It's not always the most expensive; it's about paints that we can use in the large-scale sculptures in our environment.

Dziedzic: What other industries does Storm King or other people who are interested in this kind of sculpture conservation look to for kind of [00:58:00] innovations for, I guess, durability?

Collens: Well, certainly paints have improved over the years. And they can be very expensive and difficult to use, two-part paints, and they have strict guidelines of how long, once you do the mix, you [laughs] have to use the paint before it's not good. And you need the right equipment, and always the preparation with metal sculptures, whether steel or aluminum, is they need extensive prep time for cleaning the metal—and doing the base coat, the protective coat, before you put your final coat on is critical to the maintenance and final coat holding up. And you can clear-coat, and there are different UV

preventers as well. [00:59:00] So it's really become very sophisticated with different paints and holding up against intense sunlight discoloring the paint as well.

Dziedzic: And there's some strategies that, I guess, sculpture has taken from the Department of Defense, right?

Collens: That is true. There are certain paints they're testing. The Department of Defense has been using high-quality paints on equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan and other parts of the world that the equipment's going. And it was decided to try to apply some of the paints used by the Department of Defense for outdoor sculpture. And this is being actively tested and worked on with different foundations, and there's great interest in this—with Nevelson [01:00:00] and Calder, Tony Smith, and other foundations that think it's appropriate for their outdoor sculptures. Some of it is still quite experimental in seeing how well it holds up, but certainly should be durable.

Dziedzic: And so the conversations around paint durability bring together a lot of different kinds of groups, it sounds like. [laughs]

Collens: Very diverse groups. It sounds like a boring subject, and I've been to conferences, and it's not boring whatsoever. It's really quite fascinating what the choices are in terms of paints that are readily available, from expensive paints to less expensive that are very durable and will hold up well for outdoors. So you don't have to go after the most expensive Rolls Royce of paints that are sometimes very hard to use, and you need certain conditions to use them in for [01:01:00] outdoors as well.

Mason: Can I ask a question? I was wondering—can I ask a kind of broad personal question, David?

Collens: Sure.

Mason: Like, there's an aspect of your job that's—you know, there's the conversation of art, but then there's also just this place is 10,000 logistical problems that need to be solved. Is that part of the pleasure of the work here for you? Do you feel like you're particularly well suited to have that be part of your job?

Collens: It's an interesting question. And I think we all [laughs] adjust to the practical end of working with outdoor sculpture and really what that means. You know, there's nothing ideal or permanent about the sculptures and the materials, and [01:02:00] they sit outdoors all year long in our winter weather and hot summers and rainy summers like this past summer. And that's causing different issues with the maintenance of the sculptures. It's like taking care of an automobile or even more—taking care of the outdoor sculptures that are in the environment and trying to figure out what they need and what the

schedule should be and abiding by artists' wishes that are alive and estates and foundations. And sometimes we're very innovative with it, and we have to think out of the box to come up with solutions with engineers and other people. It's a combination of a lot of, I think, different types of people coming together. Like the person from the Department of Defense said he's very curious and wanted to apply the paints that are being used [01:03:00] to sculpture and working with conservators at the National Gallery in Washington and other conservators to really bring this to fruition. Trying it out. There's no guarantee with the paints that are being used how long they're going to hold up. Aand it's challenging. And the preparation of the metal is really critical to having the paint hold up. And, you know, for example, sunscreen is very difficult to get off painted sculptures, and no one's found a way to [laughs] neutralize it yet. And you can put sunscreen on and put your hand on a painted sculpture, and that's going to leave a lasting impression.

Mason: Do you think you have a sort of satisfaction, like the classic car hobbyist? Does it feel like a source of distress, or does it feel like a source that satisfies?

Collens: Oh, I [01:04:00] think—yes, very gratifying and very satisfying to all of us to come up with different solutions—what potentially are solutions—to problems with outdoor sculpture, and being able to share that with other people. We get calls all the time at Storm King about installing sculptures and foundations, concrete and other types of foundations, fastening sculptures to concrete, and how do we maintain them and so forth? And, yes, we all have to share information because there're not many of us doing it, and I think that's important.

[Side conversation]

Collens: This is what I do after heavy rainstorms—I come up and check the holes for drainage. Because unfortunately we didn't get that right the first time. We knew about it. We didn't want to make the holes too large. But as part of a full restoration, we're going to increase the size of the drain holes, as you see up on the next level. We've got to get up there with a ladder and clean them out. But they're different-sized drain holes depending which part of the circle we're in. This is all a buildup from water, I think, the discoloration and leaves that are sitting there for a period of time.

Dziedzic: Let me follow up Graham's question a little bit. Do you sort of feel like you're the caretaker here? [laughs] [01:06:00] How do you describe your role, I guess?

Collens: Yes, certainly multifaceted. Yes, caretaker and everything else. I mean, we have a great team at Storm King working in full range of areas. And working with the sculptures and the curatorial area and with the exhibitions and maintenance of sculpture, which a very small group of us are doing, is very

gratifying. And trying to keep the sculptures in the best condition we can. You can't always predict what's going to happen after a hard winter. We can't get out and drive around, even with four-wheel drive, to different places to see what the condition of the sculptures are, and you can have a schedule, which we do—five years out—but it's always something that creeps in that needs to be [01:07:00] done faster than one anticipates.

Dziedzic: And David, correct me if I'm wrong, but when you first started, and then when you became director early on, there was such a small staff that you really were kind of in charge of everything, right? [laughs] All the different kind of diverse things that you've just mentioned. So I wanted to ask what has it been like to have a bigger staff come on and assist with those various tasks?

Collens: You know, when I first started working at Storm King, it was a very small staff, as you're pointing out. And that was terrific. It was a very creative time with Bill Rutherford, our landscape architect, and Peter Stern, who I worked for for many years. It was really the three of us working on many different projects and doing the exhibitions. And with [01:08:00] a larger staff—since John Stern became president of the Art Center in 2010, we've expanded the staff, and diversifying with the staff is really terrific, and seeing people that are passionate as well about taking care of the sculptures and doing various aspects of the work at Storm King. Because it was—it's too much for any one person.

It's still a very creative organization and continues moving forward. And it's really extraordinary to see and wonderful to be a part of. And I still walk around and figure out sculpture locations and come up and keep an eye on the sculptures on weekends when there's less demand for meetings, and more time to walk around the grounds and interact with the public and figure out sculpture [01:09:00] locations. Because I love moving sculptures from the permanent collection as well. That's very important to doing exhibitions and for visitors to see different sculptures, and rotating the sculptures in our collection.

Dziedzic: Is finding new locations for the sculptures—what determines your decision around that? Is it a matter of the trees grow, the trees look different, you want to place things somewhere else? Or is it more like you feel differently about the sculpture?

Collens: Well, I think it's important to site sculpture in different locations to see how they look. One comes up with different ideas about landscape, the juxtaposition of different sculptures together or apart from each other. Also to rotate sculptures so they stay in better condition. Bringing out other sculptures for a short period of [01:10:00] time is always, I think, important, for the public to see the variety of work in the collection and for the artists to see earlier work together, like Charles Ginnever, David Stoltz. Doesn't mean they'll be there for long periods of time, but I want to bring artists' work together when possible and think about different sites for it and use different landscapes, as I've done most recently, putting sculpture

into different landscapes—in more natural landscapes, keeping it very natural and not doing a lot of maintenance and pruning to different areas. It's really for people to look and see the sculptures, not necessarily walk in and interact with them and circle around them. But they're just different sites I've been curious about for years and just really experimenting with landscape [01:11:00] as my thoughts on landscape change.

Dziedzic: It sounds like you've described curating, but—

Collens: [laughter] Oh, yes! Indeed! So I carry on with it, and I can show you different sites. I don't know if they'll photograph well, but it's interesting to see. And people really haven't found them yet because they're not on the map and need to get sculpture labels out and little pruning and so forth. But it's minimum.

Dziedzic: And like you said, the decisions that you make come from traversing the grounds by foot—

Collens: Absolutely. Walking around all year long and thinking about locations and waiting till I can have the right sculpture to move into the particular location. And rethinking the permanent collection, about rotating works and moving works that are outdoors to new locations on the [01:12:00] property. Always fascinating—for the public, for myself. Challenging.

End of interview

STORM KING ART CENTER
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

DAVID COLLENS
October 5, 2022
November 7, 2022
November 16, 2022
December 19, 2022
continuation of series from 2018

Interviewed by Sarah Dziedzic
Storm King Oral History 007

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Thank you!

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
October 5, 2022	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Dziedzic: All right. This is Sarah Dziedzic interviewing David Collens for the Storm King Art Center Oral History program. This is picking up from our interviews in 2018, and today is October 5th, 2022. David, I want to start at your beginning. Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up?

Collens: I grew up in New York City in Manhattan, in the Yorkville area of the city. And I went to school in New York for a while before going to the Storm King School for ninth and tenth grade.

Dziedzic: Before you go on, can you talk a little bit about how that happened?

Collens: Well, growing up in New York was really inspirational to me since some of my early memories are my mother taking me to the museums—MoMA, the Whitney, and the Metropolitan Museum—as well as galleries, which were mostly uptown. In those days. I don't think we ventured to Soho, where many galleries were starting to move to at that point in time. But that was certainly important to me, seeing museums and paintings and sculptures from all periods. I didn't have a particular interest in sculpture at that point in time, but I enjoyed going to museums, and that is something that stayed with me through the rest of my life.

Dziedzic: What was your mom's connection to art?

Collens: Oh, it was very interesting because she was an artist—I should say, an amateur artist. She did watercolor painting at the Silvermine School of Art in Connecticut, where we had a house in New Canaan, and she took classes there during the summers. And we still have, my sister and I, her watercolors. But early on, she worked for the Bertha Schaefer Gallery on 57th Street in the Fuller building. And she had the honor of walking Bertha Schaefer's dog. I don't know exactly what she did in the gallery, but she certainly always told us, as children, she was in charge of the dog [laughs], so that was fascinating. But she did work there for a while and was an interior decorator as well at one point in her life. And really didn't collect art, my parents. I was always wondering why they didn't, but I think it was a question of money. Some of their friends had well known impressionist paintings and so forth on their walls, but not my parents. I think they had a Chillida drawing, as I recall, and a few works of art, but that wasn't their forte.

Dziedzic: And what kind of work did your father do?

Collens: My father was an engineer who went to Stanford University for four years, and had his business set up on Great Jones Street and Lafayette, in that neighborhood for many years, and near Cooper Union prior to going to Lafayette Street. He had a building where he manufactured in New York City, which was very unusual.

Dziedzic: That was in the Great Jones and Lafayette area? The manufacturing?

Collens: Yes, which is now so popular and had started, when my father was there, changing. Robert Rauschenberg was in the neighborhood and they wanted to put up better street lights for everybody. They went around as a community of people owning buildings in the area. I'm not sure, as I recall, that Rauschenberg was so interested in all that, but [laughs] there were other artists in the area, clearly. And yes, it was starting to change, with the public theater and other organizations around, in a process of moving more towards the arts.

Dziedzic: How did you get [00:05:00] around from Yorkville? Because that's not an area where there were subways at the time. So where did you go around the city and how did you move around?

Collens: Well, when I went to school downtown at the Grace Church School on Fourth Avenue and 10th Street, I took the bus down Lexington Avenue. And then when I got older, I took the subway down and back. I only thought there was an IRT Lexington Avenue Subway—never realized there were more subways in New York until I was in college, I think, and that you could go to Brooklyn, Queens, other parts of Manhattan. I only knew one line for a long time.

Dziedzic: Yes, I think a lot of kids who go to school in New York City, even today, in the outer boroughs, that can be true for them. So within that, that's still a pretty interesting stretch to be traveling. I know you've said before that you were interested in architecture and that influenced your preferences in art. So what sort of architecture and buildings were you noticing?

Collens: Well, growing up and having a house in New Canaan, where so many mid-century modern houses are, they were open particular weekends a year, usually one or two weekends. And traveling around to see the houses by Marcel Breuer and Philip Johnson, and many other architects inspired me. And living in New York and seeing the Seagram Building by Philip Johnson and Mies van der Rohe, and Lever House by Gordon Bunshaft of SOM, were inspirational early modern buildings that really were very

different, and quality architecture. And I recall that, as well as the Museum of Modern Art, the early buildings at the museum.

Dziedzic: And were there artists that you started to gravitate to as you went to museums or galleries?

Collens: I certainly remember different paintings and sculptures at MoMA. I clearly remember the Calder *Lobster* [*Trap and Fish Tail*] that always hangs in the staircase to this day at MoMA, and the Rousseau painting, and other works that I saw as a child.

Dziedzic: When you were in school, what were some of the subjects or activities that you were interested in?

Collens: Well, I studied American literature and was quite interested in Thoreau and many other writers of that period. I found that fascinating and really did a lot of reading from that particular part of American literature. And I studied art history to a certain extent and continued going to museums as well, but I didn't have a background with a degree in art history.

Dziedzic: Well, you went away for college, right? Can you talk about where you went and how you made that decision?

Collens: Yes, I went to Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire, and it was a very good place to be. It was small at that point in time. I had a car so I could travel to Boston, which was a few hours away, and see museums and go to the Newport Jazz Festival and the Folk Festival during the summers in Rhode Island, which was fascinating in those days as well. So I think continuing to go to art venues was important.

Dziedzic: Yes. And then you also did museum studies as well, didn't you?

Collens: I did. I studied at the Rochester Museum & Science Center. I had a fellowship for a year and a half and moved to Rochester. All my friends thought I was crazy to move to upstate New York. [00:10:00] There was plenty of snow and why would anyone move to upstate New York from New York City? I thought it was a wonderful opportunity to see a different part of the state, which is very large. I had different experiences with the Eastman Center for Photography and the Rochester Museum and so forth.

Dziedzic: So what was it about museums that you were interested in?

Collens: I think I was fascinated by seeing paintings and sculpture—probably less so photography, in those days—unfolding through the generations, and the variety of works that were being done, whether it was the Metropolitan Museum and Old Masters, to more contemporary work at the museums. But I think something stayed in my mind about seeing museums and the works that they were showing, whether it was exhibitions or the permanent collections.

Dziedzic: What was the collection of the Rochester Museum like?

Collens: They had Henry Moore and some other sculptures, and it was a relatively small to good museum. Like all museums, they have expanded today, but it was very nice to see. And I might add, Buffalo, the Albright-Knox, which is a terrific museum, was an hour away, and I'd go to Buffalo to see the Albright-Knox as well.

Dziedzic: What kind of car did you have?

Collens: At that point, I think I had a Chrysler Valiant, and it was during the energy crisis, so I didn't [laughs] use it very much because it was hard to get gasoline, which was all being basically rationed.

Dziedzic: Yes. And you had an internship at the Guggenheim too, right?

Collens: I worked for a summer at the Guggenheim Museum, which I was very interested in doing—a larger museum, of course. I was fascinated by working at a larger museum and seeing how they function with all the different departments, and the politics of a larger museum as well. So that was an interesting summer in 1972. Tom Messer, who was the director, his assistant was reluctant to accept me for the program because I had finished college and I was a few years older than the students that were in, probably, their third or fourth year of college, also volunteers. And I said to Susan Halper, “What do you have to lose if it doesn't work out? I'll leave. But I'm happy and enthusiastic to work.”

So she finally relented, and I had a terrific summer in New York City with meeting people that were in the museum that were artists and photographers working in different departments, and going to different restaurants in New York that we got to know—about 15 or 20 of us—Indian restaurants, Chinese restaurants, and calling our favorite restaurants and going to them via car, and having a wonderful time and experience with people that were in the arts, working at the museums. And also, of course, working at the museum itself, at the Guggenheim, and seeing the Kandinsky exhibition at that point, and doing the checklist for it, and seeing the David Smith *Cubi XXVII* that the museum owns and has had for a long time, a wonderful stainless steel *Cubi*, quite large. And that was an experience for me to see David Smith, one of my early ones.

Dziedzic: A little side step from there—this was also a time when there were exhibitions of conceptual art pushing in different directions. What were your thoughts about that?

Collens: You know, I don't have a clear recollection of seeing some of the more contemporary and modern works at that point in time.

Dziedzic: Okay. [00:15:00] So you were still in college in 1968?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: What was that like for you as a student, a year of so much upheaval and tumult? Did that affect you where you were in college?

Collens: I don't think in New Hampshire I was aware of it as much, being a very rural area, as the rest of the country in urban areas.

Dziedzic: All right. Let's get back to where you left off, with David Smith. Can you talk about seeing his work for the first time?

Collens: I think it would be at the Guggenheim Museum and really being struck by *Cubi XXVII*, which is in their collection and has been for a long time. Just seeing the burnished stainless steel, the abstract form of it, and the scale I found very different and very exciting. And the fact that Smith built the sculpture essentially himself. He did have help, with Leon Pratt and other people that were burnishing the stainless steel the way he wanted it, I think to save time. But he put all the sculptures together and oversaw them.

And, at the Museum of Modern Art, *Australia* was in their collection from 1951, an important early large scale work, which I found fascinating. It's generally out on exhibition, being one of their important sculptures.

Dziedzic: What about it was fascinating to you? I mean, I'm thinking of you seeing a lot of art at this point, even. So what about it was so fascinating?

Collens: Well, I think with *Australia* being an early piece from the 1950s, and welded steel, painted one color, basically, I found the scale of it quite interesting, and the openness of it. And to think that it was, along with *Cubi XXVII*, outdoors at Bolton Landing, where Smith placed 88 sculptures outdoors during his

lifetime—and way before I went to see Storm King—but I found that to be an extraordinary accomplishment.

Dziedzic: Can you talk about going up to Bolton Landing?

Collens: I went there not early, but in the early 1970s. Walking around, there were some sculptures still outdoors. And seeing the storage area in the basement and walking through the house, it was certainly a special and memorable experience to see where David Smith lived and worked.

Dziedzic: How did you find out that you could go up there?

Collens: Well, I got permission when I was doing the exhibition of David Smith—the first exhibition—at Storm King in 1976. Clem Greenberg was the executor of the estate with two other people, and he gave me permission to go up there, and I met someone that was taking care of and keeping an eye on the estate, looking after it and so forth. And so I went up there and walked around. It was early, but I know many other people that were there when Smith was alive, like Mark di Suvero, Dan Budnick, and other artists that were there, Alex Liberman, and other people that were there shortly after David Smith died in 1965, like Bob Murray, who made a film of Bolton Landing at the request of Clem Greenberg, before any of the sculptures were removed.

Dziedzic: You said you'd gone up there in the early—

Collens: —early ‘70s.

Dziedzic: So what about that first time?

Collens: It was, I think, [00:20:00] one of those special art moments. If you're interested in sculpture and the process that David Smith used for creating his sculptures, which was very much like Calder and other artists, working with the materials primarily by himself, and selecting the materials, and using the best stainless steel possible—or steel that he would find or acquire for sculpture and cut and weld. It was a wonderful tradition that Smith started and continued from a European tradition of sculpture.

Dziedzic: And did you just drive up there on your own and peek over the fence? [laughs]

Collens: I drove up there. I think it was winter time, and it was tough driving in the dead of winter up in the Bolton Landing area. I didn't have four-wheel drive and could be slippery roads, that's for sure.

Dziedzic: Did you drive from the city the whole way up there?

Collens: I drove from, I believe, Storm King up to Bolton Landing, and probably around four hours to get there.

Dziedzic: So were you able to see the sculptures in snow?

Collens: Some of them that were still outdoors. Other sculptures had been taken away, so the fields were not full of sculptures the way Smith left them.

Dziedzic: When you saw David Smith for the first time it was indoors?

Collens: They were indoors, yes.

Dziedzic: And so when did you first get interested in outdoor sculpture and thinking about the potential of that?

Collens: Really, that started—I mean, I'd seen the Museum of Modern Art garden and so forth, which is very confining, with more traditional sculptures sitting in the garden by Rodin and Matisse and many others, Picasso, Henry Moore and so forth, but the materials were more traditional. And the MoMA shows their David Smith stainless steel *Cubi* outdoors, at this point in time, in the garden. And the Guggenheim shows their *Cubi* underneath the parapet of the Frank Lloyd Wright building in New York on occasion, and it's traveling now to many other places where the Guggenheim is. But I think, yes, seeing statues in New York, and occasionally an outdoor sculpture but in confined spaces.

Dziedzic: Well, let's talk about your first arrival at Storm King then. What brought you up there, first of all?

Collens: I first saw Storm King because one of the curators, Louise Svendsen, said to me, “If you want to see David Smith, go to the Storm King Art Center. They have many David Smiths. They're outdoors.” It was a time when museums, the large museums, might have had David Smith, but they did not exhibit his work and cherish it like they do today, and it was much harder to see.

So I my made my way out to the Storm King Art Center, which was more difficult to try to find it. The road signs were very few, and people in the area didn't really know it because they were not going there in their early years. I did eventually find it, and it was an eye-opening experience to see sculpture, driving up the main road with the maple trees, what has been the main driveway since the 1935 house was constructed on top of the hill. And there were many sculptures on the right- and left-hand side of the

straight part of the [00:25:00] driveway as you went into Storm King. It was much smaller in those days, and to see a variety of sculptures, on either side of the driveway, of all colors and aesthetics being exhibited by different artists and materials was really an extraordinary eye-opening experience. I'd never seen sculpture in that quantity before, abstract sculpture.

I certainly got out of the car on top of the hill. There were far fewer places to park, and the attendance was much smaller. I walked around the landscape that was being used at that point in time and had been developed, and examined the outdoor sculptures in the fields. And there were two parts to this exhibition that my predecessor, Dorothy Mayhall, who was director of Storm King, did over several years. I've never forgotten the range of sculpture that I saw by artists that I didn't know from all over the United States that were sent to Storm King. And they were on loan for anywhere from a year to eight years or more for this exhibition.

Dziedzic: And what were the sculptures that were still at Storm King today that you saw at that time? Do you recall? Just in that area there.

Collens: Coming up the driveway? That's an interesting question. What I recall from the permanent collection sculptures, on the right-hand side of the main driveway, the south side, would be David von Schlegell's untitled sculpture, the three open cubes that he created in 1972, the first commissioned sculpture at Storm King when it was a cornfield. I think they, early on, changed it over from a cornfield to just grass, probably to be hayed for farming and cut for bales of hay, I would guess. And also the Bob Grosvenor untitled sculpture as well, from 1974, another commissioned sculpture, the second one at Storm King that Ted Ogden commissioned. And those were in place. And on the left-hand side of the main driveway was the Alexander Liberman, *Adonai*, the sculpture that was brought from Connecticut. And it was large scale. Oil tanks that were underground 20 years were used, and above ground—unpainted—but the scale was really quite large that Liberman was using, and it was acquired quickly and installed on the left-hand side of the main driveway, where it is to this day.

Dziedzic: And the sculptures that were on loan, can you describe how those were placed throughout those two areas?

Collens: I should add, Tal Streeter *Endless Column* was also in the same place as it is today, and has been part of our collection for many years. Prior to that, it was shown just next to the Metropolitan Museum in New York City on 79th Street, just inside Central Park, for a period of time before coming up to Storm King, and it's part of the permanent collection. So that was in place, and those are the four sculptures that were permanent and in place, and *Sculpture in the Fields* (1973–76) took place throughout the field area on either side of those large-scale sculptures. And there were approximately a

hundred sculptures that were scattered around in the fields at one point in time and quite close to each other. It was being [00:30:00] added to over a period of time since there were two parts to the exhibition.

Dziedzic: And by added to, do you really just mean added to? Not reevaluated and some leave and others come, but more and more?

Collens: I think it was added to where the sculptures stayed from part one to part two. Probably a few pieces departed, but not many. It was a really a substantial number of sculptures that were in the fields by the time the second part took place.

Dziedzic: Maybe we can talk about the good things about that exhibition that you first saw, and then some of the things that you didn't like that maybe got your wheels turning. So what were some of the good things, to oversimplify? I think, for example, you said it was a lot of artists you'd never seen.

Collens: Yes, the variety of artists that were selected from all over the country, that certainly was fascinating. I don't know what the criteria for selecting them was. And just the sheer quantity of sculpture––to see abstract sculpture in one place was really very different.

Dziedzic: And then, what were some of the things that you didn't love about that exhibition?

Collens: Well, I think probably the quantity of sculpture was too large. And then I think the selection could have been more restrained, and fewer artists. And I'm not sure, really, the criteria for selecting the works to this day.

Dziedzic: There's a few photos of this in the archives that I looked at, and for me it almost seemed like a lot of the sculptures were maybe a similar height with similar space between them. Is that accurate, or is that just the photo that I happened to see?

Collens: No, I mean, I remember walking through it and certainly going up the driveway to the Museum Building, but I think there was general spacing between the sculptures, and there was a variety of sizes and forms that the sculptures certainly had. I don't know what the criteria was for selecting and positioning them in the fields.

Dziedzic: And when you first went up to Storm King, was that 1973?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: Did you work there for the summer? It seemed like you worked there for a brief time and then came back. Can you explain how all that happened?

Collens: Yes, I worked at Storm King in the summer of ‘73, and I knew Dorothy Mayhall when she worked at the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut. And since my parents had a house in New Canaan, not far away, I came up with the idea that I'd like to work at the Aldrich and see what I could do there and help out. I got there too late because they were just taking down an exhibition and trucking it out, so they didn't need any extra hands at that point in time. I stayed in touch with what was happening at the Aldrich, but nothing worked out.

I happened to go to Storm King for the first time in 1973 and saw it, and Dorothy Mayhall had moved to Storm King Art Center from the Aldrich and was the director at Storm King. I saw her again and I got hired to help install sculpture, mow lawn, pour some concrete, that type of thing, and work with the artists. So that was very enjoyable for the summer of 1973. I did that for a while. Then I had a fellowship from the New York State Council on the Arts and I moved to Rochester in 1974 for a little over a year, [00:35:00] and then came back to Storm King.

Dziedzic: And that was your fellowship?

Collens: That was my fellowship,

Dziedzic: Did you know that Dorothy Mayhall was at Storm King when you went there?

Collens: I don't think so, no. I had not followed her career.

Dziedzic: Or followed her physically! [laughs] So you said you got to work with the artists a little bit. What was that like? Who were the artists that you got to work with?

Collens: I remember Peter Forakis, who passed away several years ago. Again, there were sculptures in the fields at Storm King and the Forakis was, for example, near the area where the Calder *Arch* is today. It was a large wood sculpture that looked like a fan. Many pieces of wood that were put together. It was like a fan that was held together by bolts and a steel rod, as I recall, with a square gravel base around the sculpture.

Dziedzic: Was it constructed at Storm King?

Collens: Yes. A lot of the sculptures were constructed at Storm King by the artists and were there for a period of time, for the exhibition. And there didn't seem to be a lot of maintenance going on with them as well.

Dziedzic: Did you meet Peter Stern, or Bill Rutherford, or Ted Ogden at that time?

Collens: I met Ted Ogden, as I recall, but I didn't meet Bill Rutherford or Peter Stern at that point in time.

Dziedzic: Okay, so tell me about coming back in 1974 after your fellowship in Rochester.

Collens: So, I returned to Storm King in the fall of 1974, and it was October, actually, when I started working at Storm King. A few weeks later, Ted Ogden passed away. I'd met him briefly when I returned, and saw him again in 1974. But Peter Stern took over the full responsibilities of Storm King when Ted Ogden, his business partner and father-in-law, passed away in the fall of 1974.

Dziedzic: That sounds like a very tumultuous time for Storm King, actually.

Collens: It was. I think it was clear that Peter was going to assume the full responsibilities of the Art Center. And I think at that point he was working with Dorothy Mayhall, who was director, and that was probably a difficult period since they had, I believe, a different sense of the direction of Storm King at that point in time.

Dziedzic: So when you were hired as assistant director, was that a position that was advertised or did you come back and they knew you and—?

Collens: No, I came back. Dorothy hired me before I came back—or said she'd like to have me return after the fellowship. I came back and we worked out all the details to start working at Storm King full time with Ted Ogden.

Dziedzic: Where did you live when you were working? When you worked that summer before, and then this assistant director position seems like settling down—so where were you living?

Collens: Well, during the summer of 1973, I'd stayed in the Studio Building. There was, I think, a bed there—a cot or something—because I didn't want to commute back and forth to New York, and I didn't know how many days a week I'd be working, so I just did my overnights there for a period of time. And in New York, there was always my mother's apartment to stay at. That worked out well, commuting back and forth that way. And when I started working at Storm King [00:40:00] full time in 1974, the apartment

on the second floor of the Museum Building that one of the caretakers, Bernard Schultz, and his family were living in for many years—and he was a caretaker, took care of the basic needs of Storm King with a very small staff—and his wife and two sons stayed there. And it was, I think, modernized by Joyce and Bill Rutherford. I moved in to the apartment after they did a modernization to the kitchen and other areas. And I stayed there for a while until I moved to the Gordon House.

Dziedzic: Which building is the Studio Building?

Collens: The Studio Building is where the Buildings and Grounds team, Mike Seaman's group, works out of, the garage.

Dziedzic: That's what I was thinking. So kind of rough and ready? [laughs]

Collens: Always has been!

Dziedzic: Okay. That's what I thought.

Collens: I think it got the term Studio Building because Dorothy Mayhall, who was an artist—a sculptor—used it for a studio, actually creating her wood sculptures there and splattering the paint all over the floor. So it was like a Jackson Pollock painting, looking at the floor of the Studio Building. There's still remnants of paint on the floor from those years. But I think that's how it acquired that name.

Dziedzic: So I want to ask a little bit about the—you mentioned a dynamic between Peter and Dorothy Mayhall, but in the context of you coming on as assistant director, did you get a sense when Dorothy contacted you that that was at all part of the reason why she wanted an assistant director?

Collens: I think she really worked by herself until then. And there was Bernard Schultz, who was taking care of lawns around the Museum Building, and installation of some sculptures and so forth. A much smaller organization, and one has to put one's thoughts into Storm King being much smaller in physical area, and with a collection and landscape that were less developed. Hard to imagine today. But there were significant differences between the way Storm King looks today versus in the early years of the 1970s, of course. And I think she realized she needed some help. My first jobs were to do some indoor painting—painting of galleries and repairing walls that were either sheet rock or plaster walls. And I wouldn't say that was my specialty.

Dziedzic: [laughs] Part of museum administration.

Collens: Yes. I rolled up my sleeves and did it and smiled.

Dziedzic: So let's say Dorothy needed some help with a little bit of everything, it sounds like—–

Collens: I think so.

Dziedzic: —with the big, big project of being the director. What did you think that you could bring to the place?

Collens: Well, for me, it was really a learning experience to see what was happening in an outdoor museum, first of all. So different than an urban museum. And yes, exhibitions were being done for the two floors of the galleries that Dorothy used, like we do for the most part today, using both floors. And also curating shows for the outdoor space, and that's what I think fascinated me. Working with [00:45:00] the artists and what happens in the outdoor space I found quite interesting, and the interaction with the artists.

Dziedzic: Now, to me, I was having a hard time grasping how many different exhibitions were happening every year, and also, as I mentioned before, how many artists there were. So what was that like from your perspective as assistant director, with—it looked like there were three or four exhibitions each year and things changing all the time? It's hard for me to imagine, given today, when I know how much effort and time goes into fewer [exhibitions]. I know there's a quantity versus quality argument to be made but what was that like from your perspective? With so many artists and so many exhibitions?

Collens: I think the sculptures were coming in at a particular rate for *Sculpture in the Fields*, and maybe, as we said before, a few going out for different reasons. But they were coming in and Dorothy would select them and bring them from the New York area or California to the Art Center, so there was something happening always with *Sculpture in the Fields*, increasing in size for the most part. And the exhibitions in the Museum Building, I don't recall getting particularly involved with the indoor exhibitions and the large paintings coming in. I do recall seeing the large paintings and some of the David Smiths from the permanent collection in the galleries. And I don't remember exactly when the five David Smiths started staying indoors on a regular basis that are still in the Museum Building because they're more fragile and smaller and some of them are painted and can't be outdoors anymore. So I'm not sure exactly what date that happened. Always curious about that. But I think that evolved gradually because all the David Smiths were outdoors when they were first purchased by Storm King in 1967.

Dziedzic: Were you working more directly with Peter at this time?

Collens: The early part of my experience was working with Dorothy and seeing what she was doing with all aspects of Storm King, whether it was *Sculpture in the Fields*, the exhibitions in the building, working with artists, press releases. I was really just absorbing all this and fascinated by it, and what her processes were for doing all this, and her thoughts for moving to different exhibitions in the future.

Dziedzic: Eventually she left soon after you started, within a year or so?

Collens: Yes, it was probably a year later, I think in 1975. Fall of '75, if I'm not mistaken.

Dziedzic: From the pieces of information that I have, it seems like there was some tension around that, maybe between her and Bill Rutherford. I don't know where it extended from there, but can you describe the context of that?

Collens: That is challenging. [laughs] I would say that Dorothy's philosophy and thoughts for future exhibitions at Storm King and Storm King's development were not in line with Peter Stern or Bill Rutherford. And there was clearly a very different thought process going on. For example, 1976 was going to be the bicentennial exhibition that Dorothy was organizing for Storm King, and she went out and bought somewhere different signs from [00:50:00] gasoline stations. Where she got them, I have no clue––we still have them in a barn, which we should probably at some point deaccession [laughs]. But I mean, an Esso sign, Texaco, and as she told me about her ideas for the exhibition, they were going to be attached to trees in the woods, and you'd go around in a wooded area at Storm King and see an old fashioned Esso sign or Texaco sign and so forth. And I think she was going to develop the exhibition off of that type of thought. I don't know what her final ideas were for the exhibition, but she did purchase the signs to be placed in the woods that you would randomly come across.

Dziedzic: That's a great example, David [laughs]. I mean, it's interesting because the way that Bill Rutherford describes Ted Ogden's approach is very deeply invested in farming and that kind of American tradition. And then of course he has his business, Star Expansion, and there's some kind of deeply American narrative to that. But I can see how the signs were not congruent with the Art Center part, which I think was always connected, but very different in style.

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: Speaking of Bill Rutherford, what did it sound like to be at Storm King in these early years?

Collens: I thought it was very creative, as it still is today, but in a very different way with Ted Ogden, who loved to move earth and gravel and shape hillsides, and roads like Bunny Road, the two farm ponds that

he created, planted the allée of 212 pin oak trees and the original maple allée with trees. He was always out there getting things done using the farm process, as you were pointing out, and farm staff, when possible, to execute projects at Storm King with outside people as well because it was a very large project and process, and needing heavy machinery. And so he would have to hire out different people to do different jobs to move the gravel and create some of the roads and ponds and so forth. He didn't have the in-house staff, even with the farm operating, to do it all.

Dziedzic: So when you would wake up on any given day, would you look outside and see bulldozers coming up the road and local people coming to help with some project? Or was it a little more coordinated that that?

Collens: I think a little more coordinated—probably not in the earlier years. I missed the first 14 years, I might add, and I think maybe that's when a lot of this took place. But even when I was there, the farm was providing manure for putting in the fields where the Grosvenor and the von Schlegell is, and shaping the fields so people could walk in them and have proper water drainage. It was really a farm process and Bill Rutherford mentions this throughout, that Storm King was built on a shoestring budget because of using help and materials from the farm to back up what was being done.

Dziedzic: And I think they're pretty transparent about the tax break aspect too, of the agricultural land, and a lot of what Ted did in terms of philanthropy as well.

Collens: Yes. So there was, I think, different things that took place and overlapping of different staffs and so forth, and building the Art Center very different than other outdoor museums that have been built on much larger budgets. It was farm property, and the shaping of it and using manure and so forth. It really was a farm process.

Dziedzic: My understanding is that Bill Rutherford and also Ted were always taking actions in the present for this goal 15 years in the future. Roughly like that. So when you were there 1974, '75, did you have a sense of that 15-year-future, what that vision was?

Collens: I think there was always the thought of what was going to happen in the future regarding larger staff, and placing the staff in different houses for security. We had many more people at one point living on premises, keeping an eye on the property, as we still do to this day, but we've converted the houses to other uses. I think there was always looking to a future with a larger staff and transitioning to more of a public institution, and having different things in place whether it was parking, bathrooms, and so forth.

Dziedzic: I did want to ask about, especially when Peter took over after Ted passed away, that goal of making it more of a public museum. It was something that he'd said explicitly was a goal of his. You mentioned the parking and bathrooms and things like this, but what was it about the art collection and how that was being shaped, or the exhibitions, that was in line with that goal of a more public museum?

Collens: Well, I think I'd define their earlier years as Ted Ogden being really the one overseeing Storm King. Peter was making sure the paperwork and all the books were in proper order. And it was started as a nonprofit 501(c)(3), and there were different levels of being a nonprofit, and I think Peter wanted to expand the category of Storm King being nonprofit during his stewardship of the Art Center, which he did. We certainly had a board of trustees, and that was expanded. Early board members Cynthia Polsky and Carter Brown, for example, besides family members and a few others. But they were the first two, outside of family members, as I recall.

As far as the collection goes, the great breakthrough moment early on was the David Smith collection. Ted Ogden went to Bolton Landing a year after David died, and someone said, "You should go look at David Smith's sculptures. They might work out for you at Storm King, and they have been outdoors at Bolton Landing in the Adirondacks," and so forth. And so Ted Ogden went up there in 1966, 1967, and selected what were a total of 14 works actually. Thirteen went to Storm King and Ted Ogden kept one for his personal collection, *Arc in Quotes*, which was a smaller size sculpture, but Smith had it outdoors. Ted Ogden kept it in his private collection for a number of years, and at some point wanted a Calder—thought that was a very important artist to have—and he traded his David Smith in for a Calder at the Zabriskie Gallery in New York, and that was our first Calder in the Storm King collection, which in turn, Storm King traded, plus cash, to buy *The Arch*, which came to Storm King as a loan in 1978 [01:00:00], and was acquired in the early 1980s.

Then, the Calder that was in the collection, *Seven Foot Beastie*, which now has a different name from research that has been done by the Calder Foundation, immediately was given to the Whitney Museum collection, where they have a hundred Calder sculptures, thanks to Jean and Howard Lipman, Peter Lipman's parents, and other collectors. So that's where the Calder that Storm King owned for many years—when we turned it in, it was given to the Whitney by the family, where it is today.

Dziedzic: I guess that's maybe not a 15-year plan, but a 15-year life cycle of a decision that Ted made.

Collens: But I think that was his great move to buy the David Smiths. No one expected him to buy 14—13 went to Storm King, as I said—and he selected them, which was really quite extraordinary. It's a wonderful collection of bronzes, stainless steel, unpainted steel, painted steel. And it's an important collection that represents the last ten years of David Smith's career—I'd say the more mature period, in a

way, larger scale. And seeing them outdoors when Ted Ogden went to Bolton Landing was inspirational for Storm King, for sure.

Dziedzic: I want to ask about you and Peter and Bill Rutherford. This was something else that Peter had said in his oral history from the late ‘90s, which was about how “there were often strong disagreements” between the three of you, but not necessarily “harsh words.” So I want to ask if that seems like an accurate depiction to you, and maybe if you can think of an example of something that you were dealing with in the ‘70s where there were disagreements that eventually got settled.

Collens: I think when Peter took over Storm King and had the full responsibility of it—and I might add, did a terrific job and took it to the next step—he didn't want to do everything. He wanted to leave other parts of it for another generation to move Storm King forward. Artistically, what Peter understood was that the scale of sculpture at Storm King needed to increase. And the David Smiths are inspirational and terrific and are the major collection by one artist that we have to this day, and I think inspire all of us at Storm King with the way Smith placed the sculptures at Bolton Landing at his home in fields with 88 sculptures. And Storm King, at that point in time, when they came into the collection, started to accelerate with more outdoor sculpture.

And I think Ted Ogden realized he wanted to make his own mistakes, and some sculptures and artists that he selected would be terrific, others might fade away. And he commissioned von Schlegell, Grosvenor, bought the large Liberman, bought the David Smith collection, and to a certain extent, realized that scale was important for Storm King. I think when it transitioned to Peter, he thought that it was really critical that Storm King could be a very nice garden with smaller scale sculptures, but that's not our landscape. And Peter understood the landscape with Bill Rutherford and it was really a collaboration of different people working on the landscape. Yes, Bill Rutherford is the landscape architect of record, but it wasn't Bill selecting the projects year in and year out. I think it was a common agreement about what was being done and moving it forward [01:05:00] over a period of years, so it was very different than other landscape architects that had full control and so forth. I think it was a shared control by everybody, and working together to create the landscape over 45 years, which is really an extraordinary amount of time.

I mean, year in and year out, doing landscape, and the public having to put up with moving around in different areas because we were landscaping during the full season—fair weather season—at Storm King, and that was off limits because we were moving gravel in, shaping it, grassing it over. And the artists also that had to move sculpture, like Mark di Suvero was asked year after year to move sculptures so we could landscape. He got a little tired of it after a while, but generally had a good sense of humor [laughs] about it. And I think Peter realizing Storm King is different—we're between these two valleys with

two mountains, Storm King Mountain in the east, Schunnemunk Mountain in the west, and we have this spectacular landscape. It's not just garden-size sculpture that we should be collecting, but it's a landscape that's so extraordinary, and let's continue developing that. Let's continue collecting larger scale sculpture that really fits into Storm King, not just large for the sake of large, but selecting carefully artists that would fit in to Storm King and be part of a sculpture museum. And that's not for every artist. It's not large for just for the sake of being large.

Dziedzic: Right. And maybe, if I can glean from that, maybe Dorothy Mayhall was looking at who should be shown now, who is significant in contemporary art? Bring them up here, we'll put them outside. And it sounds like Peter's approach was very different. Like you just said, it's not for every artist.

Collens: I think so. He was more discreet. Talking to some of the artists that were collected in the 1970s, I'm not sure how they heard about Storm King—and they were putting their sculptures on trucks for Mountainville, New York! How that quite developed, I'm not clear. They heard from friends that, oh, there's Storm King Art Center, it has a sculpture show, send your sculpture there or send the director some basic information and see if she selects your work? I think it was a very kind of loose open situation for some of the California artists and how they heard about it, as I mentioned, through friends or saw something that was an open call for sculptures, like Gerry Walburg, Kenneth Capps.

Dziedzic: I did want to ask about—I saw Michael Heizer's name on this this checklist from 1974. Do you recall what that artwork was?

Collens: Oh, very clearly.

It started really with Robert Smithson, who came to Storm King in the early 1970s before I arrived. And he was one of the great sculptors working with landforms—land sculptors—in this country. And he came to Storm King and did two proposals for the Art Center, which, I believe, the [Holt/Smithson] Foundation owns—or they sold the drawings to different collectors in Europe and other places. I started doing some research on this. Dorothy Mayhall borrowed the drawings many years ago and we had them in Gallery 2, stacked up on the walls, salon style, the Storm King projects that were never executed, because unfortunately Smithson died in an airplane accident looking at one of his sculptures in Texas. [01:10:00] It was early on in Storm King's history. They would've been, I think, very difficult to execute. One had to do with the Moodna Creek and widening the Moodna Creek with large machinery and really making a semi-circle on either side of the creek, from what I recall, and letting the water go into these areas, and rock, and so forth. And there were very strict rules, even in the early 1970s, about what you could do with rivers and streams, and widening them and changing direction. And adding to streams, for better or worse, it

was a very difficult thing to do, and it's much harder today, even, with stringent regulations in different states.

The other project, I think, was below the hillside from the top of the hill where the parking lot is and making these concentric circles out of bluestone from Woodstock, New York that were, a hundred years ago, used for sidewalks in New York City—there are very few left in New York City sidewalks—but putting them up on end and making these three or four circles. And we've done a lot of landscaping in that area since then, so it would've been very difficult to do either project at Storm King in the early days. But it did remain with us—a great idea to have an earth sculpture at Storm King by an artist at some point in time.

We looked into Michael Heizer and did a study with him that we paid for, and didn't receive any of the materials after we declined to move ahead with it, so we have no record of it in particular. I'm sure Heizer does, as part of his archive. But he did come to Storm King and made a proposal for an earthwork that would extend basically from the south parking lot area all the way across Bunny Road to the New York Thruway, about 1200 feet in length and about 19 feet high. It was triangular in shape like the east building of the National Gallery, the overall form of his sculpture, and that's what he was proposing, with very steep walls. And we looked into it and couldn't figure out how to really build it so it would be solid for the future, and drainage, and also be safe for people to walk on because that was one aspect of it, was to have people walking on the top of it and not fall off or anything. So we just couldn't figure this out. It was more challenging than what we were used to, and we gave it a serious try, but we just couldn't come up with the right methods for building this and preserving it, and building the right foundation for it so it would stay in good shape. Because it's not just building something that is so large—you have to really have drainage and other support structures there to hold this together. And the safety of these very steep walls became very difficult.

Dziedzic: You said it was 1200 feet of wall?

Collens: Oh, it was 1200 feet in length and about 19 feet high, and it was just like a steep drop off, and to grass that over and maintain it was extremely difficult without having it erode, and public safety.

Dziedzic: What year was that? Around what year?

Collens: Probably in the ‘80s, I would think. I mean, Heizer came over and—I went out to see his project in Nevada, what is now called *City*, that's open to the to the public if you sign up. But I saw it under construction.

Dziedzic: In the ‘80s?

Collens: I think in the ‘80s, yes. I’d have to figure out exactly when I went there with my wife [1986].

Dziedzic: And so that work that he had in 1974 in *Sculpture in the Fields*, what work was that?

Collens: I'm not sure. Definitely in the *Sculpture in the Fields* in 1974?

Dziedzic: He's on the checklist here, Michael Heizer in 1974, but there weren't any photographs of it, so I wondered if you recalled what that work was.

Collens: No. I wonder if it really was realized or if it didn't come off the list maybe because it didn't come up.

Dziedzic: Another question for Heizer archives.

Collens: [laughs] Heizer archives and the Storm King archives. [Note: no documentation exists in the Storm King archives of a work by Heizer in this exhibition.]

Dziedzic: Yes. All right. Let's get back to the ‘70s here. You said that there were some things that Peter wanted to leave for the next generation. Was there a tangible list of what those things were?

Collens: Yes, I think he always spoke about expanding visitorship and marketing for the next generation because he thought of Bill Rutherford, himself—Peter—and myself continuing to build the collection with a larger scale selection of sculpture, continuing the landscape, doing some marketing. Yes, we were interested in getting into the major papers at the time—*Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, a few other places, art magazines—and having a certain visitation, and people were coming and telling their friends about it. But there wasn't heavy advertising or anything to come up, and social media has just changed everything, no doubt about it. But we did move in certain directions to be part of the art world, for sure, and try to get reviews by the best people that could review exhibitions. And I think we were successful in starting to bring a larger group of people to Storm King. But it really, I think, diversified during John Stern's stewardship of Storm King.

Dziedzic: And Peter was focused on building the collection, and building the trustees and donors?

Collens: Building the trustees. Donors was—I think if you'd like to give, that'd be excellent, but I don't think that was his forte to ask trustees to make donations to Storm King, or there wasn't a given dollar

amount that one had to make to the Art Center each year like there is now. That's what early trustees say. Trustees helped out with projects, but it wasn't that formal.

Herb Schultz was hired to start the fundraising effort part-time, and so he started moving in that direction and cultivating trustees, and introduced trustees to what it really meant to be a trustee of Storm King and what the responsibilities were. But I think it was an interim step to doing fundraising ourselves, which started really with Rachel Coker a decade ago, having our own fundraising team. I think Herb was just an intermediate step [01:20:00] to move in that direction. But that was not the real focus of Storm King at that point in time. I think it was building landscape, the collection, having more people—not denying anybody to come, but very different than today.

Dziedzic: Yes. I wanted to ask where your office was or when you first got an office?

Collens: Well, Dorothy Mayhall's office was in Gallery 6 where the David Smith collection is sitting right now, or exhibited. She just had a chain going across the door because you went up two steps and there was a little chain saying "private" or something. And that was her office with the same desk that's in Nora's office. It was upstairs at one point and dismantled and taken eventually downstairs. And the bookshelves—because that's where the library was also, in her office, around all the walls—basically were dismantled and put into what is now our library that used to be the kitchen. So I got a carpenter to dismantle them in Gallery 6 because they were quite high—really needed a ladder to get up to the upper portion of the bookshelves—and adjusted them to the kitchen area, which is now our primary library still. So that's where offices started and certainly stopped. I mean, I didn't use an office upstairs for any length of time because it was more important as exhibit space than having an office space there.

Dziedzic: Okay. I want to ask about your first show at Storm King, the *David Smith* exhibition in 1976. Was there always a plan that that was going to be the exhibition that year? Or was that something that you decided or pushed for when you became director?

Collens: No, with the plan change from Dorothy Mayhall's plan for the bicentennial exhibition—

Dziedzic: —so that was <u>the</u> exhibition that she had planned? The Americana?

Collens: Yes, I'd have to think about this more, but now that you mention it, Sarah, there were the gasoline station signs, and I think there was going to be folk art, and just a cross section of work in the building coming right up to 1976, I guess.

Dziedzic: Whose idea was it to show David Smith instead?

Collens: Oh, it was my idea. I put it forward to Peter Stern when we started working together. And we weren't going to follow Dorothy's idea for the show that she would've created, which was very different. And maybe that was fine as well, but we didn't understand her vision, or she didn't share her full vision with us, so I think it was necessary to change to what we thought was a more important and an appropriate show for Storm King. And we really pioneered with the Smith exhibition for different reasons at the Art Center.

Dziedzic: We did talk about that a bit in our interview in 2018, and I have a couple follow up questions to that. What was the discussion around opening up the gallery area? To kind of explain where my questions are coming from, suddenly there's a change in staff, there's a change in exhibition, and then you want to tear a lot of wood down from the gallery area. [laughs] So it strikes me as a lot of changes in 1976. So what were the discussions around the rehabbing of the Museum Building?

Collens: It all started with the idea [01:25:00] that the galleries, for the past several years, were used really as just indoor galleries, white cube spaces that you'd see in any gallery anywhere, whether it was the first floor or the second floor of the building. Dorothy Mayhall had shown a lot of large scale paintings in particular in Gallery 1, which was the largest space in the building, still is, for exhibiting. And you could put some paintings of substantial size into Gallery 1, less so in Gallery 2 and 3. But on the first floor, Gallery 1, 2, and 3 only had white walls to show paintings, works on paper, whatever it was—flat work—in them.

When I decided to do the David Smith show, I started looking at the building and I was interested in doing David Smith outdoors and connecting to the indoor galleries, and that wasn't possible with all the white walls covering the French doors on the first floor of the building. So I came up with the vision of getting a carpenter and opening all the French doors so you could see out from the Museum Building and vice versa if there was an exhibition surrounding the building on both sides, the south and the east side of the building. So Peter and I were in full agreement about doing this and we proceeded to get a carpenter and move forward with opening all the space so we could look out the French doors and connect landscape and the Museum Building on the first floor. The second floor, there were plywood windows that were installed in some places that were maybe less attractive to look out, and I didn't think that was necessary. So I took out the plywood windows to increase the views out of the building from the second floor as well. And there were maybe two or three locations where there were plywood windows in the building on the second floor.

So I just wanted to make physical and visual connection between the building and the landscape for exhibition purposes. The *David Smith* exhibition of 1976 was the first exhibition that used the building and

landscape in that way. I mean, we do it all the time now, but we adapted the building and changed it for the purpose that we're still doing all these years later, and very successfully with different exhibitions. The *David Smith* exhibition was also the first exhibition, because of the complexity of it, that changed every two months, with a major change to the exhibition indoors—closing the building so we could make the indoor changes to the exhibition with drawings, paintings, photographs of Bolton Landing—and then reopen it with a new exhibition. So it was broken into three exhibitions indoors and some outdoor changes as well.

The criteria for the exhibition, because there had been other David Smith exhibitions by large museums, for me, was selecting work that had not been on public exhibition, whether they're owned by museums or private collectors. I was after borrowing works from private collectors that had not been seen before as well as from museums. So I didn't want to bring out, for example, *Australia*, that was constantly on exhibition at MoMA. Wonderful sculpture, but I didn't want to borrow it and pay for bringing into Storm King what you could see in New York City at MoMA. It was one of their prize David Smiths, and they have now many David Smiths, like most museums. But that's not [01:30:00] what I was interested in, even though I thought it was a terrific sculpture. I really focused on work that had been sitting in storage at museums, and I found that. For example, from the Metropolitan Museum, one of their sculptures had been in storage for 14 years and hadn't been on exhibition. I think it's a *Tanktotem*. So I brought that to Storm King, and lo and behold, you see it on a regular basis at the Metropolitan on public exhibition these days.

So everything's changed. Smith is very much a sculptor that's sought after by museums and private collections I borrowed from as well, from different collectors that lent me their drawings, spray paintings, sculptures, and so forth that had not been on public exhibition either. And that's how I put this show together, as well as the Estate of David Smith, borrowing different works when Clem Greenberg was the executor of the estate, before Becca and Candida Smith took over.

Dziedzic: At that time, how did you find out about works that were owned in collections that were in storage or off view?

Collens: I really used books and expanded to people I knew who were very familiar with David Smith sculptures and his work to find private collections that would be willing to lend me their works for this exhibition. And I wasn't a known quantity to anybody. Storm King wasn't either! They'd heard about this museum out in the country with 13 David Smiths, and they'd never been there. And they read about it in the *New York Times* because Grace Glueck wrote an article in 1967 about Storm King Art Center purchasing 13 David Smith sculptures, which still is the largest purchase from the Estate of David Smith to this day. And I took my materials I'd put together—we had a catalog from our permanent collection

that's still in the archives. I think I gave out many and sent many out to museums and private collectors, and went around convincing people [laughs] that I should be borrowing their wonderful David Smiths for Storm King.

And people were very agreeable, both museums and private collectors. And that was the basis of the exhibition over six months, and changing every two months and major changes to indoors. So that's how I accomplished it. And I did it because of my admiration for David Smith. I had plenty of time to research this, and I didn't expect—my motivation really wasn't for the *New York Times* or other magazines or journals to come to Storm King and review it, which happened with John Russell from the *New York Times,* the head art critic who came out to Storm King to review the exhibition. We had some, I guess, "marketing," one would call it, but it was really my putting it out there to newspapers, magazines. We didn't have someone formally doing this. And there was an exhibition catalog that was very basic because all the photographs of the sculptures and so forth, drawings, were already in major publications, so I didn't have the time to do that. I focused on the exhibition indoors and outdoors and really doing this spectacular exhibition at Storm King. And yes, John Russell reviewed it and other people as well and gave it terrific reviews.

Dziedzic: Did you pitch it in any way as bicentennial-related?

Collens: Didn't matter to me. Had nothing to do with it. I mean, it was my interest in David Smith. I might add, I'd never done an exhibition in my life before. My credit was helping out when I was in Rochester, New York with a costume exhibition. [01:35:00] I was helping out with that, so that's where my [laughs] background was for doing a major exhibition of an artist. But I did the lighting, the installation, everything, And we accomplished it.

Dziedzic: Yes. And it strikes me as being actually appropriate to the bicentennial to make the changes to the building that you did because that was a time when there was, for the first time, some kind of adaptive reuse of buildings, showcasing the historical features when you could, and utilizing them for a new purpose, not just covering them up.

Collens: I think improving—and really, eventually with Joyce Rutherford, redoing—the sheetrock walls to what they are now on the first floor, preserving all the woodwork, the paneling, that is on the first floor. And the walls—the white walls, which is neutral for any art objects—could be taken off at any point for reestablishing the original paneling, exposing it. And we did a lot of restoration work when Joyce Rutherford designed the walls for the first floor of the building. We went throughout the building and cleaned the natural woodwork, painted where appropriate, and so forth, and really started taking care of the interior of the building, which people think is fascinating. And the Smith exhibition also moved Storm

King in the direction of doing primarily sculpture exhibitions in the building that are associated with the landscape outdoors and connected to it. So there were many firsts with the 1976 exhibition of David Smith for Storm King in different ways.

Dziedzic: And who helped move and place the sculptures?

Collens: I think I got people from Star Expansion to help out, plus the small staff at Storm King. But really it was a very new experience. I did all the registrar work and so forth. It was a challenge. We just didn't have the staff and we were borrowing from major museums and collectors, so it was pioneering in all ways.

Dziedzic: Yes. And high stakes.

Collens: Yes, absolutely.

Dziedzic: When you were working with the Smith sculptures in Storm King's collection for this exhibition, what kind of thoughts did you have at the time about the maintenance and conservation needs of those sculptures? You did mention seeing that there was some neglect here and there with some of the sculptures that were outdoors. So let's focus on the Smith sculptures specifically.

Collens: Yes, generally sculpture maintenance and conservation wasn't up to the standards, of course, of what it is today. I think people thought of outdoor sculptures as being permanent. And that really doesn't––not a word I would use for outdoor sculptures. I really avoid that word, and void it out, definitely, because the materials are just very difficult. What artists are using, and being able to preserve sculpture outdoors that stays outdoors all year long in our climate at Storm King, or other climates, is extremely challenging. Whether it's in Florida near the water, salt water of course, or anywhere else, it's very difficult. It was the early years of outdoor sculpture and everybody thought, "Yes, just build them," whether it was GSA for the government building large scale sculptures—there was no maintenance program for them. And everybody found out you have to take care of these sculptures. [01:40:00] They're not taking care of themselves. There's nothing permanent about the materials, whether it's metal, steel, stainless steel. You have to weld, you have to paint, you have to repair to keep them in good shape, and it's very costly.

So that was in the early years, and I think with our David Smith collection, eventually the five David Smiths were brought into the building. I don't know if that was a conscious or an unconscious decision, and I'm not quite clear what year it was, but certainly the early '70s. Fortunately, they have been in the building ever since, on exhibit, to preserve them. And the hardier David Smiths have been outdoors during the fair weather season and brought into the building for the winter to just give them added

protection from any tree limbs falling down, or snow and ice and everything, which, yes, they survived Bolton Landing when David Smith was alive and well taking care of them. That was a very different situation.

And this is a prize part of our collection. So we do our utmost to take care of the David Smiths at all times of the year, whether it's putting a coating on the steel or waxing the bronze, or checking tree branches and so forth, whatever we can to maintain them outdoors, because we're one of the few museums that shows David Smith outdoors with the natural light—the way the artist wanted—not in an atrium with artificial light or natural light coming through a skylight of some type. Ours are outdoors on concrete bases, the way David Smith built them, with the heavy hardware. And that's really an extraordinary experience to see them this way for people that are outdoor sculpture people and are aware of David Smith's career. It's very unusual and people come to Storm King to look at the Smith collection and see it the way the artist envisioned it.

Dziedzic: What kind of cleanup did you have to do just generally at Storm King before this 1976 exhibition? So I guess the deinstall of the *Sculpture in the Fields*.

Collens: Well, that took at least a full year to deinstall the hundred sculptures that were on loan to Storm King, in the fields, from anywhere from a year to approximately eight years, in various stages of needing repair and so forth, because clearly maintenance was not thought of in the early years of outdoor sculpture by anybody. And this was a new art form in the sense that, yes, it needed maintaining. It wasn't bronze that could last for years even if it wasn't waxed and maintained in the proper way. But there were a variety of materials, wood and aluminum and steel—painted, unpainted—welds needed repairing, bases needed repairing and so forth. So Peter and I had the same vision for Storm King when he started, when we started working together, which was really extraordinary, and there really wasn't a disagreement about what we were doing.

Step one was to return the hundred sculptures, and we got a medium-sized truck, a couple drivers, and we sent sculptures as far north as Maine, south to Virginia, west to Chicago, and everywhere else in between. I was the one responsible for getting the sculptures out, which was a very difficult situation to be in. People were not always pleasant about hearing [01:45:00] that their sculptures were going to be returned, whether they were collectors, or they were the owners, or the artists themselves. “We've moved,” and “We don't have any place to put them.” And I said, “Well, I'm giving you a 30-day notice to let us know where you want it trucked.” That was a difficult experience doing that, and not always so friendly, but we did it.

The vision Peter and I had was to take out all the loan sculptures, borrow works from museums when appropriate, or artists when appropriate, and rely on the permanent collection, for better or worse, of Storm King at that point in time. Not to have all these loans. And I think that's what outdoor sculpture museums go through at some point in their careers or histories. And you never go back to that. But I think that happens to every outdoor facility, is my understanding from a brief survey.

Dziedzic: Yes. It strikes me as odd that nobody was really thinking about the maintenance and conservation because wouldn't anyone who owned a car have a sense of how these materials decay over time? [laughs]

Collens: [laughs] One would think, yes, but it was a long time coming for the outdoor sculpture conservation field to really come into its own, which I think is happening. I think it's happened and speeded up with the Getty owning the Stark collection, which was given to them a number of years ago. Sculptures by Calder, di Suvero, David Smith, Noguchi, many of the artists in our collection, smaller scale, but they had at that point forward the responsibility to take care of them. And that, I think, really changed their programming and understanding and led to what they're doing today, which is terrific. But I think it was a slow process for everybody, whether it was the GSA or anybody else, to support sculpture conservation and maintenance. Even collectors today are buying works and putting them out and they need maintenance, whether it's a sculpture by Ursula von Rydingsvard that's wood—it holds up very well if you do the proper procedures for it—or steel sculpture that needs cleaning, painting, maintenance of some type.

Dziedzic: Well, this is the last comment I'll make about the bicentennial! But that was also a turn in architectural conservation and learning the processes for that—same kinds of industrial materials. So there wasn't much going on in terms of cleaning concrete or terracotta or any of these other kinds of materials until that period, basically, and the decade after. So potentially this goes hand in hand in the United States, in a way, of understanding that you can actually maintain the old things that you have.

Collens: Yes. The only quick comment I would make for Storm King is we realized that we're getting beyond the point of being just haphazard and washing off some bird droppings or cleaning and so forth, but we needed to take the next step and figure out what sculpture conservation meant for Storm King and take an early step in that direction. We did a survey of different people to hire and we eventually hired Steven Tatti from New York to come out and help out, under his direction as professional conservator, to maintain the collection. And it still was difficult. We had differences of opinion at times about what should be done, and that continued to evolve, as it does today. But there are more professionals to back up this field than in the earlier days. And we did that with Steven, who got us off to a good start. And we've [01:50:00] taken over with Mike Seamen at this point in time, and other consultants. We're certainly not

afraid to use consultants because nobody knows all the materials that outdoor sculptures are made out of and how to take care of them, and you have to go to experts in stone or metal, and so forth, bronze, to really get the best advice.

Dziedzic: Was there also, with the *Sculpture in the Fields* exhibition, a hundred concrete bases that had to be removed?

Collens: No, I think the sculptures were probably sitting at ground level with concrete, wood, I think a variety of materials, or maybe nothing. Just directly on the ground. I think we were dealing with a variety of everything.

Dziedzic: Okay. Before you started getting those reviews in for the *David Smith* exhibition, can you remember a moment where you were able to kind of take it all in? The feeling that you had about how it had turned out?

Collens: Well, with *David Smith*, the first exhibition in 1976, and entertaining John Russell, the lead art critic from the *New York Times*, and other people from different magazines, art journals, and so forth, newspapers—I found really quite extraordinary. That wasn't my main mission. I did it because of my interest in David Smith. And I had plenty of time to figure out the exhibition from my standpoint, so it really caught me off guard. I was thrilled to receive wonderful reviews. That was, on a personal level, thrilling to me. But just to be able to do the exhibition and borrow all these works—flat works of David Smith's, paintings, drawings, sculptures from the 1930s up—from the estate, it was all extraordinary. And I was a one-person band doing it, basically. [laughs]

Dziedzic: It seems like it could be hard to tell if you're headed in the right direction sometimes when you're working completely by yourself. Was that the feeling that you had?

Collens: Yes, I think it was exhilarating and, at the same time, the pace was a lot of pressure to change every two months, and close the building down for a week, and change and bring in for the summer the loans from the Estate of David Smith through Clem Greenberg. Very strict regulations of what we could borrow and what we could say about certain sculptures, and directives from Greenberg himself.

Dziedzic: Did you have any sense of whether this exhibition and the good reviews that it got put Storm King on the map in a different way? Maybe from all the collectors that you had called, or anyone else who was reading these reviews?

Collens: No, I think it takes not just one exhibition, but it was a great start in reaching out to a whole range of—whether they were galleries or museums that heard about this museum in upstate New York. I never referred to it as upstate, none of us do. We're 50 miles north of New York [City] and after living in Rochester, you realize [laughs] how large New York state is to drive from the southern part of the state to Rochester, and so forth. But that was just the beginning of moving Storm King in the direction of working with and being [01:55:00] more aware by the art community that we existed, and we should borrow works for different exhibitions, whatever they are, and extend our friendship with other organizations and people beyond what we'd been doing in the past. So it was important in that sense.

And every year, every artist brings in a new group of people to Storm King, whether it's Outlooks or the major exhibition, there's a new group. Or the Shandekan project with artists coming and being part of Shandekan and doing tours of Storm King a year later, if they care to and are interested in doing research to do their tours, and bringing up new people that have not been as familiar with Storm King, and a younger generation. It just builds year after year.

Dziedzic: I think we covered what we set out to cover today, David, but I know you took some notes, so is there anything that you want to add to this “early years” period? Or are those notes for our future sessions?

Collens: No, I think Nora asked me this a long time ago, about who lived in the Museum Building.

[Side conversation]

Collens: Sarah, we digress from this, but Nora said to me, “Gee, I didn't know anyone lived in the building.” So I've worked up the list. Mary Ann [Carter] needs to just proof spellings and all that. But the Museum Building, there was an apartment on the second floor where we have all offices at this point in time. And the first person, way before me, that lived there was a German fellow from Germany, always had a strong German accent. He worked with the artists, worked with installing. Gilbert Hawkins remembers Bernard Schultz, and somebody else—Kenneth Capps, who was at the kickoff party the other day, remembered Bernard Schultz. So he was there with his family, wife, two sons—grew up there, basically. They were there for quite a while. He built these scale model boats that went into bottles or scale models of the *Mary Powell* that went up and down the Hudson River. He built them for the Smithsonian. I mean, really absolute perfection on-scale models and details, all that stuff.

And he lived there early on with Dorothy Mayhall. I mean, he was another part of it. Mowing the hillside around the front of the Museum Building where the Nevelson is, and a little bit in the back area and whatever, and installed sculptures and stuff like that. He went out to California, got the Mark di Suvero

that Ted Ogden bought from somebody's estate in Southern California. I guess Bernard went out, brought it back to Storm King, installed it. I don't think Mark was involved with that, at that point, installing it. But there's Bernard Schultz.

Then I was the next one to live in the Museum Building for a short time. And the upstairs was divided into rectangular rooms, one after the other.

Dziedzic: Railroad style.

Collens: Yes, thank you. And those walls have really come down. So each one was the size of John's office space, basically. And the next room over from John, where Nicki sits and whoever else in that line, would've been the kitchen area. Then there were two bedrooms, and then you eventually got to the bathroom, which is there—the shower is taken out from what's there now. Little kitchen, stove and whatever, hot plate, something like that.

Dziedzic: And did Bernard and his family move to another house on the grounds, or is that when he stopped working as the caretaker?

Collens: I think stopped working. [02:00:00] Yes, I think he passed away and moved out. And I haven't seen the sons in years. I mean, they're well up there in age. I don't know if his wife is still alive. I doubt it. Then after me—I was just short term—and I remember Joyce Rutherford designed the kitchen and it didn't have a dishwasher. I, one person, what did I need a dishwasher for? But it was so ugly. [laughs] The countertop, the color of everything. Oh, I cringed. [laughs]

Dziedzic: What color was it?

Collens: Kind of a mustard color. Oh, it was just awful. She might have been a fine architect and she was great person—I knew her, the Rutherfords, very well, the whole family. They were like parents to me. But yeah, her taste was tough.

And then I think Wanda Grieves [phonetic], I don't know how you spell it. Mary Ann or somebody else can add all that in. Mary Ann reminded me she was there, and I guess she was the last person to live in the building because it's not great to have someone live in a historic museum building like our building is, or house museum building. The cooking and fire possibilities are increased significantly.

Dziedzic: And what was Wanda Grieve's job?

Collens: I guess she was what is known as visitor services now. Security. And Gordon House, where I lived next, I think I pretty much have it down who lived there, but we don't have to go over that now. In other houses, it just changed too much, I think.

Dziedzic: Well, maybe when we go through the list of names in the relationships session that we're going to do, which is maybe session four—there's trustees and some other long-term people—maybe that will be another place where we can revisit this. There might be some overlap is what I'm trying to say.

Collens: Yes. We should have something about different houses like the Wahn House that we took down that is between our main entrance and the service entrance, that square piece of property. And anyway, we bought it, she had lifetime rights, she died, and we took the house down. I mean, it was nothing we could save. We needed it for parking and sculpture storage. We just can't maintain all these old houses. Too difficult. So eventually we took that down. The Kellogg House is still there, near where Mike has built tram buildings and everything. But, again, the same thing, Storm King bought the property from Helen Hall Kellogg, she had lifetime rights, she passed, and we took over the property full time. Maybe we maintained it when we took over the houses.

Dziedzic: I think I read something that was pretty detailed about the houses recently on the Storm King server. Maybe this is something I should check with Christine [Persche] about too, to see where the gaps in the records are, all the stories of the houses.

Collens: I mean, one interesting story—brain's starting to [laughs] churn about this—in 1985 when Mark came to install his 25-year retrospective, *Twenty-five Years of Sculptures and Drawings*, at Storm King, he stayed in the summer cottage, which was originally part of the Kellogg House. It was a standalone, literally, summer cottage. And the water line was a [laughs] garden hose going from the day cottage, which was all part of the standalone building that was part of the Kellogg property as well. But it was a garden hose going from that house up to Mark's summer cottage that he stayed at with his dog, Rosko. And he loved staying there. I found some photographs of Mark there.

Dziedzic: In your own collection?

Collens: No, somewhere at the Art Center, recently. I said, [02:05:00] “Wow, that's great!” [laughs] He talks about it. His memory's not so great anymore, but he did speak about it recently and remembers it very clearly, this green house, the little porch. And he did stay there with Rosko. That's the name of one of his sculptures. *Old Buddy, (For Rosko)*.

Dziedzic: There's definitely some stories about the houses related to the artists, I think.

Collens: Alice Aycock in the Kellogg House. She reminded me of that recently too.

Dziedzic: Yes. Storm King has the administrative history, I think, of the houses. When they were bought, the rights. But the artists staying in them, that's something that I did want to ask about—

Collens: Ask me about, yes.

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
November 7, 2022	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Dziedzic: Today is November 7th, 2022. And this is Sarah interviewing David Collens for Storm King Art Center. Okay, David, we're going to go back to 1975 again like we did last time. But this time I want to ask about when the Mark di Suvero sculptures came to Storm King. And the first question I want to ask is, what was Mark's process for deciding where his sculptures should be placed?

Collens: After the decision was made by Mark, Dick Bellamy, and myself about exactly which sculptures were coming to Storm King—and there were many to choose from the New York exhibition, the All City Exhibition connected to the Whitney Museum indoor exhibition—and we selected five outdoor sculptures that would come, ranging probably from around 20 feet or more to about 40 feet in height. So the five sculptures were trucked to Storm King in the winter of 1976 after the exhibition was complete in New York, and the sculptures had to be moved out of the city and installed in late winter 1976, positioned around the base of the ionic columns that are on top of the hill—to give you an orientation. They arced around in the field.

Mark placed the five large scale works, and the juxtaposition of each one, which Mark selected, was really extraordinary for our visitors to see from the columns on top of the hill looking down and across at these large scale sculptures that loomed up towards the height of the columns. And if you were in the field, you were walking around them and seeing the juxtaposition of the five sculptures, and some had moving elements. Walking around these steel I-beams was really very unusual, and we were pioneering using this property, which had not been used for sculpture before at Storm King.

I think it's important to mention the five sculptures, which were *Are Years What? (For Marianne Moore)*, *Ik Ook*, *Mon Père, Mon Père*, *Mother Peace*, and [pauses]—

Dziedzic: *One Oklock*.

Collens: Yes. You should have looked at my watch [laughs]. I knew I was missing one. *Mother Peace* and *Mon Père, Mon Père* eventually became part of the Storm King Art Center collection. I should mention the other three were dispersed to other museum collections over the years.

Dziedzic: You were telling me a little bit about Mark di Suvero's process before we got started with the interview. So what do you remember from that time about how he decided where the sculptures would go? You also said that he was kind of pushing into new territory.

Collens: The property that Mark put the sculptures on was not owned by Storm King Art Center at that time. We never had large scale works in this space, really, or in other parts of Storm King. And Mark was bringing, I think, a new dimension to positioning sculptures and the scale of sculptures, and having five di Suveros together that you were walking through [00:05:00] and around, and looking up through, was a really special experience and visitors loved it.

Dziedzic: And was that property owned by Glenoden Farm at that time?

Collens: I think it was owned by Star Expansion and yes, Glenoden at that point. Would have to double check the legal owner at that point. [Note: Glenoden was absorbed by the Art Center in 1986 but its exact boundaries are unclear]. But our property line for Storm King was not at the base of the hill where the columns are.

Dziedzic: And do you recall that conversation with Mark about putting the sculptures into this new territory? Was that his idea or was it something that you or Dick Bellamy suggested?

Collens: I think it was a natural flow for Mark with the scale of sculptures, looking at the collection at that point in time and the sculptures that already were on loan, because we must have had many sculptures on either side of the main driveway in 1975, still in position from the *Sculpture in the Fields* show. Even though we started taking them out in 1975, that took a year to remove them, which were primarily loaned sculptures. Mark looked at possible landscapes and this was open space and available. So he naturally flowed into it with his five sculptures, which took a lot of space. There was plenty of distance between each of his sculptures and they weren't crowded and they arced around. And *Mon Père, Mon Père* is still more or less in the same position at the base of the hillside with the ionic columns above it that it was years ago. Landscape has changed, by Bill Rutherford, and raised up, but it's more or less in the same location. You can get a feeling of imagining sculptures on either side of *Mon Père, Mon Père* and arcing around that way. There are wonderful photographs of it and it was a pioneering experience for Storm King and for Mark.

Dziedzic: And your job at that point was very hands on? Pretty much anything that needed to be done [laughs] you were the one who was doing it or involved in it? So for the installation of these sculptures, do you remember some of the things that you had to do?

Collens: Well, Mark, like many of the artists, always has been very independent with his team. Each artist has his or her own team that they bring up, that's traditional—more so at this point than in the earlier years. They put the sculptures on steel plates because we didn't know how long they were going to stay and we could stabilize the sculptures and level them with heavy steel plates that Mark put on the ground. And we had to bring machinery up to help move the plates and the steel I-beams for erecting the sculptures, but I think I probably was in charge of getting coffee and donuts and a few other things.

Dziedzic: [laughs] And this is also the time that you are preparing for the David Smith exhibition, right?

Collens: The David Smith exhibition opened in the spring of 1976, so, yes. I hadn't thought about the combination of both of them.

Dziedzic: I think you've made some comparisons before between David Smith's work and Mark di Suvero's work in terms of the materials. So I wondered if there was any kind of explicit thread between the two because I hadn't thought about this before either, that when the David Smith exhibition is opening, there's also these di Suvero sculptures in this new territory. So was that something that you were thinking about at the time, the conversation between these two artists' bodies of work?

Collens: I knew some facts about Mark and the inspiration for di Suvero being David Smith and Calder, but I don't think I associated them as closely connected or knew as much of the information about it at that point as I do today. [00:10:00]

Dziedzic: Do you have thoughts on it that you want to think through today?

Collens: I'm sure that Mark has always come up to Storm King over the years to see his sculptures, to see other people's sculptures that he admires—works by younger artists that he's always been interested in as an artist, to support younger artists. And he would travel around Storm King and certainly admired the David Smiths and other works by contemporary artists of his, so he was absorbing David Smith at Storm King in our setting with natural light outdoors and a similar background with mountains.

I might add that Mark went to Bolton Landing in the mid-1960s and did an overnight at Bolton Landing, met Smith, and it was an inspirational experience for him to camp out under the stars at Bolton Landing in the Adirondack Mountains and experience the Smith sculptures day and night while he was there, and really understand Smith's working practice. And seeing his studio was important to Mark di Suvero throughout his career.

Dziedzic: And did Mark stay on site for a while, while these works were getting installed for that exhibition?

Collens: Not for that exhibition. I think he—

Dziedzic: I guess it wasn't an exhibition.

Collens: Well, it really could be. I mean, there were five sculptures, they were large scale. I'm not sure if we thought—I think we thought of it as a proper exhibition in 1975 when we brought them out, early '76. It was a game changer for Storm King and for the public and it really broadened the experience for our visitors at that point in time. And Mark had his primary studio in New York, in Long Island City, Queens and would commute from New York to Storm King, about an hour and a half depending on traffic. So I don't think he did any overnights at that point in time unless he possibly stayed at a hotel or something in the area.

Dziedzic: All right, so I think I want to talk next about *The Arch*. So I do have a few pictures from that day, which I'm sure you know.

Collens: Always fun to see.

[Viewing images from the Storm King Art Center Archives: 1979.05.05_Archinstallion_DemetryBob_02.tif, 1979.05.05_Archinstallion_DemetryBob_03.tif, 1979.05.05_Archinstallion_DemetryBob_04.tif, 1979.05.05_Archinstallion_DemetryBob_018.tif]

Dziedzic: Got a couple of the installation. I think that's it. So I want to go back and just ask about what was the discussion like about where *The Arch* would be installed?

Collens: When it was decided to bring the Calder *Arch* from Connecticut, it was being shown at Storm King for the first time. It was fabricated in 1975, a year before Calder died, and was at the Segre Ironworks, where Calder created his large scale sculptures in this country, very close to his home in Roxbury, 30 minutes away. He worked directly with Carmen Segre on his sculptures. And it sat next to the Segre Ironworks by Route 84 for several years before it came to Storm King. Bill Rutherford, Peter Stern, and I were trying to figure out a location for this sculpture, and the scale of it really required plenty of open space and the mass of it, also, the steel plates—it has tremendous height and mass. [00:15:00] We thought that putting it in a former farm field, where it is to this day, would be a great place for people to come down Old Pleasant Hill Road, make the turn into the main driveway with the maple trees, and

see the Calder. This would be your first large scale sculpture you would see at Storm King, and it's been greeting everybody since as they enter, and will continue to remain in this location.

We subtly built up the landscape—Bill Rutherford did—out of the farm field, which was wet, to put the Calder *Arch* on. It came over in the spring of 1978, and it's fascinating to look at these photographs of the installation and see the size of the different sections of steel being lifted into place to create the full-scale sculpture. And the model for the sculpture goes back to 1940, which I find fascinating, and hasn't changed at all when Calder completed the full-scale version, which he had an interest in doing in 1975, and the resources to do. But the model was the same and is owned by the Calder Foundation, and it's been at Storm King on loan a couple different times, the model. It's wonderful to compare both of them and think of the history of this particular piece and Calder's thought process that went into it so many years earlier.

Dziedzic: Was there any other site that was considered for this?

Collens: I don't think so because we had this field available. The only other sculpture far away behind it is the Tal Streeter *Endless Column*, the very narrow, red, *Endless Column* that we decided really wouldn't interfere with the Calder, which was massive and black and a wonderful dominating sculpture, and a really special way to be greeting everybody as you came into Storm King. So this was really the only available space that we came up with. I don't think there was a backup location for this where it would have plenty of space to view it from both sides, which is very important since both sides are quite different. The west side facing Old Pleasant Hill Road having the massive steel plate tapering up to the top, which is around 49 feet high, and the east side curving and very visible from all sides.

Dziedzic: And the platform that you mentioned—you mentioned that the field was wet so was that a practical solution to make the ground more solid or was that a way to use the earth to highlight the sculpture itself?

Collens: I think it was a combination of both for Bill Rutherford. And it was so subtle—it's an important example to me of how to install sculpture and just have landscape be secondary. We needed a place to circulate people. The sculpture is quite large so we had to put concrete foundations into place, of course. And moving people through the sculpture—it being an arch—from the side view and people love to walk through it and around it. And eventually circulate people around with other pathways that Bill Rutherford constructed through the field, through what is now native grasses. Some of our oldest native grasses are in this particular area that you can walk through and you're totally immersed in native grasses, which is a wonderful experience. And looking around at the Calder *Arch* and a few other sculptures and really

observing the grasses themselves at this point at over 27 years old. They're very mature and beautiful to look at.

Dziedzic: I was going to ask when they went in. [00:20:00] So 27, doing the math—[laughs]

Collens: We started native grasses, I believe in 1997, and *The Arch* went in the spring of 1978. So Bill Rutherford started creating some native grass areas with the grasses that were growing in the field before Darrel Morrison came in and really refined the plant material for grasses and everything, and developed it into what you see today.

Dziedzic: Do you recall the discussion around switching over to native grasses? Where did that idea come from?

Collens: Well, we had expansive areas that were former farm fields and we were doing a lot of mowing and we used to water the top of the hill—have an irrigation system, that is—and some other areas and that really didn't become practical after a while, or environmentally sound either. So we made the decision to stop watering and if the grasses burned out on top of the hill, our lawn areas, we accepted that. They would grow back in September and early fall when it rained. If we had a drought one summer, rain would start again and it would turn green.

And we came up with the idea of native grasses and what you see today. We keep on adding to the 70 acres of native grasses that we have throughout the property, each year for the most part. But we came up with this idea because we were mowing the fields and our grounds team would be constantly out there on large mowers. And that just didn't seem environmentally sound either, or practical. And so people kept on thinking of Storm King as a golf course and [laughs] that didn't make us particularly happy. We didn't think of Storm King as a golf course, so we wanted to be a very different type of landscape. And we're not a formal garden.

But he came up with the idea—Bill Rutherford did—of creating these freeform native grass areas that are very large. And we just started mowing Bill Rutherford's forms that are still there today. With the plant material, whether it was invasive or not, we came up with the shape of his freeform areas throughout the property, and Bill was directly involved with that, and our grounds team, to do the mowing where we have very broad walking paths in between these freeform areas so we wouldn't wear out lawns and so forth. That started us off. But Bill was not an expert on native grasses and that's when Darrel Morrison came to Storm King, after opening the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas. And I invited Darrel to Storm King and he's been working on the project ever since. And we adjust the native grasses and wildflowers to our soil conditions.

Dziedzic: All right. So I guess I want to ask what you remember of that day [of *The Arch* installation]. After all the prep has been done and the sculpture arrives and it's getting installed?

Collens: And it had to be painted black. It only had a basic coat of paint that I think was quickly put on it at Segre Ironworks, and it wasn't fully bolted together until it arrived at Storm King. They bolted the plates together enough to keep it in position at Segre. It was a wonderful moment to have it on loan, when it first arrived at Storm King, and assembled, and painted the way Calder wished the sculpture to be. And it looks stunning in our landscape with so much space around it, and being the first large scale sculpture you saw when arriving at Storm King. [00:25:00] The height of it was perfect, the width, the form, and it was really stunning for our visitors, as it is to this day. And it's one of the great late Calder sculptures.

Dziedzic: You mentioned what you'd see when you would come in. Can you recall the difference, just thinking back to that time—a few years earlier, you would've seen so many different sculptures. What was it like to come in and see [only] this and the von Schlegell and the Grosvenor?

Collens: So when you entered, certainly the most massive sculpture was the Calder *Arch* on the left. On the right hand side, as we removed sculptures from the *Sculpture in the Fields* exhibition, you had a clear view of the Bob Grosvenor Untitled sculpture on the right, nine feet high and 212 feet long, painted black. And the David von Schlegell Untitled as well, which were both commissions, the Grosvenor and von Schlegell, from 1972 for von Schlegell, 1974 for Grosvenor. And on the opposite side of the field would be the Calder and the early Liberman, *Adonai*, tucked away, and the Tal Streeter hundreds of yards behind the Calder *Arch*. So nothing interfered with the Calder *Arch* and that was very important to us and it hasn't changed to this day.

Dziedzic: So did you drive into work the next day and think like, boom, now we got it. [laughs] Here's the recipe!

Collens: Perfect location, perfect sculpture and landscape. Doesn't get any better.

This is a wonderful photograph actually of Carmen Segre standing on my left, who Calder worked directly with on his sculptures [1979.05.05_Archinstallion_DemetryBob_018.tif]. Carmen had a factory that built pipes, never built sculpture, to my knowledge, before he met Sandy Calder and they started collaborating on sculpture. It was a wonderful combination of both of them doing sculpture, large scale sculpture, at his steel fabrication plant right next to Route 84. And Pat Cooper on the left and Pat's assistant on my right. Pat and her assistant did film and photographed the installation of the Calder *Arch* in 1978.

Dziedzic: Very prescient decision. And in terms of entering by car, thinking back to the di Suveros, was there a way to see the di Suveros by car? Or did that really require that people—I'm thinking about the early days of Storm King [a decade prior] being designed for people to drive in and see things. So how was Storm King changing the way that it thought about people getting out of their cars and walking up to the sculptures and around them?

Collens: Well, I think in the early days, you certainly would come in by the main driveway, before there was an admission booth and we had an admission policy, and you would drive to the top of the hill where the Museum Building was and the original parking lot for Storm King that Bill Rutherford created in 1960 on top of the hill. And people would walk around the top of the hill to see David Smith and the Noguchi, *Momo Taro*, which was there starting in 1978, the commissioned sculpture, and other sculptures on top of the hill as well. But it really was the main drive coming in, and I didn't particularly like to think of having drive-through sculptures.

I think we all were interested in having people circulate, not just the main driveway, and seeing the Calder or [00:30:00] Liberman or other sculptures. There was not a great deal to see in terms of sculpture, but really to start walking around and circulating to see other sculptures. The di Suvero you could see by standing on top the hill by the ionic columns and get one view, and you could walk down into the fields [and get another view]. We didn't have a direct way of walking down as we do today, but people would circulate down into the fields and go by the von Schlegell and the Grosvenor and then past the di Suveros, and heading around that way towards the south. We didn't have any other large scale sculptures in that area besides the five di Suveros. So it was far more limited and the focus was on a different area of Storm King.

[Side conversation]

[Viewing images from Storm King Art Center Archives: 1985_diSuvero.HuruInstallation_envelope6.04.tif, 1985_diSuveroExhibitionInstallation_She_envelope4.02.tif]

Dziedzic: I wanted to ask next about the 1985 di Suvero exhibition. Let's see what photos I have here—I think it's just these two. I wanted to ask, nine, 10 years later, when this exhibition is happening, what are some of the big changes between then and that first time when Mark came up to Storm King and placed five sculptures?

Collens: Well, one big change that took place was Bill Rutherford was really getting involved with more landscaping—really ramping up is the best way to put it. Year after year we would continue landscaping, at a much faster pace than the earlier years, under Peter Stern's stewardship as president and chairman

starting in 1974. That was a great interest to us and Bill was really expanding the areas that he was working in and with. So therefore, Mark di Suvero was asked, as Bill expanded to the south, to move his sculpture so we could do landscaping each year. And we had to bring cranes in and dismantle the di Suveros, being large scale works, and move them so they'd be out of the way of the Rutherford landscaping. And that was an annual phone call to Mark and that was irritating him a little bit [laughs] coming up and doing that for Storm King every year.

But the 1985 exhibition of Mark's was his first retrospective, a 25-year retrospective of his sculpture and drawings. It's the first time his drawings had been shown. I brought a group of them together and we brought drawings from France and his Petaluma studio, and we brought them all to New York and we had 25 years of drawings at Dick Bellamy's gallery on the floor—being an industrial space, we could lay them out—and it was really fascinating to see. And we selected, I think, 45 drawings for the Museum Building, both floors of the building. We had smaller sculptures in the Museum Building, earlier works that were more delicate, and the larger scale works of Mark's were outdoors.

We were moving sculptures into the fields where the di Suveros are now, but the fields were, at that point, fields—they were wet and the drainage wasn't very good. And we brought up all Mark's equipment from his Spacetime studio in Long Island City, Queens—his cranes, his welding equipment, his torches, everything. We brought his whole studio to Storm King and worked for a month doing the installation of the outdoor sculptures. Could be a few days a week or it could be weekends, just whatever the schedule Mark wanted it to be. It wasn't a continuous seven days a week. His large crane was leaking oil and we had to put a container underneath [00:35:00] the machine to catch the oil, move it around, and hopefully not get stuck in the fields as we were maneuvering the crane and steel I-beams in different locations for installation of the sculptures. And we did get stuck a few times because the fields weren't drained and prepared for easier sculpture installations and for people walking around. So we were really pioneering in that sense.

That was very much a part of Mark and working on selecting sites with Dick Bellamy and Mark and myself and getting these large scale sculptures in. And we worked right to the last minute and we had several other di Suveros at Storm King. One funny story is Peter Stern came over in his Jeep, drove to see Mark at one of his sculptures, and said, "Hey, great. You're getting the sculpture installed." And Mark said, "No I'm taking this one down because I'm moving it all out of the exhibition. I don't want this piece to be part of the Storm King exhibition in 1985, so I'm moving it out." And this is a short time before we were going to open—two weeks before, maybe seven days before, I don't know—and we just kept on going and Mark got the job done with his team and it was really extraordinary and added many outdoor sculptures that we brought in from around the United States. And it just started really showing Mark's ability for how to place sculpture at Storm King, which he wasn't prepared to do and had no studio space or outdoor space to

install his own sculptures before Storm King in 1975—that was the first time. Then 10 years later, in 1985, for the large retrospective that really received excellent reviews in various art newspapers and magazines.

Dziedzic: Just to make sure I understand, essentially you said, “Mark, all this area, we've been prepping it. Where do you want your sculptures? We'll kind of follow behind you working out the drainage issues.” How did that work—maybe laying out the calendar for the year prior or something like that?

Collens: 1984, we really didn't have the landscape prepared for moving into this area with large cranes and trucks delivering steel beams through the di Suvero exhibition. And we just had to take our chances because they were former farm fields and they had wet areas. Where the photograph of *Huru* is was clearly a wet area, I remember. And we had to pull some machines out of different places where they got stuck because of wet ground conditions. So that did happen to us and we all dealt with, and that was part of the process of doing the installation. And I think Mark was used to that in France and the Netherlands, where he had lived a few years earlier during the time of the Vietnam War when he was in self-exile and put large scale sculptures that he created in Europe into fields and so forth. I don't think that alarmed him particularly.

Dziedzic: And you also said it was an opportunity for him to have an outdoor studio, in a sense.

Collens: Outdoor studio. And one of his comments, I think, after we pulled this exhibition together of so many outdoor works—I think there were 14 that we brought from all over the country, California, Florida, Chicago, everywhere in between, the studio in New York and so forth, and many other locations. And he'd never seen as many of his works together in one place, and how familial it looked to him. And that's what he said, I think to Bruce Bassett in the film.

Dziedzic: That's right, I remember that. And so what did it mean for Storm King to pull this off? [laughs]

Collens: Oh, it was an extraordinary feat [00:40:00] even though Mark was very capable with his team of doing it, I think it really pushed us all to the limits of bringing so many sculptures in and coordinating a major exhibition from around the country and bringing all these sculptures in from private collections, public collections, and Mark’s studio, as well as doing the Museum Building and the top of the hill. It was a lot for a small staff, as it still is to this day. And I think exhibitions have become far more complicated in different ways.

Dziedzic: Right, not just machinery.

Collens: [laughs] Not just machinery and tonnage of steel, which certainly took place with the di Suvero exhibition, but I think we were pioneering for Storm King and for the artist doing exhibitions like this, and started setting a precedent for Storm King and the types of exhibitions that would be special to Storm King versus other museums that might be working with sculpture. But there were far fewer museums years ago that were doing sculpture exhibitions, and if they did, they were really primarily indoors. We had the space and, I think, the wherewithal to accomplish an exhibition like this and realized this was our niche to do this type of exhibition that other museums could not do. And moving towards really focusing on sculpture exhibitions starting in 1976 with the David Smith exhibition, whether it was in the Museum Building—with drawings, photographs, paintings by sculptors—but not just having exhibitions in the building but really moving in the direction of sculpture for Storm King, indoors and outdoors.

Dziedzic: I'm thinking back to last time when we talked about the David Smith exhibition that you, in a sense, had to introduce yourself to everybody that you called on the phone. And introduced Storm King to many people as well. Can you think back to the kind of position that you were in here, in 1985, compared to 10 years or so prior? What kind of advantages and certainties did you have that you maybe didn't have 10 years prior?

Collens: I remember putting a package of material together about the Storm King David Smith collection, the 13 David Smiths and photographs—and we had a little booklet and the outline for the 1976 exhibition—and stating why people should lend to Storm King even though they didn't know us. [laughs] Maybe they had heard about this museum in the country with a large quantity of David Smiths but they'd never been there, and the name was slightly familiar, and trying to tell them, yes, we'll insure the works, we'll properly care for them, and we have museum standards. Yes, we're a small museum and we have 13 great David Smiths and this is the exhibition and here's the outline of it and the sculptures and other works on paper I'm after, and paintings and so forth. And people thought about it and I saw them in person to plead my case and hand delivered my packages [laughs] wherever they were. And I think it was extremely successful, maybe not a hundred percent, but a lot of people lent us work that didn't know the Art Center and didn't know me or anyone associated with Storm King. And we borrowed the work, which was extraordinary, and had an important exhibition of David Smith. And showed Dorothy Dehner's *Life on the Farm* paintings for the first time as well. So it was a milestone.

I think each artist that you work with, to this day, the same holds true—that each artist or estate, if the artist is deceased, are bringing new people [00:45:00] to visit Storm King and broadening our audience for programming and visitation, which is really important. And getting the word out about Storm King.

Dziedzic: And in 1985 or 1984, were those calls that you were making and visits that you were making easier?

Collens: I think they were easier because Mark had the 1975 exhibition in New York. He owned, I'd say virtually all the outdoor sculptures that were shown throughout New York City, the 14 sculptures, and then the five that came to Storm King, as I said. And we were looking for other sculptures out of private collections and his gallerist, Dick Bellamy, knew a lot of people that he'd sold the di Suvero sculptures to that we particularly wanted, or drawings, and some works we weren't successful finding or we found them too late. A drawing in particular we found in Boston that was owned by a professor at MIT but by the time we found it, it was too late to borrow, and it would've been important for the exhibition. But we've since discovered where it is, and we borrowed it by a new owner. It was sold at Sotheby's and it's been to Storm King on other occasions, but it relates directly to, for example, *Mother Peace*. It's called *For Peace*. It's a very large collage of the *Mother Peace* sculpture. Whether it was done before *Mother Peace*, from 1970, or done after, it's not quite clear on its history, but clearly it's related to *Mother Peace* with the peace sign and it's a wonderful large scale collage of Mark's.

Dziedzic: And what was your feeling at the time to see this exhibition, pioneering in multiple ways—in terms of how far it reached out [into the fields], in terms of the drawings of Mark di Suvero's, in terms of how it was important to his career? What was the feeling that you had after this exhibition was up and receiving good reviews?

Collens: I think it really brought a different dimension to what Storm King was doing, not just in terms of scale but quality of work. Showing Mark's drawings for the first time—seeing sculptors' drawings and their sculptures was not common in those days. Very common today, to integrate both into an indoor exhibition. But in those days, no, it wasn't common to see that and to see it in a house museum. It was wonderful! And it brought many people to Storm King, expanded our visitorship—more collectors started coming—which happens with each artist—and excellent reviews for the exhibition. And we moved into new space at Storm King for this exhibition that we hadn't used before. And it was on top of the hill, off the top of the hill. It was really a special moment. We had dance performances by the large scale outdoor works, and music as well, that it inspired. It brought different dimensions of activity for our visitors to see and interact with the sculptures. Sometimes too much. [laughs]

This is *She* (1977–78), which is now at Storm King again, and the first time it came, it was on top of the hill near the Noguchi sculpture, which is in the background. And Noguchi was alive and well and protested a bit about this large scale di Suvero even though they were friends. I guess that's Mark [indicating a person in the photo], I don't know. Could well be, can't quite tell.

Dziedzic: I think it's a kid.

Collens:. A kid, yeah, [laughs] but looks like he has a hard hat on or something. Or is it a cap? What do you think? [00:50:00]

Dziedzic: I think it might be a wool hat. But it is hard to tell.

Collens: Anyway, this first was at Storm King near the Noguchi, and quite long, and I think it was very imposing to have such a large—even though it was horizontal—steel sculpture on top of the hill, and we had many other di Suveros near the Museum Building that were taller than *She*, but it's quite large with swinging platforms on them as well. But we didn't have any other space so we had to use this space relatively close to the Noguchi, going around on top of the hill near the building. It still looked wonderful.

And we realized we actually needed more space for large scale sculptures and started building the hillside in the mid-1980s. That took five years to construct, to really have a space for larger scale sculptures and also to be able to walk down the hillside to the sculptures that were in the fields and circulate people around. So it was a dual purpose for that hillside, but it did give us future space for large scale sculptures, so we didn't have to have them so close to the Museum Building, which was a little tough.

Dziedzic: When I mentioned before we started that there were some exhibitions that I didn't know very much about, my question really is, can you take me through the decision-making process, as much as you can, going from this exhibition here to some of these group shows that happened before the Calder show?

Collens: *The Reemergent Figure*?

Dziedzic: In a sense, there's a lot of exhibitions, when I look through the history, where I can see, oh yes, this is where that thread returns, and this is where that seed was planted. But these couple of exhibitions here, I kind of wondered, after this solo exhibition, what was the thinking behind doing these group shows?

Collens: Well, I think we certainly excelled at doing individual exhibitions for artists. And none of it is easy, whether it's a group show or doing a solo exhibition for a particular artist, but on occasion you'd have to break up your individual exhibitions and do a group show and just broaden your theme out. A good example was *The Reemergent Figure: Seven Sculptures at Storm King Art Center* in 1987. And the figure has always been important to sculptors, some at least, that have been interested in the figure and certainly making it more abstract or doing it in a very realistic form, the human figure. So we brought a group of artists together, including Joel Shapiro, who we borrowed a wonderful work from, and that's the

first time I believe Joel, for example, showed at Storm King, in 1987, with the outdoor sculpture that's in a collection now in Louisiana Museum, Denmark. And many other artists that were part of that. That was in the Museum Building as well as outdoors.

I wanted to really mix up what we were doing and show different aspects of what was happening in sculpture at that point in time. A lot of our focus was showing works in the earlier years by artists in the permanent collection of Storm King, or those we had close associations with, who were important artists that we wanted to give an opportunity to. And we, after many years, started branching out towards other artists that weren't in the Storm King collection. We certainly are moving well beyond our collection today because we have done exhibitions of, I'd say, many of the artists in our collection [00:55:00] over the years. And we want to work with living artists as we do today, and very closely work with them to realize their vision for an important exhibition both in the Museum Building and outdoors. So that is a tradition of Storm King doing exhibitions like that. But we have to broaden our range of what is happening and working with artists in the 21st century. But earlier years, we focused on artists in the Storm King collection, and were very successful working with them.

Dziedzic: I've heard a lot of—around this time and even prior—thinking about having a single artist to consider. For example, the Calder Hillside, and not always having so many different artists together. So that's what my question about the group shows was really about—how do these two come into balance together? I think you explained it, about having exhibitions be a little bit more contemporary sometimes as opposed to a retrospective.

Collens: Yes, I think also you want to have a pulse on what's happening with sculpture over the years and be sensitive to what is going on in the world of sculpture. It was much smaller in the earlier days than today. It's a far broader selection of artists that one can make from all over the world, whereas it was narrower at that point in time. There are sculpture exhibitions and fairs and symposiums everywhere, at this point. People get on airplanes to go to Asia, Europe, North America, South America. So it's a very broad field to select from at this point.

Dziedzic: So now I want to ask about Mia Westerlund Roosen. I think this is someone whose work I've seen from time to time, but I hadn't heard too much about her history at Storm King, and for me it kind of stood out because so much of the work is below grade, in a sense. So while Storm King is showing larger and larger scale work in some places, this is going on at the same time. So I wanted to hear about how the relationship developed with her and what it was like to have a show that was so low and below grade and any other kind of issues that came up with this work.

[Viewing images from the Storm King Art Center Archives:

1994_WesterlundRoosen_envelope2.01.tif, 1994_WesterlundRoosen_envelope2.02.tif, 1994_WesterlundRoosen.Adam'sFault_envelope2.03.tif, 1994_WesterlundRoosen.BethlehemSlouch_envelope2.05.tif, 1994_WesterlundRoosen.BethlehemSlouch1993_ClemensKalischer_envelope3.tif, 1994_WesterlundRoosen.Crib1992_envelope2.07.tif, 1994_WesterlundRoosenExhibit_envelope2.01.tif]

Collens: Like all exhibitions, in its own way, it was very challenging. We had done a commission with Mia in the early years (*Muro Series X*, 1979) that was concrete faced with steel plate. The sculpture was created by Mia at Storm King and she came out with an assistant and created the three plywood boxes on site, in the early years, and poured concrete into the three boxes that were horizontal on the ground and faced all three with steel plates. Eventually she stood them up vertically and they're like bookends together—two of them are back to back and the third one is adjacent to the other two. And we've moved them from their original location a few times at Storm King, but they were made for the site. They're very heavy and they have a black coating on them, so you don't realize they're really concrete, and they have a sealed plate that is quite thin in front of them that we just coat. They're a material that Mia has been pioneering for years and she's an expert working in concrete and similar materials to this day.

So I thought she would be a very interesting artist to work with. Her drawings are charcoal [01:00:00] and large scale and beautiful, and we showed indoor work of hers. And this image is at her studio near Bennington, Vermont on her property, in New York State, where she dug these sculptures in. She was really moving in a very different direction by digging the earth out and created sculptures for Storm King that were in the ground, in trenches, suspended on cables. The trenches kept on caving in at the Art Center, so we had, needless to say, to keep people away and put a rope around it, which artists never like ropes, but being a public place, we had to.

Dziedzic: I think there might be one [image where ropes are visible].

Collens: That's Maureen Megarian on the right, who worked at Storm King. [looking through images] So this is the one that was in a trench, and she hung these spheres in there that I think were concrete—I can't quite tell from this image—or another material. The trench kept on caving in, naturally, so we had to put a fence to keep visitors away. It was in our Storm King field, very similar to her field. And we had an art critic coming up to review the show and had to go in there with a ladder and get down there and clean out all the dirt that came tumbling in and make sure it was in great shape for the next morning for the art critic. But it was interesting because of the way she worked in concrete. This is just one example, and with other works that she sited at Storm King.

Her studio was near Bennington, Vermont and Troy, New York, and she had a barn and she created concrete there, whether by herself or with an assistant, and really has an expertise in using concrete and similar materials that she's lightened up a bit because they're so difficult to move and handle—like all sculpture, a bit dangerous. But she started really attaching them to the ground. So they gave you the feeling they were coming directly out of the ground, or she'd dig them in holes so they were emerging out of the ground in different ways. She's really pushed that material to the brink more than any other artist I know.

Dziedzic: So this is Vermont?

Collens: This is actually New York State, very close to—I guess it's Route 9 that goes into Bennington. It's Route 9 and Route 7, I think it is.

Dziedzic: Christine and I were looking at this last week and we couldn't figure out where it was at Storm King, but that's why!

Collens: It's not Storm King. That's why. And her studio would be where my water cup is over here, kind of looking down the hill at the pond and everything.

Dziedzic: I see. Okay. So I think this might be labeled as an installation photo at Storm King, so we'll definitely correct that.

Collens: Yeah, I don't think so.

Dziedzic: Because this looks like a pond.

Collens: But that's not our pond for sure, right. I mean, it looks like our allée but when you start examining—I'm quite sure I saw all this installed, not that everything came down—but she was preparing for the Storm King exhibition and I kept on changing her schedule because of the di Suvero exhibition, I think. She was very accommodating

Dziedzic: And is this Storm King or her studio?

Collens: I think her studio as well. The landscape doesn't—this is definitely Storm King here. That's Storm King with Maureen with Mia and her dog—I'm sure it's not ours. I think that might be Storm King there. [01:05:00]

Dziedzic: All right, well we've got to get you a meeting with Christine to sort these out.

Collens: Definitely. We'd have to have the titles of the sculptures, then we could figure this out, exactly where they are. And we could double check with Mia. I don't think this is our landscape either. Just too many rolling hills in the background, and we don't have that type of view.

Dziedzic: So these would've been photos that she supplied to Storm King?

Collens: Could be. Or we went up there with Maureen and we took them. But I think maybe Mia took them.

Dziedzic: So I have a couple other questions. The work in Storm King's collection was actually a commissioned work?

Collens: Yes. I think Cynthia Polsky introduced us to Mia. We also have a group of her indoor sculptures that are concrete and lead, much smaller, that you can handle and pick up, some of them, various shapes (*Concrete and Lead Series-Small Work II*, 1980 and *Concrete and Lead Series-Small Work III*, 1980).

Dziedzic: And I think that some of the writing about this exhibition said that her process was somewhat site specific in some way. Do you recall how that came into play?

Collens: For the commissioned sculpture?

Dziedzic: For this exhibition.

Collens: The exhibition itself?

Dziedzic: But now, seeing these photos that are likely from her studio, I'm thinking maybe—

Collens: She had enough lead time that she was thinking of particular sculptures, or created particular sculptures for fields at Storm King, like this particular one where we cut the trench and installed these half circles basically.

Dziedzic: So you mentioned some of the issues with the trenches caving in but I know that pretty much every sculpture that Storm King has comes with its own set of challenges.

Collens: Definitely.

Dziedzic: So can you talk about the element that I mentioned first off, which was sculpture that's very large scale—seen at a distance—compared to sculpture that is in the ground or very low to the ground. What was your takeaway from that kind of work?

Collens: As we're saying, each artist and their sculptures have particular challenges for public places. I think with Mia, the sculptures might not be overly large, but they're extremely heavy. We found that out loading trucks at her studio, with maybe this piece, as we were bringing them into Storm King. They were created at her upstate studio, not her New York studio, but we had to load flatbed trucks and it was difficult lifting them and placing them on the trucks so we could bring all the elements down. They were very hard to maneuver and heavy. So each section became a challenge and very time consuming to load, whether you're dealing with the di Suvero I-beams that are large and heavy and difficult and awkward, and then Mia's work, which is much smaller, but has plenty of weight and was challenging to properly load a truck and not get hurt.

Dziedzic: And between that commission, which—I can't remember the date, but I believe was in the '70s [1979].

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: And this is 1994. What was the conversation or communication with Mia like about potentially having an exhibition?

Collens: Well, like many artists, I stayed in touch with her. I was fascinated by her work, went to her studio, and she was very flexible as we kept on changing some other exhibitions around as to what date she would eventually do a one-person exhibition [01:10:00] at Storm King. Like all the artists, I think she put a tremendous amount into it, preparing it in advance and thinking of different sites that we reviewed, not just in the Museum Building but outdoor sites because it was a lot to take into account and coordinate with machinery to dig the holes, to get the sculptures in, and staff and everything. Because she really didn't have a large staff to do this so we had to supplement our team at Storm King, I'm sure, to do the installation.

Dziedzic: And I think the way that she talks about her work during this time is that she does connect it to earthworks, at least much more so than the earlier work that Storm King has in its collection. So I wondered, was there other earthwork that was happening at Storm King? How did you contextualize it at the time? Was that something that came up? I'm thinking maybe that the Patricia Johanson commission was—

Collens: Yes, certainly Pat Johanson (*Nostoc II,* 1975). I was fascinated with the materials that Mia really pioneered with concrete, which was certainly unusual. And she had some gallery shows where she was––at Leo Castelli, she was the only woman artist showing at Leo's for a while—and different shows she was in with concrete, doing both indoor sculptures and outdoor sculptures as her career moved forward and so forth. It might go back to Robert Smithson and the earthwork that he suggested for Storm King as well, which wasn't, unfortunately, accomplished, but was an inspiration certainly to me, and trying to broaden my knowledge of sculpture and materials being used and what was happening. So I found what Mia did really fascinating and thought it could work into Storm King in a different way, and I think was important and critical to be able to show different types of artists and really broaden the experience of sculpture for people.

Dziedzic: Was there any concern that this work might be too subtle for an audience?

Collens: I don't think so. I think it was more how people would react and what type of a fence or rope did we need for public safety for the sculptures so they weren't being walked on and causing anyone to be injured. That's always a concern and it's hard to figure that out a lot of times. So the sculptures are installed and you see how people react and it's unpredictable sometimes—many times.

Dziedzic: How did people react to this exhibition?

Collens: I think they were surprised by the materials, probably that it was being done by a woman, the scale of it. It certainly had weight, everyone could tell that, but seeing sculpture cut into the earth was quite different in the landscape that we had.

Dziedzic: A lot of the exhibitions in the '90s, even starting with these kind of architectural group shows in '90 and '91 (*Complex Visions: Sculpture and Drawings by Alice Aycock* and *Enclosures and Encounters: Architectural Aspects of Recent Sculpture*), and then moving on to the other exhibitions in the '90s, it kind of struck me that a lot of those people who whose work was shown went on to show work again at Storm King. And I wondered what was the reasoning behind not having another exhibition of Mia's work? Maybe this gets at the question that you're always grappling with, which is how do you work with limited resources and decide whose work you're going to show. But her in particular, [01:15:00] I think she stood out for me. So I wondered if you had any insight on that.

Collens: Mia's introduction to Storm King was through her commissioned work, *Muro Series X*, and then having her exhibition at Storm King. I think she's always had a close association with the Art Center over the years, which is terrific and certainly enjoyable, and very interested in coming and always looking at

her sculpture and offering to take care of it. And every time she comes down, she is very complimentary about the way Storm King takes care of it. She thinks she's going to have to come with an assistant for a full day of work and she's there an hour and leaves and then phones me later because I go to see her and she's already gone. [laughs] She's there an hour and does a little polishing or examining the edges or something like that, and she's gone. She leaves me a message, "Oh, great shape again, David!" [laughs] So that's kind of amusing. All artists want their sculptures to be in the best shape possible and they get concerned about it and have to come see for themselves and don't always believe us that we're doing the right thing and using the right materials, no matter what the combination is. But she's always pleased every time she comes—does a little detailing is all it is, and then off she goes after an hour, which is interesting.

Dziedzic: That's a great testament to Storm King—

Collens: —and Mike Seaman. Yes.

Dziedzic: But I know there's a lot of artists who maybe hope and pray and ask and suggest that maybe they have an exhibition at Storm King, but it sounds like maybe she's not one of them.

Collens: Yes, I think Mia was very patient and as we sometimes changed the dates and so forth and I wasn't overly aggressive about it, no.

Dziedzic: Is there a takeaway from an exhibition like this in terms of what it teaches you about the audience, the general public. Again, this is being an example of something that strikes me as different from a lot of the other exhibitions.

Collens: Well, I think it was different and I liked it because it was exhibiting a woman artist and I always felt that was important. I was looking for the best artists I could find whoever they were. And I was interested and fascinated by the materials that she used and the scale of the materials and the way she used them. And as she moved more towards connecting directly with the earth, I thought that was interesting as well, and something that we should be exhibiting at Storm King. And that she would be worthy of having a Storm King exhibition with her drawings because the charcoal drawings were really stunning and the scale of those and her indoor work as well. So I thought it would fit in. Maybe it wasn't an exhibition that had the largest attendance, I don't know, but I was interested in really showing a range of artists at Storm King as we are to this day.

Dziedzic: So when you're approaching or planning for an exhibition with an artist, are you thinking first and foremost, "What's Storm King's relationship with this artist?" Are you thinking, "What's going on with

the landscape at Storm King?" Are you thinking about how an artist uses a certain material? How do you go about getting your thoughts in order for planning for an exhibition? [01:20:00]

Collens: Well, thinking always of artists—like Ursula, who was really, to me, an extraordinary example to this day of when she had her first museum exhibition at Storm King in 1992. She had many gallery exhibitions but she was really ready to expand into museum exhibition and she had her first one at Storm King, both indoors and outdoors. And she excelled at creating work for the exhibition at her Brooklyn studio—her smaller Brooklyn studio, or first one, versus where she is today. But aesthetically, she was really ready for the leap forward and the opportunity to show outdoors, which she did, and indoors as well. And it was a fabulous exhibition. I think that's what I'm looking for—to try to find artists at the right point in their careers.

I think in the earlier years at Storm King, it was to see where we were in the landscape and what had Bill Rutherford completed and improved versus other areas that had not been improved yet, and where we could site exhibitions without disturbing our annual work on the landscape.

Dziedzic: So every exhibition is, in a sense, unique based on where that artist is in their career. And Storm King doesn't just offer a big white box [laughs], right? So how does what Storm King can offer kind of mix with what the artist needs and wants at that particular time?

Collens: And it's not always the top of the hill. Mia was off the top of the hill with the trench, and we couldn't trench for 30 or 40 feet—I forget how long that was—on top of the hill. Maybe we could. I mean, we did Lynda Benglis's fountains and dug into the ground and created several large pools of water (*Lynda Benglis: Water Sources*, 2015). So maybe we could've dug up the top of the hill. But she preferred a less formal area in a field location.

Dziedzic: And this was out towards the south fields?

Collens: This is down from the Calder Hillside where we had her work. This is all Calder Hillside going straight south, where that trench was, as I recall. It had to be around 30 feet long. It wasn't small.

Dziedzic: That's larger than it appears in that photo.

Collens: And quite deep. I mean, if I was standing in the bottom of it, it was five, six feet high and you needed a ladder to basically get down there safely and not collapse the sides of it, which kept on caving in, even though we put the fence around to keep people away—safety factor there. But these look like

they're half spheres with mesh to me, but I can't quite tell. But they were heavy and they were cabled into the earth.

Dziedzic: Okay. We've talked about artists really pioneering new places or new kinds of exhibitions. Are there any limitations to what Storm King will do to showcase a work? Or is it really just listening to what the artist envisions and following their lead?

Collens: I think it's really a conversation with the artists and hearing what they have to say and trying our best to execute their vision. And sometimes it doesn't happen the first time because it's too lofty—not possible to build. It's just too costly or we can't figure out how to build it within our budget [01:25:00] in the best way. And unfortunately, there are limitations, and even if there weren't, translating an artist's vision into reality doesn't always happen the first time around. We've had several artists that have to rethink—and there's nothing wrong with what their vision is—so we can reduce the cost if we have to. It's part of a discussion. It's not, “Oh, this is it, and go build it,” because there's safety, there's construction costs, dismantling, maintenance during the time of the exhibition that one has to consider—many different things. You have to come up with something that is sometimes more practical, turns out in the end, than the first vision that is not practical.

The materials are costly, fabrication, whether we're doing it with the Storm King staff or not, or it needs to be done by somebody else. We certainly do a lot of it and that's why we want to have a Conservation, Fabrication, and Maintenance Building to be able to execute more works by sculptors on our site and have better equipment to do it. But each one is a custom situation to adjust to what they want and be able to get the right equipment in, whether it's borrowing or buying it or renting or whatever it is. Or have the artists reside at the Art Center, as they do, to create their sculptures. You have to adjust each time. It's like a custom-made suit or a custom-made dress. I mean, each situation is so different, and it's time-consuming and takes a lot of lead time. And it depends on an artist's expertise and materials they're using and how they're executing their work and what they envision.

Dziedzic: Would you say also that the lofty first vision isn't always what brings about the vision of the work? In other words, rethinking and retooling and adjusting [results in a solution that] is not just satisfactory, but is maybe even better?

Collens: I think part of it is the artistic process. We have artists that we worked with, like Noguchi. Came back a year later—wrote a letter to Peter Stern and said he was talking to the stones at his studio in Shikoku, Japan and he was very confident that he was going to come up with the right stone and hadn't figured out the image for his sculpture yet. But stone was the primary material for him for the Storm King commission. The right type of stone was very important and he needed enough stone, which he didn't

have at his studio, so he had to go out and find it. And that was, I think, the beginning of it. Coming up with the right stone and coming up with his creative process of doing the sculpture with his studio assistants in Japan, and no pressure to complete it in a timeframe or show it to committees and present to committees, and return from Japan to New York to do that.

So it is a lot of freedom, and I think each artist has to have that type of freedom in a different way. Each one is different. And it's a process that takes time. Doesn't mean their first idea that they submit to us is the right one. I mean, we've had that happen. And by the time I returned the material to the artist, they've changed their mind. It happened with Maya [Lin], it happened with Sarah Sze changing her mind. Worked out an idea as long as she could and then on her own decided, no, that is not the sculpture she wanted to create. But she worked it through on her own and came up with the decision to change direction. [01:30:00] She was inspired by places she'd been, things she read, photographs she'd seen, artists around her, whatever it was, and Sarah also changed. And you have to be willing to go with that type of thing.

It's not a criticism of a process or a way that an artist works. Mark di Suvero, he should just create the sculptures that he creates because if you ask him to do a commission, whatever little model he shows you or drawing or description he gives you, it's going to be totally different! So I think he's an artist that should just create his sculptures and you're better off selecting the one you like, for whatever reason**.** Each person is very different and timeframes are different and so forth. And it's not one that's better than the other, it's just adjusting to the way artists work and their process.

Dziedzic: And I think, from the Gala video that I watched recently, artists were impressed with your patience. It seems like there's patience and trust going in both directions, not just that the artists have to trust Storm King to—

Collens: Yes, I think there's an unsaid trust that takes place and there has to be a chemistry between people. And if it's not there, it's not there. It's not going to work out. And not everything has to be explained. That's not a good process either. I mean, it's a trust that's an unspoken trust that is there as well, I would hope, through thick or thin, of different processes that take place that you can't predict and are unpredictable and you have to deal with as situations come up and adjust and stay calm.

Dziedzic: Well, David, let me ask you—

Collens: There are many examples of artists we've working with and have worked with, and it's not a criticism of anyone, but not to mention names I think is just too abstract. Well, might be this person or this anonymous person, but I think you have to have a name with it and it shouldn't be taken as a criticism of

any of them. And it's a working process that is so different for each person. We're all different people! We're different people and add in a different artist and different artist vision, that's just layering up with how to deal with it all. Creative people are different, whether they're architects or whatever, and you have to adjust accordingly, whatever that means. I don't have the magic answer. I mean, I guess I do it, and willingly, and with [laughs] a smile—doesn't mean it can't be frustrating. You've got to go think it through and do the best for everybody and come up with the best end result for everybody.

Dziedzic: I had titled this session, at least informally to myself, your "hands on" work. [laughs] You're always hands on. Is that part of it for you?

Collens: Oh, absolutely. I mean, maybe it's the old-fashioned way. Here we are in the 21st century with computers and people have different skill sets than they did years ago. But I guess I still prefer the old-fashioned way, whatever that might mean. And I think computers are great and they've added a lot to what can be done, but there's no substitute for the relationship with the artist. And that doesn't change because we have Zooms and so forth. It's the human relationship, I think, and meeting and being with the artist. [01:35:00]

That happened with Sarah Sze and we said no, we don't want to execute the work in Spain in the middle of Covid. It's not going to work out well. It's going to have long delays in the process, be very delayed, whatever the timeframe there might be. And we can't have the interaction with the artist to correct the sculpture and see it physically as we're in the production process. For example, we made the decision to fabricate near us, and maybe it wasn't perfect but we could get there 10 miles away and the artist could come from New York. It worked out quite well between Covid situations and this and that that developed. We more or less had it done on schedule. Much better than trying to fly to Spain. There might be very good fabricators over there, but timing was very poor. So you have to weigh all these things.

Dziedzic: You mentioned not talking about the stuff in the abstract, so I'm thinking about how there's a sense that maybe storytelling is also part of Storm King.

Collens: Well, I think it has to be because otherwise it's just out there. And I don't think it's being dishonest. Any artist that we have worked with, yeah, there's certain things that you don't discuss and are part of the history and you just let that be. But I think the important statement here is each artist is different, whether it's Maya Lin, Sarah Sze, Martin Puryear, they're different people. They're all terrific people on their own as human beings outside of being artists. But add the artist dimension into it and it puts it over the top. And I think working with each one and many others—Mark di Suvero, Richard Serra, all the great artists and others that we've worked with at Storm King—are really extraordinary experiences in different ways, and they have different timeframes and things change and have a different

emphasis for each one. And you have to go along with and adjust, and you can't speed things up, whether it's being manufactured at a foundry or it's more of a hands on process. There's no changing it. And you have to recognize that and figure out how to accomplish the mission still. But hopefully within a certain timeframe.

Dziedzic: [laughs]. But you're also saying in a sense, there's no formula.

Collens: Exactly. There's no formula. Definitely not. It's being sympathetic and staying in touch with artists and being sensitive, and that means a lot, and it registers, and it's terrific for everybody, and it pays off for everybody. Everyone's after the same mission to accomplish a task of creating difficult sculptures––expensive, difficult, time-consuming, everything. And everyone needs to be in sync and doing it. That's what you hope for. There could be tough parts to it too, but everybody wants to accomplish something for the same reason. These are unique opportunities and I think artists realize it when we select them, and we're very careful about our selection process. We tightly control the curatorial program at Storm King, like any museum does, but we happen to be sent a lot of material by [01:40:00] sculptors, gallerists and so forth, about what "would be great for Storm King." But ultimately, we are the ones that are directing a very small curatorial program because sculpture is costly to execute and do, whether it's exhibitions or commissions, and one has to think about it carefully. We don't have unlimited budgets so we have to pick and choose what we're doing. We have a mission to really improve and expand the Storm King collection.

Dziedzic: You also have seen, when you first came to Storm King, what it was like to not have such a tight curatorial program. So in a sense that's in your memory—burned in your memory, maybe. [laughs]

Collens: I think many sculpture parks, maybe not every one, but certainly different organizations that are focused on sculpture have gone through a similar situation. Maybe not to the extent that we have, but each one's different, and you learn. We're all learning. All of us that are dealing with sculpture conservation and installation, we communicate with each other. We might not have a formal group, but we know we can call each other and get information.

Dziedzic: So I'm going to suggest that we maybe break for lunch and come back and talk about commissions. How does that sound?

[Side conversation]

Collens: I'd like to mention our most recent commission. I think Martin Puryear is important. When I think back to Richard Serra, Mark di Suvero—and I don't mean to just select all the great artists—there's Chakaia, she certainly has had an important exhibition at Storm King and has had a wonderful career at

many different museums beyond Storm King. I've helped her out with recommendations that worked out. Maybe some didn't, I don't know. But I stay in touch with artists, try to recommend places for them.

But Maya, Sarah Sze, and then onto Martin. It's such an extraordinary experience with each one of them and to try to put it into context a little bit and timeframes, Martin is so incredibly hands on and bringing some arts and crafts direction to his sculpture. I'm not directly involved with every detail of Martin's sculpture, but yes, I'm interested in it because there's certain things that I don't want to see happen. And I learn because I go up there every day I'm at Storm King. I don't care what the weather is. Today's weather in short sleeves, and hopefully they're going like hell, and hopefully we have another 70 days like today, so they can really finish their [01:45:00] brick work with concrete because we can't do it in freezing weather. We're out when that happens. I hate global warming, but [laughs] I want it now for another 70 days, Sarah, to really push and get the form of Martin's sculpture done. And we can put off doing the floor till the spring, but we're in a tight spot here.

But each one is just so totally different. The fabrication process with UAP and Sarah [Sze], she was there. Martin's there, he trusts his very small team to the nth degree. Yes, he drives, and he'll show up at any time of day. "Rob, is the boss coming?" I say to him [Martin's studio assistant and on-site fabricator]. And being Martin, we all adore Martin. If Martin said he might be here sometime this afternoon, he might show up at 4:45PM. They're getting ready to leave. If it's weather like this, they'll work till dark just to keep going. Get that extra hour in—well, not anymore, sorry, it gets dark at five or something. I'm thinking about before the changeover of time. But they'd work as long as they could to get an extra push on whatever they're doing. And Martin would come, [laughs] before daylight savings change, he'd show up at 4:45 and they might be ready to start cleaning up because they have a lot to clean up with concrete—you can't just leave it to harden or you'll have a mess on your hands the next day in your bucket, your tools. There's a regular process to what they do. But he might show up late in the day and bring some tools they might need, different things. And to see what they're doing, not to criticize. He just has so much trust in this small team. Extraordinary.

Again, it goes both ways. Not just with his team, but the Storm King team. And there are two people that work directly for Martin, Rob and Lara. Rob's worked with him for 18 years and they are laser focused on every brick going in to this sculpture, that it has the right curve to it, it's not sticking out too much on the inside, the outside, whatever it is. The concrete is going in correctly for the joint, and the fellows are good that work with them. It's a very small group and they're all doing their best and they know what they're all looking for. But it's really Lara's eyes and Rob's eyes that are the final blessing onto every brick. And there's no arguing, they just do it beautifully. One brick after another is going in on these curves that are extreme. And that's not what brick is made for. They're cutting curves, they go around pipes, and they have to cut the brick so it has a curve like my hand [makes a C shape] in it, so it's perfect to go against

the pipe here. [laughs] It's amazing. It is so detailed. And it's not something where you could get one more person, five more people to help with—that would not help out one bit. It has its own pace. They have the right team and they're moving forward. But different than di Suvero and everybody else I have spoken about, Chakaia, or many other people I haven't mentioned, but wow, it is terrific.

Dziedzic: But that's also a point of the work, isn't it, to use this material to create these forms?

Collens: Oh gosh. The extreme simplicity of the material. For Martin, it's like when he learned how Scandinavian furniture—he lived in Scandinavia—when he learned how to use wood there and build furniture and what he was doing over there. It's like Scandinavian furniture in that it looks so simple, but—it was handmade in the beginning, but then they used lathes on it. And whether it's Hans Wegner and so forth, I mean, they mass produced it at great cost. If you go buy a Hans Wegner chair today, it's costly and it's made by machine, but there's a lot of handwork still in the way it joins and it's just so great, I think. And Martin learned all this in Scandinavia. [01:50:00] All his tools are hand tools—a few plugins at his studio, but not much. And it's just so extraordinary.

I mentioned at the Gala—I just couldn't help myself—but the night before the Gala, Friday night—again, as I say, I go up there every day, different times of the day, not just to say hello because I don't want to disturb them. They're in their pattern and I just let them go, and they'll say, "Hi, David!" or whatever, and I bring them [laughs] ice tea in the afternoon if it's hot sometimes. They love it. But I just like to watch the whole process. They're so intense about what they're doing. They're friendly, but intense. And I just watch or take photographs because I'm endlessly taking photographs to add to our pile of photographs that Adele always takes off my camera and puts into the common file for Martin.

But I was up there Friday night and the sun's getting ready to go down and they're putting some bricks in, and then Lara, who went to MIT—she's the number one brick person—she said, "Fine, let's stop at this point. We've got to fill in the cavity between the two layers of bricks in here," because there was no support in there and she really was intent not to leave it there till Monday morning from Friday. Not that anyone's going to bother it. They lock the chain and gate and all that stuff, but she just wanted all those bricks over here to get that support of all this concrete in there. This is all hand mixed bag by bag! This is not like two, three bags, hand mixing. So Martin's there, I'm there, and three of them—Rob, Lara and one other person. No one spoke. We said, "Fine, let's do it." And Rob mixes another bag—two bags, three bags. I don't know. It took a lot more than you think. It's very deceiving.

And of course the sun's going down. We pulled the car in, the Subaru, to get the headlights on the area where we're working. Temperature was cooling off, was not weather like today. And everyone had their little assignment. Two of them were up on scaffolding, Rob's mixing, then he's going off to do something

else. Martin and I took these small buckets—they didn't seem very large, but when you put concrete into them, they're heavy. And we'd have to scoop it out of the pan where he mixed all this concrete, lift it up to them. We had the headlights on. And they had to squeeze it in and keep on packing it in between the bricks. We did it until after dark. I don't know how long it took us, but we did it till Lara said, "We're fine for the weekend," and that's it. But no one spoke. Everyone had their jobs and no one complained. Then we left, cleaned up and left. It was fascinating, just the teamwork and everybody there doing it, five of us.

It's a messy job too. And you don't want to get it on your hands—the lime and the concrete is not great for your hands either. Not like your skin's going to peel off, but not a good thing to have on it, so you have to be careful of that too. But I don't know, it was just the sequence of everything happening, wow. Such a memory for me. And Martin just pitches in—he's 82! He's passing bricks to Lara and Rob earlier on. He's bending a piece of wood for them that needs to curve around before they took all the wood out, whatever it is. I mean, he's hands on. Anyway, so be it.

But it doesn't make sense without names of people. And I can't emphasize enough, it's not a criticism of any artist or their working methods or anything about them, they're all just terrific people as human beings, knowing them as I do. Just great people, Rashid Johnson, whoever it is. I mean, I'm not saying everyone is that way, but wow, we have just extraordinary luck working with people.

I mean, Alice Aycock was one tough person to work with in 1990 [01:55:00] and now we're moving her sculpture [*Three-Fold Manifestation II*]. We took it off the hillside for Martin [exhales]. That was a hot potato dealing with her. And she came up to the Gala and checked in and I was around the check-in area by the south parking lot and Alice kind of had a little bit of a chip on her shoulder. First thing she said to me, "Well, when are you painting my sculpture? When's it going in?" She says this to Mike, to John, to Nora, whoever. And that's the way she is. And I could understand. At 75, this is an important sculpture of hers. No one else wanted it. It was offered to the Hirshhorn Museum and they turned it down, from what I heard secondhand. I don't know, from her, if that was the case. But I said, I'd love this sculpture. It is a key sculpture for Alice's career and how she's gone into what she's doing today. It's a pivotal sculpture. And it's a great sculpture.

So she gets out of the parking lot, she sees me and goes into it a little bit. I said, "Alice, my car's over here [indicating 30 feet away]." I said, "I'll take you down there right now. It's light. Before you go to any of the Gala stuff at Storm King, before you check in at reception or anything, I'll take you over there right now. Let's get in the car and I'll drive you down there and show you what Storm King has done." We did that. I took my Subaru down there. We have this hillside. There was no hillside—Mike and Joel built it. It's roughly shaped. It ain't perfect yet. But I drove the Subaru and said, "This is exactly where your sculpture's going," where I stopped. We went a little further up, turned around, and she couldn't believe it.

She was seeing stars from that point on. And because I took her down there—otherwise she would've had this edge for the rest of the night. Whoever she saw from Storm King, Mike, John, Nora, Joe Schmo, it would've been everywhere. That's just the way she is. And she knows a lot of people come up to see it and she'd love to have it out as soon as possible. We will have it out next year. We're building this hillside for it! It's going to be just fine. Oh, she was over the moon. If I hadn't done it—I wasn't doing anything except saying hello to people as they came. I could take 10 minutes and put this over the top. Well worth it, with an artist.

Dziedzic: And I'm sure someone in your position has a lot of different things on their plate, trustees and the staff and everything else.

Collens: Priority one. Wow, when I saw her, my car was literally over there. I said, “That's my blue car over there! Let's go!”

Dziedzic: Not everyone would get in a car with someone in that context, but that just goes to show that there is trust. Even when there's impatience along with it, there’s trust.

Collens: It's going to be smooth sailing as much as possible. She'll be interested in the orientation. I don't blame her. And I'll help out. I'm sure if they just call me up, I'm around. I don't think I'm going anywhere exotic. I'll help keep it over the top. But boy, she is, wow, in seventh heaven with that. It wouldn't have been that way if I hadn't taken her down there. I mean, she'd been calling Mike up complaining, asking, “When are you going to paint?” He can't get the paint—supply chain issues, sorry. We've had this problem with other sculptures. We're really delayed. But we'll get it done. We'll get the concrete base in, get our final grading, shaping, grass it. All that's going to happen. But she was just an example. I didn't expect to, and I saw her and said, I'm just seizing the moment. Do it.

Dziedzic: Where is the new location?

Collens: Down Bunny Road where the pin oak trees are.

Dziedzic: I’m looking at my map.

Collens: Oh, that's your crib sheet? Sarah!

Dziedzic: My crib sheet for north, south, east and west. [laughs]

Collens: Go to the sailboat [*Mermaid*] is the best way to describe it. Sailboat's over here, you're on the right hand side of Bunny Road and here are all the trees. You go up the hill towards Andy Goldsworthy and Maya Lin, and it's straight up the hill where the Thruway is. Not quite that high—we had to lower our elevation because her sculpture's like 30 feet high and I don't want to get pushback from the Thruway. It's an attractive nuisance for drivers looking at it, and that's always a concern. They say yes, it's your property, but we have the right of way for X number of feet. [02:00:00] Take it down and look at other sculptures. And so we have a great spot. It's going to have a great presence and it will just pull people up the dirt road there that goes up and around to Andy and eventually Maya.

I don't know if you remember *Four Corners* (1969–70) [sculpture by Forrest Myers]. I had that up there. It's a box sculpture that didn't quite connect, an open box about 12 feet high. I sat that up there because I wanted to test this idea. Could I get people to come up this slight incline with bicycles, walking, whatever––we don't have a tram or anything there, just a dirt road and go around. Bingo, it happened. People loved taking their photographs inside this open box and standing there, and their friend would take a photograph and a nice view and everything looking out from it. So we took that down because we didn't have it properly secured. You could push one section of the box over. There were four different elements to it with different materials, and if you had some college kids or something, you could push one over and they were pretty heavy. And we had that happen years ago. So they weren't fastened and we took it down and didn't use the space since. For safety reasons, we took it down. We didn't want to have it pushed over.

So when this Alice Aycock situation came up, because I took her sculpture away from Martin's site and she wasn't happy about that, I said, "Alice, I will find you a good site." And she said, "I want an open space, a lot of sky." It started off in the field years ago. We have a poster of it. We moved it because of the 1985 di Suvero exhibition. I mean, it just couldn't be in the field with all the di Suveros. So then it went up on top of the hill and she loved it, but it was much more closed in. It was high altitude up there, highest elevation at Storm King, but all the trees around it. It was beautiful. Everyone loved it. And now she wants to go back to a field and open space and air around it. So this is perfect! We're building a hillside for it.

Dziedzic: How did you decide on that spot?

Collens: Oh, I came up with the spot because—it was hard. We went around with Alice and she liked some other locations in the field. Well, the di Suvero sculptures are in one side of the field. The other side of the allée, we didn't want to use for a permanent sculpture. The Richard Serra's out there eventually. Yes, we've put some smaller sculptures in for one season, but to put a permanent sculpture in, that was painful for us. And so we said sorry, all these locations are out. We had another spot, the original spot for the *Sarcophagi in Glass Houses* (1989) [sculpture by Magadalena Abakanowicz] which is nice, but

maybe the Alice is not the right sculpture there. It needs something more horizontal than vertical. So she said, “No, I want it to be more open space like the field was.” She was kind of nostalgic for the photograph of her sculpture out in the open field.

So we took the *Four Corners* out of there, the Forrest Myers, and we went up there and she saw a spot, but the Jim Ottaway boulder is there and the Ottaway oak tree is there, and we couldn't squeeze it in. So this was all kind of rough, high grasses, and she wouldn't have noticed it. She said she didn't like it. She probably doesn't even remember it when four of us—Mike, Nora, myself, Alice—went up there in the cart and she said, “No, I don't like that spot.” But it was all high grass and we had some gravel sitting there. We kept on dumping gravel there so we could build out this platform for something. And Alice's sculpture turned out to be the right one. We had to lower it and curve it around a little bit and make it look very natural [referring to landscaping]. But Mike has it the way I want it. So she's thrilled! And we really didn't have a backup spot that was agreeable to us. We try to do what the artists want and whatever, but it's our sculpture, our property. I don't think we would've budged off this location, but fortunately it worked out.

Dziedzic: And you'd never put it in a place that didn't feel like it was the right place for the sculpture.

Collens: We just couldn't go back—she was nostalgic for the other side of the allée, and the allée was much taller when there were maple trees. Now we have black gum trees that are teeny little things. Doing well, but they're small. [02:05:00] You’ve got to understand it from her standpoint. But she's a happy artist. Scratch another one off. She can be extremely difficult. I mean, going back to 1990, it was very difficult with her.

[Side conversation]

Collens: Take five.

Dziedzic: Take five. [laughs]

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
November 7, 2022	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Dziedzic: Picking back up for the third session with David Collens on November 7th, 2022. Okay, David, so I wanted to ask you to take me through some of the commissions that we haven't talked about before in the past. And the first is Patricia Johanson. So can you tell me about how that connection was made to her?

Collens: The process started with Dorothy Mayhall before I arrived at Storm King, and it was well underway. Originally, it was going to be in a larger space, around where we now have the tram circling around by George Cutts's *Sea Change*, and it was going to be in the center of that area where the tram circles. And apparently Bill Rutherford objected to using that area because it was wet and had unstable ground conditions for what Pat Johanson wanted to do. It was changed to the present location, on a hillside east of the Menashe Kadishman *Suspended* (1977) to give a direction to where its location is, before you go up the North Hill. So that had changed before I arrived and she adjusted to the change as well as she could, I believe.

And when I started working at Storm King, it was in the location on the hillside and it was the fall of the year 1975 and it was very wet. Half the leaves or more were down and it was a slippery slope. That's the best way to describe it. And we had rubber-tired machines trying to bring these large boulders up from further down the hill near the Moodna Creek and they were slipping and sliding all over trying to carry the boulders up and drag them up—I assume at some point we changed to different types of machines since the ground conditions were so wet—and brought the rock up. None of it was in this location and she placed it around the trees to create *Nostoc II*, which is a very different sculpture than her original proposal. I think we have the original proposal in our archives. I know Pat has it and she's been very generous with passing on information to Storm King about her career and her early commission at Storm King. And she's very proud of it as well.

Dziedzic: Do you remember what the original proposal was?

Collens: It was more complex. It had to do with plant material, stones, and there's always a scientific interpretation that Pat studies before she makes a proposal for a sculpture. She's very accurate, like many artists are. I really wasn't involved with any of this at Storm King. I was a late-comer to this process

and it was well underway but very difficult to safely execute, getting the boulders and positioning them around the trees. It's still in the same location. We've lost some of the trees over the years as the forest has declined in this area. But everything is in place and it's accessible to walk down, a steep slope to get there, but otherwise in good shape. [00:05:00]

Dziedzic: What were your thoughts at the time about placing a work in the woods?

Collens: I've learned it's difficult to do. Fortunately, when branches or trees fall down around *Nostoc II*, there's no damage really, with all the rock that is there. We have to go clean it up on a regular basis. But I think with sculpture of a different material, it's challenging and can be dangerous.

Dziedzic: I have one of her letters here. Oh no, I don't. Do I? Yes. In this letter she mentions some of the landscape area had been really torn up prior to her arrival, which I think you mentioned with just the machinery being difficult—–

Collens: Oh yes, I do recall seeing these large rubber-tired machines dealing with buckets on the front and chains trying to drag these boulders up the hillside. I'm not sure if they were in the buckets or—it was very dangerous for the operator as well as possibly having an accident, a machine turning over and sliding around down the hill, which was really scary.

Dziedzic: Yes, let me see if I can find the part of this letter that I wanted to highlight. So she writes [reading from the letter in the Storm King Art Center Archives, 1975_JohansonToMayhall_Nostocll.tif], “As you know, the landscape is an integral part of the sculpture and I want it to be left exactly as it is. No trees taken out or planted, no landscaping of any kind, no paths, no benches, no signs, no other sculpture displayed within this area. If the site is tampered with, I will no longer consider it my work, in the same way that other artists have disavowed sculptures that have been repainted, etc.” So what I wanted to ask about that was just how do you then interpret that to do the kind of maintenance that Storm King does?

Collens: I think we're gentle with our maintenance. It's certainly for safety purposes for our visitors, and that's an important consideration always, as well as for the sculpture itself. Trees have come down, snapped off, branches, trunks of trees, and you can't just let it go totally *au naturel*. I think it needs some gentle intervention by our staff to keep it in good order and also follow the artist's wishes. These are always balances to do and accomplish. But Pat's been very happy. She was recently at Storm King at the Gala. She didn't go see her sculpture, but very successful working in this country, Canada, on major projects. She was really an artist involved with environmental sculptures quite early on and maybe has not gotten the full acclaim that she deserves.

Dziedzic: Is there anything about her work that ages with time? I'm thinking about how there's no repainting to be done because nothing was painted in the first place. So what is it about her sculpture that does age over time that Storm King can be hands off about?

Collens: Well, I think the positions of the stones haven't changed. People haven't moved any of the small stones from the circles that she put them in. And certainly the larger boulders and smaller stones—haven't been down there recently—have lichens and moss growing on them. And that's just a natural phenomenon that takes place, especially with little light in the woods. It's still pretty dense even though we've lost trees there. And we do some very basic cleanup so visitors can safely get to the site and look at it, which they do. [00:10:00] But it's fortunately very low maintenance. We check it a few times a year, just like we do all our sculptures. Leaves decay and they take care of themselves. We don't go down there and blow leaves or anything like that. It's better for leaves to just decay on their own and compost. We have vegetation there to a certain extent. And as far as the boulders, which create the sculpture that was done in 1975, we haven't done anything to the boulders. Just maintain the area from a visitor's standpoint.

Dziedzic: What do you think the role of this sculpture is in the Storm King collection? How does this fit with the other work in the collection?

Collens: Well, it's interesting that she did this early on. In 1975, it was commissioned. Very different from her original proposal, but that happens. Maybe she didn't, from what I understand, agree with Bill Rutherford about the location of the first sculpture. I think it's accurate that it is a wet area and continues to be a wet area. We really haven't put sculpture there. On occasion, we've used it for just a temporary, one-season, exhibition of sculptures, more on the edge than going into the center of it because it is basically a wetland in that section. I don't know if she realized that or not, but this is what she was able to accomplish at Storm King and I think she's grateful to have it here. An important early work.

Dziedzic: There was another letter in the archives about thanking you for letting somebody use your room. Do you recall what that was about? I think the person's name was Alvar.

Collens: That was her young son, who I think drove her to Storm King for the Gala, as she's in her early eighties and I think had an operation recently, doesn't walk so well. But he was [laughs] quite young when she was doing the commission and he needed a place to sleep, so he slept on my bed.

Dziedzic: And is that at the time that you were living in the Museum Building?

Collens: In the Museum Building. It was when I first arrived and Pat was working on the sculpture and brought her son on a regular basis to Storm King. It was probably, I don't know, hour and a half drive at least from near the Troy/Bennington, Vermont area. She lives very close to Mia Westerlund. I'm not sure they're particularly friends, but they live in the same area.

Dziedzic: That's really sweet. I never would've thought that that would've been her son.

Collens: Yes. I think there were two boys and she was married to Eugene Goossen, the well known art historian that taught at Hunter College.

Dziedzic: Is there anything else that you want to mention about this commission before we move on to the next one?

Collens: No, it is interesting. It's one of the few commissions that have used materials—being rock in this case—from our property, very unusual. I mean, Andy Goldsworthy, of course, we gathered all the stone for the *Storm King Wall*. But I found this interesting that this is what happened with Pat. I don't know if it was intentional, but I think she wanted clearly to use material from the property, whether it was the more complex commission that she first proposed or this one.

Dziedzic: I saw there was something in the archives that was related to the Con Edison Indian Point facility. That's something that's separate, right? That's a different project.

Collens: Yes, totally a different project, yes.

Dziedzic: Okay. [00:15:00] So the next artist I wanted to talk about was Charles Simonds (*Dwellings*, 1981). [reads from letter in Storm King Art Center Archives, 1980_postcard_CharlesSimonds.tif] "Dear David Collens. Here are two montages and this slide of our proposed project. I hope they give sufficient example. The work will also be extended onto the outdoor window jamb. I look forward to hearing from you. I return to New York on December 10th. As we discussed, the cost will be $6,000 plus expenses (a place to stay and a small per diem). Sincerely, Charles Simonds."

Collens: What year is this?

Dziedzic: It doesn't say, but the date of the commission is 1981. So this actually might be December 1980.

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: So how was that relationship struck up between Storm King and Charles Simonds?

Collens: I think it was through Cynthia Polsky, if I'm not mistaken. Charles Simonds had done a work at the Whitney Museum. In the staircase of the Whitney Museum was part of it, then you'd look out the window and going across the street, there was another part on the ledge of a window across the street in another building, which was fun. And it's possible the sculpture in the staircase is still there. I haven't been to the old Whitney building for a long time, on Madison Avenue, but that was something you'd discover going up and down the staircase when the elevator was full and you wanted to circulate around the building, and there it was. It was out of clay. He was very well known for going into different parts of the city and just creating these clay sculptures in a whole range of places, where there were buildings that were demolished. He'd go in and create these clay sculptures, and I think he had kids in the neighborhood helping him sometimes. And they would just sit there and eventually deteriorate on their own.

But he did it at the American Museum of Natural History indoors too. And so we asked Charles to come out to Storm King and do it in the window sills of the library that face the exterior of the building. They are probably our smallest sculpture to date, and we have plexiglass in front of them to keep the moisture and rain from deteriorating the clay. And we call Charles up occasionally and ask him to bring more clay. He gets, I think, some of the branches of trees at the pond at Storm King, the willow branches, and uses those to bind some of the sculptures together because there are little structures in the *Dwellings*, and so he needs some more material. But he brings the clay and comes on the bus. Bag of clay, willow branches, and spends a day tuning it up. I think it's in good shape and we'll probably have to change the plexi to another type of plexi and tighten up the frame around it to keep it a little bit more waterproof, but it's hard to keep moisture out of there totally. And the ledge is very deep. People find them and they're always surprised when they do come across them.

Dziedzic: How was that location chosen?

Collens: I think we looked at different locations and that was really the only location on the building that was a possibility, where the public could easily access it. [00:20:00] And I think the size of the window frames, they're about one foot square and very deep, so it really was the perfect place to give it some protection against the elements and create *Dwellings* that one would spontaneously find and be surprised at seeing.

Dziedzic: When he was first making the work what was it like to work with him? What was the process like?

Collens: Oh, he was on a ladder and had all his materials. He collected the willow branches at Storm King, had bags of different types of clay—more of a reddish clay—and cut little bricks to create the dwellings. It went on for quite a while. I'm sure he resided at Storm King. It was a meticulous process. He worked by himself, doing it.

Dziedzic: And this work was a gift of REO [Ralph E. Ogden Foundation]. I'm not sure if that changes the connection, how they might have gotten involved after the Cynthia Polsky introduction.

Collens: No, I think there were a lot of works that the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation paid for in those days. Whether it was commissions like Charles Simonds or other works purchased for Storm King because they were really the main funder at that point in time.

Dziedzic: And how has the communication gone back and forth over the years?

Collens: I stay in touch with Charles. He's had shows in New York and he's gone to Germany to do porcelain. So he has expanded his career and is certainly well known for this aspect of his earlier career. I haven't seen any gallery shows lately. I thought he'd come up to the Gala this year, but he wasn't there. And so I look forward to still communicating with him. Very nice person. And he went to the same high school in New York as John Stern.

Dziedzic: Oh really? Wow.

Collens: At different time periods.

Dziedzic: Has anyone other than him ever done maintenance on his work?

Collens: No. It's a situation where we take care of the plexi and the frame around it, and the sculpture itself, he periodically comes to look at it and do maintenance. We'll tip him off that it might need some more bricks and a little dusting of clay powder on it or something, or some other repairs—that we have a lot of cracks and we don't want it to deteriorate too far so that we don't have anything left. So we're trying to certainly preserve it, but there's no coating on it or anything that helps to really preserve it.

Dziedzic: Could this be a situation where—I'm not sure if he has ever articulated this, but is it once he's gone, then the work will just deteriorate? Or is there some space for somebody else to model their maintenance after his original work?

Collens: That's a really good question. We've looked into some sculptures, but I think with Charles, that's well worth checking into. And I guess it's small, but we should know what the guidelines are. We haven't checked with him on that. We have some guidelines on other sculptures that are much larger, and different types of materials, but that would be well worth doing, and see if we could continue to maintain it.

Dziedzic: In the context of Storm King, this is at a time [00:25:00] when you're focusing on a lot of larger scale work, and this is tiny—tiny, tiny, tiny!

Collens: I think it's our smallest outdoor sculpture actually.

Dziedzic: [laughs] So what was the discussion around that? Going after this work that was explicitly very small scale?

Collens: I think it fit into the windows on the other side of the interior of the building, which is now the library. Those are the two windows on the east side of the library where his *Dwellings* are located. And it's a very nice contrast to the scale of everything else we have that are considerably larger scale outdoor sculptures**.** I think Peter Stern loved pointing that out on a tour, that here are small sculptures and here they are in the window sill.

Dziedzic: And that was the kitchen at the time?

Collens: These were originally the kitchen of the building, is what it was created as. Yes.

Dziedzic: Yes, they really are delightful, almost like a pallet cleanser. Okay, the next artist I have on my list is Richard Serra and *Schunnemunk Fork*, and that's 1990–91. I guess now would be a good time to ask you if there's anything that I'm missing in those intervening years?

Collens: Richard has never been to Storm King since he installed the sculpture, which is interesting to note. He's been so busy with commissions and creating other sculpture and exhibitions that, to date, he has not returned to Storm King. We've invited him. But that probably won't happen at this point in time. It is certainly an important commission, and I think he understood the Storm King landscape, and he really excels at doing landscape sculpture and really has the right balance to what he's doing with steel plates. And that's his specialty, using large plates or sections of steel, whatever shape they might be, to create sculpture for the landscape or indoor spaces, but particularly well known for the landscape. And we were determined to get a Richard Serra and thought he would be a good artist for us to have in the collection. And it took a while, but he came up with his wife, Clara, and understood the Storm King landscape and

had a topo map of the area where he decided to put the four steel plates and we have 10 acres devoted to it.

Dziedzic: How did those discussions first start around having Richard Serra create a work for Storm King?

Collens: We decided that's an artist we wanted in the collection, like we always do. It could have been suggested by trustees. I think maybe some trustees knew Richard, and Peter Stern made it his mission to really go see Richard's work in Europe and become very familiar with it, as well as in this country, the major works of his that were outdoors in landscapes. So we did our homework in that respect and Richard came out at one point and really didn't see anything that appealed to him about Storm King, and probably didn't like a lot of the artists in the collection at that point in time—maybe that was quite early.

Then when *Tilted Arc* was taken out of the federal building in New York, we decided maybe that would be appropriate to bring to Storm King. There were three or four other organizations that wanted to borrow *Tilted Arc* from the federal government and we put a letter of request in. They were going to decide where it should go. And then Richard contacted us that he did not want us to bring it out, so we withdrew our letter of interest since it didn't appeal to Richard. We continued to stay in touch with him and invited him out to Storm King another time, and he came with his wife, Clara, and Peter and I had an idea that maybe we should show Richard a site closer to the Museum Building. And we did that. And, very nicely, Richard said—it was afternoon and we toured around a little bit, maybe had lunch—and he said, “Why don't you fellas go back to your offices, do whatever your plans are for the day, and let Clara and I walk around.”

He had a topo map of the 10 acres and what was, of course, a former farm field. And he had that topo map and reduced down to four plates, just “markers in the landscape” was the way Richard spoke about it, no compass point positions in particular to them. They all have a uniformity of eight feet high and two and a half inches thick, and they vary in length depending on their position, the longest one being 54 feet, the shortest one 35 feet, and three of them were on the hillside and the fourth one's lower down. He loved the idea that it was just farm field and that's the way we maintain it today. The plates are getting darker in color. The steel plates had the blue mill scale on them early on and he never took that off. He just left it. And now, after all these years, in the last couple years, it's just starting to wear off, the mill scale, and they're starting to show brown. They're weathering steel, so they're starting to gradually change color in a very subtle way. That bluish black color is coming off of them. It's like a paint surface that's wearing off, the mill scale, and more uniformly showing up as a brown color, which the weathering steel is.

We've taken out a lot of the connecting pathways from one plate to another about four years ago—that didn't make a lot of sense to me. And after being that way for years, and Bill Rutherford creating these

beautiful curved pathways, I said after a while that we didn't need that, and it'd be better if the plates just came out of the ground and the tall grasses were around it, and not have all these pathways for people to walk around and stand on the plates, which people like to do a lot. Aesthetically, I just didn't think it was appropriate having these curved pathways and the angular steel plates out of the ground—something didn't quite jive with me. So I did a little map of the area with my daughter one winter and measured the pathways and everything. It wasn't to scale, but it gave some accuracy off the Storm King map. And I said, this is what I'd like to do, reduce one pathway and have it connect to another area, but take out all the pathways around the four steel plates and let the grass just grow there, and eventually we'll get the farmer to come in and just mow the field. And that's what we've done for the last four years. Looks terrific. Richard's thrilled. So we just have one connecting path and we actually narrowed it down. It was too wide, so we reduced the width of it.

Dziedzic: It's narrower than this image we're looking at now, right? [viewing Storm King Art Center Archives image Serra_SchunnemunkFork_JLT_14.tif]

Collens: Yes, we took out one mowing section of it because we still have it that the person can mow the path with the mower with the deck. The way it is, it's probably about 72 inches wide, and there [in the archival image] it's probably double that. So the person can go up the hill, then come back down on the other side. We had it so it was as easy as possible [00:35:00] size to mow, but I didn't like it—it was just too broad. So I reduced it down, reduced that connecting path a couple years ago, took all the other ones out and now the plates just pop up with all the tall grass around them.

Dziedzic: Yes. I wanted to ask about the decisions about the grasses because, as you were saying, the work is kind of subtle, the steel, and so therefore the grasses and the shape and color of the landscape is so much a part of the experience of seeing the work. You explained about how it just didn't seem right to be mowing, but how do you arrive at those kinds of decisions?

Collens: Well, with this situation, I realized, from my viewpoint, looking at it, I didn't like Bill Rutherford's curved pathways that we put in years ago, and they were there for a long time, and the steel plates coming out. The combination of the angular steel plates, being dark in color and jutting out of the ground, and then these curved pathways, the beautiful Rutherford curves to all the pathways around now—which were very nice—but I said, there's something not right about the combination of what is happening here. And I said, I'm going to check with Richard.

I knew that he loved the fact that when he first saw it, of course, there's nothing mowed there. And he was walking around with his wife, Clara, topo map in hand, and they came out with more steep drop-offs. We have four—I think there were maybe five plates in the beginning, five or six. And they weren't as tall and

thick as what he put in now. He reduced it, I think, by one plate. I think there were five originally. And being eight feet high—they were going to be seven and half feet or something like that, and two inches thick instead of two and a half inches. And maybe the plates weren't going to be as long if there were five or six plates in there. Then he decided to reduce the number of plates, increase their height to eight feet, and two and a half inches thick, and their length up to 54 feet for the lowest and longest one, and 35 feet for the shortest. Three of them are on top of the hill, on the edge of the hillside, that are the shorter ones. And that was a good decision on his part to end up with four instead of five and to change the dimensions of everything.

He was thrilled when I proposed that—that was the message I got back. And the one thing he didn't want is what someone did with one of his sculptures: they were coming out of the ground as well, and I don't know who it was, a private collection, and they decided to put a rose garden around the steel plates! That was not to his liking. So I said, absolutely not. I was restoring farm field. Our farmer mows it once and we try to keep the grass material in there. It's not our native grasses, but we keep it in good shape and it has different types of grasses growing and we cut it, bale it, and take it out in the fall now, the last two years. I don't think we're going to do that next year, but we've cut all the fields and baled and taken it out in October. And by that point, you don't really have nutritious value left in your grasses for feed. It's good for bedding, for animals and stuff, but it doesn't have that quality anymore. Aesthetically, it's great seeing Storm King with grasses around and blowing in the wind during the season. We've done that now for two seasons, but I think we have to change because the farmer's not coming in often enough and we're starting to get woody material into [00:40:00] the areas we're farming, and it's being degraded because we don't farm as often, cutting it twice a year instead of just once—or sometimes we've cut three times a year. So I think we have to change our approach next year.

Dziedzic: And when there's something that's not sitting right with you, like you said, the mowed curve and these different swaths that Rutherford had designed in combination with the sculptures, is that an inkling? Does it start out like you're unsettled in some way and then it progresses until you know what's wrong?

Collens: Yes, I know I haven't seen Richard for a long time, but I've had very nice discussions with him. And the whole process of commissioning, Richard was very smooth for us. I mean, everybody has different stories to tell about Richard Serra and the guidelines of maintaining the sculpture and so forth, and if you pull the steel plates out, then it doesn't exist basically. You have to get his permission about where to put it back in another location or something. But we've had very friendly discussions with him always, and through the process of him finally coming up to Storm King and coming up with this site, and we said, "Sure, we'll devote 10 acres surrounding those four steel plates to your sculpture." Well, he can use property up quickly. We have 13 acres basically devoted to Maya Lin, so 10 acres here. But he appreciated it and brought it back to his vision of just a farm field when he saw it. I don't know if the

grasses were tall or had been cut already. I'm sure the quality of grass was not particularly great in that field at that point in time. We occasionally go in and do some treatment, fertilizing to it and stuff like that, to keep the grass in good shape because we're cutting it and hopefully it's being used for feed for cows, or bedding material. We want to have it in good shape and want to keep our woody material out of there, and want to keep the grass in good condition and growing so we can do that.

Dziedzic: When you're in conversation with an artist about a commission, is it always in the back of your mind that they might pick a spot that is pushing the boundary of Storm King further? Or are you always thinking about how Storm King could expand and you have those places in mind even before the artist comes in?

Collens: It's hard to predict because with Rashid Johnson and his sculpture that we received as a gift last year, Rashid came up, and like all the other artists I have mentioned, and many I haven't, they're terrific people. We took a car around with Rashid and looked at various types of sites and he finally selected the site that we put it in, where the *Easter Island Head* (reproduction, 1970) was for years up on the little hillside isolated from other sculptures. That was fine with him. He didn't have to be front and center. He liked the plant material around it and a certain sense of privacy, I think, to the site. I was thrilled to move the *Easter Island Head*, which is a reproduction and is not an original work of art. So I said, wow, that's great. We can move the *Easter Island Head*. It's a little odd owning it, which we do, and it's had its quirky history at Storm King. But that was terrific. He just happened to like that site where it is now today. This is completing its first full year at Storm King, came about a year ago. So an example of an artist selecting a site, and sometimes you don't have to move anything, or sometimes you have to build hillsides or whatever, but it's always important to us to have the artists involved and that's why it was over the top when Alice [Aycock] took a drive with me and she left in a good way. [00:45:00]

Dziedzic: What is the quirky history of the *Easter Island Head*?

Collens: Well, it first came in the 1970s because Peter Stern, our president and chairman, was, I believe, a vice chair at the World Monuments Fund when it was a very small organization, and World Monuments was the first international organization to go to Easter Island and do the restoration on the heads. And that was a major breakthrough and they certainly needed it, and they're under stress today for different reasons—they've had fires there recently, which have been very damaging to them from what I've read. And other situations, such as the quantity of tourists visiting, was not particularly helpful either.

So he was involved with World Monuments Fund and they were supporting different activities on Easter Island for the restoration of the heads, and someone came up with an idea that they should take one of the heads and make a model of the head out of concrete aggregate. Concrete aggregate was stone and

everything. They did that, and Don Lippincott fabricated it, and they thought that'd sell these and they would be a great fundraising device. And little did they realize, well, the total weight is 7–8,000 pounds on each one, and they're 10 or 12 feet high, solid concrete, and they're really chunky and massive. So they only sold three, I think. [laughs] The one that we have at Storm King, and I saw one when I went down in Winston-Salem, North Carolina on somebody's lawn. I'm looking a long distance down somebody's lawn, I said, "I can't believe it. I'm seeing an Easter Island Head in North Carolina!" Or wherever it was, South Carolina. So that person had one, I don't know what happened to his. He died several years ago, I'm sure.

But we made the decision at Storm King at some point relatively recently—15, 20 years ago, something like that, when I say relatively recently—that it wasn't an original work of art and it was kind of quirky for us to have, and everyone thought it was a little odd. They'd discover it in the north area, and it moved around a few times. It was very difficult to get a machine in to move the 7–8,000 pounds of concrete. Anyway, we deaccessioned it and Don Lippincott found a non-profit that dealt with the Moai heads and everything. Then a year or so later, Peter thought we should have it back, with his connection to World Monuments Fund—he was nostalgic for it or something, I don't know. [sighs] So he had to retrieve it and buy it back. And it's on its second tour of duty at Storm King, in storage right now. It had been on exhibit and we had another sculpture over in the north area, but I think Mike turned it 90 degrees so it faced the house that was there for one season and then Rashid came along last year and said, "That's my spot!" So we put it in storage for a while.

Dziedzic: Well, thank you for that.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: [00:50:00] Okay, the next artist, who also is on a different scale, is Nam June Paik (*Waiting for UFO*, 1992). What were the discussions around commissioning a work from him?

Collens: Nam June started with Cynthia Polsky again because at one point she was head of the Collection and Acquisitions committee—might have had a different name, early on—but instrumental in collecting artists herself, and certain artists she gave to Storm King from her collection, but not quite different than other ones that she was recommending, Mia Westerlund Roosen and so forth. But she was constantly going around to see galleries and had a lot of connections to artists and studios and so forth. So she would go to Münster on occasion, in Germany, and she saw a work by a Nam June that struck her as an interesting possibility for Storm King, and quite a contrast. Nam June was really known for always doing Buddhas and televisions. The televisions were usually indoors, and he was the father of television and video with sculpture, early on, and he was well-respected for that. She saw one work of his that was

a bronze figure and a television—they were just facing each other, very straightforward, very simple, and characteristic of his work—and she thought that would be great, having along a little trail, where you just come across this Buddha and this bronze television, or stone Buddha, whatever he used. So she came home and thought that would be terrific and discussed it with Peter and myself.

So we went down to see him in Soho where he lived, years ago, and we got there and he wasn't awake yet, and we're talking, I don't know, 10:30AM, 11:00 in the morning. And so we had to go occupy ourselves for another hour till he got up or whatever. Went and got a cup of coffee or something and went back an hour later to his loft, and he greets us in pajamas, had just woken up. So we spoke about it and Cynthia mentioned what she'd seen in Germany, said something like that would be just great. And so we commissioned him to do a sculpture. We didn't have a clue what it was. And it went on for several years and he came maybe at least a year later to Storm King with a truck and had the old-fashioned television screens that were glass, kind of curved, and he had maybe a dozen of those. He set them on the ground, didn't really dig them in—he put them on the ground just so we could see, as a walking path. I can't remember if he brought plant material at that point or not, but it wasn't a walking path—if someone put their foot down, being a public place, the glass would break and your foot would go into this piece of glass and you wouldn't be able to remove it. Probably bleed to death! I mean, with the sharp edges of the heavy glass that the old screens were made out of.

So this, along with the temperature change in winter, we said, “We don't think this is a great idea. Maybe indoors it is, but you can't have people walking on it. Someone's bound to walk on it even if they start off just next to it. So could you please rethink this idea?” A year later after that, he came back with [00:55:00] our sculpture, again, in a truck, the fall of the year. *Waiting for UFO* arrives. And he’d rethought his materials, obviously. There were three sections to it and three totally different locations. And it was always a sense of discovery to find the three sections, two of them off the top of the hill, one below the David Smith area. It's really characteristic of his work. He's done very few outdoor sculptures that he's completed by commission or just from an idea to do an outdoor sculpture—very few—and this is one of them.

He brought all the different sections together with his small team and they stopped in New York in the Flower District, which was quite large at that time, just south of Penn Station—it's minuscule today. But he stopped in the Flower District and brought all these different plants. I said to him in the beginning, before he came up, we can tell you what zone we're in for plant material and have suggestions. “Oh, no, no, David, I'm fine. I’ll just pick and choose,” and whatever. So he brought palm trees, Ficus trees—perfect for fall of the year. And Cynthia was coming two weeks later to see all of this. So he put out palms and Ficus and stuff like that and set up the sculptures. This is one section with the photograph with your three Buddhas at different angles, three Hotpoint televisions that he bronzed as well. Another section is a

concrete television maybe 50 yards away, and then the third section, depending how you count, is below the David Smiths.

This is before we restored it [viewing Storm King Art Center Archives image 1994_Paik_WaitingForUFO_JLT_01.tif], but this was a very interesting section because it had stone Buddhas, it had six of his bronze face masks. He was alive and well, and he did the face mask—that's not usually the common way of doing a face mask! We have six of those that are at ground level and we have the old Philco television, plastic, that he carved out and put plastic flowers in. [laughs] It was a combination of different materials and bronze televisions and Buddhas in this section. So it really got buried and we had to redo it because it was getting trampled and was a maintenance issue. We had to do a lot of work on it. We dug up everything and mapped exactly where each unit goes, and we built a frame so people couldn't take away, which they were trying to do—lift up face masks and do different things to them, basically take them, I think, unfortunately. Everything is well attached now and grassed over. And now we have a rope perimeter that people can't walk through or in between any of the sections anymore.

I've always thought it was a wonderful piece, and he's an important artist. He's become more of an important artist since he passed away. He selected the location of all three sections basically. They stay outdoors all year long. And we take our flowers and plant material in, I think, for the winter. The plastic Philco television, we're always trying to collect more on eBay and other locations so we have a stockpile because we've gone through—they only last so long, but now they're collectors' items and they're expensive and hard to find, so we're always looking for them. But it's a smaller outdoor sculpture, which it was meant to be and certainly is. It's not what Cynthia was envisioning early on, but artists take an idea and just run with it, as we know, and this is the outcome. I have always been [01:00:00] in favor of it. I think it's an important work and I still do. And I like it as a contrast because it is a smaller outdoor sculpture. Charles Simonds still is the smallest, but this is relatively small. It's a sense of discovery trying to find all three sections. It's on our map of course, and people find them, and I think they're delighted and amused by it. It's really a very unusual work by Nam June, because most of them you see really involved with television and video, and they're indoors with television monitors stacked up and all sorts of things. But this is one of the few outdoor works.

Dziedzic: Yes. With working televisions.

Collens: Yes, exactly. Thank heavens we don't have that and we don't have the glass televisions, the ones that were really lethal.

Dziedzic: What's the decision-making process if you locate an artist that you want to work with in some capacity—how do you decide between talking about a commission or talking about an exhibition?

Collens: Well, I think it might start as a commission and work into an exhibition, and that seemed to be the case with Sarah Sze. Nora was more involved with that than I was. But anyway, I think with Sarah, that went on for seven years, and as I recall, we were just looking for one outdoor sculpture. She had one idea, and I think the location is the one I selected, where it presently is, but I think the point is that she changed and—whenever the midpoint was—self-corrected, which is much better than us doing a critique of it and saying, "No, this doesn't work for Storm King for the following reasons." Those can be unpleasant discussions sometimes, and sometimes they're necessary to point out different things, absolutely. But aesthetically, she figured out something very different that was important to the commissioned sculpture and it changed in a very different way.

The same thing for Martin Puryear happened, which was terrific. And then he came up with the idea of what we're executing now—far better than his original idea. But we didn't have to go to Martin, lose sleep over it—how are we going to approach him? "This is not maybe the best idea. And people think it looks like the following," which we did hear about his original idea. But he realized something about it himself and changed. We didn't ask him why, but he changed to a form that is so much a Martin Puryear form. And it harks back to an earlier work of his at the Oliver Ranch in California many years ago—not 5, 10, 15 years ago, it was like 20 plus years ago. I saw that one when it was being completed. And with Ursula—I went to the Oliver Ranch first in '92, and I think he was working on it then. I maybe didn't see it fully completed, but it was essentially complete at that point. So it goes back that far. And there's a kinship between Oliver Ranch in Northern California, their Puryear and our Puryear. It's in a private collection. But, big difference, ours is brick, and that is fieldstone. But the forms do relate to each other and it's a Martin Puryear form for both of them, which is so terrific. And it shows up in drawings, the similar types of forms—not identical—but those are the two that he executed. I think there's one from early on at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania—much smaller—[01:05:00] but a wonderful Martin Puryear form from considerably earlier in his career than ours, and fieldstone as well.

So it's hard to say. I mean, I'll just finish with Martin. The story about Martin is that we've known each other for many years. I don't know exactly how many, it doesn't matter—I have to ask Martin because he can pinpoint this. But he said to me, "David, you called me at one point early on in my career and said, would you do a temporary sculpture for Storm King for an exhibition?" I don't even remember what exhibition I was thinking of. But anyway, I called him on the phone because I did know him, we saw each other at conferences or this or that. And he said to me, and he reminded me of this story. It's funny. So I got on the phone, said that to him, and he said, "No, David, I want to do a permanent sculpture at Storm King." And this is, I don't know, 1980s or something? So voila, all these years later. Guess what he's doing? So anyway, this could be his final large scale commission, which we're executing at Storm King. He's still working on smaller scale. We're finishing year 12 [laughs] and we're actually executing it. We're

going to do an exhibition of his in the Museum Building next year, and we're going to finish the outdoor sculpture, which does not have a name. So we won't finish it this year, unless we have all winter like this [referring to unseasonably warm weather on the day of the interview]. That'd be great.

Dziedzic: But then there was 20-some years of conversations even before these 12 or 13 years started, right?

Collens: Yes. He might go on to something that he just can't resist doing for outdoors. I don't know. It remains to be seen. If this is not the last one then it is very close to the end. Just the energy it takes—– he's 82 and in great shape. I mean, knock on real wood. We gotta finish this with Martin but there's just so much you can push on.

Dziedzic: I have one more question about Nam June Pike. I believe it says that the work can be moved to a different location, unlike some of the other work that we've been discussing. Does that ring a bell to you? Is that something that Storm King has ever considered?

Collens: Not yet. I mean, what does strike me as interesting, when we were looking at Dan Graham, who just passed away, and he came up to Storm King and we were interested in his work. He was always very quirky as an individual, and certainly talented and everything. So he did come up and gave us a few proposals for a glass structure outside at Storm King, and I guess he had many of them on his computer. And he punched this one out, said, “Okay, here are two for Storm King, this one and that one,” or whatever it was, no *raison d'être* why he selected this one or that one. He just had a computer printout of these two different types of aluminum frames, glass structures. A lot of his work is terrific, and we never could figure this out.

And we’re traveling around with him, and out of all places, where does he select when we're on the cart? Right next to his good friend Nam June. He wanted to put his sculpture between Nam June, the section that you showed with the three bronze Buddhas, three televisions, and the circle of trees around it. He wanted to put it between that and these rather large fernleaf beech trees that have grown up that were planted when Peter Stern's wife, Margaret Johns, passed away and now they’re huge! So they've been there 20 years and they're not exactly petite anymore. He wanted to wedge his sculpture in between the trees here and the Nam June over there [01:10:00] in this zone. And I'm not talking about a lot of space. And we just said, “No, that’s not what we're about. I'm sorry.”

And it went nowhere. Nora and I went to see him when he was downtown on Spring Street where he lived, and it turned out that Bea Stern redid his loft for him. There's this interesting connection—and John Knight, the artist in our collection, Bea, her husband, Kurt Dillon, and John Knight, the three of them, redid

his loft years ago in New York. But it didn't work out for us because if we're going to commission something, don't pick it off a computer and say, oh, here's the Storm King piece. I mean, we couldn't figure out what was going on and why he selected that one over another. And I've seen some beautiful ones I would've loved to have had that were existing through different galleries and everything. And yeah, we tried the commission process, but just didn't really gel.

Dziedzic: A contrasting example to how you do like to work with artists, in a more organic way.

Collens: I'd still love to have a piece of his, but to have one that isn't commissioned for our site, I don't know. It's a very fine line for us. For example, we were offered a Richard Serra that was in Philadelphia, and Nora and I went down this summer, August, to see it. I said, “Let's just go before fall season. We're going to be busy as can be, and we are not going to get to Philly, driving or train, in any way in September.” We're just busy with Storm King, and people coming, and whatever we're doing. So we went in August and as we looked at the sculpture, it turned out, just ironically, it was 1990 when this sculpture was commissioned in Philadelphia—–very different than Storm King, we're 1991. But Richard came, he looked at our site with Clara and it was a great relationship between them, and Clara was way over there, and when she was not in view, Richard said, “Stop, Clara, come back further. I want to see the top of your head,” or something and “this is where the plate should go.” So there's interaction between the two of them, and it's part of his notebook drawings, actually, the Storm King piece that was shown at the Metropolitan Museum. We have a facsimile of his notebook drawing that he produced that you could buy. So we have that.

But the point is, in Philadelphia, it was commissioned through Philly for a private collector, and Richard agreed to have it moved somewhere else and that it could be sold. But the scale of it was wrong. I’d love another Richard Serra, but I want it to be really contrasting to the 1991 commissioned work we have, not take something from somebody else's collection that he worked on, but in Philly. The scale is wrong, and they're a year apart. Just doesn't make sense. So I turned it down, but it was nice to be offered it. But how are we going to justify bringing this one from Philadelphia from 1990 when Richard in 1990 was here and did this commission—he was physically at Storm King, he decided on everything. He was there for the installation. It's just diluting the process to do it, so of course we didn't do it. It wasn't an overly strong Richard Serra either, not just the size of it, but we didn't think it was up to the standards for Storm King, whether he agreed to having it moved somewhere or not, so we didn't take it.

And we wouldn't do a Dan Graham now either. I think that'd be hard on us. He did so many commissions and for different places, and is well known for that. And I don't know, just to take a Dan Graham doesn't make a lot of sense at this point. And we tried.

Dziedzic: And you said that you wouldn't want this Richard Serra piece because you'd want something that was contrasting to *Schunnemunk Fork*. [01:15:00] And by contrasting, what do you mean?

Collens: Well, the *Torqued Ellipses*, they look great at Dia, but there are many other periods of his career that I think are stronger than what we saw in Philly. And we have to consider the great Richard Serra that we have. It fits into the landscape perfectly. Whereas Richard Serra and urban landscapes are so confrontational, so many times. Not just *Tilted Arc*, I remember that well, but many others that you see. And he just hit it when he works in landscape, I think he's spot on. Like in the Storm King landscape is perfect, and outdoor sculptures are wonderful of his, one in Iceland that he did, haven't seen it personally, but other people have. You can go to Iceland and find it, these five stone pillars from the island that he cut and placed are perfect. I've seen others in Europe that I've liked enormously, but it makes a big difference.

Dziedzic: Let me ask you this question about Richard Serra's approach to placing his sculptures and Mark di Suvero's approach to placing his sculptures. When we did the interviews in 2018, Mark di Suvero had said that having his sculptures at Storm King "was like jewels in velvet." That was a quote of his. And Richard Serra's—

Collens: Oh, is that when we were at his studio?

Dziedzic: Yes, we went to his studio and just did an audio recording.

Collens: Oh yeah, we did strictly audio and I just gave him the names where he forgot names. God, he's 89, he has a right to forget names, and he's still working! Yes, I do remember that now. Sorry, just had to get my brain into that one.

Dziedzic: And then Richard Serra had a much more subtle approach. In a sense, the sculptures and the landscape are complimentary and reveal some kind of complexity about each other just by this subtle presence. And he's out there with a topo map and he's out there with his wife, and, "walk back 10 feet," or whatever. So—

Collens: But I think with the topo map, probably, Sarah, he said, "Fellas," meaning Peter and myself, "you guys go inside." Probably in those days we had jackets and ties on. He's "caj" [short for casual]. They had lunch there, spent the day, and really found something to work with, where other times he's been quoted as saying, "No, I didn't find anything at Storm King." Sculpture parks aren't for everybody. It gets your competitive juices up—are you capable really of doing something as good as whoever is out there? Whatever artist you like or don't like. It gets you going, in a way. Can you find the right location? Can you

come up with a particular sculpture? So it's nice he came back out and he said, “No, forget about *Tilted Arc*.” Not for us. We declined that piece. And he came back out and, “You fellas go inside, let us walk around.” “Here's the topo.” But what I think he did is marked off on the topo. I don't think we have the topo still. Would it be great if we did. Maybe Richard has everything. I mean, he built a model. We have nothing. He probably has the original topo we gave him.

But I think he must have put, [making a rough diagram on a piece of paper] okay, here's the hillside and the steepest drop off points. Here's one plate here, here's plate number two, here's three, here's four. This is the direction they go. I’m making this up but it's not so far off probably. And this is 54 feet, this is the 34 foot, and this is 36, and whatever. He must have marked it on [01:20:00] the topo map is what I think. But it's conjecture on my part. I gave him the map. [laughs] Never seen it since! And he had five originally. He cut number five out—so smart on his part. Make it a foot taller—go from seven to eight feet. Go to two and a half inches thick instead of two. Subtle but big differences. And some people say, “Oh, this is kind of a wimpy Serra. They're just the plates sticking out of the ground this way or that way,” or whatever. Different lengths, which people don't realize. Maybe they don't even realize they're rectangles. Three quarters of each one is buried into a channel! But it's fabulous. I mean, he understands landscape. If you ask him to put something in a garden or something like that, I don't know, that's not his style, but that's why I wanted to restore the farm field to the way he saw it and take out—as much as I adore Bill Rutherford—take out the Rutherford curves of these pathways and keep people off walking on the plates, [speaking sarcastically] unless you want to go through with your shorts on with plenty of ticks out there, then be my guest. But no, I just did it aesthetically, totally aesthetically for me. I caught on to it and wanted to restore it to the way he thought it should be and what he first saw at Storm King. Small changes.

I did the same thing with Mark di Suvero recently, last winter. I finally figured out, after spending, I don't know, close to a year—because once *E=MC*^{2} (1996–97) went in, my suspicion was correct. *E=MC*^{2} went in and *Mozart's Birthday* was off to one side, this teeny little horizontal sculpture compared to 92 feet soaring up there, and I said, I'm going to move this sculpture no matter what, soon. And it took me two years because we didn't have the equipment—we had the money, but we didn't have the equipment—and all the other stuff and just letting things settle in. I finally kept on walking around, came up with the space for moving *Mozart* away so *E=MC*^{2} is by itself now, the way I always envisioned it, and I put *Mozart* in a different location. I think you saw it when you were up this spring. We moved it last winter. And now it’s really grown, Mike's new grasses. It looks great.

Mark was up in, I think, October—he didn't come to the Gala, so he came up in September before he went back to California—and we're driving around with his top open and we're driving under *E=MC*^{2}. Mark loves that type of thing! We stopped there. He is looking up in the joint section, dead center, and it just

gets his juices going. He loves it. It's like 20 years ago or something, and even though he is not a good walker, doesn't matter. But, oh, wow, his energy! And we're just zooming around. I didn't drive, somebody else did. Then we go underneath *Mozart's Birthday*, much smaller, [laughs] and much lower, the beam. But we did all this—so much fun just zooming around in the fields. I said, “We can do whatever we want! The field is dry, and forget about the security at Storm King.” But he just loved it. He liked the position that *Mozart* was in, and Ivana did.

And to me, it’s, “Wow! What a change!” It is so perfect. The three of them together, the three sculptures [*E=MC*^{2}, *Mozart's Birthday*, and *Figolu*] and the spacing, it doesn't happen often. I say, “Jackpot, I got it right!” Because, damn it all, I would've gotten machines and moved it again if it wasn't right. And then Mike Seamen, after a lot of talk, we got permission from Mark to take off the horizontal steel beam. We did this in the fall, I think, late summer. And I said, “Ivana, let's get Mark's permission. I want to do it when he's alive and well. And I'm not going to do it unless we have written permission so no one questions what we're doing,” because we've been arguing about this for three years. And Mark said, “Why the fuck didn't you take it off when we were putting it up in July 2019?! I wanted it off and somebody said it should be on.” I don't know, whatever. [laughs] So we cut it off one morning. Wow, this is the way Mark envisioned the sculpture! It is so great. And doesn't mean so much to anybody else. To me it means the world. And what a difference without this horizontal beam going across it! It just comes alive. [01:25:00] Vivian said to me, “Oh, just leave it. It looks fine.” I said, “No, it doesn't. Sorry, I don't care whether you're doing sculpture or not. It's coming off.” It is so terrific. It's such a small detail. The beam was maybe six or eight feet long. We still have it. Because it was so big, Mike had to cut it in half and we didn't want it snapping around because we didn't know if it was going to push the legs out. It had no structural integrity at all, this beam, for the sculpture. But these details are so small and so important to me, but that's what it's about.

Anyway, that's my speech for the day. What else can we talk about?

Dziedzic: [laughs] Thank you.

Collens: They're just points to back up what I'm saying.

Dziedzic: Exactly. That something as small as a half inch of width or with *E=MC*^{2}, it's one 20th of the sculpture or one 50th of the sculpture, this little bar.

Collens: Yes, I mean it was probably a third longer than my arms. But it's the same thing—the difference between Richard Serra out there with the map, out there with his notebook, which he always carried around this notebook and made these drawings. The drawing and the facsimile is, I think, the landscape is here and something like that [indicating a very simple sketch].

Dziedzic: As simple as that.

Collens: Yes, it's two or three lines. Wow! It is so pure. It is so great. It's like Scandinavian furniture to me. There it is. We have it at the Art Center. Two lines on a page or one line.

Dziedzic: Basically my point was, it's interesting that Richard Serra and Mark di Suvero can have such success with their sculptures at Storm King, even though their approach is different. And you're saying it's actually similar in some way because it's all about the subtle difference that makes the work actually come together and be this magical thing.

Collens: And to carry on the next statement from what you're saying is the following: I haven't thought about this until you mentioned it today, it's not something I've particularly thought about for a while, but Richard is very exact with that one line on the page in his notebook, and that just clicks for him, and being out there and making the notes on the topo map, which I'm sure he did, with a pen or a magic marker or something. And his eye for looking at certain landscapes. But he's very precise about what he's doing. And with Mark di Suvero, in the fields doing exhibitions with him beyond 1985, putting in *Beethoven's Quartet*, before it went out to Montana, there was absolutely no sculpture in this space between *Pyramidian* and *Mother Peace*. I mean that's like, I don't know, half a mile. Well, Mark goes there, looks, bang, this is the spot for *Beethoven's Quartet*. It's not measuring, putting in flags, any of that stuff.

That's what frustrated me so much about the Liberman at Tippet Rise last summer. I'm tearing my hair out. I said, "Cathy, what's going on here? Mark wouldn't do it this way." I mean, maybe he has just great vision, great thought of how to do it. No preparation in his career that he's ever worked at, no space that he could do that before Storm King. Bullseye every time in a different way than Richard Serra. Every time for Mark. And Mark said, "Gee, I want to put a sculpture by the pond." So I got our farmer, within two days I trucked all this material in, built a hundred foot circle, which we used for three different di Suveros over I don't know how many years—15, 20 years now—built them because that was his vision. He wanted to be closer to the pond with a large scale work, and it was all wet—we couldn't just drop it in there. This was hardened and grassed it over and good firm ground, put steel plates and put a large piece there. We've done that now with three different di Suveros in that area. Again, the artist's vision. [01:30:00]

But it's just so different. With Mark, uncanny ability to do that type of thing time after time. As we worked together, after Dick Bellamy died, I said, "Mark, put the sculptures between the south parking lot and the pond, or Bunny Road all the way over to the allée of trees." Never wrong but great approaches for each one. So that hopefully illustrates what you're talking about.

Dziedzic: Yes, absolutely. Thank you, David.

Collens: And I don't know why Mark has that ability. He worked at industrial sites in Bayonne, New Jersey, and here, there and everywhere. A Pasadena parking lot is where he built *Mother Peace* in 1970. That's not exactly beautiful.

Dziedzic: [laughs]. Right, right.

Collens: Or wherever he's done these sculptures.

Dziedzic: Yes, there's not really a precedent for the Storm King experience, or the outdoor landscape experience in the same way.

Collens: No, absolutely not. What do you think he meant by the statement you just read?

Dziedzic: The jewels in velvet? That the landscape is beautiful and that the artist has a certain appreciation for their own work, and you can place it almost anywhere and it's going to look good. It's going to maintain whatever kind of preciousness you see in it—precious isn't a good word, but it's enhanced. The work is enhanced by the landscape in a way that it wouldn't necessarily be in an industrial landscape.

Collens: And he chooses words carefully.

Dziedzic: He may have a different kind of allusion for an industrial landscape—his work made out of industrial materials in an industrial space might also enhances the work. But for Storm King, it's jewels in velvet.

Collens: That's the *crème de la crème*. What a statement.

Dziedzic: I think that’s definitely what he was saying.

Okay, two other artists that we haven't talked about yet today. So Andy Goldsworthy, we talked a lot in 2018 about *Storm King Wall* but we didn't really talk about the process of *Five Men, Seventeen Days, Fifteen Boulders, One Wall* (2010).

Collens: 50th anniversary, yes.

Dziedzic: Yes. So I wanted to ask a different set of questions for Goldsworthy since we did talk about that first relationship. I guess I had thought about Goldsworthy as being different from prior commissions because the materials were being drawn from what was onsite. But as we talked about earlier, Pat Johanson set a precedent for that. But I'm also curious about how do you decide that you want another commissioned work by the same artist?

Collens: Well, that has to do with the exhibition, the 50th anniversary exhibition in 2010.

[Viewing Storm King Art Center Archives images:
2010_Installation_5+5NewPerspectives_Goldsworthy_FiveMen_JLT_02.tif,
2010_Installation_5+5NewPerspectives_Goldsworthy_FiveMen_JLT_09]

Wonderful photographs. And we had Gordon and Jason, the father-son team. They were just back at Storm King in April doing some tune-ups to the curved part of the wall. Not this one but the original wall. Let's see, for the 50th anniversary exhibition, we decided to select five artists that never exhibited at Storm King before and give those people an opportunity to do a major work, and five artists that had major exhibitions at Storm King. So that's when Andy came back to do the wall, for the 50th anniversary, *Five Men*.

His original idea was, again, very different. And he wanted us, which we did, to go into the farm field because he said if you dig down three, four, six feet, something like that, eight feet, you're going to find some boulders there. This is the area of the field I want you to dig. So he told us that, and Mike got his machine out. We hit nothing, just gravel. We're so well-endowed with gravel in the farm fields, everywhere in our property. We have two boulders that stick out in the north and that's it. We just had absolutely nothing. We said, "Andy, sorry, we haven't come across anything but pebbles. That's about it." Maybe something slightly larger.

So he changed his idea and decided to build the *Five Men* wall and brought his team over. They were going on to another project and he had a limited amount of time—that's how the name came about. *Five Men*—same five men as 1997/98 in 2010. And also the fellows would come back, different ones, to do tune-ups to the wall, which we needed every several years. And now it's becoming more of a regular thing as it's getting older. But anyway, they came back for the 50th anniversary and *Five Men, 15 Boulders*, you count the boulders on either side of the wall, and all these boulders came out of what is now the maple rooms, which had fallen down trees, uprooted trees, and just a mess of vegetation in there and so we decided to clear that out and create the maple rooms with 64 maple trees. And we dragged the boulders over to where there was this wall before Andy's wall was there. So there was an existing wall with fallen down stones and all that stuff. We dragged the boulders over there and Andy used the boulders in the

year 2000 when he did an exhibition in the Museum Building for his major exhibition at Storm King. And he worked on the boulders and created some other wooden structures with students at Cornell, where he was a visiting professor thanks to Joel and Sherry Mallin. And he brought the students down, worked on the outdoor work there, in the maple room.

So he is very familiar with it and decided, okay, can't find any sizable rocks in the farm fields. He was shocked that we couldn't, but he came and built the *Five Men* wall and you come out with *Five Men, Seventeen Days, Fifteen Boulders*, that was his time limit. He said, "You guys can wall for 17 days and whatever you do, you do. One wall." And that's what they did. They walled for 17 days and it turned out to be 300-something feet long, and curves around with rocks, and they left the ends kind of open and people play around with them a little. He said it's fine if people play around with the ends of the walls—but then they start decaying and I said, well, I don't know about that. [laughs] I kind of punch them back together when people do too much playing around. But it's a much sturdier stone than the original *Storm King Wall*. It's a heavier stone that we collected and it was much wetter over there, and we started having our machines slip around and had to get other machinery in to collect more stone. That's how it came out with that title. And it's wonderful to have. Andy made us promise not to cut the vegetation on the woods side. To Mike and I, his parting words were, when he left and finished it, just leave it alone. Don't do what all the Americans do and manicure everything and clip and trim and this and that. Just leave it au naturel as vines are coming across the wall. A tree hits it, fine, take that out, but don't go manicuring. So we've left it pretty rough and ready over there and he loves that. We got high marks last time he was here in April. It's on loan.

Dziedzic: What does that mean in a practical sense? [01:40:00]

Collens: If someone wants to buy it, the stones belong to us and he owns the wall, the concept of it and everything. I said, "Andy, just give it to us." He said, "What?! Who's going to buy it, David?" He looked at me with this funny grin on his face, "Who's going to buy it? It's your stone."

Dziedzic: Could it be moved or would it always be in that place?

Collens: He'll eventually give it to us. No big deal. I'm not concerned that someone's going to go buy it at the moment. That's fine with him. But he realized that Storm King is great for stone. It's very similar to what the wallers use in the UK. They're very happy with our stone. They feel at home and it was great to see them again and go out to dinner with them. It's like a homecoming

Dziedzic: Yes. I wanted to ask how do you maintain this relationship with Andy Goldsworthy over time?

Collens: We stay in touch with him because near the straight part of the other wall, near Bunny Road, eventually—–way down the line—we want to put in a little pavilion so you can get something to drink and have a great view of the pond. It's fairly close to the straight part of the wall where it comes out on Bunny Road and goes up the hillside, and right as you go up, we want to cut this very modest building into the hillside. And it's not about architecture, it's about having it just be very subtle and have a couple bathrooms there and be able to have some other evening programs if we wanted. We could change it around for small groups, not hundreds, but 50 people or something. Anyway, we don't have the money to build it, but we had to discuss it with Andy because it is part of our plan. He was basically okay with it. It wasn't too close to his wall and he accepted that. So he's just going to his exhibitions, and seeing him whenever he is around and having him stop over is always fun.

Dziedzic: And you visited him in Scotland too, right?

Collens: Oh, I did once. It was so fabulous. Yes.

Dziedzic: What was that like?

Collens: I went over before we did the exhibition and I thought it was going to be bitter cold and everything like that. I said, “No, I'm not taking a trunk with me with all this winter gear.” I said, “Forget it. Andy’s the same size as I am, I can borrow his wellies, or if I need a hat, or I need gloves. I'll take basics, and I'm not there that long.” And yeah, it was a lot of fun and he lent me whatever I needed. We went to see Henry Moore's *King and Queen* that was on a hillside. It's privately owned and on private property, but in Scotland you can go across fences and stuff like that, you're allowed to. So we went to see that, and I’ve seen photographs of it and I knew exactly where he was taking me, and I was probably half asleep in the car. Then we walked up the hillside and, wow, there it was. And then we went off to see other works and just had a great time. Nice camaraderie with him, and friendship.

Dziedzic: Was this before the first exhibition or the second one?

Collens: Before 2000, I must have gone there. In the winter of 2000 because he was setting up everything in the local gymnasium for Storm King and doing different work and different sculptures and stuff like in his small community they lived. That it was fabulous and they just treated him like royalty.

Dziedzic: Is this another work that expanded the grounds of Storm King, or the boundaries as people thought of it?

Collens: Oh, I think so because the maple rooms—this is 2010. Bill put them in considerably earlier. I have my theory about where he got the idea of coming up with the maple rooms, but the trees went in considerably earlier. Don't know exactly what year, but we really hadn't used it and it's kind of an odd space for us and it's an [01:45:00] odd landscape of Bill Rutherford's, I think, a late one, but odd. And it's too formal. There's nothing like it at Storm King that Bill did that's even remotely similar. But I have my theory and I was never able to confirm it with his son, Bill Rutherford, Jr., who was a landscape architect. I'm going to try it out on Jack someday, his other son, who's an architect. But no, and I never got a straight answer from Bill either.

Dziedzic: What was your theory?

Collens: Well, Bill, in 1988, asked us if he could work at General Mills in Minneapolis because General Mills's headquarters was there, SOM buildings from the 1950s. Beautiful buildings, I think they're all in great shape, haven't been there in a long time. And the interstate highway was taking a lot of acreage in front of their entrance into their property for increasing the lanes of the interstate. And they were going from eight lanes to like 16 lanes—it's insane. They wanted to know if they could hire Bill Rutherford, Peter and I said, sure, hire Bill. So he went out there and worked on changing around their entrance and parking areas, and created a little sculpture garden for them and commissioned Siah Armajani to do this heated walkway for people to go from their cars, in Minneapolis weather, far from the main building to their office buildings.

And I said to Bill, in 1988, in the fair weather season, go out there. And I said to him, "Take a look at the Walker Art Center. They're expanding, they're creating a sculpture garden for the first time." And Edward Larrabee Barnes was the architect of the building. He was doing a sculpture garden and a friend of mine actually was a landscape architect, and I asked, "What do you choose in that zone?" You have about three plants you can use that will grow in Minneapolis winters and survive! So anyway, he looked at it and to this day, that part of the garden by the architect of the building, Edward Larrabee Barnes, they're rectangular formal spaces—squares—with plant material going around each square. It's all a grid system is the point, and that's exactly what the maple rooms are. And I said, "Bill, where's the Rutherford curve?" So he went back and did a little squiggly curve for me in the maple rooms, but I'm sure it's after going to the Walker Art Center garden that was finished in '88. Totally a grid system for putting sculptures in. You'd walk down the main path and there was a square room here, a square room there, and on from there. Now they've integrated another less formal garden to it, but what an odd mix it is, to me. But the point is, I'm sure that's where Bill came up with it. He didn't go back to European historic gardens in England or France or whatever. That wasn't his style. I think this must have stuck in his head and he came up with the maple rooms. He said, "Oh, use them however you want." Put a tent up there, use them for sculpture. It's a very flexible space. Anyway, just out character for him.

Dziedzic: Yes. Okay. The next artist I wanted to ask about was Maya Lin and *Storm King Wavefield* (2007–08). She was actually one commission that we didn't get a chance to talk about in our prior interviews a few years ago. I'd like to ask when did Storm King start zeroing in on having Maya Lin do a commissioned work?

Collens: It was 10 years earlier than the commission was executed. We thought she was a good artist. Introduced to Storm King by Richard and Ronay Menschel, they brought her up. She was also a friend of the Polsky family, I might add, and still is with all of them, the Menschels, Polskys. [01:50:00] Those were the early connections when they were board members. We thought she would be a good artist to do an earthwork. Our prior history was having Robert Smithson come to Storm King. So that was really the inspiration, trying to find an artist that could work with the landscape. And we selected Maya to accomplish that. I'd call her in the fall of the year after Labor Day and she always expected my call [laughs], “Oh, David, I'm really busy,” doing this, that, and the other thing. “Can you wait a little bit longer?”

So finally she came out to Storm King and made a proposal for a very different sculpture—different materials, different sculpture, different location, everything—and presented it to the board. Georgene [Zlock] and I had a car and driver and I had the responsibility of taking Maya's models and all her material out from the presentation location, which I think was maybe the Harvard Club at that time. But anyway, so I had to return it to her that night before we departed New York, and we're having the board meeting, dinner and everything. By the time I arrived at Maya's apartment on the East Side and took everything up to her, she said, “I've changed my mind.” And I'm like, “What?” [laughs] “Two hours earlier, you just presented the following proposal. You've changed your mind?” “Yes, it's not correct for Storm King. I'm sorry.” I said okay, and we sat down, had a discussion. Left Georgene in the car, who fell asleep with the driver for half an hour or something. And I understood what she was talking about and so we changed course. We didn't have anything at the moment we could think of.

A while later—I don't know how long the while was, probably within a year, I would say—we were closing out a gravel pit that we had permission from the State of New York to use, the material in it, the gravel, for doing projects at Storm King. We completed our projects and we wanted to just grass it over and there was a very flat area, four and a half acres there, and we started grassing that hillside. We had some grass growing on. It takes a long time to do that process and close it out. So Maya came up again and saw the flat area where the gravel pits had been, “Now, this is very exciting. I can create my third and final *Wavefield*, and my largest one, at Storm King.” Each one being different, not like an edition of a print or something. Each one is totally different. So we said great.

We had to check with the Department of Environmental Conservation because they controlled the permits, not that we were selling the gravel—we used it on our property—but to close out you still had to go through all the paperwork with this state agency. So I said, this is going to be interesting. I think we're going to need a lawyer to go through all the paperwork and red tape and everything else. State agency, folks! And anyway, what happened was, there was somebody that we knew that worked for the Department of Environmental Conservation in one of the areas that was appropriate for Storm King. So I got ahold of this woman. Well, she understood what we were doing, totally. "Oh, you're bringing in an artist? You guys could win a prize for doing this earthwork and not just throwing some grass seed down. That is so exciting!" And cut through all the red tape. There was no red tape, there was nothing. This woman fully understood what we were doing and she was a field worker. She wasn't high up in the organization except in our region. It's all divided into regions for the state. And she was a person that oversaw [01:55:00] our region, including Storm King, and just loved sculpture and had that type of background and thought this was a terrific project and got through it all. "Just do it! Get Maya in! And if you need more gravel, just take it off the side of your hill." She was very enthusiastic about it and we proceeded to do it. This is how it started.

The first *Wavefield* of Maya's was at the University of Michigan North Campus, very small, 30 inches high or something, sitting between some academic buildings. Students would go out there and relax in the springtime on these little curved waves. Each *Wavefield* that Maya did has different types of waves, and they had a sprinkler so it was always very green and kept in great condition. We went out to see that. And then the second one was in downtown Miami by the federal courthouse. And Miami has the city courthouse, the county courthouse, the federal one, all next to each other in this downtown area. And the federal courthouse was a new glass building and Maya was commissioned to do this field of 60,000 square feet, also very low, after 9/11. It's basically what I call Florida crabgrass.

Because it was done after 9/11, and they were very concerned that someone would drop a bomb and blow up the courthouse building, so security to this day is extremely intense there. They have lights, so it's like daytime at nighttime, and they have another set of security cameras just canvassing the area, daytime, nighttime. And she created this very low *Wavefield* and they don't even want you looking at it. The security guards are around there all the time. Try taking a photograph and you're almost arrested. It's unbelievable. The best place to view it—because you can't park on the street anywhere—you have to go to the public garage at the end of the block and you go to the third level, and this beautiful view of Maya's *Wavefield* is there, from the third level of the garage [laughs]. I've done this. I pay to go to the garage and I go to the third level and it's just a perfect view of it, and it's a wonderful project.

Then Storm King came along and this was the third and final one with mid-ocean waves. She studies everything very carefully, so it was a wonderful project. It was our final project of commissioned work with

Peter Stern. Maya came out every week. She doesn't drive so she had an assistant bring her out. They'd rent vehicles—gas guzzlers and Priuses—and they kept a full tally of all the gasoline they used on their trips to Storm King. We kept a tally of all the diesel fuel used by the three or four people that were creating the *Wavefields*, very small group. And we did a carbon offset, very important to Maya.

Halfway through, Maya came out and said, “We better have a talk, David.” And I've had these serious talks with artists before. And anyway, we went off walking around where no one was near us and Maya said to me, “Well, there's not enough material here and it's not right. I had someone do cut and fills for how much gravel was needed.” They figured it out, I guess on a computer, for the space, the 13-acre gravel pit. And they came up with the wrong number. It was a firm she'd used before for other projects, a landscape firm—quite a well-known one. And she was embarrassed. She said, “I'll cover the cost of that, but we have to get this right. And I can't build this because it's not going to be long enough. It's not going to be high enough. It's not going to be as good as Richard Serra and other sculptures. I'm very conscious of this.” And she realized it at a really critical point and I said, “Well, that's interesting.”

Years ago, [02:00:00] Gorbachev and Reagan had a little walk into the woods in Glasgow, New Jersey when they had their summit, and there was no woods for us. We were in an open field—that is my comparison. And we had a candid conversation about this, and “We're moving forward,” and “We’ll figure out where to get more gravel” because we had gone beyond our limits with the permit for the gravel pit. And we took more gravel off the side of the hill. We did this even before Maya.

[Side conversation]

And so I said, “Look, we'll figure this out, Maya. We want make it right with you.” And Peter and I discussed all this.

So I got a gravel pit, where we know the people, to donate the gravel, but we had to truck in gravel from 10 miles away. Not one or two loads—more than 30, 40 loads. I'm not sure. More than a handful. And it was probably somewhere around 20 loads. We had to increase the height of the waves from the projected 11 feet to close to 14 feet, approximately. That really makes it much more massive. And add on another 50 feet to make it approximately 300 feet per wave. So that's a lot of material. I imagine it must have been around a thousand yards we brought in, maybe more. I’d have to look it up. It was a moving target for raising money, now we had to do it again. Maya understood it, totally. And the artist’s wishes were correct. She wasn't wrong whatsoever. We figured out where to get the material—more topsoil, more seed—it just had a rippling effect for finishing the project and needing more money. But we accomplished it. These things happen. So that's one example of other things that have happened with other artists as we moved forward.

Dziedzic: Is this one of the most complicated projects?

Collens: Well, being a living work of art, yes. Because we're dealing with grasses and we didn't build it with engineers. It's a very basic structure under there. It's rock and gravel, and we shaped it and did top soil. Yes, it was huge project. We started July 15th, I remember, 2007. Worked till early October with about four people, a very small team. No one worked weekends. I convinced them to work one weekend, that was it, and they didn't like that one bit. They worked a Saturday. But they did it the way Maya wanted it. She would be out there showing everybody how to rake the top soil. She was hands on about everything, how to shape the wave. She was here every week. [Viewing Storm King Art Center Archives image 2007_Print6x4_Installation_Lin_Wavefield_JLT_30.tif]. Here, the shape is correct and we're putting down the mulch and grassing over.

Darrel Morrison and Edwina von Gal were our landscape architects working with Maya and really coming up with a seed mix. We didn't know how to really mow it correctly, and the height of mowing. If you don't mow then you have to rake it and you need a thousand people there to rake it. We had that happen a couple times and it's terrible. You have to bring in extra people to take rakes and get all the cut grass and rake it off once it's cut, and you've got to get it to the right height, around five or six inches. Sometimes it's too short, and if it's too long, you're in trouble. And we have a lot of invasive plant material, so we like to keep it short. Wood chucks, we're dealing with, and all sorts of things. We had water in one of the valleys in spring. We had to surgically go in a year later and cut into one of the valleys [02:05:00] and get the spring water to go a different direction, put rock in there. It was always wet. There's no water system, it just gets brown in the summer. So it was quite a challenge to build and one of the great projects at Storm King. Seeing it from up above is very nice. Looking down and then seeing it at ground level is the preferred way. But sometimes I have to take people at ground level first.

Now, we're trying to get people to understand not to walk the full length of the waves and we've restricted it, opening during fair weather season the last two weeks of every month because it's getting too much wear and tear. We changed our signage, but we had like 5,000 people the other day, or more, and who pays attention to a sign? You want to walk the full length. But they're flattening the tops out, so very difficult. We work with her on the wording and signage. She's very particular about all that and she has a great design aesthetic and she practices architecture. So it's all very important to her and we're constantly working with her on it, like we do other artists.

Dziedzic: How would you describe this work as changing the collection?

Collens: Well, it's wonderful to have an earthwork in the collection. We have, over the years, done so much landscaping and moved gravel for sculpture, platforms, pathways, everything that we could accomplish. And we really wanted to find an artist that could do an earthwork at Storm King. Certainly, they tried in the early years, probably too early, in the 1970s with Robert Smithson, but that certainly inspired us and remained an inspiration—that he came and created two different proposals, very different, but neither one could be executed. That was really early in the history of Storm King. It was very early '70s. It was before I got there, so I didn't meet him or anything. But that was important to us as we moved forward. And we did approach another artist about doing an earthwork and we were not able to figure out how to really execute it. It was so large and the difficulty ratio was very high.

Dziedzic: And this is Michael Heizer.

Collens: Michael Heizer. And the safety of it as well, because the walls, as I recall, were about 19 feet high, very steep. So if you fell off the edge, you'd be just tumbling all the way down to the bottom. The sheer scale of it was beyond what we could really figure out. We looked into it—the drainage and how to really secure it and do it for the long haul—was very difficult and also cost prohibitive. We didn't get engineers in, we just didn't get to that phase of it. But working with Bill Rutherford as a landscape architect, and we could have brought other landscape architects and engineers in and so forth and try to figure it out, but Heizer just didn't have the knowledge and wherewithal at that point in his career, and left it to us to try to figure out how to build it.

A great idea and everything, about 1200 feet long, and I think triangular and shape, as I remember. And we commissioned him to do a model and then we broke off after the model, saying that we just couldn't come up with the best method to build it. And not just to keep it going for a year or two, but that type of investment in materials—where were we going to get all the material? And to make it 19 feet high and to really bind it together and have it so it was a solid structure and safe for the public? I mean, you have to have a fence around something that high.

Dziedzic: And his proposal was that it would [02:10:00] just be earth?

Collens: Yes. Because he did a project in Illinois that Bill and I flew to Chicago, and drove two or three hours, to see—a project he'd done earlier—that was, I think, an open strip mine near a river. And they had just finished it. They were doing the same thing as we are in this photograph [viewing Storm King rt Center Archives image 2007_Print6x4_Installation_Lin_Wavefield_JLT_30.tif], seeding it and trying to get it green and stabilize it. And I think Heizer did the form of different insects on this very large landscape, and it was hard to tell what the insects were. They were historically important to him, and these were insects that were on this property millions of years ago, I guess. But you just couldn't make out the form

and the long legs. They were very large and we walked all the way around and through it and everything. But it's hard to get a landscape going, to stabilize it and get the grasses to grow, no matter what type of grasses you have there. So we saw that and I don't think they had particularly a lot of drainage with that. This was a reclaimed open coal mine.

Certainly, he's learned a lot. I saw him in Nevada. I went out there with my wife in the early ‘80s to see his complex in Nevada that he just opened earlier this year. There was a learning curve for him. We got out there and I'd seen photographs and these long horizontal concrete rectangular sections, square, that were formed—he took them down because he found out the concrete was inferior quality or something. They didn't have the right mix and it was either going to fall down or he was going to take it down before someone got hurt. And he took it down before we arrived. So that was gone. The basic form was there but he's expanded it so far beyond what we saw, I wouldn't recognize it. But we made this special trip and had to do an overnight, and he’d ripped out a good portion of it.

So we looked into it and we spent money and didn't come out with anything. And no, we didn't have the model or anything. That was part of the deal, that he gets everything. The Richard Serra model was quite large and it was on plywood. Peter and I went to see it at his studio on Duane Street, where he still owns the building. I don't think he's there very often, but Duane Street, where he was really operating out of years ago. And there were four sections of plywood put together and these little triangular sections of steel plate, these rectangles coming out of the side of the hill. He did all that like the topo map and it was painted green. If you didn't know it was Storm King, you'd say, where is this? And no, we don't have that. We don't have anything. He kept all that. Not that we could store these enormous plywood sections that he painted green and these little plates coming out. It was so interesting. It was so subtle. But it was 10 acres of Storm King there.

Dziedzic: Going to do a time check—it’s 3:52PM. Let's talk a little bit more about Sarah Sze and, I don't know, maybe there's a little more to talk about with Martin Puryear, maybe not. And that might be it for today.

Collens: Yes, I think that’s a good place to cut off. Good idea.

Dziedzic: So I think both of these artists you've mentioned, it's can take a long time between the beginning of the conversation and when the artwork is finally completed. I also want to say that the last time that we talked, you mentioned the importance of also involving Nora's perspective and John's, Mike Seaman’s, and Amy Weiser’s in these latest two commissions.

Collens: [02:15:00] Well, Amy would only be Martin Puryear.

Dziedzic: Okay. So focusing on what your perspective is, and what you recall, what is the background with Sarah Sze? How did that relationship begin?

Collens: Well, I think at one point, we decided—John, myself, Nora—to put a list of artists together that we thought might be interesting for Storm King for us to commission. It's an interesting idea, and there's a wild card to it as well, and you have to really think about it and work with them. And who should we reach out to because we never have worked with artists that reach out to us for exhibitions and commissions—just not the Storm King method, being a museum.

I think people are confused because we have the title "art center" and they think, "Sure! Just send all the stuff in and they must do juried shows," and this and that. That's my theory, totally—having that name, not quite a museum. I'm sure MoMA receives unsolicited information about exhibitions and purchases and everything like that, but we receive [laughs] a large quantity, and we just started dealing with this—besides me very nicely sending a little letter that I have in my head that I can easily type up on a computer, knock it out in no time.

But that just is not the Storm King method. It never has been—well, I'm not sure about that. I will take that back about certain sculptures. I have to look into that earlier period by my predecessor—still puzzles me. But in more recent times, we've never selected an artist for a commission, or doing an exhibition, or having a work at Storm King from someone sending an email, US post office, or however—dropping it off to us—it comes by all means and methods. Thanks, but no thanks. It's just very tight control over the sculpture program. So I think what we did, shortly after Nora came, as I recall, we decided—people kept saying that we should have a list of all the artists we wanted, a "wish list" is what it's called, basically. So we said, okay, fine, we'll do some brainstorming, and we all came up with different artists, threw it together, and came up with what we thought were the more serious ones out of it. And Sarah Sze was on the list.

Not that we have many commissioned sculptures—there's still only a handful over 62 years. That was in our *modus operandi* from the beginning. When you think about it, Ted Ogden wanted to select works for Storm King and whether it was commissioned or purchased, and he was going to make mistakes. He was going to do a great job and sometimes, no, it wouldn't work out. So yes, it happened to be great with David Smith and Grosvenor and von Schlegell, all very interesting. Liberman and so forth, yes. Others, didn't work out as well.

So anyway, we came up with the list and we decided that out of the people on the list, Sarah Sze would be very interesting to us with their past career mostly doing indoor work. She did a work for the Public Art

Fund on 57th Street, or Fifth Avenue, where they always do works, years ago. I remember it clearly. Dug into the ground and it was the same brick as the apartment building across the street on Fifth Avenue. You could look into this triangular section and see this interior, which was fascinating. I think it was something about the architecture of the apartment building, or she created this interior space, as I recall. But anyway, we said this would be a terrific artist to really examine more closely. I think we were thinking of an exhibition and [02:20:00] realized at that point, where she really was in her career, that this would be a great opportunity for everybody through a dialogue that developed, and a friendship.

We moved ahead with a commission and it was very different than what we ended up with. Everything took longer, the pandemic hit, and all that stuff. But anyway, we were thrilled. With her background being Asian, background from China with her parents, and artistically what she had done in her career, we said, this is something we want to move forward with, doing a project with her. And I think the site slightly changed—Nora had a slightly different site, as I recall, than what I had. We got to where we are—this was the site of the old oak tree that collapsed that was in front of that hillside, and it was all shaped because of the oak tree by Bill Rutherford when what is now the Calder Hillside was built. It had this beautiful curved shape, like a saucer, around it. And that oak tree was dead center and nothing has changed where the Sarah Sze *Fallen Sky* (2021) is. We didn't change the angle of that hillside, still remained 17 degrees steep the way it always was.

Filled it before Sarah arrived on the scene, and we just left it kind of scrubby and everything. We didn't do much on planting. And she saw it and liked the hillside. She just lit up, like Noguchi lit up for his site. And others have too, and Martin. Lots of examples there. But we took out the tree, of course, years before and we filled in to a certain level where the tree was because it was like four or five feet in diameter, it's a shame. But it disappeared so we just filled in and she came along and loved that site! It was quirky, but we went along with it, and no one else was going to use it. So we commissioned her and came out with *Fallen Sky* and then had to do this landscaping—really last minute quarterbacking to do the landscaping at the 11th hour to make it so it's more accessible to the public. It's not fully accessible. It's not ADA-approved coming down this hillside because at the top of the hill is the Museum Building, and walking down is really sharp and they're wearing out lawn, so eventually we have to figure out what to do. But if you're standing in front looking at it, we had to raise up part of it to make it more accessible so you were at a certain level looking across to the stainless steel sculpture and the grasses. Because coming around down the side is very steep and someone was going get hurt. You still could—it's not the most accessible route, and with wet ground conditions, not good. And we filled in front, we added a thousand yards of gravel last minute.

Sarah had this idea of landscaping and plant material, all very difficult, and it's too bad because I'm convinced Bill Rutherford would not have handled the landscaping that way in front of it and where you

circle around. Because you have to remember, not far from the front of it, and over to the right—because that hillside is big—was the Calder *Five Swords*, the big orange one. And that's gone never to return. But the point is, now we have this very flat area where the Calder *Five Swords* used to be because we can't put another sculpture there because it interferes, at a distance, with Sarah Sze. [02:25:00] So that is not a sculpture location anymore and that remains empty. And this whole area that was kind of dipped down in has been flattened out because we brought in all this gravel and kind of shaped it off to the dogwood trees on the other side. And we have what looks like a kind of a helicopter landing site—it's big and it's flat and we can't put a sculpture on it, as I said, because *Five Swords* was the last sculpture that will go there. Anything will interfere with Sarah Sze so it's off limits to us and it's just too flat, it's too big. I know Bill was very creative and would've done something very different, so I'm disappointed about that. Hopefully someday someone corrects it. We have to do a pathway down here. All future landscape projects. It's going to be very hard to make it ADA accessible.

[Side conversation]

Collens: It's just this big, flat platform, which I find unfortunate. Very hard for everybody to deal with at the 11th hour and come up with a better solution. It could be adjusted but it's time and money, and landscape takes a long time to blend in again.

Dziedzic: What was the original work that she proposed?

Collens: It was a cube, maybe about 10 feet high, and different than the Forrest Myers cube that I referred to before. It was basically more solid. It was going to be made out of metal—I don't know exactly what material, not bronze because it was quite large, and I think there was going to be cavities in it, everything irregular, not uniform or anything. She has drawings and models that she built of it, in dark and color. Maybe there were two cubes and you could cut through one section and enter part of it. It's coming back to me now—I haven't thought about it for a long time. But not at the creative level of *Fallen Sky*. I think there was so much inspiration that came from visits to India, seeing different sites in India, for Sarah, where she traveled with her husband, who's Indian by birth, and their children. Seeing astronomical sites and other architectural sites, where you go down staircases and you're in the ground, and trying come up with this form that she did here. I think there are multiple inspirations for her from her reading, seeing architecture, very close friendship with Maya Lin, very close—different generations—but they're very close to each other.

She understood that this was the sculpture of her career at this point in time. And doing the exhibition just on the first floor last year, because we had Covid restrictions and we only opened Gallery 1, and had everyone circulating through what was the Museum Store. We took out the store totally and had only *x*

number of people, with masks on, and this and that, going through and exiting the doors. She consumed the whole space. It was terrific. And that's all you needed. It was a really stunning combination of the commissioned sculpture and her gallery installation, which is moving on to another site, actually, the full installation. What a challenge to do it with all the projectors. I think there were 14 projectors, and all related to Storm King—*Fallen Sky* and models of *Fallen Sky* and early inspiration for it. Just so creative, and just the sheer scale of it consumed the full room. The painting came off the floor and we had four feet, five feet to walk in one direction only. It was wonderful.

Dziedzic: And you said there was a possibility that this would be installed in a different site. I'm just curious what that other site was.

Collens: Only the interior work, which we didn't own. She created it for Gallery 1. It was like 50 feet long, the painting.

Dziedzic: I mean *Fallen Sky*.

Collens: Oh no, this is ours, lock, stock and barrel. Doesn't move.

Dziedzic: Was there another site considered for this work?

Collens: No, she really fell in love with this hillside from the beginning, and we just had weeds and junk plant material growing there. No, she latched onto it and that was it.

Dziedzic: And you mentioned changing where the work would be fabricated from Spain to a place that was local.

Collens: Yes, we were prepared for Spain. We all thought this was going to be a great fabrication shop, a very large fabrication facility outside of Madrid. Great place to visit for many different reasons. But then with Covid, it just closed it down and that wasn't an option. One of our trustees said, “This is crazy. You can't be doing that. You’ve got to look into a facility and get a better price. Tell them to sharpen their price from another facility in this country that we can go visit.”

Dziedzic: And so from this stage, of this photograph [viewing various phone snapshots of installation of *Fallen Sky*], where Sarah's working with these individual pieces from the local fabrication place, what was this stage of the installation and the work like?

Collens: So we did put in 38 concrete pylons in the fall of ’20, dug the 38 holes, put our cylinders down, poured the concrete. So this is the fall, doing all that in ‘20, preparing for installation in ‘21. So that's how it all began. And that's our responsibility doing all that. And we had to bring in all this top soil. We had already brought in our gravel to raise that about seven feet up in the air. This is the curve going to the dogwood trees on one side where we didn't want people walking down. It's all tall grass now, from this line that we made in the dirt. From that line, over to the trees, all tall grass, three or four feet high and that's quite a steep drop off. This is all grassed over, everything that's top soil there, coming up to basically where Sarah is, and we had just installed three or four different sections of the stainless steel. It's all stainless steel, the sides, everything is stainless steel from UAP Foundry, 10 miles from us.

So Sarah has, in her hand, cloth to clean the tops. She didn't like the sides being bright stainless steel, even though they were textured like a tree trunk, [02:35:00] so she has her little special material in her can there, not coffee, but something else she mixed in there, and she just toned the sides down so they weren’t bright and shiny, probably with a black wax or something else. And then where she's standing, we had to bring in topsoil up to the top of the stainless steel, basically by hand, bring it in by buckets, lift it in there and bring it to a certain level so we could plug all the different types of grasses that we bought and start this. We took grasses out of our fields, grasses we bought, so there are a variety of different grasses in there. I guess there’s a slightly different opinion about the types of grasses and how they grow. You just have to let things start up. You can't overdo it. She and her team were so concerned that everything would be absolutely green on opening day in May ‘21.

It's perfectly green and we have to keep it clipped so the grasses don’t fall over it and the leaves don't fall over the stainless steel and ruin the view of the stainless steel and block the sun and the view of the shadows from clouds and everything. You can see shadows of the oak trees above that were coming out. We had to prune the oak trees back so we didn't start a fire by chance at a certain time of the year when this gets very hot, reflects up to the oak tree leaves, and they go from green to brown. So we had do all these studies with different people, not us, but professionals about how far we have to cut the oak branches back so we didn't have potential fire hazards. Whew, one thing after another. Or reflection of the *Fallen Sky* going off to our tall grasses in the field and starting a fire down there. We were all very concerned about all this. It was really wild. She was involved with every aspect of it with her team members.

Dziedzic: Wow, I'd never thought about that. In doing my research, I saw there were discussions about how reflective is the top, and what can you see on it, and how do you maintain the grasses, and how often—all this stuff. But the fire danger was new to me.

Collens: Yes, well, we had an experience with Alyson Shotz's *Mirror Fence* (2003, refabricated 2014) when it was first at Storm King, must have been within the first two years because I think we only did this twice. It was first shown at Socrates Sculpture Park years earlier, and then it was shown a few other places, but each time, when Alyson built it, she built it very inexpensively. So you have your pickets, wood. And then she put a plastic laminate onto the picket, same shape as the picket. And after one season the plastic would lean forward, just basically peel off like an orange. And it was leaning forward in early spring one year and we had a group of people in Gallery 1, where Sarah Sze's large installation was in '21, and we're standing there showing some members something, whatever the show was that year, and we looked down and we see a fire by the Alyson Shotz sculpture. The pickets had peeled off the plastic and the sun was so intense, no leaves on the trees, they had reflected down to dry dead leaves that had gathered and they caught on fire. And we had to send groups of people down with our fire extinguishers from the Museum Building to go down there quickly before we had the wind blowing it everywhere. We got it out and we raked our leaves away from the sculpture in early spring. But that caught on fire. So that was a great concern with stainless steel and reflection of the sun and everything.

Dziedzic: I actually had a question here about the creation of the mirrored finish, based on [02:40:00] Alyson Shotz, knowing that her work was refabricated by Storm King, but I didn't know about the fire part––or I forgot about the fire part.

Collens: This is before we refabricated. We were going to do it out of stainless steel, *Mirror Fence*, and then decided if someone took a key to it and scratched it, that's it. We couldn't repair the picket. We couldn't grind that out and repolish. That was just beyond what we could do. So we came up with the idea of sapphire glass, which it is. It doesn't survive the winter—if it gets too cold then we have other [laughs] issues with it, so we have a trailer that we drive over to it and we remove each section of the fence and put it into the trailer for the winter and just store it somewhere in our parking areas.

But this had to be polished to a certain level to be what she wanted and what we wanted. Very reflective, still. And we clean it. Mike cleans dust off of it from pollen, twice a year at least. He's keeping an eye on it. We're still learning how to take care of it, and the plant material, and all of that. It's not a proven method and there's no guidebook to tell you all this. You have to do it for a while. Trial and error, I would say.

Dziedzic: So Martin Puryear, he came up quite a bit today. But I guess have a question about location, which is maybe a general way of asking with this as an example. What's the process and the ethics of moving one artist's work and making space for another? With the example of Martin Puryear's sculpture taking the place where Alice Aycock's sculpture had been. You've talked about how that gets resolved relationship-wise, but what's the thought process when the idea comes up that maybe we might have to move somebody's work to make space for another artist's work?

Collens: Right, very good question. I think one can discuss this for a long time and on many different levels. I would start by saying that if there's a commissioned sculpture by an artist, no, you do not go and do that. That's inappropriate. In the case Martin Puryear, I'll address that first, if it's an existing sculpture, in this case by Alice Aycock, that started in the fields at Storm King, it was never commissioned for Storm King. It was first shown at Doris Freedman Plaza in New York on Fifth Avenue and 58th Street area, years ago. Given to us, and we first put it out in the field and that was fine. Our maple trees at that point, which were the allée, were significantly smaller than when we took them down a few years ago. And it was sitting near the maple trees and probably about the same height as the maples. Alice's sculpture is 32 feet high and probably the maples were around that height. She loved the open field and blue sky and open space around it, so it sat down there till, I believe, the di Suvero exhibition in 1985, and the fields became the di Suvero fields, with the 14 di Suveros we brought in from all over the country. And that [location] was no longer appropriate.

We had space on top of the North Hill, which is our highest elevation, and we put it up there for many years. People walked up to the hill to see the Aycock for many years, and Liberman on the hillside opposite. That was a destination for folks. And then, in 2010, when we looked into commissioning Martin and discussing a permanent piece of Martin's at Storm King—a sculpture, not a temporary one—and he was very excited and came to Storm King [02:45:00] and certainly was interested. John, Martin, and I walked around, particularly in the north area. Walking in the woods, the top of the hill, the North Hill where the Aycock was and other areas, as I said, in the north section of Storm King. We had already several commissions in the south. And Martin liked hiking around and we got to the top of the North Hill and I offered him the North Hill location, where the Alice Aycock was.

John and I discussed this before as being appropriate for Martin. And the Alice Aycock had been there for a number of years. It was not commissioned—I moved it there—and we decided it was time to move Alice to another location and that we would work with her on finding a new position for it. And it needed a full restoration, so there was another reason to move it. We couldn't do a full restoration in place that would really be a quality restoration, so it would be much better to do it off an exhibition location and come out with a quality restoration at some point in time. Martin was offered the site and he was thrilled and, I think, very touched that we would do that—give him that particular site. And I think he responded in kind with appreciation and understood the importance of that site. Yes, the highest elevation at Storm King with a view and everything. And he started to work on an appropriate sculpture for that particular location.

I spoke to Alice and told her what we were doing, and there was some gentle pushback. I did mention to her that we had done this actually once before. When Noguchi was commissioned, there was another

sculpture on the site of what is now the Noguchi sculpture hillside. But the hillside was not built out as a full hill the way it is now. He didn't see that. He saw a much smaller piece of hillside and it just dropped off like a cliff, and there was a lot of underbrush there. We built the hill eventually to Noguchi's specifications when he decided, yes, he wanted to use that hillside. We removed another sculpture, and I did not mention what sculpture was sitting there to Alice, but I said, no, this wasn't the first time and it was not a commissioned sculpture sitting there either. And I said, "We will find you a terrific location. And this is going to work out, between the full conservation treatment to your sculpture and a new location." And she came up and we looked around, and didn't settle it until she returned and I drove her down to the location where it's going, near the Thruway, in the field with all this open space. And we are building a hillside for it. So that was a very happy outcome. But that's what happened with Martin after doing a lot of walking around. When he saw that and was offered the top of the hill, of course, he realized that was a terrific, premier site.

Dziedzic: I didn't realize that it had only happened that one other time before with Noguchi.

Collens: To my knowledge, with me, yes. Peter and I discussed it. We had three locations for Noguchi. Where it is now, two other locations, I think, on top of the hill. One might be where the Oldenburg is, *Wayside Drainpipe*. So I think one was there, [02:50:00] one where it presently is, and I forget where the third one was. The other two locations were not equivalent to the one he selected and we knew he'd select that one. And we built a full hillside to his specifications—the shape of it, height, everything was done according to Noguchi.

Dziedzic: So it's true that you might have to move sculptures because of landscape realities, but it's not that often that a sculpture will be moved to make space for another artist's work.

Collens: Correct.

Dziedzic: Okay.

Collens: I mean, we kept on moving di Suveros [laughs] according to Bill Rutherford's vision. It was improving our landscape over the years. It was 45 years of landscaping! But no, this is unusual and it's happened now, twice, to my knowledge.

Dziedzic: Okay. And I wanted to ask, just thinking about your process of traversing the grounds and actually seeing sculptures from different angles, and with your own body moving around the site, I did also want to ask when the golf carts arrived.

Collens: The golf carts. I guess our visitor services carts were all gas to begin with because electric just hadn't advanced that far, and I think when I started doing it, I borrowed one of the gasoline maintenance carts to go around with my wood stakes, hammer, and survey flags. Or I just drove my own car around on the roads and would park in certain areas and then walk around.

Dziedzic: And that would be for landscape stuff? Not sculpture stuff.

Collens: Yes, a combination. Because I used to drive my Jeep around with Bill Rutherford all the time and through the fields and purple loosestrife. My radiator was just coated with purple loosestrife, and I'd go for a vacuuming because I'd think the radiator was getting ready to heat up and explode or something. Yes, I often would drive around, didn't think twice about it.

Dziedzic: Can you discern how your eye has changed for sculpture or landscape over the years? Do you think it has changed?

Collens: I think it has. I'm not particularly looking for formal landscapes, being Storm King, and there's certain things I want done and I'm particular about that. There are a few examples when they haven't been done to my specifications because maybe we needed a $1000 more topsoil or $500, I don't know, whatever it is, and I look at it today and it's still not quite right, even though the grass has been there and grown in for several years now. There's an undulation to a landscape and we should have spent the extra $1000, whatever it is, to do it. That's important.

I think landscape architects are important to work with Storm King and I think our team has a good eye. What we're doing with Alice Aycock so far is good, but it's the fine tuning from this point forward to get that site—the shape of it, not artificial, get the concrete foundation in, and then final top soiling, shaping grass. It's fine so far, but it's not finished and it's really critical. It's like Bill Rutherford and the Calder *Arch* site. Subtle but wonderful. That's the type of landscaping I'm looking for.

For example, and I didn't get it when another large sculpture was moved and I wanted to bring it out further—I guess everyone was impatient and didn't check with me. And now with Sarah Sze, I don't find it quite right either, and it's going to take a professional to bring the proper pathway, circulate the pathways around, and [02:55:00] get people around and standing in front of it, looking up to it, and not have this massive flat area that we presently have. It was unfortunate but everything happened on very short notice. We had to make some command decisions rapidly and get it green and open the exhibition [laughs]. And there were obviously different opinions about it and we all had to come together with the landscape architect that was working on the project. It was hard on everybody—Sarah, Storm King staff, myself, Nora, the landscape architect we hired—there were control issues. Eventually, it's going to have

to be changed because I don't think it's ever going to be fully ADA accessible—you're not taking a wheelchair down there but maybe there's another view for a wheelchair. Someone came up with a plan that we haven't executed—and I don't think we should—but by the time we consider doing it, something else will change. ADA is very hard and expensive—appropriate, yes—but to really do the proper pathways correctly and everything. And I'm sure the landscape down the line will change around Sarah's work, but not anytime soon. It's a lot of thought and you need a substantial budget to change it.

Dziedzic: So I think if there's any other things that we end up talking about with Martin Puryear, we can actually save that for the last session when we meet because there is something about it that is future-facing.

Collens: It's future-facing. Offhand, I would say Martin's process is so totally different, and that's the way it should be with each artist. Labor intense. And we'll save that for the future. Also, we're going to buy a proper vehicle to get people up to the Puryear Hill, by reservation only, if you can't walk there. It's a long walk from the Museum Building or wherever you start from and you're rising on quite a hillside no matter how you approach it. And we're going to do some selective pruning so you can see it from a longer distance. Not be perfect—we don't want it perfect in that sense. We're not going to be manicuring trees and giving trees crew cuts and overly taking off branches. But you want to be able to see it at a long distance and it's going to show when it's really done and the curved roof is off of it and all that, which is just a protection above it so we can work in different weather. And we're buying a vehicle, as I started to say, to bring people up there, by reservation only, not seven days a week but certain days a week we will, by reservation only, take you up to the Puryear site because it's never going to be accessible for the tram because it's just too steep. And not all of Storm King will be accessible, or any outdoor site. Just doesn't happen.

So that's something underway. And taking into account that we're going to drive a vehicle up there on a regular basis, we don't want to wear out lawns, we have to have some type of paving and park it in a certain place so it just doesn't turn out to be mud. We're going to park it on a little paved area that looks appropriate without being too large and too urban. But we've got to do something because people are going to want to go there. They're already—I've never seen so many people walking up to the hill. There's a fence around it and you can't approach it beyond a certain point. People are fascinated, whether they like it one third brick, two thirds open, skeleton shape to it. "Leave it that way." [03:00:00] So yeah, that'd be good to carry on with Martin.

Dziedzic: Yes.

Collens: Wow. Fabulous.

Dziedzic: All right, I'm calling it for today.

Collens: Oh, I can't argue with you, Sarah. Terrific.

Dziedzic: I had you talking for five hours.

Collens: Yes, it feels like five minutes. Thank you very much.

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**2 audio files**
November 16, 2022	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Dziedzic: This is Sarah Dziedzic and this is an interview with David Collens for the Storm King Art Center and today is November 16th, 2022. So today we're talking about trustees—we'll start with trustees. David, you've got a list of all the trustees from 1976 in front of you there. And I think since this would've been when you were just starting, can you give us a rundown of who all these folks were and what their role was on the board?

Collens: I'll start with Lowell Wadmond, who was a partner at White & Case law firm along with Vermont Hatch, earlier, and Walter Orr. Vermont Hatch and Walter Orr had houses in the area. Of course, Vermont Hatch built his house in 1935 as a weekend house, French Normandy style, and it was purchased by his friend and neighbor, Ted Ogden, who started Storm King Art Center and became what is known as the Museum Building with both gallery space and office space. Eugene L. Cohan and Spencer L. Koslan were employees of Star Expansion Company and also trustees of Storm King Art Center. Spencer Koslan was a lawyer for Star Expansion and also was the lawyer serving as a trustee of Storm King. Eugene L. Cohan was a trustee for many years. Both gentlemen were very helpful to Peter Stern, who was the president and became chairman also of Storm King Art Center.

J. Carter Brown was the director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington and was a friend of Peter Stern and Cynthia Polsky. They all knew each other. Carter was the first museum director to serve on the Storm King Art Center board of trustees and was very knowledgeable about art, of course, and about landscape as well in various positions he had over the years. He was certainly influential and helpful to Storm King in museum matters as well as also serving on the Collection and Acquisitions committee, which at that point had a different name, but gave excellent advice on landscape and sculpture and other matters that were related to museums.

Cynthia Polsky, also an early trustee of Storm King, came up to the Art Center and knew Peter Stern through various organizations in New York and became chair of the Collection and Acquisitions committee early on when it had a different name, but a very important committee, as it is today at Storm King. And Cynthia would go around to the galleries and knew many of the sculptors working and gave her recommendations to the committee of artists that she thought would be appropriate [00:05:00] for Storm King. She was also instrumental in purchasing sculptures over the years, through her family foundation,

for the Art Center. That was very important to Storm King moving forward with major commissions and acquisitions of sculpture.

Dziedzic: When it comes to the Star employees that were part of the board, how did Peter decide who would be significant to Storm King's development?

Collens: Both Gene Cohan and Spence Koslan lived in the area and worked at Star Expansion, as I mentioned, and had important positions at Star—one as in-house lawyer, Spencer L. Koslan—and Eugene L. Cohan I believe was a vice president at Star and was very good at working with people, and was certainly a wonderful trustee in the capacity of negotiating, on behalf of Storm King and Peter Stern, the purchase of the Calder *Arch* and also the purchase of the two large di Suvero sculptures that were on loan, *Mother Peace* and *Mon Père, Mon Père*. So I think he had a wonderful sense of people and was very skilled at working with the artists' representatives and artists' families to successfully conclude contracts to purchase both works by di Suvero and Calder.

Dziedzic: And do you know what Peter's relationship would have been to J. Carter Brown, how that relationship was made? It seems like a great asset to have someone with this kind of art knowledge and connection on the board, so do you have any sense of the background story there?

Collens: We'd have to verify this, but I believe both Peter and Cynthia were members of the Collectors Committee early on at the National Gallery in Washington. There might be a common interest in World Monuments Fund between Carter Brown and Peter and Cynthia as well, and other major organizations in New York—Asia Society and so forth. I think Carter had very broad interests and I would say that potentially could be the beginning of the relationship.

Dziedzic: And already at that time, Peter was involved with other art world projects and organizations, so the relationships wouldn't necessarily have started with Storm King. They had been pre-existing.

Collens: Correct. I definitely think pre-existing.

Dziedzic: Okay. And you mentioned with J. Carter Brown his knowledge of landscape, that that was an influence that he had. What are some of the other things that he was involved in or instrumental with?

Collens: Well, I think collecting sculpture and major purchases, and what was important to Storm King as a small organization that was growing, [00:10:00] and the types of sculpture that would be appropriate for Storm King. He was very supportive of the larger scale sculpture that we were purchasing for Storm King, not just garden-size sculpture. It started more as garden-size sculpture, and I think there was a choice

that was made, particularly by Peter Stern, to move into a larger scale sculpture that would really fit and be appropriate for the landscape at Storm King as Bill Rutherford was developing it over the years.

Dziedzic: We talked last week about how there really isn't a formula for how Storm King works with artists or makes decisions about exhibitions. But do you recall, in the early days, the way that the board made decisions about sculpture acquisitions?

Collens: Well, we had certainly a limited budget and I think there were many artists that we could have looked at, and I think Peter Stern felt strongly that, as president of the Art Center, he was interested in looking at artists that had a certain scale—that weren't just large for the sake of being large, but would fit into our landscape and be quite different at Storm King versus urban areas or other landscapes, and would be unique for people to see them at Storm King and would fit into our program of collecting large scale sculpture. I think that was hard on many artists that just thought we were collecting large scale works, but I think there was a *raison d'être* to it. Working with artists like Mark di Suvero, who really understood the landscape at Storm King early on, and through exhibitions and the placement of his sculptures, starting in 1975 with the five loans that came to Storm King, for example, and where Mark wanted to place them and the juxtaposition of each sculpture and the effect of all five together from every vantage point. So I think that was an unusual undertaking.

And that was a common goal for us, to look for particular artists and work with artists for exhibitions that were in the collection since we didn't have a large staff to be really expanding, even into a small art world that existed in 1970s, ‘80s. And in the ‘90s, really started moving forward, becoming much more diverse with sculpture and all types of art, which really required a larger staff to gain a better understanding of what was happening and focus on artists that are working from all over the world.

Dziedzic: And Cynthia Polsky also was an artist as well, right?

Collens: Cynthia was a painter and went to Bennington College and exhibited her paintings. She has an exhibition of her paintings coming up next spring in Hong Kong, in the spring of 2023. She stopped painting at a certain point in her career to focus on other things, but was very accomplished and successful with her paintings and created a large number [0015:00] of works, acrylic on canvas.

Dziedzic: I know Cynthia Polsky has been involved for many decades on the board, so who are some of the artists that she made connections with or suggested that Storm King take a look at?

Collens: Well, early on she was very involved in Isamu Noguchi coming to Storm King, which took a while. But Cynthia commissioned a sculpture, representing her family, that is at Mount Sinai Hospital in

New York, indoors. It's a bench out of stone, which is in the main building, and I saw it a few years ago before Covid. It's in very good shape. And she thought Noguchi would be an important artist for Storm King to have. And Peter and Cynthia decided to invite Noguchi to visit Storm King, which didn't happen quickly, but he did eventually come out and was commissioned by Peter Stern to do a stone sculpture sitting area, which turned out to be *Momo Taro*, which was installed in the spring of 1978.

Dziedzic: And what about some other artists as well?

Collens: Cynthia had a broad interest in sculpture and was very generous to give Storm King a group of sculptures for the indoor collection, considerably smaller sculptures that are part of our collection by Mia Westerlund Roosen. We have an outdoor sculpture we commissioned of Mia Westerlund Roosen's as well that's out of concrete and steel. Several other artists that Cynthia gave us as a core group of indoor sculptures to exhibit when appropriate.

She also was instrumental in the process of Nam June Paik coming to Storm King after seeing a work of his in Germany, and thought that would be wonderful to have a television and a Buddha facing each other outside. So Cynthia, Peter, and I went to Nam June's studio in New York in the summer and went to see him and he agreed to come out and do a commission for Storm King—one of the very few outdoor sculptures that he completed during his lifetime. That took several years and different ideas of his to come up with an appropriate sculpture, and it's called *Waiting for UFO*, which was finally realized. There are three parts to it and it's a sense of discovery to find all three sections, with televisions and Buddhas and plastic flowers, concrete televisions, and people do find all three sections that are quite far apart. It's one of our smaller outdoor sculptures, but I think quite fabulous.

Dziedzic: Were there ever any artists or artworks that she was pursuing that ended up not working out, that didn't become part of the collection or didn't end up being exhibited at Storm King?

Collens: I think we did look at some artists because we made many studio visits to artist studios in New York and other locations that Cynthia recommended and decided that the artist was not appropriate for Storm King. It might be the scale, the materials, or we didn't think it was going to be something that we should put our resources into purchasing.

Dziedzic: So that did happen from time to time.

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: And you said that she knew Peter [00:20:00] and that was likely the connection there.

Collens: I think Peter and Cynthia knew each other through Asia Society and I think possibly also the Metropolitan Museum, but I think it was really Asia Society and maybe other organizations in New York that shared a common interest in Indian sculpture and painting. They both collected Indian paintings and textiles and sculptures from India.

Dziedzic: And she was both an artist and a collector. So brought those two, I guess, lenses to the table in terms of discussions at the board meetings.

Collens: Broad interests in publications and painting and sculpture, definitely, and was a trustee of the Metropolitan Museum as well as Asia Society, Cynthia.

Dziedzic: Was there anyone else who's been on the board over the years who was both an artist and a collector?

Collens: No, I think that really is quite unusual. I can't think of anybody else that brought both dimensions to the board like Cynthia did.

Dziedzic: Yes, she seems like a unique presence throughout the archives, which is how I experience Storm King over the years.

Collens: And knowing so many artists, that was very important to her—to go to the galleries wherever they were located in the early years, and really had her understanding and pulse on the situation for sculpture, going to openings and knowing the artist, going to their studio. She was very well versed in that.

Dziedzic: It sounds like she would've been doing that work and research on the ground on a regular basis in a way that maybe some of the other board members were not. Obviously, J. Carter Brown—and then Howard Lipman, who we haven't talked about yet—they have a direct line of sight to what's going on in the sculpture world because they're running galleries or museums. But was she the outpost in New York City In a sense?

Collens: I think so. Howard Lipman came on the board and he was chair of the Whitney Museum of American Art for many years, and also a very important collector of sculpture with his wife, Jean Lipman. And they had a collection of sculpture that is really the foundation of the Whitney Museum's sculpture collection to this day, and knew all the artists. It was a different period of collecting. So they got to know

many of the artists and purchase the work from them or their galleries and really stayed in touch, whether it was David Smith or Calder. The collection at the Whitney is vast that was given to them by the Lipmans. And they were really in touch and friends with many of the artists that they collected, and that was very important in those days and very different than what happens today. Howard became a board member at Storm King when he was getting off many boards, and couldn't refuse when he was asked by Peter to join the Storm King board, and that was terrific. And it was at the time we were purchasing *City on the High Mountain* from Pace Gallery and he was very helpful and instrumental in the purchase of that particular sculpture, which is certainly an important Nevelson that Storm King owns.

Dziedzic: And then we also, I think before we started recording, started talking about Peter Lipman and the donation of other work to Storm King more recently. [00:25:00]

Collens: That is true. Howard's son, Peter, and his wife Bev Lipman, are very involved with Storm King, which is terrific. And that really started with the loan of *Cubi XXI* by David Smith many years ago. *Cubi XXI* was sitting in storage, and I got to know Peter after his parents had passed away and we were able to borrow *Cubi XXI* at Storm King for approximately 10 years with the understanding that if the Whitney Museum in New York needed the sculpture, we would lend it to the Whitney for an exhibition. It was a very nice arrangement. Peter was very interested in having the public see the sculpture on a regular basis, not have it left in storage. So we had it on loan, and then the Lipmans decided to give it to Storm King several years ago, and we co-own it with the Whitney Museum. And still the same arrangement continues—that it's on exhibition at Storm King unless the Whitney needs it for a show.

Dziedzic: It seems like there's a lot of multi-generational involvement with Storm King.

Collens: It's very nice that that continues. Peter and Bev, most recently, were in the process of making a donation of two early Nevelson sculptures, both wood, created early in Nevelson's career, and they will complement the outdoor sculpture we have, and are on exhibit in the Museum Building, with a full understanding that they will not be shown all the time. Peter Lipman is a museum person and understands we will not show them all the time. They're going to be traveling to an exhibition for two years to Texas and then to another venue. So that is wonderful. And that's, I think, very important to the Lipmans, to have the sculptures out there and have as many people as possible to see the works that they've donated to museums. So we're thrilled to have the two indoor Nevelsons at Storm King as part of our collection.

Dziedzic: In this early era of the board, were you the one who was getting all the materials and everything ready for the board meetings?

Collens: For the Collection and Acquisitions committee? Yes.

Dziedzic: Here's what I'm curious about: the board is pretty small, the staff is small at Storm King, so were the conversations and decisions about artwork or landscape pretty much the same between you and Peter and Bill Rutherford and the board, or did they feel somewhat different once you got to the space of the board?

Collens: Many times, Bill Rutherford would do presentations to the board using hand drawn panels that he did of the landscape he was creating at that point in time, and they were beautifully done. Starting with the basic blueprint map of the landscape he was working on, and Bill's explanations, they were very colorful with magic marker, and it was like an artist did them, actually. And Bill's descriptions were always very creative about what he was working on and were quite interesting to hear, and his interaction with the board about what he was doing. He was really very artistic and an extraordinary landscape architect that was understated about everything.

But he understood the Storm King landscape and working originally with Ted Ogden, starting in [00:30:00] 1960, and then eventually to Peter Stern when Peter became president of the Art Center and took over after Ted Ogden's death in 1974. And Bill continued to work with Peter and eventually, myself, and it was a wonderful, wonderful combination with the three of us and the input that we all had into the landscape. And it wasn't just one person's vision, but we were all involved with it, walking around Storm King when Bill came up from Greenwich, Connecticut and reviewing different projects, discussing it on the telephone when Bill was not present, and discussing various projects to keep them moving forward. And we were all dedicated to it. And it went on year after year for 45 years.

Dziedzic: It sounds like the board trusted what you all were doing.

Collens: Definitely so. And I think Carter was influential into overall landscape design in particular areas as well. And he had that type of background for it.

Dziedzic: I wanted to ask also about Leslie A. Jacobson and Lester Knaack, other board members from the early days. So who were they and what kind of knowledge did they bring to the board?

Collens: Leslie Jacobson was a lawyer and was a wonderful person. Peter Stern knew him early on and brought Leslie in as a board member. He had excellent advice on contracts with artists and galleries and questions that came up in a broader way with contracts that Storm King needed. And Peter worked with Leslie early on—I think it was Peter Stern's first job after law school to work for Leslie Jacobson at his

firm. And they became friends and Peter asked him to join the board. He was just a wonderful person that everyone liked and had a broad group of friends and was very supportive of Storm King.

Dziedzic: And what about Lester Knaack?

Collens: Lester Knaack worked for Star Expansion Company as well. In the early years, most of the support really came from Star Expansion Company and the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation. Star Expansion supported Storm King in terms of maintaining the sculptures because sculptures are not permanent objects unless you maintain them. Everybody has found this out about outdoor sculpture. You can't just leave it out there [laughs] year after year without maintenance. It's like everything else outdoors, it needs maintenance. People didn't quite think that was true in the beginning. Sculpture conservation became a very important part of maintaining outdoor sculptures, of course. And Lester helped the Art Center out in the early years. He worked at Star, as I said, in research and development and was very familiar as a metallurgist because that was the origins of Star Expansion Company and what they did in manufacturing. So Lester was very knowledgeable with different types of metal and he was asked by Peter Stern to help out with, for instance, researching paint for sculptures at Storm King. And Lester came up with a DuPont Imron paint [00:35:00] to be used on Alex Liberman's sculptures.

Alex didn't know what to paint his sculptures with or what material to use that would really last and hold up. So when Alex asked Peter Stern about this, Peter in turn went to Lester Knaack, and Lester came up with a DuPont Imron paint that is very durable and, if properly used on steel, can hold up for many, many years. That was one example Lester knew about. He also helped out with concrete bases and welding sculpture and repairing sculpture as well, when that was needed, to take care of metal sculptures of different types. So he was very important to the early years of the maintenance of sculpture at Storm King before we set up a more formal program.

Dziedzic: And what was the general attitude of the folks that were coming from Star, or people who did law but maybe not necessarily working with artists. What was it like from your perspective when they were presented with these issues that were specific to artwork or artists or the gallery setting?

Collens: Well, I think people like Lester, it was new for him, I'm sure. And he was asked by Peter to help out and he certainly willingly did it. I think it was a learning experience for sure, and to see how artists were putting sculptures together and fastening different elements together out of metal and so forth. I'm sure [laughs] he had some surprises and didn't think things were done well and correctly in the safest way, but he gave his advice. Sometimes I would certainly pass it on to artists. We had issues with particular sculptures that were on loan, and I remember we had a chain and a heavy stone fall from a sculpture with a metal frame, and the chain was not correctly attached to the steel frame and Lester told

me how to repair it, what should be done—with the artist's permission, of course. And I told the artist and he didn't seem very interested [laughs] in improving his methods.

Dziedzic: So sometimes there was a little bit of tension?

Collens: I think so, yes. And others would be very thankful because they were not knowledgeable about the best paint to use at that point in time, or how to strengthen their sculptures if they were metal or other materials. They weren't always open-minded. Some were. I don't think it's any different today, probably.

Dziedzic: I think one difference today might be that galleries have people on staff that can provide that kind of information to the artists if they want it, rather than a board doing that kind of research and making those presentations.

Collens: Yes. We were early on into this field. And it was a much smaller art world, sculpture world, than today, and the art world is far more sophisticated and larger in exhibitions, and fabrication of sculpture is certainly more complex.

Dziedzic: Let's move on to the 1980s. I wanted to ask about Peter Bienstock, how he came on the board and what he brought in terms of knowledge and experience to the board.

Collens: Peter was a friend of Peter Stern. They lived in the same building on Fifth Avenue. They didn't know each other at that point and they lived several floors apart [00:40:00] but they became friends through food and wine early on, and a shared interest well beyond that. Peter worked in the Hudson Valley for his business and had a home in the Hudson Valley north of Storm King for many years, and was involved with land preservation. He added a different dimension to the Storm King board with his interests, which were quite broad, as we were acquiring more property, reaching out to, today, our 500 acres, and which was either purchased or given to Storm King, and what the best way is to maintain it. And viewshed protection was always important to Storm King, and Peter became a trustee of the Open Space Institute, OSI, along with two other board members, [Christopher J.] Kim Elliman and Hume Steyer also, OSI trustees as well as trustees of Storm King Art Center.

Dziedzic: So what kind of questions was he bringing to the table with regard to the land acquisition and the viewshed protection?

Collens: Well, early on he also was concerned about protecting our forest lands that were being ravaged by deer, and the understory being cleared out by deer, and trying to do studies of trees and thinking towards the future, and involved with an early symposium that we had on landscape as well. So he had

broad interests and brought something very different to the board. He is also quite knowledgeable on art, but I think more focus on land preservation and viewshed issues as development was taking place around the Storm King area. There are many organizations around Storm King that are interested in land preservation to this day, and that's very important to all of us.

Dziedzic: Were there any differences with, let's say, his approaches to these questions compared to Bill Rutherford? Because obviously there's a long history of having concern for stewardship of the landscape and the health of the landscape at Storm King. So how did he enhance or support Bill Rutherford's vision and approach?

Collens: I think everyone had, for example, on our property, a common interest in reducing the number of invasive plants, getting them under control. And Peter was well aware of different types of plant material and what should be done there as far as identifying it and how to better get it under control, and what types of grasses that we should possibly plant for the future. Trees and diversification of tree species. So he relied also on people at Black Rock Forest like Bill Schuster, the former executive director at Black Rock, to help out. And Bill joined our landscape committee several years ago and has been very helpful with deer studies and so forth.

Dziedzic: So it sounds like the information that he brought and the ways in which he was able to expand that conversation were just exactly what Storm King needed at that moment.

Collens: I think so, yes.

Dziedzic: And Bill was able to incorporate that information into what he was already doing—Bill Rutherford? [0045:00]

Collens: Definitely. I think there was a common interest there and people got along very well.

Dziedzic: Let's talk about Jim Ottaway as well. How did he come on the board?

Collens: Jim Ottaway lived in the area, and like Peter Bienstock, brought his children to Storm King early on and had wonderful experiences with their children going around and seeing different sculptures and being able to run around—not the urban museum setting—but really look at outdoor sculptures and interpret what they thought the sculpture was about and tell their parents. And it was a different experience and an important one. Both Jim Ottaway remembers taking his children around as well as Peter Bienstock. And Jim was the owner of the Ottaway Newspapers in our area, local newspapers, and lived in the Hudson Valley not far from Storm King and had come to, as I said, the Art Center early on and

was involved with the Hudson Valley through the newspaper business, and became a trustee. It's nice to have trustees from our area as well as a broader cross section of the country. So Jim really brought a different dimension, I think, to Storm King, as more of a regional trustee and his interest in literature and music. He became more interested in sculpture after Peter asked him to join the board.

Dziedzic: Yes. Do you recall, during this decade, let's say, was there an interest in Storm King growing the board in any particular way? Or was it a matter of finding people who seemed like they would be great to join and then whatever knowledge they had and energies that they brought or connection that they had, to recognize that as an asset and move ahead with that?

Collens: I think Peter was interested in assembling a board of trustees that were congenial that would hopefully share the same interests. And yes, Storm King was, I think, always growing, not just the landscape end that Bill Rutherford was involved with, as I said, year after year, but in other areas. And I think the early support came from the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation, so trustees weren't being asked for annual support like they are today, or broadening the base of support of the Art Center, which is so important today, along with diversification of trustees. So I think the issues were very different and it was a much smaller, less complex organization to run than Storm King in 2022.

Dziedzic: I think we're about at the time where we have to move [to another office]. I guess we can leave that as a cliff hanger for [laughs] for what we're going to cover next. Is that all right?

Collens: Please.

Dziedzic: Okay. Thanks David.

[Side conversation]

Audio File 2

Dziedzic: This is resuming our conversation on November 16th, 2022. This is Sarah Dziedzic and David Collens. Okay, David, is there anyone else from the 1980s era of the board that you want mention as shifting the conversations that the board was having?

Collens: No. I think probably we have Jim Ottaway covered. Then certainly Richard Menschel when he came.

Dziedzic: Yes, I think Richard Menschel came on in 1989. So let's talk about some of the board members onward from there starting in the 1990s. And do you want to start with him?

Collens: With Richard Menschel?

Dziedzic: Yes. So how did the relationship with him start at Storm King?

Collens: Let's see, Richard and Ronay became early members at a low level, which was interesting. You just never know who's a low-level member that has potential, and certainly the Menschels were people that signed up and had come out. Richard was at Goldman Sachs, and both Richard and Ronay were very involved with New York City and philanthropy, and Phipps Houses for Ronay, where she was very involved, and Public Art Fund. And Ronay was also involved with the Arts for Transit program for the MTA that she oversaw for many years. They're collectors of sculpture and photography at their apartment in New York, and smaller scale sculpture, but have outdoor sculpture at their house in Nantucket, including a large di Suvero that was commissioned several years ago.

Richard became a board member of Storm King after getting to know Peter Stern and knowing other trustees at the Art Center. And Richard was always interested in education and I think of Richard as the father of the education program in the early years, supporting it financially and also always excellent ideas about bringing groups out from New York City—really a turnkey operation—from different schools from all over New York City, every borough. And students come to Storm King, never been to the Art Center and outdoors in a space like the Art Center, and they'd have tours, we'd give them some food and something to drink, and cover all their expenses for buses and they'd be returned to New York later in the afternoon. It was an interesting program to follow because the time to drive from New York was certainly a solid two hours, and by the time children of different age groups arrived, they were rambunctious and needed to run around, stretch their legs, and get something to eat and drink, and take a tour and return—it was a hard program to do. But successful with many different schools and gave people an opportunity to come to Storm King that would not have had that chance. Richard was very supportive of bringing more people to Storm King, students that is, and different ages and public schools and so forth, [00:05:00] and was interested in the quality of our education programs, our tours, that type of thing as well—all aspects of education. He was instrumental in really helping out and giving direction to the small staff that we had at that point in time.

Dziedzic: Let me ask you this, David. I did want to talk in a little more detail about the education program and we could either do it now or we could save it for our later afternoon session when we talk about staff. Do you have a preference?

Collens: Probably save it.

Dziedzic: Okay. Well, a follow up question about Richard Menschel. When you say that he was kind of the father of the education program, was he developing the education programs himself or supporting staff positions?

Collens: Really supporting staff in the direction they were taking.

Dziedzic: Can you recall the arguments that he was making about why kids education at Storm King was important?

Collens: I think there was a history of being interested in education, and supporting through their foundation—Ronay and Richard's foundation—educational programs, exhibitions and so forth. But that was certainly important to Richard personally, I think, to see more people enjoying Storm King, students in particular, coming out and getting the experience that could be influential as they moved forward.

Dziedzic: And when you think about, as you mentioned, Ronay's experience with Public Art Fund and Art for Transit, was there any impact of that experience and perspective on the sculptures that Storm King was considering exhibiting or collecting?

Collens: Early on, I think most trustees were, like today, serving on the Collection and Acquisitions committee—it might have had a different name—but that was certainly important to have a sense of what we wanted to collect and occasionally commission, and exhibitions we were doing. I'm sure Richard was on that committee as well as the Finance committee with his background at Goldman Sachs, which was extremely helpful to us as well.

Dziedzic: Because I'm thinking about outdoor art and public art, and where are the intersections? Sometimes I think public art is outdoors kind of incidentally, but all outdoor art isn't necessarily public art. Was that a subject of conversation about maybe having some art at Storm King that was accessible in a way that was different than the art that was already there?

Collens: I think we wanted to, in appropriate ways, broaden the collection and really think of the special landscape that we had at Storm King that was being developed and really made more appropriate for visitors by Bill Rutherford, and for circulating people around and everything. And I think at that point, Peter Stern's interest in changing the scale of sculptures that were mostly smaller that Ted Ogden had collected—more garden-size sculptures, and there were a few exceptions such as commissions by David von Schlegell and Bob Grosvenor and the Libermans that were at Storm King quite early on—but for the

most part, it was smaller scale sculpture, I think, that the Art Center was known for. And to continue on [00:10:00] with a smaller scale didn't really seem appropriate because we weren't a formal garden like many smaller scale sculptures were being exhibited in, whether it was private garden or PepsiCo and other places that were showing sculptures that had really formal gardens. People excluded us from garden books because they didn't think of Storm King as a garden. We didn't have flowering plant material or trees like dogwoods and so forth, and we had open space and 27 years ago began the native grass program, but I don't think people thought of that as garden plantings appropriate for garden books. So we really were excluded several times because that wasn't the current thinking at that point in time.

Just to finish my thought, I think it was really Peter's vision to increase the scale of sculpture that would be appropriate for Storm King. And no, we weren't going to include every large scale sculpture that was available because we couldn't afford the process of bringing the sculptures to Storm King, to buy them—it's always been very expensive to purchase sculpture and has become more so, like other art forms. So we were very selective about what we brought to Storm King.

Dziedzic: Again, it's more about understanding the resource of Storm King and how to make the most of that as opposed to, why don't we try something that another organization is doing and see if that works here, or let's try something like that and see if it works here. It's really just Storm King at the heart of it and developing programs around that.

Collens: I think so. We really pioneered. There weren't many locations of places to look to for larger scale sculpture. It was really European sculpture gardens like Kröller-Müller, Middelheim, which were exhibiting much smaller scale sculptures, for the most part. So we were pioneering and doing what was appropriate for our site in our collection. And I think each organization, whether it's private or public, has their own philosophy of landscape and philosophy of collecting sculpture.

Dziedzic: Was there anyone on the board that was reticent about school programs?

Collens: No, I think that was important early on with the schools surrounding Storm King and having schools from our community and the surrounding communities come to the Art Center when that was easier to do. With buses and the pressure on delivering the students to school and then buses are available for a short period, bringing the students to Storm King, and getting them back to the schools for the return home in the afternoon—there has always been a lot of difficulty with timeframes of when to do this. Also budgets of schools have been very difficult, so parents would be raising money to help bring buses to Storm King with students. Eventually Covid really stopped it all for several years and now it's picking up again. It’s important to us to be part of our community, whether it's Cornwall or the City of Newburgh, where we have outreach programs and partnerships with different schools.

Dziedzic: So is this the time when there was really that investment in reaching out to neighboring communities like Newburgh and Cornwall that you mentioned?

Collens: I think it started in different ways. Early on, we had some grants that were hard to execute [0015:00] because we weren't in an urban area, and trying to find the appropriate contact people was extremely difficult, not just in the schools but in the community to help out. It wasn't just making phone calls, you had to go into the community, to the churches, other organizations, and really spend a lot of time finding the people and doing the appropriate pitch about Storm King and bringing students or different groups to Storm King—senior citizens, whoever it might be—for programs where we had grant money. So that was very difficult and that was an unknown when we got involved with it. No, not just a phone call, but you were ringing doorbells and doing solicitation by going there and trying to find the appropriate people and hopefully the organizations were open.

Dziedzic: Sticking with the theme of education, Lisa Stern also came on the board in the '90s, I believe, and she was also a champion of education at Storm King.

Collens: Lisa was very interested in education and really took a hands on approach to it. Again, since our education department was so small, she really took a leadership role beyond just being a trustee. Stepped in on her own in a very positive way, helped out and gave guidance to the education programs with public schools and setting up student docent programs with the high school for, basically, I think, 11th and 12th grade students. Pioneered in many different ways. I think with our community, people remember coming to Storm King early on in grammar school, high school, and there'd be a long gap before they would come back to Storm King and they'd show house guests Storm King, because it was so unique, on weekends and that type of thing. But they weren't active participants. I think we're far more inviting and open-minded to the community visiting—and we definitely want to be and should be—and all that is appropriate. So we reach out not just to the town of Cornwall, which we're part of, but to our larger community. That's very important to Storm King.

Dziedzic: And did that came from the board or did it come from the community voicing some requests to have more programs that were community focused? Where did that come from?

Collens: Well, I think R.J. Smith, who's a trustee of Storm King and has been for many years, lives in Orange County and is very much in contact with community through his business and personal interests of students and education, and really has a pulse on what is happening in Orange County and so forth. He became a teacher later in his career, as well as real estate, but wanted to bring more people to Storm King and has been very helpful with more local contacts into appropriate people for Storm King to meet.

Dziedzic: When did things start to shift from bringing people on the board who Peter knew and was friendly with, and knew would advance the vision that he had—when did it change from that ethos to thinking strategically about different perspectives that we realize we're missing, and who can we bring on to speak to that aspect?

Collens: Well, I would characterize Ted Ogden's years and Peter Stern's years as [00:20:00] establishing Storm King with landscape, with a collection. Yes, people should visit, we were doing marketing—this is way before the days of social media, which has really changed everything and is bringing people to the Art Center, and younger people, of course—in a very different way than today. But that was important to us to a certain extent, to get reviews of exhibitions and have our name out there—not everywhere but in appropriate places so the art world would know about Storm King.

And as I mentioned, the art world of course was much smaller at that point in time, and we didn't have all the amenities that we have today. And we still need more as our attendance increases. But I think both Ted Ogden and Peter Stern didn't want to really get involved with developing the Art Center to the point that it is today. I think the thought was to let another generation step in: we're going to really build the Art Center, in the way I said, with programs but a small staff, but let the next generation really make it more of a public institution and open it to a wider, more diverse audience. Certainly, social media has been tremendously helpful in bringing more people to Storm King. And that was really left up to, I think, John Stern, who became president 12 years ago of Storm King Art Center, as paid president and really broadening the Art Center in all respects in terms of our community and being more inviting to our community to come in with appropriate programming, whether it's music or other programs that are taking place at the Art Center, and broadening the staff and having more amenities for our visitors like the café, bicycles, that make it more appealing for people to come.

Developing the senior staff was very important for the first time—really establishing a senior staff—because it went from three people when I first arrived at Storm King to approximately a hundred staff members, both part-time and full-time. That's a significant change, and the professionalism that has taken place and Storm King, being far more recognized in the art world, in the world in general. And there are always people that haven't heard about Storm King, whether it's the tri-state area or not, we're not the best kept secret anymore. People are coming from Europe and returning again as travel begins after Covid and everything. But our largest attendance a few years ago was 212,000 people. And we've expanded our exhibition season—we've been open now, this is our third winter, and starting in January we're going to be open on winter weekends, January, February, March. And then move, in April, into our regular season with different exhibitions as we've always done. And exhibitions and public programs have become far more complicated. And we have Bloomberg Connects, which is very important and has

helped our visitors out enormously, which people use to get more information when they are at Storm King walking around with their phones.

Dziedzic: Do you remember when John first joined the board?

Collens: I think Lisa, Bea, and John were invited by their father [00:25:00] to join the board after having early memories of their grandfather taking them around to Storm King and to the farm and other properties that Ted Ogden was creating and nurturing over the years. And then their father, Peter Stern, usually kept them informed about Storm King, I think, before they joined officially. And they were asked to officially join and became full board members and involved with different committees that were active in those days and really following their own particular interests, as Lisa was involved with education and always has been—she's now chair of the Education committee at Storm King. In more recent times, all the board committees have been really expanded and are up and operating under John's stewardship and moving forward.

It's a much more complicated organization—running an outdoor sculpture museum—in different ways than an urban museum. We still have a small board and the trustees are terrific in their support of Storm King in different ways. There's the artistic end of Storm King, there's the land preservation end that's always of concern, and viewshed protection and so forth. So different board members are interested in different aspects of our programs and that's important and it's good. And we're moving forward, at age 62, and trying to broaden the base of support for Storm King with a larger board and moving ahead with a capital project and different departments that are well established at the Art Center for programming and exhibitions, for example.

Dziedzic: It's striking to me how you've described Peter Stern as thinking, well, this is what I'm going to do and then the next generation can take care of X, Y, Z. Because it really happened that way! There really was another generation and it seems like they really did have very different goals and thinking from their father, both as a result of generational difference, but also the time and the age of Storm King. So what was their reception on the board when they came on and brought different energy and different goals?

Collens: I think there was an adjustment for everybody, honestly. You had a younger generation of Lisa, Bea and John coming on, and different ideas for the first time being presented, and clearly I think that was a time for people to adjust, which is necessary and appropriate for organizations to move ahead.

Dziedzic: In your position as the director, if you're hearing different ideas come up on the board, what was your response, as the person who was head of the staff? The small staff.

Collens: Still a small staff, definitely.

Dziedzic: What was your response to these different ideas and questions with regard to Storm King's capacity?

Collens: I think that's always been a question with small organizations of this capacity. How are you going to really execute and implement new ideas and bring these ideas [00:30:00] that are excellent to fruition? Not all of them are excellent, not all of them are practical to do for financial reasons, lack of staff and so forth, but the ones that are good, how to do that in a reasonable amount of time. And we use consultants to a certain extent. Trustees were very helpful on different projects and guidance, and I think the staff were open-minded and willing for the most part to take on some of these new ventures.

Dziedzic: Am I pinpointing that time right? When you think back, is that the early ‘90s when things started to shift or was it even earlier?

Collens: No, I think probably the ‘90s. Yes, it wasn't an earthquake shift, but clearly there were things changing and people were, I think, aware of that with a younger generation of trustees.

Dziedzic: So let's talk about a couple other trustees, and I think we'll come back to some of these themes when we talk more about staff. So Joel Mallin and Sherry Mallin was also involved. Can you talk about what they brought to the board? I think maybe Sherry's on committees.

Collens: Yes, Joel was a trustee of Storm King for several years. An example of a couple, with Sherry Hope Mallon and Joel, of trustees that are collectors, different type of collecting pattern than Cynthia Polsky, but fascinating and, I'd say, more contemporary, more cutting edge artwork that they were collecting. They had a large property in Pound Ridge in Westchester where they were collecting outdoor sculpture and eventually built an art barn for collecting indoor work, not just sculpture, but photographs, paintings, fragile indoor sculptures and so forth that certainly wouldn't be appropriate for outdoors. So it broadened their range of collecting, having the art barn, when they built that several years ago, and continued their outdoor collecting of sculpture as well.

And I think they were interested in, as I said, a younger generation of artists than what we had represented at Storm King. They were fascinated by Ursula von Rydingsvard, for example, who had her first museum exhibition in 1992 at Storm King that I did, both indoors in the galleries and outdoors, and really was a new pioneering beginning for Ursula, who artistically was at the right point in her career to really take on doing an exhibition on both floors of the museum with large scale indoor sculpture and

outdoor sculptures. That was a really important beginning for her career. She had many gallery shows prior to that, but that was her first museum exhibition. And the way she artistically just really dived into it and with the energy level and artistic creativity was extraordinary and admirable. So she became an artist that the Mallins were interested in and some others that we were showing in Storm King. But I'd say their collection and philosophy was very different than the Storm King philosophy. [00:35:00]

At one point I was interested in British artists in particular that were interested in the land, and I was thinking of different artists that we could exhibit at Storm King, whether it might be Richard Long or others, but people are who really interested in the land. We had plenty of land at that point in the 1990s, and there was Storm King Mountain, there was Schunnemunk Mountain nearby to explore, Schunnemunk Mountain being two miles away from us that might fascinate somebody—I was thinking of Richard Long, for example. And then the Mallins, by chance, commissioned Andy Goldsworthy to do his first commission in the United States on their property at Buckhorn. And Andy built a wall with an ash tree going horizontally through the wall at the mid-level, and you had the stones on top of the ash tree and below it, and this large ash tree going through the wall and the limbs stuck out of the tree. It was really quite beautiful when it was under construction and finished. Eventually, the wall has, over the last several years, decayed and the ash tree, the limbs rotted out and then the tree itself, the trunk started rotting and the stones started collapsing and Andy did not want to rebuild it. He's photographed it in the process of decaying, but he was not going to rebuild it, much to the surprise of the Mallins. Anyway, he's gone to Buckhorn and done documentation at various points in time of the wall. So he has a photographic record of its decay.

But when he was working on the Mallins's wall, he came to Storm King probably around 1995, 1996 for the first time, and introduced by Joel and Sherry Mallin to Storm King. He was working on different projects at Buckhorn and came to Storm King and thought it was quite interesting, and returned in the fall of 1997 in terrible weather and walked around with his oil cloth and wellies on and created a lot of ephemeral works out of twigs and leaves outdoors, which he photographed before they washed away or the wind blew them apart. And he was down by the Moodna Creek, our little river, and creating sculptures on boulders in the river with leaves and colored leaves and so forth.

And he came up with the idea, while walking around doing these ephemeral works, that we had a lot of fallen down stone walls, very similar to farm walls in the UK. He thought that interested him and really appealed, so he decided to build some British agricultural walls that would go around where he found farm walls on the ground—not an arbitrary decision on his part—and where the trees had grown up over the years. Andy built the *Storm King Wall* starting in the fall of 1997 with five wallers from the UK and one apprentice. We collected all our stone from fallen down stone walls. It took us eight months to collect the quantity of stone Andy needed and put it in lines. And he built the creative part starting in the fall of 1997.

Took eight weeks to build, six days a week working on it. It's beautiful to this day, it's in great shape. The wallers come back from England every few years to do some [00:40:00] tune-ups and repair the stone because people are, on occasion, walking on the wall, which they wouldn't do in England, and taking some stone out, replacing it, all sorts of things. We can do a certain portion of it ourself, but we usually need to get Andy and his wallers back in to do appropriate and proper repairs every few years because it has no foundation to it. It's just a dry wall sitting on the ground basically. So we need to do repairs like every sculpture outdoors needs repairs.

That's our introduction to Andy through the Mallins, and that was indeed really special. And he came back in 1998 to do the straight part of the wall going up to the Thruway, making the wall just under a half-mile long and really quite special.

Dziedzic: How common is it for trustees to make an introduction to an artist versus maybe some interest or introduction coming out of the curatorial department at Storm King?

Collens: Well, it's happened on occasion, and I think it could happen to this day, where a trustee who is a collector—and we haven't had a lot of trustees that are active collectors on our board, and that's certainly important as we move forward, to really have more trustees that are collecting in a serious way. It happened with Maya Lin as well, that our introduction came through Richard Menschel and Cynthia Polsky to Maya Lin, who they both knew quite well and brought up to Storm King early on and introduced Maya to us. It took a while to really gel and set a schedule for doing a project after looking at some proposals.

Dziedzic: And were the Mallins the first introduction to Ursula as well, or was Ursula someone who you'd already had some studio visits with?

Collens: No, I don't think the connection to Ursula was through the Mallins. I think I was going around and seeing her work at galleries and being aware of her work earlier, through research I'd done. I think probably it was through some gallery shows. And she was just transitioning from one gallery to another when I did the show in 1992 of her work. She was just in the process of going to Galerie Lelong, where she still is today.

Dziedzic: I thought I remembered some other connection there. Alright, so I also wanted to ask about Nick and Pat Ohnell. My understanding is that they have been involved with trees at Storm King.

Collens: The Ohnells came on board quite early as well. Nick is a board member and very supportive of different projects like Magdalena Abakanowicz *Sarcophagi in Glass Houses* (1994) and bringing that to

the United States from Zürich, Switzerland, where it was in storage. We brought it and we replaced all the glass with safety glass, not a glass that was on it before. We left all the previous glass in Switzerland, which was a breakable type of glass. We wanted glass that was like automobile glass, which shatters in a different way and would be much safer for the public if something happened and a sheet of glass broke. So we brought it here, did full conservation treatment and found a location for it. And Nick was very helpful in supporting that project as he has been with many other projects.

Pat has been part of our regional advisory committee, [00:45:00] which was a predecessor to a different group at Storm King, and expanded into landscape as well, with Nick, and helping out with the allée of trees that had to be replaced in the south from a hybrid maple tree that had been there approximately 50 years. We had to make the decision to replace the maples since they were not doing well and we decided, after a lot of research with Reed Hilderbrand, a landscape architecture firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to use a black gum tree that has nice fall color like the maples and will grow in size to be 35 feet high when they're older. They've already been there a couple years and they already have wonderful color in the fall. Leaves are small, but they'll get taller and be quite interesting for fall foliage, which was important to us.

Dziedzic: Do you have a sense of how different trustees will figure out which major projects they're invested in supporting financially?

Collens: Well, I think trustees have different particular interests, like everybody. We try to assign each trustee an appropriate committee, whether it's Collection and Acquisitions, or Landscape, Education, and Finance, and so forth. But we want trustees to be happy and really enjoy what they're doing. And many trustees are also chairs of their different committees, so there's a lot of chance to really be involved on a hands on basis with a small organization, if you like that type of thing.

Dziedzic: And it seems like many of the trustees also have foundations as well.

Collens: The trustees have been very supportive of Storm King in different areas, whether it's education, public programs, exhibitions, which is certainly important. And everything really stems from what exhibitions are taking place each year and what public programs are being done and how to pitch our exhibitions with our audience and how to move forward with everything we're doing. But it really starts with deciding what exhibitions we're having each year.

Dziedzic: And you mentioned the Landscape committee. Do you recall how that was formed?

Collens: Oh, that was started years ago by Frank Cabot and Margaret Johns, Peter Stern's second wife, who was a wonderful gardener and outdoor person and a watercolorist as well. She also had a professional side where she was a scientist. She really was multifaceted, but enjoyed the outdoors in the landscape immensely. So that was the beginning of a small committee with Frank Cabot, early on, who, on the other side of the Hudson River, had a house and gardens in Cold Spring, as well as in Canada. Instrumental in the garden movement in this country early on with different landscape organizations that he was involved with.

Dziedzic: And so this is the committee that grew to encompass concerns about the viewshed and the native grasses, or are these separate?

Collens: No, I think their umbrella really was everything outdoors, viewshed protection, whether properties were contingent with ours or not—we own some property that was given to us off Angola Road—and those types of things [00:50:00] that are important. So we don't have houses popping up there in the future. Enough of that happens, and you can't control everything, but it'd be nice if you could. And also how to maintain our grounds. We've done a couple of programs regarding our landscape and the best ways to take care of that, and what are we doing for educational programs. We've had a couple of symposiums over the years that we've done in a more formal way with speakers and full program on a Saturday.

Dziedzic: And Christine had mentioned that she thought Alice Cary Brown was a member of that Landscape committee.

Collens: Oh, Alice Cary definitely was an excellent board member that we haven't mentioned before and had a long history of coming to Storm King—from Kentucky originally. Alice Cary was a long-standing member of the Garden Club of America, so she had a really solid interest in landscape and gardening and was very important to us in that area. Her husband, Lee Brown, was ambassador to Austria a number of years ago, and came from Kentucky from, I think, a family that started various wines and liquors in Kentucky and that had been very philanthropic over the years, and supportive of Storm King.

Dziedzic: Now the folks that we've mentioned joining the board in this decade, are they still people that Peter Stern had relationships with and invited to be part of the board? Or was there a different way of seeking out new board members that emerged during this time?

Collens: Well, I think there was to a certain extent. I think Lee Brown, for example, was involved with the World Monuments Fund. So there were different connections always, over the years, through different organizations, that various board members were affiliated with.

Dziedzic: And how are you involved in bringing on new board members?

Collens: Well, I think all of us, over the years, have sought to broaden the base of support at the Art Center with new board members. Hard to really do, in many ways, but certainly tried to make suggestions of appropriate people for being involved with Storm King, whether they were donors or board members and so forth. And that's ongoing always, to try to expand and have the right balance to the board of different people that are collectors or in finance or landscape and all aspects of Storm King, education and so forth. Some people are involved that are not board members, with different committees as well.

Dziedzic: Are those a result of, like you mentioned, people that you notice are members and you do a little research and you see maybe they have the potential to become more involved? How do you start off deepening that relationship?

Collens: Well, for instance, on our Landscape committee we have Bill Schuster, who is at the neighboring Black Rock Forest as executive director until recently when he retired, but still working at Black Rock, I think, on research one day a week for the next year. And Bill's been extremely helpful to the Landscape committee on trees and tree growth and how to really keep the forest in good shape from the deer and other issues that are constantly coming up, and diversifying our species as well, [00:55:00] and doing a tree study. So he has been involved with that, with Peter Bienstock and other people on that committee.

Dziedzic: Let me do a little time check here? Okay, 1:15PM. When do you need to take a break to get some lunch before your call at 2:00PM?

Collens: Oh. 1:30PM.

Dziedzic: Okay. So we have one more decade to talk about before John becomes president.

Collens: Yes, [laughs]. Gosh. It was pretty insular in those days, when you really think about it. I mean, I haven't thought about it and discussed it with an outsider. You're an insider-outsider, I guess, Sarah. But yes, it was a tight group, no matter what. It expanded to Richard Menschel, Hume, other people that came on over the years, but still, one way or another, everyone—there's a dot between people. You knew somebody and we'd consider your person that you knew as a trustee, if it seemed appropriate and could help maybe broaden us a bit. Or is it moving in the same direction?

Dziedzic: Well, it also seems like it's a strategy that considers the relationships that are going well [laughs] and are productive. And that's certainly not bad.

Collens: Don't rock the boat [laughs]. Yes.

Dziedzic: Well, more so thinking about whose energy and insights are allowing Storm King to grow in directions that seem desirable, let's say. Do you think it was more that, or more "don't rock the boat?"

Collens: No, I think it was a combo really, because Peter wasn't the personality to really go out and say, "Sarah, you're a trustee, can you please give us some money as an annual donation as a trustee? Or could you help out with an exhibition or education program?" or whatever it is. If you went to him and gave him a check, I guess he'd take it, but it just wasn't Peter asking other trustees, who certainly had money and everything, to help out with the organization. It was really the Ralph E. Ogden [REO] Foundation that had the primary burden of responsibility of supporting the Art Center in the early years, with a much smaller budget and everything. If we wanted to buy a Nevelson sculpture or something, it was no question about, it was not asking trustees about throwing some money in—it was REO that kicked in for the sculpture.

Or commissioning Noguchi in 1978. Peter said, "I have X number of dollars available and went off and commissioned Noguchi: "Can you do anything for that price?" And he said yes and cut through all the baloney of committees, red tape and stuff like that, which thrilled Noguchi to no end. And it was a handshake and everyone went off in different directions and a week later, we got a contract from Noguchi's lawyer. So basic. It wasn't funny, but no committees, no nothing. He'll go to Japan and use stone makers in Japan, the best stone makers that were available, and whatever, no pressure or anything. I mean, big museums would say, "Oh, I'm sorry Mr. Noguchi. You've got to come back to the United States for a committee meeting or acquisition meeting and present everything, and you have to have all these drawings and this and that. And it was just a handshake with Peter. "Here's the location, go to it!" That kind of thing is really remarkable.

Dziedzic: And so Peter as the president of Storm King and the president of the board, he knows what he has to work with and that's just what he's working with. So in a sense, it wasn't a skill that he needed to develop [01:00:00] or become comfortable with because he was just working within [a pre-set budget].

Collens: I would say that the skill set would be, taking it one step further than what you're saying, is to be able to think and figure out, say to Isamu—and I was there—"Noguchi, let's cut through all the red tape." We hardly had committees. There was Cynthia and Carter Brown. Cynthia knew Isamu because she commissioned the two-part bench that's connected—as long as this room, it is—and you can go see it at

Mount Sinai. It's a little hard to find, but it's there, and they sit on it for lunch and stuff like that, after all these years. But she commissioned it on behalf of her family, and said, “Noguchi, a great artist for Storm King.” And she was right, but there was the delay of getting Isamu, who didn’t want to travel 50 minutes outside of New York City for anything, and he came up and spent the day, and had a picnic lunch on the grounds. Chose the best location, everything. It was all just so great.

But Peter figured out the best way to get Noguchi to do the best possible sculpture for a small amount of money. It was $150,000 in 1977. I'm sure he was getting tons of money for other projects, but whatever, regardless of that, we were a teeny museum and that's all that we could afford. So Peter figured out, get Noguchi, do stone. Because Peter and I researched this and said, yes, he's done bronze, tons of bronze, he's done a lot of sculptures that are large scale and steel and other materials, but, wow, stone would be great for Storm King. We had a lot of metal—David Smith and other artists, Liberman, Grosvenor, von Schlegell at that point. We realized that, really, Noguchi excelled at stone. Get Noguchi to go back to Shikoku to his studio when he was relaxed, stay there, no pressure of all these committees, and get his best stone masons available to him at that point in time when he was in between major projects, and he did Storm King. He was preparing a show for the Walker Art Center, but he didn't have other commissions and—bullseye—that was absolutely perfect. Relieving Isamu of all this other stuff that was red tape, wasn't creative, to get his creative juices going and with his best stone mason or two in Japan to produce *Momo Taro*.

So it's taking it one step further, I think. And Peter had no involvement with commissioning artists, and he didn't particularly like contemporary and modern sculpture, whatever you want to call it at that point in time. And he went to Henry Moore and asked him about a sculpture [speaking with an accent like Henry Moore’s] “that wasn't even conceived, Mr. Stern. I’d be happy to sell you one, but it’s not conceived yet. Would you go along with that idea?” Peter said it in a much better way than I do, but it was recorded at Cedar House. I was there. But he really latched onto this, figured it out. Bright guy, Peter was, really a bright man, kind of reminded me of Alex Liberman in a different way. Very handsome, *debonair*, not as tall as Alex, but European traditions were important to Peter throughout his life. And he figured this out and started working with artists and working at Storm King and really adored it. And Bill Rutherford, myself, it was the three of us that really kept moving forward. Working with Noguchi and his figuring out how to get Noguchi to do this. My God, he came out after a year of asking. “Okay, I'm coming out,” kind of grumpy. And wow, he was there for the rest of the day, loved it. Went to Peter's house [01:05:00] for weekend parties and stuff. You'd never know if he was going to show up, but he did go and you'd have to call him at the last minute and he’d come out or whatever.

But yes, it was terrific and cut through all the baloney of other museums. He had his best people in Shikoku, Japan and he's comfortable, loved being there, staying there for a period of time, and wrote one

letter to Peter about, “Yes, I'm in Japan and haven't figured anything out yet, but I'm going to talk to the stones.” That's what the letter says! “I'm going to talk to the stones.” "They're going to tell me what to do.” Wow, that is so great. This handwritten letter. There's nothing better to me than that comment. And a year later—bingo—–produces *Momo Taro*, one of the great sculptures, 10 years before he died.

Dziedzic: Peter had a skill of keeping things easy and light, it sounds like.

Collens: Easy and light and could deal with situations that were going awry. Like Eugene Cohan is doing the final negotiations for *The Arch*, I mean, one of the great sculptures, and we were so lucky to be able to buy that versus the other one that sold recently for $34 million—not by the Calder Foundation, it was privately sold, but huge! But this is the better of the two, I think, and always will be. But anyway, the other one's nothing to sneeze at, but historically, I think this one's better for different reasons.

But the point is, Eugene Cohan, who was really wonderful with people and was a real people person, and what he was doing at Star as a sensitive negotiator and this and that—probably was involved with union negotiations there and whatever else he did at Star—and he was a trustee of Storm King. Peter assigned him to go to do the final negotiation on the Calder *Arch* with the Calder family, Howard Rower, Sandy Rower's father, who started the Calder Foundation. And I knew Howard—quirky family, like all these art families are—and at the last minute, Howard said—–and their lawyers are there—“I want half a percent more for the escrow account.” And this is early ‘80s when we bought it, and that adds up to X number of thousands of dollars more. Eugene is hesitating about this, saying I don't think we should do it, calls H. Peter. Again, Peter's foresight—I'm just giving you the big picture—–“God dammit, do it!” It was a couple thousand dollars more. It wasn't that much at that point, whatever this half percent translated into, I don't remember how much, but it was like a couple hundred thousand dollars. “Do it, Eugene! Don't even blink. Yes.” And if it wasn't for Peter, he probably would've messed up the whole thing.

And yes, Peter was his boss, like he was everybody's boss. He did the right thing, called in. And Peter said, “For God’s sake, do it, Eugene!” He called him Gene. I always used to call him Eugene. But anyway, the point is, it was such a small amount of money. Yes, it was huge in 1981 or whenever that took place. But with inflation today—–I don't know how much. but Peter said, “Are you crazy? Do it! We get this great sculpture, the Ogden Foundation can afford it.” We traded in a small Calder for a fortune, but we still needed tons of cash.

Dziedzic: So don't sweat the details, especially when the relationship might be at risk. Big picture.

Collens: And the same thing with di Suvero in a different way, and different amounts of money. We traded a di Suvero in, and that's been really helpful to us, for an appropriate sculpture. I hated to see the

Calder go. It's in the Whitney collection. The family turned around immediately and went from Storm King to the Whitney. I was heartbroken, but a great sculpture. Just like I was heartbroken about the di Suvero. Smaller scale, not really right for Storm King, but the di Suvero is in a collection in San Francisco, [01:10:00] the de Young, I think it is, indoors forever more, but it's wood and steel and rubber tire. It's fully restored, looks great. We had it for years. But both those negotiating situations with Eugene Cohan, they called Peter up in different ways. I told you about Calder and the different situation for di Suvero, but the same reaction, Peter said, “Yes, go for it!”

Dziedzic: Didn't have to think twice.

Collens: Absolutely not. And now people on the staff don't realize all this and never will. They want two minutes of history and that's it. And the personalities, what the art world was like, they weren't even alive maybe, whatever it is, they just didn't understand how Storm King was built on a shoestring budget, whether it was landscaping, building a collection, and how unusual it was. And it was a family situation, and young age, 62 years old, and at a critical point in our history and we're still moving forward. Started by two families? Wow, that's impressive in my book. Not every organization thrives. They're out of business or just fizzle**.** We ain't fizzling. We're going to move forward, we're going to figure out the capital project, we're going to figure out everything and keep moving forward.

But people just don’t realize that building this collection was difficult. Yeah, I'd love to have a Tony Smith but that didn't appeal to Peter at that point. And a large Oldenburg, we tried, but that didn't happen. And we had a long history with Oldenburg. First one didn't happen—the pads of butter that flopped down the hillside, yeah, that would've been great! So anyway, you hit and miss sometimes. It’s opportunities and it's right for the artist or it's not right for the artists, it's not right for us. Things click somehow sometimes, but not every time.

Dziedzic: But it seems like often personalities came into play a lot in a different way than they do now. Fewer lawyers then than now. But that's just across the board in the art world. It's not just unique to Storm King, but I think what is unique to Storm King is that there are generations that tend to be interested and want to change things as they become the people at the helm. And that, like you said, it's still continuing to grow and—

Collens: —and it's quality. And different types of sculpture. Peter always wanted really see beautiful sculptures. I don't know what that term meant to him, but I think he'd be pretty shocked by the broad range of sculptures that we've been showing the last 10 years, whatever it is.

Dziedzic: Yes, I think we might be at our break time.

Collens: But I just wanted to give you some of the flavor of it. It doesn't come through to other staff and it just wasn't a cut and dry situation. And I don't think MoMA was either, when it started in the 1930s early on, and any museum.

Dziedzic: Is there some bemoaning that happens about why don't we have this artist's work or why don't we have that sculpture?

Collens: Yes, I mean, there's certain artists I'd love to have that we couldn't afford. We just weren't savvy enough, or to borrow, and we weren't getting gifts. And no one was owning them. They were going to public sites, like the Dubuffet in Philadelphia, a really solid stainless steel piece. It wasn't one of his more delicate materials that need a lot of repair like the one at the old Chase Manhattan Bank building in Lower Manhattan, and others at PepsiCo that need a lot of repair. That stainless steel one's a great scale and much easier to maintain. It's metal versus the other material that he used to use, like the big one at Kröller-Müller. [01:15:00] You know, that always happens.

Yes, I'd love to have the di Suvero *Are Years What? (For Marianne Moore)*. That is one of the great American sculptures of the latter half of the 20th century in my book, and other people think so as well. We tried to buy it—Storm King, I say we—nothing. The Nasher Sculpture Collection, Ray and Patsy Nasher tried to buy it, nothing. Because of Dick Bellamy. It just went in the circular file. We had a contract sitting on Dick's desk and it got trashed and he never considered it. Patsy Nasher asked Dick, at Storm King by the columns in 1985, "How much is that sculpture? Please let me know." Dick never let her know. They could easily afford the sculpture. Zero. And Patsy knew Dick well enough—she said, "I'm never going to hear from him." She was right. [laughs].

Dziedzic: So the flip side is that the personalities also kind of got in the way of Storm King owning exactly what it wanted.

Collens: Yes, maybe we weren't broad enough, savvy enough at that point. And Ted Ogden wanted to make his own decisions, for better or worse. He didn't want Clem Greenberg or anybody else advising him. He wanted to commission Bob Grosvenor, von Schlegell, buy the Libermans, buy 13 David Smiths for Storm King. He hit the jackpot. Everyone thought he was crazy! His friend said, "You're buying this metal and agricultural tools?! You're nuts!" Early on, that's what he wanted to do. And I think Peter wanted to take his own chances, but realized scale was really important to the Art Center. In all due respect, fine, garden sculptures—you could see those at MoMA or in many other formal gardens, at Joe Hirshhorn's house in Greenwich, or whatever, for the most part.

Dziedzic: But it's the scale of the artwork and the scale of the Art Center too. Because as much as he said let's leave this to the next generation, in a sense, the groundwork was already laid.

Collens: Yes. Absolutely. But that's what I think both Ted and Peter did and said. And each person advanced the Art Center in the direction of being more of a public institution. It always started as a 501(c)(3). They did everything correct. And there are different status marks of a 501(c)(3), and Peter advanced it more when we had broader support, when we could say we had X number of dollars of public support from a public foundation, not from private operating foundation. And Herb Schultz was really important to starting development in a very gentile way and ushering in the first staff member, Rachel Coker. But it was really Herb's starting that process in his way and working closely with Peter, and the Storm King way at that point, and Peter's way, to start introducing all this.

Dziedzic: And that critical shift was between the funding of Storm King coming from the private foundation to Storm King receiving grant funds?

Collens: Basically. We were more able to receive outside monies because we'd met certain requirements for a status change there. And I think that was in the late '70s. There are more technical terms that what I'm using for all this. But that's basically what it is. We had to show, over a four- or five-year period, how much money we were taking in, year by year, from outside sources to make this change over and broaden our base of support. I think Herb doing the introduction for new trustees, spending a full day with them with the paperwork, the finances, board committees, this and that, [01:20:00] and really acclimating them to being a board member at Storm King and moving more towards some fundraising. We were starting to dip our toe into fundraising. I wouldn't say we were diving into it, but Jim Kautz, who was chair of Vassar College, who became a board member of Storm King, is a nice example. A friend of Richard Menschel's from Goldman Sachs, that connection. And Jim was a terrific board member and his daughter—Jim died several years ago, saw him in Tucson—but very helpful to Storm King. His wife went to Vassar and was a friend of Herb Schultz's wife at Vassar. And all these connections started coming and Jim became very helpful financially to Storm King and a great board member.

Dziedzic: And when did Herb start on the board?

Collens: When he left Vassar, he was vice president for development at Vassar College and lived in Kingston, so just a quick trip across the river basically for him. When he retired from Vassar, Peter knew him from Vassar because Peter was on, basically what is now the Vassar Museum was the Vassar Art Gallery, and Peter was on the board there, and he was also a trustee of Vassar College, I believe.

Dziedzic: And was this in the '90s also?

Collens: Probably ‘80s, it started. Okay. You'd have to double check dates on all this stuff, Sarah. But he really did a terrific job and moved us in that direction for Rachel Coker, the first development person at the Art Center.

Dziedzic: All right, well, let me be time keeper.

Collens: Yes, let's break.

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
November 16, 2022	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: So picking back up with trustees, this is Sarah Dziedzic on November 16th. Okay. So we left off around the 2000s and the 2010s, heading towards the transition between Peter Stern at the helm and John at the helm. There's a few trustees that I wanted to ask you about during this period. And the first is Kim Elliman.

Collens: Kim has been a long term trustee and is executive director at the Open Space Institute. Like Peter Bienstock, his particular specialty is land preservation. He's very involved with the Landscape committee at this point—head of our Landscape committee at Storm King, which is appropriate and is doing excellent job spearheading that as we have different issues coming up with trees and native grasses, invasive grasses, and other issues of plant material at Storm King. He has been excellent overseeing that committee.

Dziedzic: And you had talked about the goal, for a long time with the trustees, was to think about broadening the base in terms of who was on the board and the kind of experience that they could bring. So who are some of the other people from this era that were part of that larger goal?

Collens: I might add that Kim Elliman, like many trustees, has been helpful in guiding us to other individuals that are non-trustees for getting support for different projects at Storm King. We need more participation of that type from everybody but it's wonderful when that does happen, and I think Kim has been very successful and helpful to us in that respect like many others. Clearly, we need more involvement on that level, and time for reviewing potential people and contacts that trustees have that we don't have at the moment.

Dziedzic: And that's the kind of information that someone who's the head of a foundation can potentially bring?

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: So how about Adam Weinberg? Continuing the tradition at Storm King of having somebody from head of the Whitney being part of the board.

Collens: Right. After Carter Brown passed away, we were left without an [00:05:00] outside museum director on the board of Storm King. We had found that to be enormously helpful. I think that a natural person that was suggested by Cynthia Polsky would be Adam Weinberg, the director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and Adam accepted and has been on the board now for several years and is extremely helpful to everybody regarding exhibitions, appropriate museum protocol in difficult situations that always arise with running museums and nonprofits, and he has been very generous with his time and excellent suggestions. We count on Adam to give us guidance in different areas across the board.

Dziedzic: Is there a way for you to talk about some of the difficult things where his expertise would be helpful?

Collens: Sometimes, in handling donors. Other programs that have come up, which all nonprofits are dealing with, and corporations, and that is diversity and DEAI issues and how to approach those subjects. Also just how a larger museum operates, and fundraising and so forth, and his expertise in exhibitions and collectors have been really outstanding and very solid advice.

Dziedzic: Are there any artist relationships that he was able to strike up between Storm King and artists?

Collens: I think his guidance with commissions, and the Whitney also doing commissioned sculptures on occasion like we do, and different connections that he has and insight has been extremely helpful on a trustee basis. And also I think working with staff at Storm King as well. His generosity of time is really extraordinary and greatly appreciated.

Dziedzic: Okay. So I wanted to ask about the Duke of Devonshire [Peregrine Cavendish, 12th Duke of Devonshire]. I guess he was honored at one of the galas along with Andy Goldsworthy. I would just say that the big point of mystery for me [laughs] is how that relationship started. I wonder if you could shed some light on that.

Collens: Let's see. The Duke of Devonshire, known as Stoker, served on the Storm King board for several years and I believe he met Peter Stern through World Monuments Fund. Peter asked Stoker, as he asked us to call him, to come up to Storm King and see Storm King because where Stoker lives and is in charge of—Chatsworth House in England—is private and they have farm property, and they do sculpture exhibitions with Sotheby's, temporary exhibitions. They have collected sculptures as well, Chatsworth on their own, [00:10:00] besides doing these special temporary exhibitions outdoors at

Chatsworth. It seemed to be something in common. Peter Stern loved his accent, his English accent, and invited him on the board, and he came on with very good suggestions and had a wonderful cross section of interests in landscapes, sculpture, preservation of buildings—very different periods—but interested in and inquisitive about everything. And was a terrific board member during his time and made very good contributions verbally to Storm King. He really did not give monetarily to any organization that he was on the board of. I think that was not something that he did, but he really added a different dimension and I think broadened our thinking in many different ways.

Dziedzic: Do you have any examples of that?

Collens: Well, I think in terms of landscape, that was of special interest. He really enjoyed making different suggestions about native grasses and how to take care of lawns and other landscapes that were similar to Chatsworth. Our lawn is not the quality of the Chatsworth lawn for sure. But he was very helpful in suggestions regarding landscape, farming, which we still do. We have a local farmer that comes in and cuts the grasses and bales it and takes it out. So I think in those areas. Another common interest, because Chatsworth is open to the public, they have a paying public that goes there. A very large number of people visit the outdoors, the indoors of the house, which is very large with over 200 rooms. And I think having the connection to Sotheby's that Stoker had, with the outdoor sculpture shows that were taking place every year at Chatsworth, there were some of the same artists as in the Storm King collection. Could be Alice Aycock or other artists that they would show there. There was quite a bit in common and I think he brought a different perspective to what we were doing and was wonderful to have on the board for a number of years.

Dziedzic: Did he have a particular relationship with Andy Goldsworthy?

Collens: I think there was. I think the Duke commissioned Andy to do a sculpture. I kind of remember something about a property line that was in question and I think the sculpture had to be taken down, being a wall. But the wallers of Andy's worked at Chatsworth and then they were working at Storm King, I think for our 50th anniversary exhibition that we were doing. They were building another wall of Andy's and saw Stoker again at Storm King, which was a nice rendezvous for everybody to see each other. It's always fun when that happens at Storm King.

Dziedzic: Thanks. I couldn't make sense of that myself looking at the archives and that's helpful to hear the backstory there.

Collens: Well, we think [laughs] it's accurate.

Dziedzic: Titled nobility all of a sudden out of nowhere—that's what sparked my question. [00:15:00]

Collens: But I guess that's the Peter Stern connection. We're a little unsure.

Dziedzic: Yes. Is there anyone else on the list that you want to bring up there?

Collens: I think we should mention Bea Stern because we discussed Lisa Stern. I just don't want to forget about Bea, who's been a trustee and came on with her siblings at the same time. Bea is a trained architect and has been very helpful during the capital campaign process and has, with her background in architecture, been involved with working with our architects and the process of coming up with the designs for the buildings that we need that are very modest, very Storm King structures. But I think in all aspects, Bea being familiar with architecture, construction work crews, and contractors and so forth, she's added a very different dimension, and meanwhile, being able to source different people and suggestions for what we should do to move the project forward.

Dziedzic: And she's also been on the Collection and Acquisitions committee for a long time, right?

Collens: That's another aspect of what Bea's done, correct. She was instrumental in helping to support a project by John Knight, known as JK. She came up with three different artists, John Knight and Michael Asher, who we looked into. But Michael passed away and we did not execute the idea for his project. Then the third person was Daniel Buren, a French artist, and we created these benches that were originally out of wood that didn't last very long, and then we fabricated them in metal—aluminum—and they were painted with green and white stripes. There are 10 benches, rectangular sitting areas, and the idea is you put one so you can see another one further ahead, and stretch them out over a long distance and you can go from one to the other. They've been also used by some of our performance artists during the summer that was part of our program as well. And we don't leave them out in the winter, so we bring them inside to give them added protection. And we keep moving them around to different locations. They don't have to be in the same location all the time, so we'll move them to different areas on the grounds of the Art Center. And they're not always on exhibit every year. But it was certainly a wonderful commission and unfortunately we didn't follow through with the third and final commission that Bea thought of with Michael Asher.

Dziedzic: Do you want to talk about that in more detail now? Or we can also talk about that in our next session.

Collens: Let's save that for artist session, please. I might add that through Bea and Lisa and John, the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation—particularly Bea and Lisa—they deserve a lot of credit for continuing to

support Storm King over the years, and the capital project as well, which is greatly appreciated. Bea is the president of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation and Lisa is vice president, I believe, of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation. So they still stay deeply involved with Storm King Art Center and have been very supportive in different ways. And Bea is on the Collection and Acquisitions committee to this day and always has very good advice, practical advice, about how to work with artists and [00:20:00] maybe cut some costs, which are always appreciated, and do things in a more streamlined way. Very constructive comments, always.

Dziedzic: When did the capital project start? When did discussions about that really start to take root?

Collens: [Exhales] Oh, it has to be 10 years ago when we realized, and we knew at Storm King, of course—many other people didn't—as we were moving forward that Storm King does not have any purpose-built buildings. We're doing extensive conservation on our collection, all sorts of programming and curatorial, education department, and we're doing this with not the proper office space for visitor service staff or any of us—any of the staff. And we really needed storage for sculptures, all sorts of things. That's when we started coming up with this idea of a capital project and seeing what that would entail in terms of money for Storm King. Buildings that really would be appropriate to move forward with that would help us better maintain the collection, like the CFM building, Conservation, Fabrication, and Maintenance building, which we're still raising money for in phase one of the capital project.

But this would give us an opportunity to have a building all year long that we could use for conservation purposes, taking care of our own sculpture collection, the outdoor sculpture collection, bringing the objects into the building with large garage doors and having the appropriate space and equipment to do the conservation and maintenance work on the different types of sculptures we have in the collection, whether they're metal or other materials. So that's still a dream we want to execute. The maintenance is taking care of all our equipment that we have for the grounds in the same building, as well as fabricating works and helping to fabricate works by younger artists for the Outlooks program. Again, no space, and we're using tram buildings and every square inch that we can. We'll move the trams out in the winter and sometimes bring heaters in, sometimes just work in the cold space depending on what we're doing. It's really makeshift and we've got to move on to improved better conditions for doing all this work.

We have fabricated most of the sculptures that are in Outlooks for the last seven years—if not totally fabricated them, parts of them—working with the artists directly and then installing them on the grounds. So it's an enormous challenge for all our staff, whether you're office staff, or Mike and his team, doing conservation work and having the right space. The timing of doing everything is very limited if it's during the season, and we're doing it outdoors because of weather conditions—hopefully warm enough weather—but not enough indoor space to bring the objects in, and doing our painting outdoors and

hoping for the best. So that's something we really want to change for the future and improve and be able to move on to do bigger sculpture projects and be able to dismantle the larger sculptures and bring them in in sections, and having enough space to do that as well. Not just smaller objects. But we want to handle all our conservation on premises so it doesn't have to be trucked away [00:25:00] and done somewhere else. That can be very damaging, as you move sculpture around.

Dziedzic: How do you support a staff when everybody knows, for decades, that the spaces are not adequate to the goals? I mean, everyone's making it work, but how do you keep everyone's spirits high?

Collens: Oh, I think it's certainly a challenge at this point as exhibitions and installations take more time. Working with the artists, which is very positive and that's one of our number one priorities, but when you don't have the right space, the right equipment, it's definitely a challenging situation, and we need to finish off the capital campaign, the final amount of money we need, and start building.

Dziedzic: Is there a projection for when that might happen?

Collens: Not at the moment. That's something we're working on and, I think, probably by the end of this year or certainly into next year, have a better idea of what our timeframe is going to be for all this, but [laughs] soon enough. Yes, it's something we're really looking forward to having built and using.

Dziedzic: Another board member I wanted to ask about was Nick Polsky, another family legacy that's continuing across generations. So what does he bring to the board that maybe supports his mother's vision or is separate from it in different ways?

Collens: Nick is very interesting because he also has an art background and went to art camps during the summer where he met his future wife. So there's a creative side to Nick, and different things he's done with, I think, painting and ceramics and so forth. And he goes to a lot of galleries and has contact with living artists, and that certainly appeals to him. He's seeing museum exhibitions, gallery shows, and is thinking about these subjects. He's the chair of the Collection and Acquisitions committee at this point and doing a really a wonderful job and with sensitivity and understanding of what's happening in the field of contemporary art, and watching auctions and artists as they develop, the galleries and what museums are doing, and has appropriate comments to make as we are reviewing different artists for consideration to the Art Center, or commissions and exhibitions and other projects. But Nick is out there seeing things, so that's important and extremely helpful to the curatorial staff.

Dziedzic: Does the Collection and Acquisitions committee have input on the Outlooks artists each year?

Collens: The curatorial department has kept a tight control on the curatorial program at the Art Center, which is very important because we're a museum and maybe it's misleading because we're called Storm King Art Center and a lot of people are constantly asking us—artists and others, galleries—they're submitting material to Storm King and thinking that we would give consideration to showing particular artists or exhibiting their work—buying a work, whatever it might be—and they don't realize that we have a large collection and we're looking for particular artists to really add to the collection, either by the commission process, which is very slow, or just outright purchasing a sculpture if that seems appropriate, [00:30:00] or receiving gifts at this point in time. It's wonderful to receive a gift if it's the appropriate sculpture for the collection. And we already, as I said, have a large collection. We're looking to broaden it, and not often do we receive offers of gifts that are appropriate.

As far as selecting artists go, we maintain a very tight control over that, which is appropriate. Otherwise you can be off in many different directions, borrowing sculpture. It's an expensive proposition to borrow sculptures—install them, buy them, insure them, maintain them—which one has a responsibility to do when they're on the grounds and on exhibition at Storm King, whether it's loaned sculpture or permanent collection. So I think that's very important to keep the artistic direction very tightly controlled with a small group of people, and recommending from the curatorial department to the board what the program is, and ask the board to help out with the fundraising end when it comes time for that, and any suggestions of people, foundations they might have, and be active in that area as well as suggestions about how to better do things, when appropriate. But I think the curatorial department has to come up with the appropriate direction and quality direction that Storm King needs for the future.

Dziedzic: So sometimes an idea or maybe an introduction might occur through the board, but it always goes through the curatorial department.

Collens: Definitely so. It's important that we maintain a really tight program because our resources are limited and we certainly can't do everything, nor can anybody. But we have a limited amount of money to spend on exhibitions and we really have to select carefully and get the best articles that we can from exhibitions to keep us going with the art community, I think. And there's no guarantee to that, but people look to Storm King for sculpture conservation, which we can discuss later, but in many, many different ways. The artists we're exhibiting and so forth. So I think it's important to maintain a very high level of what we're doing. It's too easy to fall into the range of mediocrity. There's a lot of sculpture out there and we have to maintain our standards.

Dziedzic: I've seen recently over the last few years that there are also artists on the board, Heather Hart and Virginia Overton. Can I ask about that decision?

Collens: Well, many museums have been doing this now for the last several years—and, I think, successfully—and I think staying in tune with what nonprofits are doing, it would be inappropriate. And we selected two artists that we had worked with, both Heather Hart and Virginia Overton. They were both part of the Outlooks program and did very different but wonderful works. They were very willing to join the board and spend time reviewing Storm King and giving their thoughts on what it meant to be involved and different committees they serve on, like all board members. And during their time at Storm King as a trustee, they cannot exhibit at Storm King, which they're aware of. There's certain guidelines like that and we can't have a conflict of interest of being offered or buying a piece during that period of time. But they're on for, basically, a three-year [00:35:00] term as I recall. And each one has really done a terrific job and gotten involved and given excellent comments, which have really helped to select different people for different jobs at Storm King as outside consultants and so forth, and really help to move in a different direction, and certainly well-respected for what they're doing.

Dziedzic: How has their presence changed some of the conversations that the trustees have?

Collens: I think with Heather Hart, who is Black, she's brought a different perspective to what we're doing and people we should hire as consultants and our program, and all this takes time and sensitivity, and I think she's done it in a really eloquent way and is well-respected for it. So her advice is out there and being given to all the trustees and is appreciated.

Dziedzic: And what about Virginia Overton?

Collens: I think Virginia, in her own way—each person is different as a trustee and being an artist trustee puts you in a different category as well, but bringing an artist perspective to what we're doing. I think it's important to keep that in mind and that's what we are, really—an organization devoted to the artists that we work with, past present and future artists, and to continue to work with them and nurture them in what they're doing, which is certainly difficult and challenging. So I think between Heather and Virginia, they've really done a yeoman's job in bringing a different dialogue and voice to the conversation of what's happening at Storm King.

Dziedzic: So let's talk about when John took over as president. So what were some of the changes in terms of the trustees that he initiated?

Collens: Well, a lot of the big changes that took place with the new generation and museums opening up more, and new challenges that were taking place—that still are in a very different way than earlier years—to expand the board was really critical financially so we could move ahead with a capital project. And we just didn't have enough people on the board to really broaden it enough, and that's what he started to do

and bring in more financial support. And Rachel Coker is really the first director of development that started and historically set up the development department after Herb Schultz did a lot of the initial introductions to trustees about Storm King, but Rachel started fundraising in earnest and was paid for it, of course. And that was the period when [00:40:00] John established the senior staff in different areas, for education, curatorial, grounds department, and brought our own staff in to really expand what we were doing. And definitely trustees realized we had to move beyond an earlier period in Storm King's history when there was a really more of a reliance on the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation and we needed to raise money for our own support independently of the Ogden Foundation, which we started to do and have continued to broaden the base.

Dziedzic: And what was the thinking around expanding the staff so much?

Collens: Well, if we were going to grow, I think we needed to have a professional staff and do exhibitions, education, and programming. You couldn't just do it part of the year. We needed our own staff to really generate what the exhibitions and programs would be, public programs that is, and step away from the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation.

Dziedzic: Storm King's big increase in visitorship—did that happen after there were already moves in place to create a senior staff and to grow in all these different directions? Or was there a boom in visitorship and then some thinking about how to have the staff support that growth?

Collens: Well, the big increase of visitorship started in 2009 with the Maya Lin exhibition. The Storm King *Wavefield* was finished in 2007–08, and took longer than expected, I guess. Anyway, in 2009 we did an exhibition in the Museum Building in honor of the Storm King *Wavefield*—being the only outdoor sculpture at four and a half acres, that was plenty! It was an extraordinary exhibition that Maya put together for the building. All her interests in environment, and other projects that she brought together related to the Storm King *Wavefield*, and her interest in other aspects of what was going on in the world and environment and so forth. So we did that, and Maya said we should open earlier in the season. "Why wait till June? Just open in May?" So we opened in May and she just sent out so many people.

And people heard about the show, and the *Wavefield*, and we came out with significantly more people that year than previous years. We were hovering around 43,000 and we, I think, boosted to just under 90,000 that year with everybody coming out and all the publicity that started up and so forth—articles about her and everything. And she's just terrific to write about. Her work has such quality and the different directions she's moving in, whether it's the environmental part of Maya, doing outdoor sculptures, architecture—she's an extraordinary gifted individual. I think that's what this exhibition showed of hers

and it just doubled the attendance immediately. Even on the first day, we were swamped with people coming to her opening, which was wonderful. It just held up through the rest of the season, basically.

Dziedzic: Were there other exhibitions or seasons where the visitorship doubled like that again? [00:45:00]

Collens: Moving forward, we had more people coming, between social media—not just Maya, but continuing to move on to different types of exhibitions that would bring more people was always important and helpful, and a new audience to a certain extent. It was a great thing to do. And we had more amenities increases, like use of bathrooms, increase in bicycles for their first time. We started with 20 or 30 bikes and before you knew it, we got up to 60. We had to add all these amenities in—also a cafe and food truck. It really just started changing what we were doing. And being open on winter weekends a few times, originally, and then finally being open in the winter on weekends on a regular basis and having a food truck. People caught on and we had over 10,000 visitors for winter weekends, and the food truck there, and we missed maybe one or two weekends because of snow and ice, but it's a pretty impressive number, and we're trying to be more sustainable for being open in the winter time. But I don't know if that's worth it at this point in time. It might happen that we could stay open some weekdays. I don't know, that's something we're looking into.

Dziedzic: All right. Well, let's reel back the clock again to where we started with trustees and talk about some of the staff, which we'll work our way back to the present again. So the staff was so small for such a long time. When you think back, when did it start to grow in a way that was really impacting your work?

Collens: Well, I think one big move was we had a few grounds people for a while and then we got an outside farmer to take care of a lot of things, which was expensive and that was a short term solution. It really happened with Mike Seaman bringing a team that he knew to Storm King to do buildings, grounds, and sculpture installation. And with Mike's particular talents, that really added another dimension to what we were doing and made us more self-sufficient in a good way, where we could be supporting exhibitions and building all the bases they need for indoors, outdoors, working with artists as the Outlooks program started—which I believe is only seven years old now. And working with exhibitions that became more difficult to bring in and offload from large trucks and store the crates and install and build all the bases needed for indoor exhibitions, and everything that needed to be done for the outdoor sculptures as well. So I think it was just ratcheting up on complexity for what was happening with exhibitions all around basically.

Dziedzic: So before Mike Seaman and his team, it would've been Star employees that were called over to help with these things?

Collens: Sometimes Star employees. Sometimes we would have some employees of Pleasant Acres. Bruce Williams's father started Pleasant Acres and put in a lot of plant material years ago—pachysandra, trees.

Dziedzic: [00:50:00] I don't think I've ever heard of Pleasant Acres before.

Collens: Oh, Bruce's father, Bud Williams, did a lot of the plant material in the early 1960s. Put in pachysandra and other more formal plantings around the Museum Building in the earlier years. Then Bruce took over the business and helped out, did some mowing and took care of the grounds, and some basic moving of sculptures—very basic—before Mike and his team. Very nice guy. Just didn't have the right combination of skill sets, and then became ill and had to leave. We were looking for someone that really could take care of everything in-house. Bruce McCord, who was a local farmer—very gifted, but we were charged for every little extra thing that he did. And that was fine for a stop gap measure, but basically we wanted to bring everything in-house.

And Mike Seaman was a person that did our tree work, had his own small tree business, and worked with us on pruning trees for Bill Rutherford and creating views for the David Smith sculptures and did a few other things early on, and was quite talented and stepped in and really did a terrific job. I recognized that and liked working with Mike, and he had never done that type of thing before, but he's gifted and a problem solver and did things in a safe way. So just clicked for everybody, I think.

Mike had to make a decision at a certain point in his career that he was going to expand his tree business with more equipment at a great expense—trucks and everything that goes along with tree equipment, which is expensive—or he would have to maintain it at the level he was doing it with five or six workers and not enough equipment. And being satisfied with certain types of jobs but not really expanding into larger jobs. And he decided at a certain point that he didn't want to carry on and be in the tree business with the enormous expense that he would have to put out to get new equipment. I mean, hundreds of thousands of dollars of new equipment. It wasn't $50,000 or $60,000 but considerably more than that. And the time it would take, and amount of work it would take, and the staff he'd have to increase to. It was just ramping up to a much larger operation than he was doing before. He was hands on with this tree business and we used him at Storm King. I used him at my house, we all used Mike.

Dziedzic: When did he first start working with Storm King?

Collens: Probably in the '90s with the tree business, working with Bill Rutherford and myself, getting to know him in different areas and expanding from there. Then he made his personal decisions about what

he wanted to do in terms of business, and he became available when he decided not to have his own tree business become larger and financially crushing, and the tremendous pressure and stress. So he organized a group of people that he had known and worked with well to set up a core group at Storm King for the buildings and grounds department. [00:55:00] Joel Longinott, he went to high school with and they continued knowing each other post-high school and worked together in construction and different things. So he pulled together this group of people he had worked with over the years, Mike did, and that became the buildings and grounds department.

Dziedzic: Are there any other departments that were established in that kind of way?

Collens: No, no. I think education, Victoria Lichtendorf, for the last number of years has been director of education and public programs and in the modern era—21st century—I would say really established the education program for Storm King.

Dziedzic: Earlier we were talking about how Richard Menschel had really started the support for that on the board. What were the earlier forms of education like at Storm King?

Collens: Docents were very important. We didn't get into all this, but Lisa was very important with docents. We had Wally McGuire, who was a public school teacher at Monroe Woodbury and was quite gifted in his own right. He taught art and he had the ability to take large groups around—up to a hundred people—and a very commanding voice and develop this fascinating program. He'd go to the top of the hill around the Museum Building and work with the kids and tell them about each sculpture, the major sculptures around the top of the hill. He'd have this cloth sock that the kids would get into and they'd bend over and arch over like a Henry Moore sculpture and he'd talk about positive space, negative space, and so forth. He was captivating to children of all ages, high school, grammar school, and wonderful programs that he did because he could handle such a large group, where our docents certainly could not. He had a very different approach to museum education and didn't always represent what Storm King's approach was, but it was unique.

A film is in the process of being made of Wally McGuire going around our grounds, which is not a film that Storm King has financially supported. We said, yes, you can do the film. We haven't been involved with directing it or producing it, and it's been made clear, it's going to come out at some point in time. But I think it was wonderful, Wally in his heyday doing this. It was always the same program though. He wouldn't move on to other sculptures and expand or think about going off the top of the hill particularly. As much as we encouraged him to do that, it really didn't happen. It was going around the top of the hill, starting in front of the Museum Building and going from Louise Nevelson to the next sculptures, and then onto David Smith, Noguchi, and doing a full circle on top of the hill depending on what the special

exhibition was each year. But anyway, he worked with our education program as a consultant and did larger groups that he could handle. That was his specialty.

Dziedzic: There's a few other staff that have been around for a while that I wanted to ask about—or around in the archives, I should say. So I wanted to ask about Georgene Zlock. [01:00:00]

Collens: Georgene, a wonderful individual I worked closely with. She was Peter Stern's assistant at Star Expansion Company, originally, that was her job. And then she also got involved with Storm King when we had a very small staff. So Georgene and I worked very closely together on many different projects, and it was excellent in a sense. She had a direct ear to Peter Stern and I could get his attention [laughs] when I needed it. I had a wonderful working relationship with Peter on my own, but I think between the three of us in the very early years, it was a great combination. We worked well together and long hours and we didn't think of it, and accomplished everything that was really needed in the early years. So Georgene just spanned, I think, keeping Peter on schedule, and his personal life and his daily schedule and everything, and he was all over the place to New York, Europe, traveling to India. Whatever it was, Georgene did a terrific job working directly for Peter. That's how it really started. And then Peter brought his office from Star Expansion over to Storm King, I think in 1997, and Georgene came over and oversaw the administrative side of Storm King, still with a very small staff. He brought some other people from Star to help out who got transferred to Storm King, and that's how the staff started growing a little bit.

Dziedzic: Who else was part of that transfer?

Collens: I think there was Rose Wood and a few others in those years came over. Not too many, but it still remained small.

Dziedzic: When did Mary Ann start?

Collens: Mary Ann's been working for Storm King for 32 years.

Dziedzic: Was she always your assistant?

Collens: No, she started in, let's see, I think it was the membership department at that point, and then changed and started working with me as my assistant and wearing [laughs] many different hats, and very willing to do that type of thing over the years. Working with artists and working with other staff at Storm King and helping to coordinate incoming exhibitions, outgoing exhibitions, the end of the season, working with collectors, the whole range of activity. Board meetings, eventually, with Georgene, and Art Center openings, whether they were luncheons and opening day ceremonies and so forth. She worked with a

small group on that as well. Just handled a lot of different things and was a team player, has been a team player.

Dziedzic: Was there a particular tipping point where it was clear that you needed an assistant?

Collens: Oh yes. As I had gotten more involved with a combination of working with collectors, fundraising for different exhibitions—we really didn't have a fundraising department, so like everybody, job descriptions are nice, but I wore many hats. It just became a natural thing to just go into different areas and get involved because [01:05:00] we didn't have a particular fundraiser. Herb Schultz introduced Storm King to fundraising in the 1990s and early on he was a vice president for fundraising at Vassar College and worked there, after having his own business—he was in the coal business in Kingston, New York, where he lived—and then commuted over to Vassar for 10 years.

Then retired from Vassar and knew a lot of different people like Jim Kautz, who was chair of the board of Vassar College and is a Goldman Sachs person and also a friend of Richard Menschel. All these connections started coming together and Jim came on the board at Storm King. His wife went to Vassar, and Herb Schultz's wife was in the same Vassar class as Jim's wife. So it was a really wonderful grouping and camaraderie, I would say. Jim loved Storm King. He lived in Morristown, New Jersey and had no inhibitions coming up to go to Storm King, Vassar, and was a terrific board member. Eventually moved to Tucson, Arizona. But anyway, he did a great job as a trustee and was involved with Storm King over many years, and a terribly nice person. And again, his daughter has made a contribution supporting education, for example, in Jim's honor, in her father's name, to support different staff members in education.

Dziedzic: A few other people from different departments. Let's see. Linda Steigleder.

Collens: Linda Steigleder. She came on board, I believe, in the ‘80s as an assistant director and had an interesting background and moved on from Storm King to several other different jobs. She wasn't on the curatorial end, but added a different dimension. Broadened our staff needs out a little bit more as well.

Dziedzic: Was that the first assistant director that had worked with you?

Collens: I think so, yes.

Dziedzic: Do you recall what was the staff need was? How she broadened the staff?

Collens: Yes, I think more in the administrative area, helping out as we're getting larger and more demands from organizations to do films and film shoots, and use photographs of the Art Center and other areas to that were administrative, primarily.

Dziedzic: And from the curation area, Maureen Megarian.

Collens: Maureen came on board around the same time to help out in curatorial to start really researching the collection, getting more involved in that area so we could stay up to date with what was happening and make sure our files were in good shape and do some research on the collection.

Dziedzic: And [Fernande] Nan Ross?

Collens: Nan came on as a consultant from New Haven, Connecticut. She would spend a couple days—do one or two overnights at Storm King, and leave her husband, Sam, well cared for and would leave all the food in the refrigerator or the freezer marked for what day [laughs] and breakfast, lunch or dinner and sandwiches, pick it out. And he was fine on his own for a couple days. But Nan was terrific. She had an excellent background [01:10:00] at Yale University Art Gallery, was registrar for 17 years, and then moved on to the Philadelphia Museum, also in a similar capacity. And she really brought a solid museum background in the registrar area to Storm King. And we were, at that point, getting accreditation from the American Association of Museums, and Nan's background was invaluable to getting our files in order from the earlier period. Everything was by hand with cards and proper files set up for each artist. And she did this from the beginning—looked at everything. Not that our collection is particularly large, but she really did a wonderful job and was really good advisor and knew a lot of people in the art world that could help support Storm King in those areas.

We deaccessioned some paintings in the late 1980s and Nan also handled that because we had really no use for endlessly storing paintings by a variety of artists. Some of them were very nice, but we're a house museum and [laughs] just to maneuver them around the building was very difficult, and mostly being in Gallery 1 for some of the paintings because you couldn't get them up from basement storage outdoors and get them in through the French doors [laughs] from the patio into the building. And forget most of the second floor galleries, you couldn't accommodate them. So it was all very difficult. We decided we weren't really about paintings at that point in time so we deaccessioned probably a couple dozen or more paintings that we had that we just weren't using. They were sitting in storage. So Nan oversaw that project as well.

Dziedzic: Are these hires during this time related to what we talked about before with Storm King aiming to reach that public level and having some different kind of obligations to serve the public or present the museum collection in certain ways?

Collens: Well, starting in 1976, when I did my first exhibition of David Smith, that was the first time that the Museum Building was used primarily for sculpture on both floors. It was the first time an exhibition opened in May and stayed in place till the middle of October. Not that we closed in the middle of October to the public, but that became the exhibition season. And beyond that, really connecting the first floor of the building where all the French doors are, particularly in Gallery 1, and a couple other galleries, had been just blocked off with white sheetrock—a gallery space like you see in any museum or gallery in New York. It didn't take advantage of looking out the French doors out onto the lawn areas, the mountains and the trees, and I thought that was crazy. So I got a carpenter, asked Peter about this, and we were really in agreement about virtually everything we discussed. And we got a carpenter and started opening up all the French doors to make this connection from the first floor of the building to our beautiful landscape, Storm King Mountain, Schunnemunk Mountain, the farm fields in the distance, whatever it was, and start connecting exhibitions, the way they flowed from indoors, outdoors, and vice versa. So that was really pioneering in a very different way for the Art Center. A lot of the exhibitions were that my predecessor did were paintings and drawings, some sculpture. It was really a mix of very different types [01:15:00] of art and flat work and sculpture. So there was a different feeling about it and I was moving us really to be a museum of sculpture.

And sculpture was primary for exhibitions. If an artist like David Smith was excellent at photography, drawings, yes, I would certainly want to show his flat work. Or Alex Liberman with his paintings and Smith with his paintings, whatever it was. But I wanted to show sculpture number one, and really show the full breadth of an artist's work and what else they did if I thought it was appropriate. But I switched to sculpture since that's what we had outdoors. And it was very different in 1976, the collection, than what you see today, with some important loans that we have from Lynda Benglis, and we just finished a three-year Louise Bourgeois loan from the Louise Bourgeois Trust, and di Suvero loans, Calder loans. So we've had different loans over the years, which have been terrific and really supported us. But no, not necessary to have many loans, which are hard to take care of, expensive to maintain with insurance and transportation for them.

Dziedzic: And some of these staff like Nan Ross or Maureen Megarian would have supported that focus on sculpture?

Collens: Yes. By that point, when they were on board, we were established as exhibitions focused on sculpture and a museum that was focused on sculpture, not having these large Audrey Flack paintings

inside. I clearly remember them in photographs in the archives, or Chuck Close, or whoever it was, which were only on downstairs because they were so large, that's the only place you could put them. And other sculptures, I mean, part of the David Smith collection that we own was scattered around the building sometimes and was outdoors sometimes, and other sculptures were shown, of course. But that was wonderful. But I just decided I wanted to connect to the outdoor sculpture collection for better or worse and focus the exhibitions on sculpture.

Dziedzic: And maybe this person also fits into that: Joan Pachner.

Collens: Joan came on board as a consultant and she was very knowledgeable on both Tony Smith and David Smith, and working on the catalogue raisonné of Tony Smith today is one of her projects. I just saw her last weekend at a symposium. But she came on board with curatorial expertise and experience, and at the time of our three-year David Smith exhibition. She knew Becca and Candida Smith, and she knew Peter Stevens, executive director of the Estate of David Smith at that point. And Joan was very interested in David Smith's photographs and, quite early, started looking at them and examining them with Peter Stevens. Then other people have gone on to really recognize David Smith as a photographer. But that was one area of Smith that Joan was examining and familiar with, and has written about his photographs and other aspects of David Smith's career.

Dziedzic: Jumping around a little bit as we talked about different aspects, but there are two other people I wanted to ask about. The first is Chris Pulst, and I wondered when he started working with Storm King.

Collens: I think probably in the ‘90s. He worked for a contractor [01:20:00] that we used to clean the inside of the Museum Building, all the paint, natural woodwork, painted surfaces, wood floors. He was a very gifted craftsman and lived in the area, probably around the Poughkeepsie area, I think. He came on board and was helpful to painting and keeping the Museum Building in very good shape, which is always a challenge, being a large stone building. He also helped out on sculptures, helped with sculpture maintenance and was very steady in that area and not going off doing different things that were not appropriate, which a lot of people in the early years didn't realize how difficult it is to take care of sculpture, outdoor sculpture, and had many suggestions about materials to use and methods, and I was interested in having it done one way and that was it and I didn't need all the suggestions for everything. Some people got more involved with that and I said, “Thank you very much for your services.” [laughs]

Dziedzic: So Chris Pulst was—

Collens: He was steady and produced quality work with whatever he did.

Dziedzic: Was he before the Mike Seaman era?

Collens: Yes, I'd say before Mike. Mike knew him. He was, I think, a stop gap before Mike really came into his own and really proved himself to be qualified in so many different areas, in Mike's quiet way.

Dziedzic: Well, I guess related to that, I wanted to ask about the grasses and another consultant that was important to Storm King, Darrel Morrison.

Collens: Darrel, critical to our accomplishment of native grasses. Honestly, Bill Rutherford came up with the idea of these large freeform areas and Bill and Rod Parkman [phonetic], our head groundskeeper at that time, got on mowers, got on little golf carts, and laid it out with survey flags, the shapes of these forms. And Bill was there hands on telling our small grounds crew exactly where to mow, don't mow here, mow here, so forth and so on. It was such an abstract idea to everybody, and Bill wasn't always the [laughs] most verbal of people to really explain it better. But as I said, he was hands on. He was on that golf cart driving around and made sure that all the flags were there to get the proper round shape or kidney shape, whatever it was, to these large areas that the grasses would grow up and between. Those would be these broad walking paths.

So that was done one summer and it was quite a task to set it up. And Bill was not familiar with what type of grasses to really grow with the different types of ground conditions we had, soil and everything, because you need different types of native grasses depending on your soil conditions. So Bill started the project and we did all the mowing, as I described, with our staff, and we just let the grasses grow up. There were some decent grasses, [laughs] there were weeds, there were invasive grasses, but we just wanted to get the form down. And we clearly decided—and Bill was very honest—"it's not my area of expertise." He's a great landscape architect, but you can't know everything. So we decided at that point to basically try to find someone that was an expert on native grasses. [01:25:00]

We heard about the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas that was being designed and going to be opened in 1988, I think that was—nope, before that, sorry, little before '88 [1982]. Anyway, around that period, maybe a few years earlier. And we decided I'd go down to the opening. So I got an invitation to the opening of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, 42 acres. And I met Darrel Morrison, one of the lead designers on this project. There were several landscape architects involved with it, but Darrel was very different because, first of all, he decided to camp out on the property. Nothing there except 42 acres, no buildings, nothing. They just bought the property and they hired him and others. He camped out and spent days walking around and really understanding this property and decided where the building should go, where different native grasses should go, where there should be Indian paintbrush

flowers that are native to Texas, which they love, and blue bonnets over there, Indian paintbrush there, prairie grasses over here, buildings there, whatever it was.

So I went down and I met him and we just hit it off. He gave a talk and everything, and I invited him up to Storm King. He was teaching at University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia at the time and he said he'd come up and look around. I told him basically about Bill Rutherford, what we wanted to do, what we had done, what we were hoping to do, and how he could help us out. And he came up and just loved the idea of it and saw it and the expanse, the sculptures—everything about Storm King—and started working with us for close to 30 years now. And he's really the one responsible for selecting all the native grasses for different areas. Mike Seaman has worked with him very successfully, and we continue to add more acreage. We're at about 70 acres with all these freeform areas, and we're going to hold on to the 70 acres and really go for quality of improving areas that are kind of falling apart.

It seems simple to do, but it's very difficult and you have to keep going. And it's like Scandinavian furniture. Scandinavian furniture by Hans Wegner and other designers—seems very simple and was going to be inexpensive but it turned out to be expensive and hard to produce. Simplicity is great, what they did and everything. But same thing with native grasses. You have to keep on going. Some years it's like a good wine, you have a great year. Other years, the birds and the winds are just pushing all the pollen and bad seeds in your grass areas. So you end up with a lot of invasive stuff that you have to cut out. You can't just do it by spraying. And so we're going in for quality next year on a lot of these areas, and not expanding. We've done a lot of expanding over the years.

It's been terrific working with Darrel. He continues to come up at age 85. He came up this year once or twice. He's going to come up next year as long as he can walk and talk. He's coming from Madison, Wisconsin now. But a great eye, great vision. A wonderful book came out of his last year on his career. And Storm King is a chapter in the book, which is terrific, with photographs, Darrel writing about Storm King and everything. So really critical to what we've done. And it's a signature of Storm King, the native grasses and the Rutherford landscape, without a doubt.

Dziedzic: Do you remember the first season where you saw the grasses and they were taking root the way they were supposed to, and you were like, yes, this was a good idea?

Collens: Yes, it took five years. With any landscape, I will qualify it by saying landscape takes a long time to really come into its own. It's not instant gratification, oh, a year, it's going to be perfect. Nothing of the kind, especially with native grasses. It just doesn't happen that way. And it looked like maybe a moth-eaten blanket. [01:30:00] There wasn't much to show for several years. It was about a five-year project

before there was some uniformity and evenness to what was happening, and growth that you could see. I mean, it looked pretty spotty otherwise for several years.

Dziedzic: Was it more or less that the native grasses replaced the grasses that were being harvested? Tall grasses replaced different tall grasses?

Collens: No, tall grasses basically replaced grasses that we were mowing on a regular basis. Because what brought us to this point, one reason, people would come up in the ‘80s before we started, and say, “Wow! Great golf course. I’d like to tee off and hit the ball into the Noguchi hole! Or I’d like to hit the Kadishman out there!” Yes, whatever it is. I don't know. I don't think any of us are golfers and we would kind of cringe. Certainly, Peter and I were not golfers, neither one of us were, so we'd say [groans]. That kind of got our blood pressure up and off. It’s not the comment we wanted to hear. And our grounds guys would love going back and forth on these large mowers that were designed for going through the fields with these large decks out there, and back and forth sitting on them all day. And what a waste of time. What a waste of gasoline or diesel fuel or whatever they used. We could do better things and be more environmentally sound!

So we said, this is not for us: being just open fields and cutting grass everywhere and watering lawns and everything, so we stopped it. And Darrel took over that project after Bill really initiated it. But what a difference. Sometimes, I was buzzing around with somebody this fall that said something about golfing. “Oh, I got this great idea for you, David.” I just kind of melted away and my mind just said, “Oh, it’s over. [laughs] This guy’s not going to help us out in any way, shape or form. He’s talking about golfing.” And someone wanted to give us, actually, a sculpture of golf clubs years ago. It was by Claus Oldenburg, and I don't know what happened to it, but they thought it'd be great for Storm King. I said, I don't want to reinforce that idea because it was the point we were trying to transition out of, endless mowing and all these comments about golf courses and clubs, and hitting balls into Noguchi or whatever. [laughs]. Oh, dear. Anyway, I’m getting carried away.

Dziedzic: Well, the last but not least in terms of staff is Helen Hydos.

Collens: Oh dear, Helen. Absolutely. Can't forget Helen. Helen was terrific. She worked at Star Expansion Company for 20-plus years before transitioning to Storm King, and I think she was involved with inventory, counting nuts and bolts [laughs]. But I guess that's where she worked for many years, and knew Georgene. And so it was a natural flow for Helen to come over to Storm King. We all loved her and she was in charge of the docent program at the Art Center and 20-odd docents. That’s like running an army. They're all so different and to keep track of—she knew everyone and every aspect of their lives and where they were in the world, vacation or sign them up for a group this afternoon, tomorrow

afternoon, or morning. She just balanced and juggled all this information around and, wow, did a terrific job of it.

And they all adored her. It was a mutual admiration society here. All the staff loved Helen. There was nothing not to love about her. She was Greek and, wow, she knew how to cook, and she knew how to bake. For the Christmas party or end of the year party for the docents, she'd make baklava like you have never tasted, and quantities of it. [01:35:00] And she just passed it on to her children and they're equally as good as Helen at baklava. She doesn't make it anymore. She's well into her eighties. We'd love to have her come over for a driving tour of the Art Center, have one of her kids drive her over, and then transfer her to a cart. Some folks, it's like Mark di Suvero, it's better to stay in your own vehicle. Or Richard Menschel, for all different reasons, but stay in your own car and we'll drive you around. Open your window if it's nice weather. But you can get a great experience. All of them are well into their eighties and they just don't transfer easily for different reasons. So that's what I want to do with Helen.

But oh, she was adored by everybody and really made a nice transition to Victoria. And doesn't matter, everyone loves Helen. What else can I say? And just her touch with everybody. With people, wow, special, doesn't matter who you are, totally irrelevant—docent visitor, whoever she was dealing with for group visits. She'd be tearing her hair out with changes and this and that and all these different directives with each group, lunch, no lunch, and docent tour, tram tour. I mean, she was juggling all this stuff and just did a terrific job of it. And the nicest person in the world. Great on every front. We all adore her.

Dziedzic: So there's the docent program, there's education, which is happening in fits and starts, it sounds like, and visitor services. So how did those three things, which I think are distinct from each other now, how did they originate? As being the same thing?

Collens: No**.** We'll break out docents and education because that has all been one entity through everything I've described today, with Lisa Stern, with Helen Hydos, Wayne Lempka, who was an educator for a short time. I still see him. He's been, for years, at the Dorsky Museum at SUNY New Paltz, and he is, I guess, going to retire from there fairly soon. He's been collection manager there for years and he was temporarily, I think, interim director before they hired somebody else. He didn't want that job—he didn't need it at that age, I guess [laughs]. So he is going to be retiring probably the end of this year or sometime next year. But anyway, he was at Storm King for a while and brought a different dimension to it. We had somebody else prior to Wayne that was there for a matter of months before he passed away, unfortunately, unexpectedly.

So we've gone through different professional educators before Victoria, but really, Victoria's, as I call it, the 21st century educator that's really established the program, working with the docents and public

programs as well as educating the docents, not just with our internal staff, but by bringing other people on board and broadening the whole program with outsiders and establishing the education committee with Lisa Stern as chair of it, and bringing some outside advisors into that group as well for education. So really just a steady, wonderful individual, Victoria, establishing a solid program in that area.

Visitor service staff, really, that's a separate group. And that started with security staff. I guess most museums call them security people. [01:40:00] At the Met, MoMA, Whitney, whatever, that was fine, but now for our outdoor situation, that became difficult and seemed to be the wrong tone. They needed a lot of training. You're dealing with people, outdoor sculptures, large scale sculptures, people are climbing, they're handling too much, they're doing other things. They needed some guidance. And it wasn't just telling them to get off the sculptures. People are looking for bathrooms, they're looking for where we might have food. They're looking for particular sculptures. Yes, we had maps—no one can read a map. To this day, people go like this [holding a map up to one's face], they're in trouble. They're looking for a bathroom, they're looking for a particular sculpture, they can't find the Museum Building, whatever it is. I just walk up to them and say, "Excuse me, can I help you? I work at Storm King." "Oh, yes! We're so relieved!" "What is it?" I can help them out with whatever it is, 99% of the time. I can help them out with whatever they're looking for. So it started that way.

But security guard, that's too much like the Army. People didn't like it. I think they were coming to Storm King, this beautiful large scale environment, lawns, trees, to get away from whatever it is, for different reasons. Maybe they <u>were</u> climbing on a sculpture—people can't read signs all of a sudden, all that stuff––and "Hey, get off the sculpture, lady!" or whatever they were saying, it just didn't jive and wasn't our philosophy for enjoying Storm King, starting with Peter Stern. And we just had to tone this down. We had several different people, some successful, some not, working in security or security guards. It evolved, the names, over the years, but it was all too dictatorial.

Then we came up, I think primarily with Anthony [Davidowitz] trying to soften the approach to it all, change the name. We're not about security in that sense. We want folks to keep an eye on the sculptures, hopefully prevent vandalism. Not so successful at that. But yes, helping people out and not being a full docent—we're not asking visitor service people to do that—but we want them to be informed to give you information. If you're looking for Andy Goldsworthy's *Wall*, the Maya Lin, Nam June Paik, or Bob Murray––it's amazing what people look for and want to find when they come to Storm King—different artists that aren't the stars of the collection, let me put it that way. And we want the visitor service people to know all the artists that are on exhibit today so they could point you to Bob Murray's sculpture. Either because you know him or you know his grandmother, all this stuff comes up and that's what they want to see for whatever reason. Or bathrooms, food, all the basic stuff. "Do you go from one parking lot to another? Can I move my car?" Help out with just basic questions. "How do I start? I'm really confused." It's not like

walking in the Met and you go right, left, or straight, or whatever you do, or the MoMA. You have some choices here.

We're always going to have some choices. It's not finite like that. And we like it that way to a certain extent. But, “I have two hours, give me the 10 sculptures that I absolutely should see.” I mean, some people didn't want to have the 10, 12, 15 most important sculptures. They didn't like that idea. So we leave it up to a trained visitor service person to say to you, “Well, if you only have an hour and a quarter, that's pretty short, but you could take a bike around, you can catch a tram.” Now the trams are being used in a different way, but, “Here's some important sculptures to see. Walk around the top hill, get the overview of the 500-acre property.” It's evolved into that type of thing. [01:45:00] Toning them down and being more friendly. And of course, they were standing back once we opened with Covid again, everyone had masks on. They didn't want to get near you. “Just go on your own. I don't want to talk to you.” So the younger ones have gotten a little shyer about that, where I think the older folks that have more life experience and work experience are better at that than younger ones for the most part. It's too much of a revolving door of younger ones too. I mean, they go back to college or are only here for one season, you never see them again. We’re dealing with this influx of people, as I said, a revolving door.

But the point is, through training by Anthony and others, Irene [Buccieri], all department heads help train the visitor service people the beginning of every season, mid-season, end of season, because they're a constantly changing group of employees. So we're trying to do our best, but we want them to be user-friendly and we want them to, yes, keep an eye on sculptures, prevent damage, but they can't watch everything. So the more fragile ones, like the David Smiths and others, we put ropes up and that's the way it has to be. Otherwise, they're rattling away at David Smith and they're fragile. But that's their entity, that's their job, and they’re a separate group from education. But we all throw our hats into the ring and help out with educating them, every department does.

Dziedzic: They’re kind of like a front of house staff, but outdoors.

Collens: Yes, they're on the front lines and it's tough with whatever the weather is—like the postman, rain, sleet, snow. Yes, outdoors a lot times.

Dziedzic: Okay, well, let's spend our last 10 minutes or so, before you have to go, talking about two other big figures, Don Lippincott and Bruce Bassett.

Collens: I'll start with Don, thank you. I've known Don for many years, and Don started a business, Lippincott Foundry, in North Haven, Connecticut, outside of New Haven, where he came up with this idea that he wanted to work with artists in a hands on approach because they didn't have the wherewithal, the

knowledge, the equipment to fabricate their visions, the artists' visions, of larger scale sculpture. They could make certain things in their studios, but really to make outdoor sculpture as it was coming into its own in the 1970s and so forth, late '60s, '70s, and well beyond, Don wanted to do this. He established his business and his brother, Alfred, was involved with it, I think, later on. But Don was really a key person working with artists early on—very different than bronze foundry work—using new materials, new processes. And Don did it with Oldenburg, Barnett Newman, Bob Murray, David von Schlegell, Bob Grosvenor, on and on. The list is extremely long. Marisol, Kadishman, on and on.

Don's son, Jonathan Lippincott, took his father's files out in the garage from the days of the Lippincott Foundry and looked at everything as much as he could, deciphering it was not in great shape and he needed an archivist. But Jonathan did it probably about 15 years ago and created this book called *Large Scale*, which is fabulous. It doesn't cover everything, but covers many of the artists that his father and uncle worked with. It was a time before computers were being used, and it was really a hands on approach to it all and it was one-on-one about what the artist wanted to do and figuring out the materials, how to create the sculptures. [01:50:00] Nevelson worked there for 20 years on her outdoor sculptures, metal sculptures, steel, aluminum, and so forth. Many others did too. James Rosati, on and on, as I said. That's what Don did and that was his specialty.

He had really the gift for doing it, like Dick Polich, early on, who just passed away a couple days ago—another foundry person that did it before computers got going. But Dick continued even with computers until within the last five years. But Don decided very clearly to stop when everything started becoming computerized and they were cutting metal with lasers and all this other stuff. I mean, just did everything the old-fashioned way with cutting the material, presses to bend the metals, and all this other stuff, and just figuring out the best way to build the various sculptures that the artist wanted. And he was very successful and created a lot of the sculptures at Storm King. Nevelson, Bob Murray, Robert Grosvenor, von Schlegell, I'm sure I'm leaving some out.

Dziedzic: Is this somebody who Ted Ogden would've been introduced to?

Collens: Yes, I'm sure Ted Ogden knew Don because the von Schlegell was 1972, the first commission of Ted Ogden's, when the farm field was still a cornfield, the three open cubes, which are actually *Untitled*, and the Robert Grosvenor *Untitled* as well, that looks like a bridge, was done by Ted Ogden. Those are the two early commissions at Storm King. But there are other von Schlegells that we own that are in storage as well. But Don was very successful and continues. He sold his place of business—his Lippincott Foundry doesn't exist, but he's used other foundries or equipment to produce sculptures by Tony Smith for the Tony Smith Estate, and other sculptures besides Tony Smith, and repairing and conservation work on sculptures—he's done that—of work that he's fabricated over the years. But still,

he’s somebody I speak to on a regular basis and is very knowledgeable, and we're friends, and I really depend on his solid advice to this day.

Dziedzic: And what do you think that relationship brought to Storm King in those early years?

Collens: I think it showed a different way that sculptures could be created. Alex Liberman was doing something very different. Mark di Suvero taught himself how to operate a crane. He was a union crane operator, card carrying member of the union. He taught himself how to weld, cut steel, everything. He didn't have a degree in it. Where Calder, on the flip side, went to Stevens Institute of Technology and had a degree from Stevens as an engineer. Other people like Kenneth Snelson studied science and different things. It's amazing. There are a lot of artists with scientific backgrounds, mechanical backgrounds, all sorts of things that changed over. Some were architects like Tony Smith. Two were dentists. Herbert Ferber studied as a dentist. Noguchi went to medical school and stopped, went to Columbia Medical School in New York and then decided he wanted to be a sculptor.

It's fascinating to see how people started as painters. David Smith was a painter. He worked at a Studebaker factory in Indiana before he started doing sculpture. During the war, he was working in Schenectady and putting tanks and locomotives together. It just helped his skill set in welding and bolting and assembly and everything. Added different dimensions. Fabulous! A fascinating background to each person and how they got to do what they were doing as sculptors. [01:55:00] And Don was a component to help the artists out. Really unusual that Mark had all those abilities and just used different spaces to build his sculptures. He didn't have a studio. He used a yard in Bayonne, New Jersey with a half-broken crane to build his first large scale sculpture after his accident, and was in France using space and a boatyard and whatever.

Dziedzic: And [pauses for dramatic effect] Bruce Bassett.

Collens: Bruce Bassett did an early film on Jacques Lipchitz that was shown at the Metropolitan Museum during a very large Lipchitz show at the Met. And there was a computer component to it early on that Bruce previewed there. Then he did a film on Noguchi. All projects that were very expensive. He only worked with film. He didn't ever switch to digital. He could have done video, never did, didn't believe in it. He was old fashioned and came out of the television industry working for NBC. Anyway, just always used film throughout his career. I think we saw the Noguch film that he did—a full-length film, films that went on PBS and everything, that he did, and extremely expensive to produce. He traveled to Japan, to Italy, to see Noguchi and watch Noguchi working on marble in Italy in Pietrasanta. Traveled all over the world to his major projects in Paris, UNESCO, and everywhere. It was a big travel budget to film and see all these

different major Noguchi sculptures, and Storm King was a part of it with *Momo Taro* in 1978 when *Momo Taro* was installed.

That's how, I believe, we heard about Bruce Bassett. He came up to Storm King to do Noguchi and then said, “Oh, it'd be great to do a film on Peter Stern and Storm King.”

Dziedzic: That was his idea? Bruce Bassett's idea?

Collens: Probably so. I think Cynthia Polsky might have known him early on because the Noguchi film—they had to raise money for the Noguchi film, that's for sure. I think she knew him early on, introduced Peter to Bruce, I would guess. But I think that was our early introduction and he thought this would be fabulous. He'd done some other films as well.

And anyway, he started in on Storm King and it was a long process working with Bruce, and difficult, and expensive. It was everything. So he did produce a film on Storm King and interviewed, I think, seven different sculptors, the most important artists being di Suvero and Richard Serra, Ken Snelson, and several others, as I recall. He went to their respective studios, homes, kitchens, and did these interviews, seven days a week. We have a lot of archival material that we're still working with and wanting to preserve as much as we can. We have the films, which are still interesting—basically in-depth segments of each of the artists that were selected to do this film on Storm King. But very difficult person, and demanding, and we had a very small staff [02:00:00] and he'd rent helicopters. Endless stories about Bruce Bassett going to film Andy Goldsworthy in the UK, and filming at Storm King, and wherever else he went. It was challenging.

Dziedzic: Did you have a sense early on that you wouldn't love the end product?

Collens: Well, I think it was fine. It was a different approach that Bruce had, two films, and not just using film versus video, which was coming into its own, but I think his perspective was very focused, for Storm King, on Peter Stern. He made that very clear. And that was fine. But we were all helping out when Bruce came out to Storm King with his film crew, and it was an exhausting day for everybody by the time he left. Then he did another film regarding Ted Ogden and Peter Stern that, yes, interesting information and footage, but it never went public.

Dziedzic: Well, I'm afraid it's probably 4:45PM or even a minute or two later, which I think was our cutoff for today.

Collens: Oh, yeah. Are we left in the dark here? [indicating a dark office area] Did they close up shop?

Dziedzic: I don't think so.

Collens: Okay. Let me see if I can stay here until 5:15PM.

Dziedzic: Right. Thanks David.

End of session

Interview with David Collens and Mike Seaman	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
December 19, 2022	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Seaman: [Responding to a question about when he first became involved with sculpture conservation at Storm King Art Center] Some work was done on them [the David Smith sculptures] by [Steve] Tatti and they were waxed up, and hot waxed a bunch of times again, and then became very, very dark. I have it all documented someplace in my own records from doing the work.

Collens: In your archive at home, right?

Seaman: Yes.

Collens: I think that is correct because what I recall is Steve, when he came on board in 1985, there were so many projects to work on that for the bronzes, we said, “Okay, let's wax all the bronzes and we can do more selective work on bronzes later on.” But move on with other sculptures that required work and the bronzes would be protected with wax. And then the David Smith show in 1997, ‘98 and ‘99 started and the Smith family didn't like the David Smith bronze sculptures all being hot waxed. They were all very dark, so whether it was Henry Moore, David Smith, or any other bronzes outdoors, they all looked uniformly very dark because they were hot waxed and they weren't done to really emphasize the patina of each bronze individually. So that's when things started to change in preparation for the Smith show of 1997. And Mike started working on them and changing from hot wax to other waxes and to individually patina each bronze so they were different, as they should be. And we started changing all the sculptures at Storm King that were bronze at that point.

Seaman: All the bronzes were cleaned down at that point.

Collens: Yes.

Dziedzic: Mike, what kind of work had you done with bronze before coming to Storm King?

Seaman: Oh, just other conservation projects. Cleaning bronze down. I have a familiarity with the chemical process used in patination. The cleaning, waxing. Different bronzes are clear-coated—we don't have any here at Storm King, but there's all these different processes that go into it.

Dziedzic: Was this all in an art context?

Seaman: Most of it, yes. Yes. Art and antiques.

Dziedzic: So can you both talk about your conversations around figuring out whether you were going to come and work here full-time and do this work full-time? Because I know it was a transition for you.

Seaman: It was a transition that took place quite a few years back where I was a contractor and consultant for Storm King, and I was spending a lot of my time here at that point. And I'm trying to think back, I think one of the earlier projects that I got involved with on the conservation end was Liberman's *Adam* when that came down. Assisting in taking that apart, bringing it up to RM Lill at the time, and doing the conservation work on that. We did a handful of projects—

Collens: And the di Suvero at the same time, Mike.

Seaman: Yep, that's right.

Collens: *Mon Père, Mon Père* and—

Seaman: And *Mother Peace.* We did that.

Collens: Took them to RM Lill.

Seaman: Yep, that's correct. So we had had those few projects. Then we worked on an independent project doing a piece for Maya Lin called *Flow*. We did that for Storm King.

Collens: And that was for her exhibition in 2009.

Seaman: Right.

Collens: Just to give some context.

Seaman: Yes. And then also we worked on—I'm just trying to timeframe everything. Other conservation projects we worked on before we were employed at Storm King, with Joel Longinott, who's a team member now, we constructed a Sol Lewitt block structure for Storm King and we worked on the original fence for Alyson Shotz, we did the installation on that. Gosh, I guess we did quite a few. [00:05:00]

Because we even did the *Buddha* foundations for Zhang Huan's *Three Legged Buddha* (2007) before we were employed at Storm King also.

Collens: And that was 2010 when the *Buddha* went in, spring of 2010.

Seaman: So throughout that period of time we did a lot of work for Storm King with installations, some fabrication work. Some of that work was also done with people who, at the time, were independents, and who are now also working at Storm King.

Dziedzic: That timeline is so helpful for me trying to put the pieces together. Thank you.

Collens: Might want to just mention about the Sol Lewitt block sculpture Mike's referring—a cement block, but it wasn't just a cement block from [laughs] Home Depot, as we found out, Mike.

Seaman: Yes, it was a block that each individual block was sandblasted to have a particular surface texture on it. And everything had to be done down to the most intricate detail as far as spacing, mortar joints, a massive foundation underneath of it. So it was more than just throwing block together. And I'm just thinking back—I just keep on coming up with ones—I think we also had *Luba* come in during that time period too. That was 2010 also, wasn't it?

Collens: That was 2010, yes. Fiftieth anniversary exhibition. Ursula produced that.

Seaman: So right before I was coming on board. I guess it was 11 years ago or thereabouts that we came on.

Dziedzic: So in that process of figuring out the right processes for the materials and the refabrication of, I guess the Sol Lewitt—because you're mentioning that it was more complicated than it sounds or looks—what was the process like of testing out different methods while you were still independent?

Seaman: Well, that process there, we really didn't have the opportunity to test anything out because we were given the materials to work with. So we didn't have the choice to say we're going to use this type of block versus that type of block, or this type of mortar versus that type of mortar. It was very controlled that this is the block you're going to use, this is the mortar you're going to use, and these are the tolerances that everything has to be within. So not a whole lot of figuring that we had to do on our part. We just had to execute it the way that it was asked to be executed.

Dziedzic: So let's talk about starting to work at Storm King and bringing some other people on, as you mentioned, that you'd worked with before. What was that process like? What were the conversations about that?

Seaman: Well, that really started off with the question of whether or not—as you probably know, and David has probably said before, Storm King had an in-house team at one point many years ago. Then it turned into a process of bringing different contractors in and having those different contractors do the work. And I think bringing a team on, the question was, if we have a team here at Storm King, can we produce work that's more controlled, better, and of course, can we do it for less money? And I think we all agreed that we could, but who was this team going to be? So I had people that I'd worked for and with in the past and reached out to those people, who were mostly independents, and they agreed, let's give it a try. We'll see, we'll go work with Storm King and see how it goes. That's really how it started.

So we brought people in that had different skills, whether they're construction skills, landscape skills, welding, painting. All these different skills to try to develop a team that can execute many of the different projects at Storm King. And I think it proved pretty successful right away because we started our Outlooks program right around the same time, and if I remember correctly, I think it was David Brooks's *A Proverbial Machine in the Garden* (2103) that was the first undertaking we took on as far as an Outlooks project, which was, to say at least, monumental. I don't think we've come across one yet that's—

Collens: —been more challenging.

Seaman: —had more challenge or consumed more man hours.

Collens: And that was only for one season!

Seaman: That was one season.

Dziedzic: So at this point, are you maybe talking with [00:10:00] David or with John about, here's who I think we need. And David, are you bringing that to the table that we need someone who does landscape or we need someone who does stone or whatever it was? How did you know who needed to be part of that team?

Seaman: I think we knew because we had a fairly good understanding of what work takes place here. So we know we have 500 acres, we have acreage—at that time, much less than we have now, as far as native grasses. So we had native grasses and we knew that that program was going to have to expand. And going into something like this, because there's so many broad, so many different things, that it's not

bringing somebody in that knows everything, but bringing people in that can learn. So we had, back at the time, Darrel Morrison, who still works with us but Darrel was much more involved in the native grass program. So it was learning as much as we could from Darrel so that we can really start moving forward with it in-house and gathering as much knowledge as we could from Darrel. And of course we still consult with Darrel from time to time. So that's just one example of looking into that. Conservation wise, I, over the years, had had the opportunity to work with many different conservators in the field, work with different fabricators, Don Lippincott, working with Dick Polich, Steve Tatti, I shadowed a bit, Marc[-Christian] Roussel, Eleanor Nagy, I've had many conversations with, and we always talk shop with a bunch of different people, and we still do. That's something that's always going to continue. And of course Alan Farancz.

Collens: Yes.

Seaman: With the David Smiths.

Collens: I might add Mike's relationship with artists and really communicating with them to execute what they want and, if necessary, compromise on what is the best method because the artists don't always know the best materials and we've been very informative to them in a positive way about materials that they should use on their sculptures, whether it's paint or waxes or repairing and so forth.

Dziedzic: Yes, David has mentioned things, like expensive and overly complicated processes. What are some other things that you might know or discover about the way that a work was planned to be fabricated, where you would go back to an artist and say, "Can we do it this way instead?" Or, "What do you think about this?"

Seaman: Well, I think a most recent example would be the Shotz fence. That originally started off as a fence that was fabricated from plexi and mirrored plexi, and those different plexis were laminated together. We fabricated it, I believe two times, in plexi here for Storm King—and David's better with the years than I am—but at one point Alyson gifted the fence to us, and during that time period, we were looking at a way to make it more permanent. So we looked at aluminum, we looked at chromed aluminum, we looked at polished stainless steel. So we looked at all these different materials and nothing really was successful. Then we came up with the idea of using true mirror, a laminated mirror, and we made some samples of that up for Alyson to review. She was very pleased with it because it gave you a true mirrored surface, unlike all the others that had distortions in it. She was very pleased except for the fact that you could see green around the edges, like a coke bottle. And she asked if there was a way to get rid of that, and through a little bit of research we found we could purchase an iron-free glass that, rather than green, it had a blue hue to it. That's how we came about that process, for example.

And I guess another thing that you may want to go back to certain artists with, and I won't mention any names, but the use of Cor-Ten steel. At one point, everybody had a different [00:15:00] understanding of what the end results of Cor-Ten steel were going to be, and Cor-Ten steel when it's used in thin gauge. Typically when it's used as a box material, where it's hollow inside, it does tend to fail. So looking at different issues with drainage on sculptures, air circulation on sculptures, and sometimes even the material itself.

Dziedzic: So it sounds like with Alyson Shotz, that was great. You were kind of doing the research that maybe she didn't have the capacity to do or the know-how—not to say anything bad about Alyson!—but you're taking on that professional role. So it sounds like there are some instances where maybe the artists don't welcome that kind of input—is that what you're getting at? And how do you smooth those things over?

Seaman: No, I think all artists are looking at what's best for their sculpture. I can see a lot of it, for example, with paint systems. A lot of art artists, many artists, love flat paint, like a flat black. And there's a reason why they love it so much because it really looks nice and it really looks great on sculpture, but it just doesn't hold up to the elements. So I think, in having conversations with the artists, and as long as we can give them the reasons why it's best to move in another direction, I can't think of really any times that we've had any tremendous pushback from anybody because I really feel that they want what's best for their work and have a true understanding that once it's in an outdoors environment that it needs these different paint systems. It'd be a completely different story if it were sitting in a white wall gallery someplace and never having the outdoor elements working against it.

Dziedzic: Do you find that you have to do that education for some artists sometimes?

Seaman: I think we always do it. I think it's the right thing to do. We always want to work very closely with our artists and have them—we may propose something to them and they may agree with it right away, they may have questions, but I think it's always very important to have that conversation with them and the reasoning behind it and have it documented as to why we made the change, and that the artist is happy with that change.

Dziedzic: And who has a line to the artist during these conversations? David, I know you've talked about how important it is to have good relationships, just generally—no different from relationships that people have out in the world, right? So in these conversations, are you speaking with the artist directly or is there a team that's involved?

Seaman: It's certainly a team effort. Of course, my introduction to the artist comes through curatorial and working with the curatorial department. I become involved and then at a certain time they'll often hand me the baton per se and I'll go work with them with the different paints and stuff like that. But the curatorial team is always involved in all these processes that we have.

Collens: But clearly it's a team effort though, with all of us involved, and Mike is doing a terrific job and I think a good example is Alice Aycock and repainting *Three-fold Manifestation II*.

Seaman: Yes, which is a process that we just started last year. We deinstalled *Three-fold* and have had several conversations with Alice. She loves powder coat paint. Powder coat has its place, and we've just found here in our outdoors environment, and particularly with the type of sculptures she has, that it doesn't serve as well as other paint systems that we can use. We've had conversations with Alice about this and she turns around and she agrees that our suggestions would be probably best for the sculpture.

Dziedzic: What is the issue with powder coat paint?

Seaman: Powder coat works very well. Powder coat has to go on, then it has to go through an oven. So sometimes very large pieces are difficult to transport around and could not be done onsite or in situ. And it becomes a little bit trickier when you have to touch it up because you don't just go out and touch up with the powder coat. So we like to have control over work in situ where we can rework the piece because oftentimes we may de-install a sculpture, repaint that sculpture, and then install it again. But by doing that, we're looking at [00:20:00] the next paint job or two being done in situ. We work very hard in finding systems that we can do that with because the expense that goes into taking these large scale sculptures down, putting them on trucks, traveling down the road, finding a paint shop that can do that work, and then all the time that we still need to spend traveling offsite to oversee those projects. We would rather just have a system that can be used in place.

Dziedzic: And so Alice Aycock's sculpture would be getting repainted because it's offsite right now, and so that's an opportunity in a sense?

Seaman: Well, no, it's still on site. It's deinstalled.

Dziedzic: Off-view, not offsite. Sorry.

Seaman: It's off-view. And right now, at this point, a large portion of the sculpture has been fabricated out of aluminum. Aluminum is a fairly tricky alloy to paint because it oxidizes right away. So we do have some

failures in that paint system. So yes, at this point we're going to clean all the paint off of it and put a new system on it.

Collens: And do it at Storm King.

Seaman: And we can do it at Storm King.

Dziedzic: So what are some of the other factors or issues that you're still kind of figuring out? Just to give me a sense of how the team does work together, the research, experimentation, execution, what are some things that you're figuring out right now?

Seaman: I think one of the things, going back to paint, is 15 years ago, going back 20 years ago, all these paint systems, whether they're aliphatic polyurethanes, fluoronars, they all had to be sprayed. There was no way to put those paints on a surface without brushing or being able to brush and roll them. So we've been doing a lot of testing. We work a lot with a company called Tnemec Paints and they have developed some additives that we can put into their paint systems that we can brush and roll. By being able to brush and roll, it eliminates a need to tent. If we were going to spray a sculpture outdoors, we'd need to tent that sculpture for several different reasons. One of those being the environmental impact that that paint would have. So that's something we often make paint boards of, as we call them. We have them hanging all over the place, where we use different types of paints and we roll them, we brush them, now we even spray them, just to see the differences between those paint systems, and put them out in the weather. Or we sometimes make small ones, we put them in a freezer, we take it out, we get it wet, we put it back in the freezer. So we always play around with different paint and see how durable they're going to be. And sometimes it takes many years and we just keep on tossing it around.

Dziedzic: Let me also ask about some other recent changes—let me check the time so I don't keep you here too long—some other recent changes such as increase in attendance or climate change, things that are impacting the sculptures and the landscape. So how do you deal with those kinds of issues?

Seaman: I would say that probably the largest issue we have would be increased attendance and increase touching. I think people look at art a little bit differently now than they used to. It's very common for people just to touch and handle right now. And I'm sure David mentioned in past conversations about sunscreen. And so everybody has sunscreen on, they go and they touch the sculptures and the sunscreen stays on and it's very difficult to get off, if possible at all. So attendance, between handling foot traffic, we lose our grass around our sculptures. Artists always like to have nice grass around the sculptures. So then we have to contend with the possibilities of roping sculptures off, keeping people

away. There's a lot that goes into it. We're looking at aesthetics, we're looking at what we can handle manpower wise. I would say, probably, attendance is our biggest challenge.

Dziedzic: And your team is in charge of the landscaping activities as well, right?

Seaman: That's correct.

Dziedzic: So David and I were talking about this before we got started about Bill Rutherford's description of "creative farming" here—are you familiar with that? [00:25:00] Yes. So how do you think about that now and do you have a different term for it?

Seaman: We still do farming. The farming that takes place actually shrunk down with the expansion of our native grasses. So what used to be part of the creative farming or freeform farm fields are now native grasses. So rather than being farmed, we burn those fields. We still have some farming we do, mostly around the Richard Serra and the di Suvero *Pyramidian,* and then south of the *Wavefield*. It's still farmed. I think it's all still kept creative, or what we like to say is we try not to have too many straight edges where straight edges aren't appropriate. But I think it was a wonderful thing that Rutherford developed and it really transformed Storm King from short grass to these wonderful freeform areas of tall grasses.

Dziedzic: And are there any spots that are your favorite on site? Whether it be because of the sculpture or the grasses?

Seaman: I have a lot of favorite spots.

Dziedzic: Can you share some of them?

Seaman: Oh boy. I love top of the hill looking north, that has always been a favorite of mine. But as we know, that's changing. I'm sure it's going to be still a favorite but different. I was looking north towards the Aycock and Liberman's *Adam*, which now we're going to have Martin's work. And the native grasses, really, when everything's in bloom we have the different wildflowers and the grasses and it's just really spectacular.

Dziedzic: And David, is there anything that you want to ask or add?

Collens: I think we really covered it. I mean, certainly the native grasses are a signature of Storm King at this point and it didn't start that way. I mean the first, what, five years they didn't look very impressive and people were getting impatient, but landscape takes a long time, always. And we're doing a fabulous job of

increasing native grasses, Mike has, in different areas—down in the di Suvero fields over the last several years. We're going to emphasize maintaining the grasses that we have in the older areas because it takes a lot of work. It looks very easy, but it's a lot of work to keep them going and have them really look in good shape. Some years are better than others, depending on the climate, birds moving the grasses around with seeds and everything, and invasive material that's more intense some years than others that we have to keep getting out.

Seaman: I think that's an important point that David made, that when we plant a native grass field, you're probably looking at three to five years before those fields become what we intend them to be. So it does take time and it can be a little frustrating when you're waiting for grass to grow. [laughter] So it does take a bit of time. And as David mentioned, we did our largest native grass planting last season, which was a little over five acres, and that was down in the di Suvero fields. So we plan on taking the next couple years and not planting any new fields, but maintaining the existing fields, doing some overseeding and working on some of the invasive species.

Dziedzic: What are the invasive species that are big issues here?

Seaman: We have many. Spotted knapweed, loosestrife, thistle. We consider certain milkweeds are going to be a little bit invasive, if they take over too much of the fields. Leafy spurge. So we have many, many invasives and they're invasives because they grow very well here. And a lot of those invasives are cool season, which means they start growing when the weather's still cool. The majority of our native grasses are warm season grasses, so they don't start growing until it starts to get warm out. Ideally you want the grasses to start growing before the invasives do so they can choke out the invasives. But we have this battle that we have that we really try to keep these invasives down until the warm season grasses grow.

Dziedzic: Have you noticed any changes in wildlife or pollinators? [00:30:00] I know Storm King is huge, but at the same time it's also small within the context of the ecosystem here, so I'm curious if you've seen any changes.

Seaman: Definitely. The bird population has increased so much. I'm not a bird person, I don't know much about birds, but I know that we have many more than we used to and there are a lot of different varieties of birds that we have coming in too. And I think butterflies too. More butterflies, bees. So I don't know, you've probably seen a difference.

Collens: Oh, definitely so. And I think that's a good point. Part of it has to do with when you mow the fields and everything and the change of schedule there to help the birds out.

Seaman: Yes, we're conscious of nesting times with birds. And even with the burning, we never want to burn at times a year when different wildlife are nesting. It's always a lot of thought that goes into when and why it's done.

Dziedzic: Same for sculpture conservation and same for—

Seaman: Exactly.

Dziedzic: —the ecosystem here. Is there anything else that comes to mind that you might want to add about your time here?

Seaman: It's been a lot of fun. It really is.

Collens: Hey, that's Bill Rutherford's line!

Seaman: I think everybody has fun here! [Laughter]

Collens: I just want to add that Mike continues in a long tradition of artists really seeking out Storm King, artists that we are working with, that are part of the collection, artists that we bring in for special exhibitions, whether it's Outlooks, many others, but they are artists that we don't know that are calling up––calling Storm King—wanting information about how to fabricate sculptures, how to paint, wax, concrete bases, every aspect of an outdoor sculpture in the installation, maintenance. We're getting asked questions about it. And that started early on with Alex Liberman calling Peter Stern and saying, “Well, what paint do I put on my sculptures that will last?” And Peter going to Star Expansion at that point in time and Lester Knaack advising on DuPont Imron paint, that it would be a very good one that would be durable for outdoors. And that's what Alex started doing in his earlier years, then changed over. But it's been a long history and Mike continues carrying the torch with all these questions that come up, and they're constant. There's not a week that goes by that we don't have questions from collectors, artists, other museums, and wide range of people and organizations—

Seaman: —which is great because it shows that people want to take care of their art.

Dziedzic: And like David said, this is a place that has that knowledge and information and willingness to share it and support that.

Seaman: We've met all the challenges, I think.

Collens: Except the Conservation, Fabrication and Maintenance Building. Here Christmas is coming and you still don't have it.

Seaman: Yeah, I still don't have it.

Collens: [laughs]

Seaman: We'll put it back on the list next year.

Dziedzic: Is there any plan on when you might break ground on that?

Seaman: We are hoping very soon. I think we're moving in a positive direction and it will give us the ability to do things better than we're doing them now. And it will really open up a lot of doors, for educational purposes, as far as conservation goes and we'll really be able to do our job better, and be able to provide a lot more of the artists—and excited for new and younger artists that are coming in—and be able to have a facility that we can really help them achieve their sculpture.

Collens: And an all-year-round facility for the first time.

Seaman: All-year-round facility. Because, as you can imagine, it's very, very challenging working on sculptures outdoors. Dust, sun, humidity levels, everything that's around you is working against you. Bugs. [00:35:00]

Dziedzic: Birds.

Seaman: Yes.

Dziedzic: It's kind of making me realize how there's a certain amount of information available to artists in school about certain materials, but not necessarily outdoor materials. Not in the same way that there are––a ceramic studio or painting studio or a sculpture studio. Just what valuable information that would be for young artists.

Seaman: Oh sure. Yes

Dziedzic: Well, Mike, I think we can let you go. Thank you.

Seaman: Thank you. Okay.

Collens: Oh, 15 minutes early! All right. Thank you, Mike.

Dziedzic: Thanks, Mike.

Dziedzic: Are you good to keep going, David?

Collens: Sure.

Seaman: So you're going to continue in here, so when I leave, I'm going to sneak around that way.

Collens: I heard someone doing that already. Thank you, Mike! That was terrific.

[Mike Seaman leaves]

Dziedzic: Yes, glad that worked out.

Collens: Just added really a lot to this dialogue, having Mike's voice in there.

Dziedzic: Mm-hmm. Those details.

Collens: Interesting to listen to him. Not often that he has a chance to really shine like that. He doesn't think of it that way, I'm sure, but he's just so knowledgeable and steady with his information

Dziedzic: I'm so curious about all the details but I'm trying to just stick to some of the bigger themes [given the time limitation], but yes, super interesting.

So where we're going to go next is some of those other artworks that are significant to Storm King's history. So first I want ask about Michael Asher, and if you could talk about that history, that relationship, how that started, and the artwork that was proposed.

Collens: Michael Asher started with Bea Stern's suggestion of having three artists that she was interested in that would really broaden the collection in a very different way. And that would be Michael Asher, John Knight, and Daniel Buren. And those are three artists that she personally knew. She put the combination together and supported, I might add, bringing all three artists to Storm King through a grant. And at different times, each artist came and toured around, and really got to know Storm King and better

understand what we were doing. And this is many years ago. Both Daniel Buren and John Knight accomplished projects at Storm King.

Michael Asher proposed a project. As I recall, he was interested in studying the early history of tree maintenance and landscape maintenance for not just trees but other vegetation at Storm King from the beginning, 1960 onward, and what we were doing to maintain the property, whether it was spraying for poison ivy, for example, or taking out sumac trees, or pruning trees with professional pruners, using trucks and equipment to do the proper pruning. And in the early years, it was very hard to find since the Art Center was closely associated with Star Expansion and had a lot of support from the farm, Glenoden Farm, which was part of Star Expansion. And it wasn't clear, going to a file and coming up with the information that Michael was asking for, so it really never got off the ground, [00:40:00] this project with Asher, and collecting the information and being able to present it to the public. So we let that one go.

I don't know if it could be revived at this point. Michael passed away and I think there's a foundation that oversees his work, but it probably would be very hard to get back into that project at this point in time. I think, probably, Bea feels badly about it. Maybe we didn't look into it enough, I don't know, but I don't think the records were easily found, and it'd probably be very difficult to find today as well.

Dziedzic: Do you think there are any projects that have happened at Storm King that resonate with that kind of work that Michael Asher was proposing?

Collens: I think it was a very different direction. He'd done a project at MoMA researching, I think, different paintings and sculpture in the collection and there was a free catalog that was available at the museum shop. But, as I found out, very hard to find when I asked the museum shop, “Do you have it?” It was a list of the works that he went through and I think he was interested in the provenance of the works and how they came into the collection, who owned them, and so forth. And it took half an hour or so, and I had to walk around looking at the museum store at MoMA, and they finally produced one that I could have, but it wasn't readily available. They didn't know what I was talking about, I remember. So he always, I think, chose different projects like that that were going to be really, I think, on the edge, using a material that would have a certain sensitivity, and exposing it to the public.

Dziedzic: And when was that work proposed? When did Bea make these suggestions?

Collens: I think that was in the ‘90s, as I recall.

Dziedzic: I think that's what I recall too.

Collens: John Knight was somebody she knew and came to Mountainville, spent time, and all of us got to know him, and he came up with a fascinating project, which we did execute. And the same thing with Daniel Buren. He came up with a very different project, but two artists that are well known—and maybe more so in Europe than they are in this country, possibly for doing large projects. They both work around the world, so they're internationally known for sure.

Dziedzic: And we've talked already about Michael Heizer and also Dan Graham, with the work that Storm King decided not to move forward with. Are there any other artworks that were maybe planned but just didn't actually get executed?

Collens: The only other major one I can think of is Robert Smithson.

Dziedzic: Right, of course.

Collens: And I think we did discuss Smithson.

Dziedzic: We did.

Collens: That was early on and certainly an important project with one of the great artists, earthwork artists, and inspired, I think, Storm King to continue to look for an artist that could work with the landscape at Storm King.

Dziedzic: So another artwork that I wanted to ask about was the *Life on the Farm* paintings (1940–45) by Dorothy Dehner. Can you talk about how that came into Storm King's collection? [00:45:00]

Collens: Dorothy Dehner was David Smith's first wife. They were married for 23 years before they were divorced, and Dorothy lived in New York and I was introduced to Dorothy probably around 1974, 1975, and got to know her very well and really enjoyed stopping at her apartment at 33 Fifth Avenue. She was an artist in her own right with painting, sculpture, and drawings, and print work she did throughout her career, received a certain amount of recognition—certainly more recognition since she passed away, and has been recognized by museums and collectors far more than in the past.

She was very knowledgeable about David Smith's work up to 1950. And as I said, I got to know Dorothy very well and always enjoyed stopping by her apartment for good conversation and tea, and asking her about David Smith because I was working on a Smith exhibition at Storm King in 1976, the first exhibition I did. And Dorothy was invaluable to that effort, and her knowledge of David Smith in the years that she was with him was very important to me. Her memory was excellent about different sculptures, not just

titles, but the fabrication process, so it was very interesting to hear what Dorothy had to say. And I, of course, told her about my exhibition. She gave me some recommendations of sculptures and other works up to 1950, which I appreciated, and were very accurate, as she always was in those days. And she mentioned to me, when I was visiting, about some egg tempera on board that she did in the 1940s, a group of paintings called *Life on the Farm*, and they were on top of her closet in a Bonwit Teller box, and could I go get a step ladder and bring them down so she could see them? And so I did that and they were each packed beautifully. I don't think anyone had looked at them for a long time. We put them out on the dining room table in her apartment and they were absolutely fascinating. It was a documentation of Dorothy's years at Bolton Landing, and it started originally as a farm when Dorothy and David bought the property, and they transformed it, David did, into a working studio and home out of cement block and a metal roof. Since there was no fire protection and he was welding all the time, that would be a very safe structure to be welding in, to live in.

So they eventually transformed the property and Dorothy documented their life on the farm, which was modeled after the French Book of Hours, was her idea for it. And created these charming, small, very delicate egg tempera paintings on board, which are in very good shape, and we show them on occasion. I asked to borrow them and I had a special gallery I put the *Life on the Farm* paintings in for the 1976 exhibition on the second floor. People thought they were absolutely charming and important to the exhibition for understanding their early years at Bolton Landing and how Dorothy and David lived. She just selected different activities [00:50:00] that took place during their everyday lives at Bolton Landing, and friends and parties they went to, and came up with wonderful titles, and each one has its own title and Dorothy lent them to me and said, “Well, I'll write a short paragraph about each one.” And she just looked at the paintings and without really thinking wrote very quickly about each one. Nothing had to be changed, the statement was perfect the first time. And we have her handwritten statements and we put the statement under each painting when we exhibited them, and people were fascinated to hear directly from the artist about what Dorothy's thoughts were going into each painting and read about it.

And so we had them on loan for one year. They were going to go back, and Peggy Ogden, the wife of our founder, Ted Ogden, thought they were charming, the *Life on the Farm* paintings, and asked if we would like to have them in the collection. And we said yes. Peggy Ogden purchased them for Storm King in the mid-‘70s. So we have the critical mass now of 19 *Life on the Farm* paintings. Dorothy Dehner asked her friends to please give Storm King the paintings that they had, at some point in time, which we have received. We've added a few more and there are a few that are not in our collection, but we have the majority of the *Life on the Farm* paintings and people really enjoy seeing them when they're on exhibit, which, only occasionally do we bring them out because the light can affect them very easily in our building. So they're a great resource to have and support all the archival material we have on David Smith and Dorothy Dehner.

Dziedzic: Was she able to come up and see the exhibition in 1976?

Collens: She came up. Someone, of course, drover her up. And I exhibited Dorothy's sculptures on other occasions for exhibitions or wood sculptures, which people were not familiar with at that point in time, in the gallery on the second floor. Dorothy also gave us an outdoor bronze sculpture early on, which is wonderful to have in the collection. Again, we occasionally show it outdoors, as we rotate the smaller sculptures in the collection. It's important to have.

Dziedzic: Does Storm King have other paintings in its collection?

Collens: Very few. We have some drawings that really relate to sculptures and paintings that relate to works by sculptors. But not at this point, no.

Dziedzic: Because this collection is so unique and Storm King has the majority of them, like you said, have there been any requests to borrow these works to exhibit elsewhere, or come to research and view them? Anything like that?

Collens: People have come to look at them. The most recent person was Michael Brenson, who just completed the book on David Smith, the first biography that was published, earlier this year. He came on two occasions to see the *Life on the Farm* paintings and we had to bring them out into the conference room because they sit in storage and are very precious, and we had to carefully bring them into the conference room and put them on a table for Michael to see. But he was really quite fascinated and surprised to see the *Life on the Farm* paintings. People have seen them that have written about Dorothy's work [00:55:00] and that period of Dorothy's career as well. A professor from Chicago saw them several years ago, so it's only on occasion at this point, but I think people know that they're here. We had a loan request for one of the *Life on the Farm* paintings that was fortunately a work on paper that we could more easily lend to an exhibition at the Palmer Museum last year.

Dziedzic: Well, maybe we can save this idea of lending and pick that up with *Mermaid* (1994) outside.

Collens: Definitely.

Dziedzic: Okay. Sound good?

Collens: Good plan.

Dziedzic: All right, thanks David.

End of session

Interview with David Collens	**Storm King Art Center**
Conducted by Sarah Dziedzic	**1 audio file**
December 19, 2022	**Open for research use**

Audio File 1

Collens: [Speaking while driving on route to Roy Lichtenstein's *Mermaid*] On *E=MC²*, there was a horizontal cross beam that we cut out during the summertime. It was about 55 feet up, and this is the way Mark really realized the sculpture, without the beam there. The beam was there not for structural purposes—it was used always over the years to help to lift the legs of the sculpture up from a horizontal position with the crane and everything. And so it just got left there and we took it out. I think probably the first time it was shown with the beam in place was in Paris in 1997. And Mike was up on a lift about 55 feet up in the air one morning this summer with one of Mark's assistants and they cut it out and he gave us permission to do it. It's just so aesthetically different to see it without this one beam crossing over just below the joint section. It was maybe 15 feet below the joint section where it was going across.

Dziedzic: It does make a big difference.

Collens: Yes. I mean, I said let's get this done. I wanted to do it while Mark was alive and well, and he approved of it, so I kept on pushing to get that done last summer. I think there's a big difference, to me personally, and it's a small detail in a way but an important one.

Dziedzic: Yes, it was interrupting the flow a little bit.

Collens: Yes. All the pin oak trees were put in by Bill Rutherford and Ted Ogden and done very well and require more maintenance than in the early years.

Dziedzic: Are those pin oak in the parking lot too that we just passed?

Collens: Yes, much younger ones. Maple and pin oak and the south parking lot and we're going to move some of the pin oaks and leave some of the pine trees and other trees. Those are, I think, not as easy to move successfully.

On the right is a long-distance view of where we're going to put Alice Aycock's sculpture—where you see all the brown earth. We've been bringing material in, gravel, and shaping and building a hillside there for it. We had another sculpture several years ago, Forrest Myers, *Four Corners*, that we started building a little hillside for, much smaller. Then, with the possibility of trying to find a location for Alice, she's thrilled

about this location. And the sculptures is, I think, 29 feet high, so it will have quite a presence, *Three-Fold Manifestation II*. We have to top soil it and continue shaping it, but that's where it's going to be.

Dziedzic: That'll be great.

Collens: It will just pull people up the little roadway here. They ride their bikes up here, walk up here. A lot of times we've had sculpture on the left over the last several years. Different artists exhibiting in this area and people like to circulate around to Andy Goldsworthy and Maya Lin. There's a pathway that goes through all the pine and other trees back there that you'll be able to enter this area. You can see that green pathway.

Dziedzic: That'll be great.

Collens: So you can approach it from different angles and everything. And we want to have the trees behind it from the Thruway so that it doesn't upset the Thruway folks.

Dziedzic: You can really see how close the Thruway is when the leaves are off the trees. [00:05:00]

Collens: Yes, it's certainly noisy depending on traffic and everything and wind direction—depends. But during the season, the maples successfully block off the Thruway. But people will walk up to these trails here and go to Andy Goldsworthy's *Wall*, the straight part of the wall that ends at the Thruway fence line, and ride their bikes up through here as well. There's a wonderful view of the surrounding mountains.

Maya Lin's *Storm King Wavefield* is just down the hill here. That looks in pretty good shape. There's always different things happening—wood chucks or invasive grasses that we have to keep an eye on. And people, on very busy days, they'll be walking on the ridge lines, and we put a rope all the way around it because it's only open now two weeks each month starting in June. And we try to let the grass rest from having everyone walking on it otherwise. And people understand the signage, to a certain extent. It's just days that we're extremely busy that everyone is not following guidelines there.

Dziedzic: When I came up in September at some point it looked pretty bad. It looks a lot better now.

Collens: Probably after a really dry hot summer because we don't water it or anything.

Dziedzic: Yes, it hadn't really rained yet when I came up so I think that helped a lot.

Collens: And these grasses, I guess Mike mows—I don't think he burns down here. Storm King Mountain off in the distance. It plunges into the Hudson River at a very sharp angle.

Dziedzic: Now I see why you wouldn't want to drive your own vehicle [indicating scratching sound as car drives on narrow pathway lined with tall grasses].

Collens: Through here? No.

Dziedzic: I hear the grasses scraping on the side of the car.

Collens: Yes, I've been squeezing this car through narrow places and given it a few bumps and dings and everything. I'm pretty fearless, going everywhere with it. But a nice overview and nice view of *E=MC*^{2}, the upper section of the di Suvero there, 92 feet high. It will be a nice addition having Alice up here, I think. That'll be nice because we had *Four Corners* by Forrest Myers sitting a little higher up than what Alice is going to be. His was a very small sculpture, only 10 feet high maybe at the most. It was just a box, an open box. But people loved coming up and standing in it and having their photographs taken. I think Alice will be a nice attraction, raised out of the field onto the hillside that we're building.

Dziedzic: That white is such an attractant to your eye, I think, of the sculpture.

Collens: And that's the color I think Alice always uses on sculpture. Other artists like Nevelson and Liberman have used white occasionally, but not on a regular basis.

And here we are at the *Mermaid*, also known as *Young America* by some people. [00:10:00] [Turns off car]

Dziedzic: Can you explain how this boat came into the Storm King collection?

Collens: Well, *Young America* was the original name when it was sailing for the New York Yacht Club. It was built as an America's Cup boat in 1995 and raced in New Zealand and Auckland and lost to Team New Zealand. It's 77 feet long, it's carbon fiber and weighs 5,000 pounds. An interesting history is when the boat was being built for the New York Yacht Club, John Marshall, who was the president of the foundation building the boat, came up with an idea that they should really have artwork on the side instead of all the logos for the companies that supported the endeavor to race for the America's Cup, which was a very expensive project. And John went to Arne Glimcher at Pace Gallery and Arne came up with the idea of Roy Lichtenstein, who had sailed, and he came up with the design for the *Mermaid*, which was painted by students from Rhode Island School of Design, originally, on the boat.

And this is the way it sailed. The main sail and the spinnaker sail also had designs by Roy of sunbursts on them. And this main sail and spinnaker that Roy designed were not competition sails so that only was one time off San Diego that the boat sailed with Roy's sail on, and it was quite beautiful from the photographs I've seen. The sail has now been lost and people are looking for them, but probably are not around anymore. And this was given to us by the New York Yacht Club in the year 2000. It came back from New Zealand and they were determined to maintain the boat and find someone who would like to have it and see it on public exhibit with a mermaid painted on the side. So one of our trustees, J. Carter Brown, was a Harvard graduate as well as John Marshall, and several other trustees of Storm King, and John read an article about Storm King and other trustees in the Harvard magazine and decided to call Carter Brown up, who was a sailor—he enjoyed sailing like his father—and was involved with the New York Yacht Club. So he had a long conversation with Carter Brown about possibly bringing the boat to Storm King. It worked out that we did bring it here and have had it all these years.

We lent it to Middlebury College for a special exhibition related to the America's Cup boat at Middlebury. It was in their pond for two years and the exhibition was in the museum building at Middlebury a few years ago. That's the only time we've lent it. It was very difficult to remove from the island at Storm King and truck to Middlebury. And all the support material regarding the building of the boat, a film, and other material related to *Young America* or now, as it's known, *Mermaid*, was indoors at the Middlebury College Museum. And people certainly like it. It's not a painting of Roy's per se, it's on a boat, and it's unusual, and it has an unusual history of being constructed in 1995 in Rhode Island and coming to Storm King many years later. We're doing a very good job of preserving it. Mike just finished doing conservation on the mermaid itself, [00:15:00] repainting over the last couple years. And the boat is in good shape. We don't have water under the deck or anything in the hull of the boat. We have a deck that is keeping all the water out and we check on it on a regular basis and it's holding up well.

Dziedzic: What was the discussion around Roy Lichtenstein as being an artist that would be in the collection here? He seems very stylistically different.

Collens: Very much so. Roy's done many outdoor sculptures during his lifetime and, at one point, we were wondering if this was really the best object for us to have of Roy's. And we looked into some other possibilities and discussed that with the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation—they have a few outdoor sculptures. I think everyone felt that it was very interesting and it wasn't a painting per se and it wasn't a sculpture that Roy designed but it was very unusual and well worth preserving. And it was an extraordinary gift and very different. But it did fit into Storm King, on our island, and so we've had it now for close to 23 years.

Dziedzic: How do you think about this sculpture in the landscape compared to some of the other sculptures in the distance? We can see Andy Goldsworthy and over the hill is Richard Serra. So how is this different or similar from those other sculptures, the way that they inhabit the landscape?

Collens: Well, certainly very different. The island had a willow tree on it, which we took off—it was falling down, a very large willow—to create enough space for the *Mermaid* to be placed on the island. And during the season—with the pin oak trees, the willows around on the other side of the pond, and we planted some more willows to block out the stern of the boat from the top of the hill—it has its own area and privacy during the season and is far enough away from the Goldsworthy *Wall* and other sculptures at Storm King. Certainly, it may be a stretch to call it a sculpture. But the form is so beautiful on the boat, and Roy painting it, was a terrific combination. And it sailed this way, which was very unusual. It was the only boat that sailed with artwork on the side instead of all the logos of the corporations. So it had really a different presence in the photographs as it was sailing off San Diego and New Zealand.

Dziedzic: It really does look amazing.

Collens: It's a little different for our collection, but an important American artist and we thought it would fit into the collection.

Dziedzic: All right. Sounds good, David. Let's move on to our next spot.

Collens: Let's warm up! [Indicating restarting the car and turning on the heater]

Dziedzic: That too. So I guess my next questions were about things that you are still thinking about, things that you'd like to have changed at some point in the future. Either sculptures that you want moved or landscaping that you want done differently, a curve in the landscape changed. You've talked about how some of those things will start to—you're not sure what it is about a sculpture, but something's not right for you. And so I'm just wondering if there's any of those places that you could take us to and point out, "this is bothering me" or "this is something specific that I'd like to move." [00:20:00]

Collens: I think probably more in the north area, some of the early stone sculptures that were collected by Ted Ogden in 1963, because Storm King started in 1960 with no collection and the early stone sculptures were in different locations on top of the hill when Storm King was much smaller. I gathered them over the years—they're about five large stone sculptures that were put into one area and have been in the same location now for well over a decade. And I think the area is changing with Martin's sculpture going up on the hill and the way people walk around and circulate, which is very nice, and they look at the stone sculptures, but to me it's getting a little crowded in this particular area. And I think it'd be more

appropriate to put them in a new area where they're still accessible and they're artists that most people in this country don't know. They're well known in Germany and Austria, but not as much in this country.

Dziedzic: Who are the artists?

Collens: Karl Pfann, Josef Pillhofer, who was a student of Fritz Wotruba, who was a very well known Austrian artist. And I think there is one artist that's Greek [Yerassimos Sklavos], where the sculpture is made at Storm King out of Vermont marble, and another Austrian artist that we have that is, I think, quite well known in Europe but not in this country [Alfred Hrdlicka]. And I think just changing locations would be good for the sculptures and open some more landscape in a different way. It's important to change sculpture around, the smaller ones that can be more easily moved.

Dziedzic: And why is that?

Collens: Well, it gives you a fresh view on the sculpture, a different perspective, seeing them in a different landscape. It's nice to have a change, on occasion. Though a lot of visitors look forward to seeing the sculpture in the same location at Storm King. It's like an old friend coming back and seeing the sculpture in the same area.

Here we are by Richard Serra and the fields have been mowed for the wintertime. As Mike and I were talking about earlier, I think we'll have to do more mowing next year on a more regular basis. We only mowed once this year in October and it's hard to keep invasive plant material out, doing it that way. Other plants start growing up into saplings and everything to trees. And so it's better to mow more often to keep the grasses in good condition.

Dziedzic: And is this area being kept as farm fields because that's how it was when Serra saw it? In other words, why not think about converting this to native grass, for example?

Collens: We have five acres that we most recently converted in the di Suvero area. We might be overwhelmed with native grasses and the maintenance of taking care of the grasses. Historically, this has been a farm property for a hundred years and we've been farming throughout these fields and [00:25:00] want to really not mow everything because in the early years at Storm King, all these fields were mowed on a regular basis, many of them. And we decided we didn't like the look of just constantly mowing the fields so we decided to grow native grasses, wildflowers, not have it look like a golf course. This area, the property has been farmed and we've had corn and other crops in here and now it's really grasses and cutting and bailing it two or three times a year, which keeps everything in much better shape.

Dziedzic: When did you have different crops growing there?

Collens: Until probably the ‘80s, I'd say mid-‘80s. And the deer population was pretty intense, so that became an issue too.

Dziedzic: Those other crops were attracting deer?

Collens: Oh, corn, especially. There were other crops that would attract the deer, definitely. We still have a pretty intense deer population, and Canada geese and everything. A lot of wildlife around.

We're just going to circle around the property. I thought you'd like to see Martin Puryear’s sculpture.

Dziedzic: Let's check on progress.

Collens: It stops for the wintertime because it's—oh, looks like a hawk. [Hawk flies in front of car]

Dziedzic: Oh! Right on cue, David.

Collens: Yeah, I just pushed the remote button. [laughs]

Dziedzic: The hawk button.

Collens: Yeah, it came out. But people walk and ride their bikes everywhere that we're driving right now. Passing Ursula von Rydingsvard sculptures.

Dziedzic: These look quite different in the wintertime with the dried grasses and the bare trees. I don't think I'd seen that before.

[Side conversation]

Collens: A lot of maintenance to the grounds, always, to do.

Dziedzic: Do you feel like you've gotten any break from thinking all those things through since you've become the director emeritus?

Collens: Eventually, I think we have to expand the staff to really do it more successfully.

Dziedzic: To keep track of all the needs?

Collens: Yes. They're just increasing. Here's Alice Aycock's *Low Building with Dirt Roof*. That will just last so long before the wood starts falling apart and we have to redo it.

We can drive up here and check on Puryear. You don't even have to get out [of the car]. This is Martin Puryear's sculpture that he's building out of brick and we just put the snow fences on this side and the other side to stop the snow from drifting as much. We're not going to put any cover over the brick or anything because that's more damaging, with condensation and trying to cover it and keep a cover on, than letting it stay open and drying out. [00:30:00] If it gets rained on or snow or wind, we'll dry it out. But it's all totally going to be brick and what you see is this stainless steel rebar section that next year we'll finish creating in brick. You'll be able to walk into the far side into the archway and stand inside and look out to the south, and Schunnemunk Mountain to the southwest. It is just a beautiful view from our highest elevation at this point on our North Hill at Storm King. All these circles are areas that will have tubes of three, six, and nine inches placed in them that will let light in, and the red tennis ball is dead center so when you stand there, you're going to have focused light at a certain time of day if you're standing on that one spot.

It will hold 10, 12 people comfortably inside and you'll walk up to it. We will have a small vehicle for people that aren't able to walk up the hillside here so they can have a chance to see it as well. And we just have this tent over it for the season so we can work on it if it rained and so forth. All that will be moved off and we'll have a special landscape around it. Underneath, inside the structure, it's going to be Belgium block and we have our landscaping to do. We have a round bench that's being repaired on the oak tree on the far left.

Dziedzic: You said it was Martin Puryear's brother who was repairing it.

Collens: His brother, Michael Puryear, is doing the repair of the teak wood and it's underway. He's found the teak wood and he's shaping it to the bench itself and he'll install that in the spring. We're going to have our opening next September since we have a long ways to go on installing brick.

Dziedzic: How do you feel about the progress that was made this year?

Collens: It was excellent. It has its own pace. We have very good craftsmen and people working on this project and you just can't change the pace of it. It's very exact, putting the bricks in, and so there's a lot of detail to it. The structure itself, the rebar, was all thought out with an engineer from MIT that's a friend of Martin's, and students from MIT did a lot of the calculations. They were here last summer working on it

with their computers and telling Martin's assistants exactly some subtle and slight changes that need to be made so all the tubes that you are going to be able to see through, that will let light in, are going to be at the correct angle. A lot of thought went into this project and it's very pure the way the bricks are facing each other with mortar in them and the rebar holding everything together. It's inspirational that Martin did this sculpture out of brick, his first brick sculpture, inspired by travels to Iran and other locations.

Dziedzic: Are there any other sculptures that have been built on site that have had as much effort and precision and taken as long with the artist's assistants?

Collens: No, this will be an example of building on site probably longer than Andy Goldsworthy did, for sure, in '97, '98 and using material from our site, [00:35:00] fieldstones for Andy, from our falling down walls. And Martin's process is quite different and very exacting, and the arts and crafts process is very important to him, and the people he works with and selecting them, and type of brick he wants to use, which isn't just your regular Home Depot brick.

Dziedzic: The tradition is to work on these things a little bit every day almost.

Collens: Yes. And it's just so far you can push it. It has its own schedule and we have stone masons working on it in good weather, but we had to break for the wintertime. It got too cold. You'll be able to see it, even during the summer, through the leaves from down here. You'll have some views of it. You'll be able to glimpse at it to pull you up the hill and draw you up there.

And this is the Siah Armajani [*Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini*, 1992] that Mike just finished painting this summer. Took basically all year trying to get the paint, first of all, much harder to get the paint colors we needed, and Armajani changed the paint to a very dark almost black green, like a New England shutter, from a teal color.

Dziedzic: Has any other artist done that over the years, changed the color?

Collens: Mark di Suvero went from orange on *Mother Peace* to a red that he came up with.

Dziedzic: Okay, so that's not just photographs looking different from age.

Collens: Artists get ideas about changing color or fabricating sculptures differently and it's nice to have an early example and always learn how to do things a better way. But I think those are the two examples of paint being changed in a major way.

And these are the stone sculptures, been here for a long time. They were scattered around top of the hill and other locations so I consolidated them into this spot here probably 20 years ago. But now, with Liberman up on the hill—and that's been there for a long time—and then Martin Puryear, people are walking around here more, and the [George] Rickey on the left just seems like it's getting a little too crowded, and just leave it as open space. So that's what I'm thinking about at some point in time. But they're fragile to move, very heavy and fragile.

Dziedzic: Were any of these sculptures shown in *Sculpture in the Fields*?

Collens: No, these were all much earlier, from 1963, like Josef Pillhofer, which Ted Ogden found in a quarry in Austria where they had a symposium and a lot of different stone sculptors working, and he decided to buy it. And we have several other Pillhofers in the collection in storage. We returned Louise Bourgeois *Eyes* (2001).

This is the way people will come up for seeing Martin's sculpture. You'll have a very nice view into it, a side view, once the tent is down and the construction structure. [00:40:00] We'll prune some branches where necessary.

Dziedzic: I'm thinking about how you identify that feeling that it's a little too crowded with sculpture.

Collens: Yes, it was very good for a long time and we didn't have anything where the Rickeys are. On occasion, I think we put Dennis Oppenheim's 12 architectural cacti in that area [*Architectural Cactus Grove*, #1–6 (2008)], but that was for one season. The Rickeys have been there now a couple years and that's easy to move them, but they have scale and I like the space for the time being till we find a larger sculpture. And we have a lot of landscaping to do because the water comes down the hillside and so you have to consider that when you start putting more permanent sculptures or commissions into certain landscapes. You might have a lot of work to do. Another consideration.

Dziedzic: Turkeys!

Collens: Oh, they're around. Yes.

Dziedzic: It seems to me that when you remove some sculptures from an area, it isn't just a blank space because of the way that things have been landscaped. There's activity there on that landscape, whether it's destructive to sculptures, or pleasing in some way, but it isn't just about moving things around a room.

Collens: Right. I mean, Anthony Caro has been here for a long time. Nice lawn area, but I was thinking maybe that we should move it to the north. But Mike's so busy with different projects. I always love the view of the Calder from down here, looking at the archways of *Black Flag* that unless you come to this spot, you don't see.

Dziedzic: It surprises me every time how I am used to seeing sculptures from a particular approach. And just like with Calder's *Black Flag*, if I see it from the other direction, how different it looks because the landscape is completely different. The sky behind it or the trees behind it is so different.

Collens: We just took out Allyson Shotz. It doesn't do well in the wintertime with snow and ice, cold temperature. So we always take it out for the winter, the picket fence.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: Well, let me ask you my last question, which is thinking about those Rutherford—–

Collens: Oh wow. Another one [hawk flying in front of the car]. I wonder if it's the same one. That's probably a different one.

Dziedzic: Wow.

Collens: We just put the Calder up on the hillside. We have it on loan.

Dziedzic: Oh yeah, I was thinking that that was different.

Collens: That was different. That's called *Jerusalem II* (1976) because the full scale sculpture is in Jerusalem on a hillside, 40 feet high or something, but this is the larger-than-intermediate model for it. Kind of has a strange history. [00:45:00] But *Five Swords* was really the great sculpture that was here for 32 years and is now in Connecticut I guess. It went to Berlin and then to Connecticut and there's a Calder garden opening in Philadelphia in 2024 sometime. They're going to have a lot of space outdoors for some of these stabiles, so I think our loans are going to be leaving then for Philadelphia, I guess.

Dziedzic: So if Rutherford had some things that he thought were important to carry forward, what are the pieces that you think are important?

Collens: I think landscape and sculpture at Storm King are so unusual. And I think not being overcrowded for sculpture at Storm King, which is very different than, say, Tippet Rise in Montana, where

you don’t see one sculpture with another—each has its own valley! But we're pretty close to that. [laughs] I mean, we've really pioneered, and not having sculpture crowded, even with large scale pieces, and giving each artist plenty of space, and working with them on locations. I think that continues to be important in working with younger artists who—we basically fabricated all the works for Outlooks for seven years and continue to. Having a better space, the Conservation, Fabrication and Maintenance Building, so we can really properly do that. And really, more opportunities for artists and working to execute their vision. It doesn't always happen the first time they come up with an idea because it's too expensive or it's not practical. It's not necessarily the first idea that we do for artists.

But working through the process with them and getting them to understand and learn about materials and what holds up outdoors, and they're always surprised by scale. Whether it's Alyson Shotz with her 140-foot fence. “Oh, I could have had it 300 feet long!” Or Alice Aycock working through the process of finding a location for her sculpture. A terrific piece, and yes, it moved off the hill, it's not where she wanted it, but it didn't work out from our perspective to put it there. And we're building a hillside, which is great, but being able to build a hillside for Alice or Ursula von Rydingsvard’s sculpture, *For Paul*, we built the hillside for that. And worked with di Suvero on sculptures coming up to Storm King and changing them and locations and exhibitions. Each artist is really terrific in his or her own way and it’s really a pleasure. It's an adjustment. Each person is very different and has different needs and ways of doing things and personalities and everything, you have to adjust to it all. But I think we've been successful.

And showing quality sculpture, no matter who it’s by, is important, and a broad range of artists. And that's why we have Outlooks. We have of program for artists like Wangechi Mutu that are more in depth exhibitions, and working with the Shandekan Project for having artists [00:50:00] come to Storm King in a residency program. It's just working in different ways with different artists. The residents don't have any responsibility to do an exhibition at Storm King. They might come back a year later and they really love Storm King and they tour with different curatorial and education department people, and others, and they might be interested in sculptures at Storm King, or landscape, and they do these wonderful tours and bring up more people to see Storm King that haven't been here before. So it opens up new opportunities for sure.

Dziedzic: So the two big different things that I'm hearing are just acknowledging working with artists and having that relationship—literally, you will move the earth for an artist if it's the right move for the artist and for Storm King.

Collens: Yes, definitely.

Dziedzic: And also working with younger artists and being really explicit about new relationships.

Collens: Well, I think that's what more established artists like Mark di Suvero really see as important and wanting to happen, and many others. Not just exhibiting Mark's work. He said, “Why are you always exhibiting my work?” He would say to me, “Why don't you select some new artists?” But there was such a rich opportunity with Mark, I just couldn't let it go. And yes, I found new artists like Peter Lundberg, and Chakaia, to do exhibitions and bring their works here, that type of thing.

I think now, with senior staff, it's really fascinating to see how we're broadening everything. And we're still small, curatorial is small, but it's been reorganized with someone like Eric [Booker] coming in that's a professional and well experienced from working at the Calder Foundation earlier in his career, and most recently at the Studio Museum, and worked with artists and bringing a new group of artists and people to Storm King. He just started, but it's going to happen.

Dziedzic: So it sounds like the trend of the staff expanding will have to continue.

Collens: Oh, I think so. In a select way, we're always going to have the small staff. I don't see it growing enormously, but it was really important for curatorial to grow. And Adela [Goldsmith] is here now for well over a year, and Eric coming on board, I think it's really important. We were understaffed in that area.

[Side conversation]

Collens: [00:55:14] So someday this will change on the left [indicating future site of Conservation, Fabrication, and Maintenance Building]. We're hoping next fall, I guess, to start construction.

Dziedzic: Are you going to have a giant ribbon cutting for starting construction?

Collens: Yes, definitely. Poor Mike needs this building. It's been long time coming.

Dziedzic: Well, I think officially those are all my questions.

Collens: Yes, you can do unofficial ones too, you know? Yes, I think that the future is really bright for the Art Center and I think it's going to be interesting to find staff that really understand an outdoor sculpture museum versus an urban museum. But landscape is critical and it's going to remain critical. And I think we have some new landscape architects that respect what Bill Rutherford has done. I know they do. Outdoor sculptures evolve. You don't have people doing it like Mark did and understanding materials and constructing it themselves.

Dziedzic: That's one of the reasons why having a conservation center to advise younger artists would be helpful, am I understanding that right?

Collens: Yes. I think that would be enormously helpful for younger artists. Fabricating their work is always good.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: I remember in some of the interviews that I did with, I think it was Lisa Stern, she talked about the relationship that Storm King has with the community of Cornwall or Mountainville, and how it wasn't always a great relationship, and there was some disconnect there. What do you see for the future in terms of Storm King's relationship with the communities that it has a history with, and is located within?

Collens: There's always work to be done, but it's improving significantly. When I think of the early years, the best way to describe it—which I might have done before—was when it started in 1960 and on through Peter Stern's stewardship and Ted Ogden's, it was more of a "town and gown" situation, like Yale University and the city of New Haven. [01:00:00] There was a little bit of a rub that was taking place there. And because Ted Ogden started it, and gosh, it was almost 63 years ago, it was a very different community, much smaller, and he knew everybody [laughs] between the factory of Star Expansion, Glenoden Farm with 200 dairy cows and everything. If he needed something, he knew who was involved with the town and the supervisor then, and the town clerk, the building department and [laughs] just called Joe up, or Sam, or John, or whoever it was. And the guy would come out and they'd have a discussion and it was settled, that type of thing. It was much smaller with less regulation, I would guess. So I think he was interested in building the Art Center and people came, that's for sure.

Then with Peter Stern, he was a very different individual. Very European in his manner. He was running Star and the farm and he had many other diverse interests, like World Monuments Fund and International Rescue Committee because he came from Europe. He was born in Germany and lived in Romania.

This is the Storm King School, a boarding school and day school. It's been here forever. We just live down the hill.

So he wasn't interacting with people from the town like Ted Ogden did, calling the guy from the building department and that type of thing, and it was becoming more formalized with the building department and so forth.

This is where Maureen Spaulding lives, that works with Dwayne [Jarvis], that's her house there.

So just a real change. And it wasn't as much of a connection to people in the town except the building department. You'll always need that, you're not going off and constructing buildings without permits. That would be crazy. So I don't think there was as much interaction, other than Lisa with education, when she started the school docents program, high school docents. So there was interaction with the public high school, and schools in the early years did come over with students. That was really mandatory. Buses brought students to Storm King in the early years and then that stopped when things changed and there was less money for the schools and everything.

[Side conversation]

Dziedzic: So do you have any sense of whether there will come a day where you don't feel like going to Storm King anymore?

Collens: That's going to be hard on me. [laughs] Yeah, that's going to be very hard because living so close and, I don't know, it's just been a way of life.

Dziedzic: Well, it sounds like you're thinking that there might need to be a few more people, each dedicated to a certain area of the kinds of activities that need to be looked after and thought through with some foresight.

Collens: Yes, definitely. We need to expand. [01:05:00] I mean, Mike's team is lean and friendly. They're not turning lean and mean yet, but lean and friendly. They really are very pushed to accomplish everything.

End of interview