

University of California General Library/Berkeley
Regional Cultural History Project

Grace L. McCann Morley

ART, ARTISTS, MUSEUMS,
AND THE
SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess

Berkeley
1960

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INTRODUCTION

"During the 25 years in which San Francisco has boasted a museum of modern art, it has become one of the world's primary centers for the creation of modern art... The San Francisco Museum became what it is today very largely as the result of one person's insight. That person was Grace L. McCann Morley, who is still nominally director of these galleries."* In addition to directing the San Francisco Museum of Art, Dr. Morley has held many important consultative and editorial positions. The United States government claimed her professional and personal abilities in inter-American affairs and cultural relations from 1941 to 1945 and, from 1947 to 1949 Dr. Morley was able also to use her great vision and capability as head of Unesco's museums division. Awareness of her skills by the art world and her own sense of responsibility have brought Dr. Morley generously to put these

* This and a following quotation are from Alfred Frankenstein's "It Made Sense to Concentrate on the Contemporary," San Francisco Chronicle, This World, October 23, 1960, pp. 20-21.

skills to work in many national and international undertakings.

In 1958 Dr. Morley left the San Francisco Museum of Art, "the only institution of its kind west of New York... still possess[ing] few rivals in the country," the museum that she had pioneered to such a preeminent position. Her reasons for so doing involve some history and they are explained in the interview. Her next position, at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, did not lead to permanently satisfying work, and early in 1960 Dr. Morley accepted the very challenging directorship of the National Museum in New Delhi. When it was known that Dr. Morley would be in the Bay Area briefly in the spring of 1960 before departing for at least five years in India, the Regional Cultural History Project took that opportunity to request a series of interviews. At the time, early in March, Dr. Morley was on this campus to supervise the unpacking and hanging of the valuable exhibition she had been invited to arrange coincident with the official opening of Kroeber Hall, the "Art from Ingres to Pollock: Paintings and Sculpture since Neoclassicism" exhibition. She consented to do the interviews when she came back to the University to repack the exhibition. The usual extended autobiography was out of the question because of Dr. Morley's limited time and her natural wish to see something of the area that she loved and had spent little

time in since 1958. The following volume is the result of four sessions between March 29th and April 11th.

Dr. Morley hurried to the late afternoon interviewing sessions held in an upstairs office in Kroeber Hall from her very intense responsibilities -- packing the paintings, directing correspondence, labeling shipping tickets (see page 170) -- in the galleries below. Yet there was no question of "gathering her wits about her" and stepping back in time to cull her memories; the past was vital and accessible, she was composed and eager to begin the interviews -- perhaps the only break from her dawn to dusk work with the packers. And later, when it came to editing the interviews, despite the fact that she was then, in late summer of 1960, in New York on her way to Paris and making plans for her further departure to New Delhi, she was able to make extensive additions and corrections, and volunteer supplemental information that makes the manuscript as full as it is in contradiction to the brief time spent in interviewing sessions.

As an interviewee Dr. Morley was an attentive and reassuring person to work with. Experienced as a lecturer, with a sharp power of recall, she was able to speak long and fully on any question put to her. Though the ultra-activity of her day put the interviews on a no-nonsense basis, this fact and

newspaper reports of her efficiency as a museum director would be wrong if they implied that she is a chilling, forbidding person; she is not that, as the interview will show. And her warm interest in the project continued even as she began her work in India. It was from New Delhi that she sent a most important addition to the manuscript, the story never told before that begins on page 48. A September 22nd letter of Dr. Morley's from New Delhi is illustrative of her positive, vigorous and young approach to life:

"The job here I like very much. I like India and I enjoy working with Indians. I'm beginning to learn the language and things appear to be going well. Apparently I am going to be given good support in doing the job and I am going to be used to the maximum for the benefit of the museum movement here in India. This of course pleases me. It is a sort of reward for previous frustrations. I hope that what seems so promising now may be indeed fulfilled. We shall see. Meanwhile I am having an interesting time."

In imagination, in realizations, Dr. Morley is far ahead of the sixty years of this century that began the same year she was born. She maintains that what was achieved in the San Francisco Museum of Art was the result of a fortunate combination of people and times. Fortunate, rare even, and it may be long before the people and times are ready again for such foresight as she brought to San Francisco in 1935. Then a young woman, with an education unusually suited to her life's work, and an expansive interest in art, Grace McCann Morley's was to be

recognized as the clearest and strongest voice for the art of the West Coast.

Documentary material donated by Dr. Morley is deposited with the copy of this volume in the Library of the University of California at Berkeley.* The Whitney Museum of American Art has donated the catalogues of the State Department Traveling Exhibition of 1947 and the auction following, and Dr. Morley has donated UNESCO/CUA/64, her report to a Unesco seminar in Athens in 1954. These items are on file in the Library.

This volume is part of a larger series of tape-recorded autobiographical interviews conducted by the Regional Cultural History Project with persons who have been influential in some phases of the development of Northern California. The program is under the administration of the General Library of the University of California at Berkeley.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer

Regional Cultural History Project
University of California Library at Berkeley
December 1960

* "Women's Board Contributions to Museum Growth," SFMA, May 1958; "Communism under the Guise of Cultural Freedom - Strangling American Art," Congressional Record, House of Representatives, June 14, 1956, pp. 9377-9383; "The Pacific Coast Artists Brought their Climate to Sao Paulo," by Grace L. McCann Morley, San Francisco Chronicle, This World, Oct. 2, 1955, pp. 22-23; "Pacific Coast Art at the Third Biennial of Sao Paulo, Brazil, July - October 1955," by Grace L. McCann Morley, SFMA, 1955; "Report" on SFMA dated January 1938; Statistical notes for a report to Mayor Rossi in 1939; "Important Exhibitions and Activities of the San Francisco Museum of Art During 1941;" "Catalog of 117 Oil and Water Color Originals by Leading American Artists" offered for sale at sealed bid by War Assets Administration, 1948; "Art in the United States," by Grace L. McCann Morley, for exhibition organized by United States for Sao Paulo III Biennial.

EDUCATION AND EARLY MUSEUM WORK

Childhood in Bay Area

Morley: I think one of the aims of this kind of a record -- which is a little bit, I feel, more valuable as an account of a period of interesting artistic history here in the area than it is as an interview of special interest because of me as a person -- should be to try to make an exploration of what happened at a particular moment, explaining why, bringing in the people who were, shall we say, positive elements in it, and then more or less letting go the extraneous details. So that's what I'll try to do as we go along.

Now, about the childhood. I was born in Berkeley, as a matter of fact. [3 November 1900] I wasn't very well as a child, so I didn't go to school until late, when I was about ten years old. And, because of not being well, I was taken to -- oh, to various country places around California, trying to find a good climate -- and we finally settled in

Morley: St. Helena, in Napa County. That's where I grew up and I finished grammar school there. And then my high school education was there except for a brief period at the Alameda High School.

I was the eldest child. My brother is five years younger than I, and I have a sister seven years younger. So there was a considerable division in interest and companionship. The fact that I wasn't well and therefore couldn't play with other children meant that I had a very solitary life as a child. I didn't learn to read until very late and that meant that I was somewhat, I suppose, separated from the ordinary child's experience and made up my own stories. When I did go to school I learned to read quickly and began to read everything I could, beginning with the ordinary classics -- Dickens and Scott -- found in homes at that time. I remember Balzac in translation, Bullfinch's Mythology, Bunyon's Pilgrim's Progress (read three times), poetry by Scott, Tennyson, Moore.

Riess: What was your father doing? Was he able to move to St. Helena easily?

Morley: Yes. My father had been out of any business connections for many years and he simply had a small income from owning property, so that we were fortunate in that way.

Riess: What was St. Helena then? Population?

Morley: It was a very lively but quite small town, of course, and a very charming and delightful one at that time. The population was, I suppose, less than a thousand. This would be from about 1909 until 1918. The fact that it was such a small place meant that you knew everyone, more or less, and that there were no sharp distinctions based on occupation or money or social status. It was also a very healthy kind of life, for fields, woods and hills were close at hand always, and as children and high school students we knew all the country around the town.

Riess: It was a farming life for most people?

Morley: Well, it was a region of prunes and grape-growing principally, yes. Then there were a good many retired navy people, which gave it a somewhat greater sophistication, perhaps, than many small towns have. It seemed very far away from San Francisco in those days. And now, of course, it's a matter of an hour and a half's drive, but at that time it was a four-hour trip and you didn't come down to "the City" -- as it was called -- very often.

Riess: It's still called that.

Morley: Yes, it is. From over on this side. (Laughter)

Riess: Newspaper interviews with you mention that when you were four years old you saw a piece of Greek statuary in the

Riess: museum...

Morley: That is actually a fact, and I remember it quite vividly. I can't have been much more than four years old.

Riess: This was in the deYoung?

Morley: In the deYoung. At that time the deYoung had mostly casts and a few of the paintings that it now has in its little gallery of examples of the pioneer as collector in the Early California period room section. And to me that was art, that Greek sculpture.

Riess: Did this first experience of art have anything to do with your interest in the Greek language later on?

Morley: Maybe that exposure to Greek sculpture and my enthusiastic response -- which I think I was quite quiet about, I don't think I talked about it at all -- had some effect on my later study of Greek. Those things you can't know. But later, when I did learn to read, one of my favorite books was Bullfinch's Mythology, as I mentioned. And, after all, Greek was rather basic, and at that time you thought of it as more basic to art and culture even than you do today, because a great deal of the pre-Greek and the other cultures hadn't been as completely studied as they have been now, while there were continuous references to Greek and Roman periods in much of one's reading then.

Riess: Did they have more classical learning in high schools then?

Morley: In large high schools probably, but in St. Helena they did not have any classics in high school, except Latin. Of course Latin led to the Greek too. St. Helena had a very small high school. There were fewer than a hundred students. All I had in foreign languages was Spanish, which I started there.

When I began high school, because I couldn't get French, and wanted it very much, I taught myself to read French, just by the dictionary, and with a simple reader. Then later on, when I came to the University, I did major in French, you see. I always feel I have a bad accent because I taught myself to pronounce the words without having heard them.

(Laughter)

Riess: I looked at your master's thesis in amazement because I thought you were an art major at the time and doing your thesis in French was a really ambitious performance!*

Morley: No, I didn't ever take any art at the University. I knew that I wasn't a creative artist; I didn't have any aspirations of that kind. I was interested in art, but not to do it, and there just weren't any art history courses.

*La poétique d'Aristote en France à l'époque classique, Grace McCann, Berkeley, California, 1923. Thesis (M.A.) University of California, Berkeley, May 1924.

Riess: No?

Morley: No. There was a sort of survey course, but it wasn't, well, considered very useful by serious students in those days. There was almost no art to look at in the area. There wasn't any point in just looking at slides.

Riess: So your B.A. was in French and Greek.

Morley: Yes, that's right, a double major. The M.A. was in French.

Student in Paris

Morley: And then I had a fellowship -- and I can't remember the name of it, after all of these years -- which helped me to go to France in the sense that it proved to my family that I was good enough to have help for study abroad. And so, what with the financing -- I think it was a thousand dollars or something like that -- plus family, why I had approximately three years in France.

Riess: Was this a renewing scholarship, or just a lump sum?

Morley: It was a single grant.

Riess: And how did you get to Europe?

Morley: I got on a train, after getting my M.A., and went across the continent, stopping in Chicago, where I had relatives, for a short time, and New York, similarly where I had

- Morley: friends, then got on a boat, got on a train again, and there I was in Paris at six o'clock in the morning!
- Riess: Yes. That's when everyone arrives in Paris, I think. Six o'clock in the morning!
- Morley: And then you walk around a bit. It's a beautiful place.
- Riess: When did you change to art from your study of French?
- Morley: Well, as I say, I'd always been interested in art when I was here at the University. The Legion -- the California Palace of the Legion of Honor -- had opened, and it had some rather good exhibitions. I remember going to those. And there was a French exhibition in the Civic Auditorium, a very modern exhibition, and I remember going to that. There wasn't very much in permanent collections to see then, you know, in this area.
- Riess: What there was of foreign art was mostly French, wasn't it?
- Morley: Yes.

And then, when I went to Paris, and settled down to writing my thesis there, I chose a subject that combined literature and art. It was The Feeling for Nature in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century.* I worked under the

* Le Sentiment de la nature en France dans la première moitié de XVII^e siècle, G.L. McCann, Nemours, Imprimerie André Lesot, 1926 (190 pp. text, 16 illustrations).

Morley: wise and kindly direction of Gustave Regnier who was at the time the great authority on the 17th century in the Faculté des Lettres of the University of Paris (the Sorbonne).

This was a very interesting period in France because it was a turning point both in literature and in art from the more, shall we say, conscious attention to man's surroundings to the emphasis on man himself. The Academie Française was created toward the middle of the century, you see, for literature; and in art, too, an academy was established soon after it, and it stressed man, not nature. The last of the great landscape painters -- Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin -- dominated the early half of the century. Also nature poetry that had come, actually, out of the Middle Ages, went on still during the first half of the century.

I read a great many novels of the time in which nobles became shepherds and shepherdesses and sheperds and shepherdesses became heroes of one kind or another. These romances were usually in ten volumes. Very delightful to read. Very easy to read.

So, it was a good period for comparison, for summing up the old period, with its delight in nature, which was shortly to give way to the new "classic" period in which

Morley: man was the center of interest. It was a transition period, in which the classic point of view was gradually dominating in many forms of expression, but much more feeling for nature continued well on into the century than has been usually realized by those acquainted only with works for the theatre -- Corneille and Racine -- which is the most important literature of the time. Even gardening, with the development of the formal French type of garden during the seventeenth century, was an indication of the change. Originally literature was my subject, but I soon found to my pleasure that art was equally important to make my points.

Riess: How did you use that historical background in planning the landscape exhibits at the San Francisco Museum of Art?

Morley: I knew where to go, shall we say, to get more material.

So my time in France was a good classic education in both literature and art.

Riess: In contemporary art in Paris what was going on when you were there?

Morley: There were many exhibitions: Cezanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Picasso, and Dufy, to name a few I recall. All the great names you think of now as you look back -- Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, were all known, more or less. But people

Morley: had no idea how important they were to become. I bought quantities of small, inexpensive illustrated booklets on these artists that are the modern masters now, and brought them back with me when I returned to California after my stay in France. The Impressionists were very seriously accepted in Paris and were accepted even in this country, at least in the well-informed centers like New York and Boston, by that time.

Riess: That means that we were approximately forty years behind, at that point, in art?

Morley: Yes.

Riess: Was there an art circle in Paris that you were in touch with? Actually I suppose that as an art historian this doesn't happen.

Morley: No. I used to see artists around, and I knew some art students. I lived in Montparnasse, which was the quarter in those days for artists and art students. It was very convenient to the Sorbonne; you walked across the Luxembourg Gardens, which was pleasant. But I spent most of my time in the libraries, because I was doing research, you see, and mostly in the Arsenal Library, which very few people know but which is very rich in seventeenth century

Morley: material.

Riess: Is that library a part of the Sorbonne?

Morley: No, it's one of the public libraries, in the sense of being a research library. It's state-owned, and is in quite another part of Paris, on the rue de Sully, quite far from the Sorbonne.

Riess: And when you took out the ten-volume books of shepherdesses and shepherds could you read them in the gardens?

Morley: No. You had to read them in that library, or in the Bibliothèque Nationale which had a lot of them too. I went wherever they were, you see, for they were valuable, printed at that time and often unique copies which had been preserved, so I read them in the library reading rooms.

For art I spent my Sundays at the Louvre, and I spent my summer Sundays going to different places near Paris that were important for art -- Fontainebleau and Versailles, for example. For my thesis, I worked at art history in the Bibliothèque Nationale, mostly, using books, of course, but also studying prints and drawings in its Cabinet des Estampes (print department).

Riess: And you had some summer school, didn't you, in France?

Morley: Yes. The first summer I was there [1924] I went to Grenoble and took courses, simply as a matter of learning to

Morley: understand French more easily and quickly, and to speak it more fluently. Although I had done a good deal of writing in French while I was here at the University, and understood it fairly well -- could read anything -- still it's not the same thing as using a language daily. I'd never really heard French around me, continuously. So I went to the theatre a great deal for the same reason. Every night that I could I would go to the theatre. It helps a great deal in training one's ears.

Riess: What had you been planning to do with just French, if you hadn't gone into art?

Morley: Oh, at that time the ordinary thing for women university students to do was to go into teaching. A great many of my classmates did, of course, unless they had some very strong vocation for some specialized field. I planned to teach in a college or university. I had decided definitely against taking courses in education and so made the decision against high school teaching fairly early.

I think perhaps if I'd come along a little later I would have gone into anthropology. I was always very much interested in anthropology, though I never actually enrolled for a course, except the general introductory one. But during my years at the University most of Dr. Kroeber's big classes had me in them, unless I was

Morley: attending one of the classes in which I was enrolled. I attended lectures and classes by other anthropologists too when I could, those by Waterman and Lowie I recall. And I used to know very well the ancestor of this museum here [Lowie Museum of Anthropology], which was then at Parnassus Heights in San Francisco.

To me it was a very fortunate thing that I had that interest in anthropology at the time, because later on, when I went into contemporary art, the anthropological background that I had derived from my enthusiasm and which I continued to a certain extent from that interest in my student days, carried over into art of today and its relationships with what is called primitive art.

And so that was the groundwork on which my interest in art was based. It then developed in a more systematic and orthodox way when I got to Paris, as I attended art lectures at the Sorbonne, went to museums and did specific research in art for my thesis.

Then when I came back from Paris with my degree [Ph.D. 1926] I had to start looking for a job, as everyone does, and obviously the first thing I did was come to the University of California. But the University of California didn't have then many openings for women, and also they usually liked to have their students teach

Morley: somewhere else and then perhaps be called back.

Teaching at Goucher

Morley: I wrote around to universities and colleges in various parts of the country and finally Goucher asked me to go there. And so I went as an instructor in French -- French literature and conversation [1927-1930]. I had what were the more advanced courses, actually. There was a native Frenchwoman who did the beginning courses, Mrs. Siebert.

Riess: Yes, she was at Goucher when I was there in 1956.

Morley: Is she still there?

Riess: I think she has since retired.

Morley: And then -- and this you probably don't know anything about, in spite of your Goucher background -- there was a Dr. Froelicher. Did you ever hear of him?

Riess: Yes. I lived in Froelicher Hall.

Morley: Well, he was the one who taught history of art.

Riess: Oh, I was wondering whether you had started that department.

Morley: No. He did, I believe. And he covered the whole field -- classics and everything else up through the nineteenth

Morley: century. He was an old man when I went there and he died, I think, after I'd been there about a year, died in mid-year. And it was a problem to know what to do with the courses. So, they were divided. Those that concerned the classic period were given to the classics department, the Latin department. And I took over from the Gothic period on, just to fill in, you see, until the end of the year.

Then, when the American Institute of Architects became very worried about the kind of art instruction that was being carried on in colleges, even universities, all over the United States in the late twenties, they got a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to do something about it. So for several years they formed groups of about thirty representatives of different colleges and universities and had them go to the Fogg Museum at Harvard for intensive study during summer session.

Learning at Harvard

Morley: Goucher was offered the opportunity to send someone and they simply didn't have anyone. I was the only one young enough who knew anything about art. It was an advantage

Morley: for the college to have this opportunity, because it meant a very small book fund as one result. So I was asked if I would consider going and I said, "Yes, I'd be interested to go." It must have been the summer of 1929 I spent there.

I was very interested. I took a course in architecture of the seventeenth century, a very classic course again. It fitted right in with my background. And then a decorative arts course, and some other odds and ends, and wrote some papers.

Meanwhile, I was examining with great interest the Fogg Museum and realized that the Fogg, Harvard, had a course for training museum people. I was so interested in continuing the art side of things, and found studying, working and teaching in relation to the objects so attractive, that I investigated the possibility of going to Harvard, taking the museum training course, and getting another doctorate. My idea upset Harvard quite a bit at that time because they didn't understand why a person who had one doctorate wanted another.

But while I was investigating that, the man -- who was secretary of the Fogg Museum and had been in charge of the Carnegie group, Walter Siple -- was named director of the Cincinnati Art Museum. And when he was named

Morley: director he needed a general curator. And so, before I had a chance to settle down at Harvard to study, I was a curator in Cincinnati in that new museum [curator from 1930-1933]. It wasn't, in fact, a new museum; it was a very old one, and a very fine one, but it was being reorganized and so appeared in a new form.

This was the period, 1928, '29, '30, when Fogg-trained people went out all over the country and reorganized the museums that had fallen into a more or less static pattern. Mr. Siple, the director of the Cincinnati, was a Fogg product, and his wife was too, and one of the leaders of the museum movement at that time. So I learned the trade by actually doing it and so I am a sort of second-hand product of the Fogg Museum.

Riess: Mr. Siple was originally with the American Institute of Architects?

Morley: No, he was the secretary of the Fogg Museum and he was in charge of the group that had been formed by the American Institute of Architects with the Carnegie subsidy for the improvement of the training of college teachers in art.

Riess: Why did the American Institute of Architects undertake this? Was there no one else more logical, such as the American Institute of Art Historians, or some such thing?

Morley: No, there was nothing of the kind in existence at that time. And the A.I.A., I think, had become seriously concerned about the fact that the art teaching of the time simply was not in step with the art development of the country at large, especially in the smaller colleges and in the ones far away from Harvard, which was a recognized center for art teaching. They got the Carnegie to finance the program.

It was part of this whole movement, this whole improvement in the status of art, that was taking place at this time.

Riess: Around 1930.

Morley: Well, I would say from the time Paul Sachs took over in the Fogg in the mid-twenties. This great wave of Fogg-trained people who went out across the country to museums was the result of his art training and museum course at Harvard.

General Curator in Cincinnati

Riess: Cincinnati was a general art museum?

Morley: Yes, but on a very high level. It included everything, from some classic works straight through to contemporary.

Morley: It even had an American Indian collection, and decorative arts collections. Cincinnati is one of the great centers in the country, and it was a leading museum even then.

Riess: Do you remember something of this first experience as a curator?

Morley: Well, it was very hard work. In those days one usually didn't have any days off. You worked straight through the week, took what time you could. Today museum people have a much easier time. Cincinnati had a very small staff, a very small number of trained people. It was very unusual for anyone with a doctorate to be in museum work at that time.

Riess: Where did the doctorates in art history go?

Morley: Mostly into university teaching. Museum work doesn't necessarily, has never really necessarily, required a doctorate. Even the Fogg course at its height, when it was the most complete, didn't lead to a doctorate usually. It was post-graduate work but it didn't involve independent research as much as it did a sort of professional or vocational training of different technical kinds required for museums.

Riess: Was Cincinnati what is designated as a "storehouse" variety of museum?

Morley: No. It had been. You see, I went in at the break between the storehouse-accumulation era and the new period when museums were reorganizing their collections, putting the less important things into storage as study collections or reserve collections, and putting on exhibition, as attractively as possible, the most important items in the collections. Changing exhibitions too were beginning to be used to supplement collections in the reorganized museums throughout the country. Cincinnati presented some important exhibitions touring the country then (American Indian Art; Modern Architecture from the Museum of Modern Art; Russian Icons), and it organized a number of important exhibitions for showing only there, usually with reference to its own collections or to private collections in the city (André Derain Retrospective; Paintings and Drawings by Thomas Gainsborough -- for which there was a handsome catalogue). And that was the beginning of the very good period in installation, which has gone on developing ever since -- presenting exhibitions to attract the interest of the general public, in order to give the public pleasure, obviously, but also to instruct it.

And it was the period of the development of the activities and educational programs. It was a period when

Morley: there was a great struggle between the educators and the curators in the museums, because the curators usually liked to remain in a little tower and study, and the educators, the museum educational people -- who should be distinguished from the art educator, who is another kind of animal -- these museum education people were the link between the eager, uninstructed general public and the specialized knowledge of the curators. And they're the ones that launched the great campaign for children's work in the museums, classes for adults, educational exhibitions, and that sort of thing. Cincinnati was one of the first museums at that time that developed a very good education program, and for a long time it was a leader in that field.

Riess: This was all Fogg-inspired.

Morley: Yes, in Cincinnati it was, through Mr. Siple and his wife, Ella Siple, who'd been one of the very pioneers in that type of work in the Worcester Art Museum, in the twenties.

So it was just good luck that I happened to have this introduction to museum work, and experience in it at the beginning of a new development. But for my art interest too I was lucky. Cincinnati had been a very, very great collecting center, oh, for years.

Riess: Private collectors.

Morley: Yes, private collectors. The museum itself had collected well and it had been given or bequeathed important works by private collectors but it hadn't done anything special with the exhibition of its material until that time.

Cincinnati was especially notable for print-collecting. There was the Print Collectors Club which was made up of the business and financial leaders of the city, who were at the same time quite scholarly in their interests and very, very serious. And Cincinnati remains today a great print center, now however especially active with contemporary prints.

Riess: Fine printing and print-collecting seem to be one of the things that leading people in a city are attracted to.

Morley: Yes. Both rare books and prints are intimate things. Collecting prints allowed these people of Cincinnati, who obviously couldn't put their hands on many great Italian masterpieces, to have a fine Mantegna or a Pollaiuolo in their collections, you see.

Riess: Oh! This was the sort of print?

Morley: They were all master prints, and great ones. Dürers... one of the greatest groups of Dürers in the United States was there. Still is.

And it went right up to contemporaries. The whole

Morley: history of art...

Riess: I see.

Morley: The print curator in the museum was Emily Poole, the sister of one of the great collectors there, one of the pioneer collectors and a very great expert, Dr. Allyn C. Poole. And Emily Poole was a very knowledgeable curator indeed, and got the print department started well. So I wasn't in charge of prints, but I became very interested in them and very fond of them because of the association. We used to discuss the relationship between the painting and sculpture part of the museum and the print part.

Riess: Did these amount to two strong and equal divisions?

Morley: Well, decorative arts was very strong, too, in the museum. They were just different departments, shall we say. Prints in a museum form always a supplementary department. The prints numbered some thousand items or so, maybe more, in Cincinnati; the paintings also were a large group, and included a good many important old masters. There was not so much sculpture, but quite a bit. Good sculpture, too. But the prints department had the largest group, and had outstanding examples.

Riess: You were curator of painting and sculpture, then?

Morley: Yes, and all the rest of the collections. I was, shall we say, second in command under the director and responsible

Morley: to him for general museum operation, as his deputy. The curator is not concerned, usually, with the financial part of the museum. The director is. The curator is concerned with the, theoretically, more scholarly parts of the museum, and the physical care and study of the collections. So I was second in command under the director, in charge, therefore, of the whole museum, except prints.

Riess: And you were getting to know what it would be like to be a director.

Morley: Yes. When Mr. Siple was away I was acting director, of course.

And, thanks to having a bout of illness and the Pooles taking me into their home to have me near the doctor, I learned about prints. Dr. Poole was elderly then, and so during office hours, when he didn't have any patients waiting, he would bring up a solander box and show prints from his large collection to me. And we would discuss them, from both the art and technical points of view. I learned a lot about prints that way.

Riess: A solander box?

Morley: A solander box is one of those black boxes in which prints are stored.

Riess: Oh... What was contemporary art like in Cincinnati?

Morley: Well, there were some excellent artists but, after all, that was the beginning of the thirties. It was the beginning of the regional development of that period -- Stuart Curry and Thomas Benton, Grant Wood -- we knew all those people's work, followed it closely. And all the contemporary French artists were known, more or less. One of the things we showed was a big retrospective of André Derain. Derain had been a Fauve, you know. We had some fauve paintings in that show, but it was his later work that was admired then. Abstract painting hadn't been thought of then in this country very generally... Well, it had been by a few artists in New York, but hardly anywhere else. Cubism was known a little bit. We knew about it and we talked about it. But there were no very outstanding direct reflections of contemporary movements in Cincinnati in 1930.

Riess: When you speak of the regional development does this mean that art was not regional before this, that it was narrowing down, so to speak?

Morley: No, not narrowing down. It was simply a very strong movement to put emphasis on what gave regional character and flavor to a given artist's work, or to a given movement, what expressed in art a specific locality. In the mid-thirties in all this work that came out of the Middle West

Morley: -- Benton, Curry, Grant Wood -- the feeling that art had to have roots in the country was strong. It was actually an anti-foreign movement, because Thomas Craven, and Grant Wood, and Benton, had been in Europe and hadn't liked it and they were reacting powerfully from that experience and trying to develop their own style with a national flavor. If you read Thomas Craven you'll see how strong was the reaction against foreign influence and how earnest was the desire to establish a national art, expressive of this country and of its people at this time.* Remember too that the depression had been felt by artists and there was the beginning of the expression of social comment -- regionalism and nationalism and social themes, all later to be developed in the various government art projects of the thirties.

* Craven, Thomas, Men of Art, 1931; Modern Art, 1934; The Story of Painting, 1943. Published by Simon and Schuster, New York.

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART:
EARLY YEARS IN THE WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING

Reopening of the San Francisco Museum of Art

Riess: What brought you back to San Francisco?

Morley: Well, I enjoyed Cincinnati a great deal, learned a tremendous amount, but I found it a little far away. It wasn't New York, which would have been wonderful. And, at the same time, I was away from the family, and the climate did not agree with me. Also I got married [1933] and came back to California.

Riess: You got married while you were in Cincinnati?

Morley: I left Cincinnati to get married, and I came back here. And, after a while, I discovered that it would be necessary to go back into the profession. While I was debating whether to go to New York, where I had an opening in New York University, or to go somewhere else, I discovered that there was talk of this museum in San Francisco.

The San Francisco Museum of Art, which had existed

Morley: since 1916 in the Palace of Fine Arts on the Marina, had gone along very well for about ten years, and then because of finances partly, and partly because of the fact that the building -- a temporary structure that had been erected for the 1915 Exposition -- wasn't safe, had closed down in the expectation of having quarters in the new War Memorial Building in the Civic Center. With that information I made an appointment with Mr. W.W. Crocker, to whom I was directed as the person most interested in that enterprise.*

Riess: How had you heard about the opening?

Morley: I heard about it first through Dr. Walter Heil. He was director of the deYoung and I had asked his advice about returning to museum work. And he said, "Why don't you go and see W.W. Crocker, who is said to be interested in reopening the old museum?" And so I did that and Mr. Crocker and I talked a bit and he referred me then to Timothy L. Pfleuger, an architect, who had been a great leader of art and of civic development in San Francisco.

*[Just at that time, the end of June or early July, 1934, his election as president of the museum was announced in the local newspapers. GLMcM.] See clipping following.

Crocker Heads Governors of Museum of Art

**Institution Will Open
Next Autumn at
Civic Center**

W. W. Crocker, vice president of the Crocker First National Bank, has been elected chairman of the board of governors of the San Francisco Museum of Art by the directors of the San Francisco Art Associations, according to announcement yesterday by Timothy L. Pflueger, president.

John Francis Neylan, attorney, was elected a director of the association at the same meeting.

When the art museum opens in the War Memorial group at the Civic Center this fall, the policies of the 63-year-old institution will be controlled by a board of governors.

GREAT SHOW SLATED

The museum will be open daily from noon until 10 p. m. One of the first attractions will be the annual Carnegie International, which is under contract to exhibit from March 14 to April 25, 1935.

This outstanding collection of 250 paintings by living European artists and 100 paintings by living American artists will be shown only in Pittsburgh, Baltimore and San Francisco. Homer Saint-Gaudens, director of fine arts of the Carnegie Institute, has just returned from Europe, where he selected the paintings for this exhibit.

CURATOR TO BE NAMED

The annual Carnegie International will include the finest contemporary work of painters of Austria, France, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Russia and Poland, in addition to the finest works of American painters.

As soon as the members of the board of governors of the museum have been selected by the directors of the art association, a curator will be appointed and the opening date of the museum will be announced.

Riess: And also vice president.

Morley: He was later vice president of the museum. He was also, I think, at that time president of the San Francisco Art Association.

Riess: Yes. These people seemed to be doing things interchangeably.

Morley: Well, that is part of the pattern of the San Francisco Museum of Art and the Art Association. The board of trustees of the museum and the board of directors of the art association are theoretically interlocking.

Riess: Who actually had the authority to ask you to direct the museum? The art association?

Morley: No. The museum is independent, and the trustees of the museum, not the art association, hired me. The museum, you see, had been incorporated in 1921 as a separate institution. For many years the letterhead of the museum carried this line: "The Art Museum of the San Francisco Art Association," but it didn't mean that it belonged to the art association; it meant simply that it served it. It had been founded by the art association too, of course.

Originally the idea had been that the War Memorial would have an opera house, a great theatre in the center,

Morley: and a museum all around it. With time that plan was modified.

Riess: Why?

Morley: Well, different architects, I suppose, and different ideas.

Riess: It sounds like a good plan.

Morley: Yes, but it's difficult to administer and to safeguard.

So there are two different buildings: the Opera House and the so-called Veterans' Building, in which the museum is located. In the beginning the whole Veterans' Building, except for one suite of offices on the ground floor, was to have been museum. Then the money wasn't sufficient to build the group of buildings without having a bond issue. So, when the bond issue was launched the veterans' groups were brought in and, as a result of this support, more spaces in the building were given to all sorts of organizations associated with the veterans.

Riess: The bond issue was supported by the art association, too.

Morley: Yes, the art association was eager to have a new museum. It had founded the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1916 and had always had a very deep interest in it even after the museum was incorporated as an independent institution

Morley: in 1921. When the museum closed, the art association served as its storage place. It had its own home on Chestnut Street, in the California School of Fine Arts Building, and that was used to store what books, magazines, and so on, had been accumulated by the library of the old museum on the Marina, as well as the collections in their custody which were later supposed to be passed over to the museum -- mostly nineteenth century Barbizon School paintings.

The art association was very anxious to have a special museum to represent them and their interests, in San Francisco. And they were the ones that kept the equity in the War Memorial Building and eventually found means to bring the museum back into existence in 1934.

Riess: What did the art association's "remote control" of the museum amount to?

Morley: Practically nothing. It was a very close relationship of a friendly, professional kind, and for mutual, reciprocal advantage, shall we say. But apart from that there was no real control. The two are separate organizations but with these links: the historical founding of the museum by the art association, the boards inter-

Morley: locking to a considerable extent, and the fact that by tradition the museum presents the Annuals of the San Francisco Art Association, and emphasizes contemporary art, which is the natural concern of an organization in which artists are active as they are in the art association.

Riess: What was in the museum at the time when it was housed in the Palace of Fine Arts?

Morley: It had almost no collections then. It had a library, a periodical library -- quite a revolutionary thing at the time -- and it presented changing exhibitions. It had quite a distinguished group of them over the ten-year period. It had a fine showing of the drawings and prints of Rembrandt, for instance. It had a great exhibition of tapestries.

Riess: Traveling exhibitions?

Morley: Well, they were assembled sometimes by it, sometimes they were organized by others, and the museum participated in them. They weren't so much traveling exhibitions in that they went to many places, but exhibitions that were organized for showing in one or two places. They made a very considerable contribution to art interest in San Francisco. Also the annual exhibitions

Morley: of the art association were shown there. Then during the period of the museum's being closed, until the new quarters opened, those Annuals were shown in the deYoung and in the Palace of the Legion of Honor, I believe.

Riess: The museum's permanent collection at that time was the Barbizon School group?

Morley: No. These collections didn't belong to the museum; they belonged to the art association, collections that had been bequeathed to it. The museum, when it reopened in its present quarters, owned practically nothing in the way of art except about ninety-eight very fine modern French prints, including some Picassos, which had been bought by some of its devoted supporters when the art shop, Vickery Atkins and Torrey, closed in San Francisco. That was the beginning.

Riess: They were bought before 1926, then?

Morley: No, I think it was after the Marina version of the museum had closed, and it was in anticipation of the reopening of the other, which didn't take place until 1935.

Riess: When the San Francisco Museum of Art was incorporated in 1921, was it incorporated as a museum of contemporary art?

Morley: No, just as a museum of art.

In 1916, when it began, it was the only museum in San Francisco devoted exclusively to art. The deYoung was a general museum, including history. The Legion did not yet exist. By 1921 there was no change. But the allegiance to the art association meant that it was at least to some extent committed to contemporary art. When it reopened in 1935 it wasn't definitely and exclusively designated for contemporary art. The Opening Exhibition, of which the catalogue is in the University Library,* really was a survey of the art field, with the most important special exhibition devoted to the nineteenth century, the French Impressionists. This was deliberate because that represented the beginning of the contemporary movement; making this period of art known was important for a museum which would show Annuals of contemporary art regularly.

And the second exhibition was part of the Carnegie International, the European section of the Carnegie International, with a selection of the Americans.** It

*Opening Exhibition, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1935.

**1934-1935 Carnegie International, European Section, including a representative showing of Contemporary American painting. March 15th-April 15th. San Francisco Museum of Art, 1935.

Morley: had been arranged for a considerable while before I was appointed. Subsequent exhibitions were very often historical exhibitions in the sense that they went back to the past in order to trace a line of development -- a technique, a point of view. I remember we did one big one on textiles, going back to the Renaissance and including contemporary weaving; the Bay Region was even then a notable center for tapestries. We did another on landscape gardening, with a great deal of historical material as an introduction and continued the survey on into the present; the Bay Region had a considerable number of talented garden designers then and some, like Thomas Church later, won national fame. We presented another on the history of landscape painting, leading from the remote past to the present. And we did smaller ones of figure painting, and so on.

Riess: Have they been doing this sort of tracer exhibition much lately at the San Francisco Museum of Art?

Morley: Well, there's no point right now to doing that sort of historical review to the same extent as in 1935 to 1939 because, you see, the ground has been covered, the foundations have been laid, while the other two museums have become much more active and that sort of thing is more properly their responsibility as general art museums.

Morley: In San Francisco it is always important to try not to duplicate but to have each museum do those parts of the art picture that are its natural concern. In that way the parts fit finally together into a total report on art.

Riess: That's why this exhibition downstairs is so wonderful.*

Morley: Oh, yes, it is a sort of survey of the high points in art from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present -- a review of the evolution of modern art.

Empty Galleries

Riess: When the War Memorial Building was being planned did the art association members have their ideas of what sort of a gallery they would like to be hung in?

Morley: No, I don't think at that time that anyone clearly thought of a setting, this setting or that setting. What they wanted was a space. And Arthur Brown, who was architect of the Civic Center, and one of the museum's trustees,

*Art from Ingres to Pollock: Paintings and Sculpture since Neoclassicism. March 6 - April 3, 1960. Kroeber Hall, University of California, Berkeley, 1960.

Morley: a Beaux Arts man, extremely well trained, with the advantages, and also the limitations, of that training in France, had a great feeling for proportion. The galleries when empty were very fine. They were not ideal for showing contemporary art. They were renovated after the occupation of the United Nations in 1945, and at that time their architectural limitations were to an extent corrected.

Riess: Pictures of the galleries with the original walls can be seen in pre-1945 publications of the museum.

Morley: Well, because of the fine proportions those empty galleries were very beautiful, as abstract sculpture if you like. Very soon after I had seen Mr. Crocker and Mr. Pfleuger for the first time Mr. Pfleuger sent me to the War Memorial to look at those galleries. I saw them empty there, an acre of floor space. Heaven knows I've never figured out how many running feet of wall space, but it was a tremendous area. There was nothing in them and they were very imposing. There were very, very heavy partitions lying on the floor that had been built to break up the space and which were completely impractical. We had to have them broken down and replaced with others for economy of man-service. I suppose

Morley: at the time the building was planned, in the early twenties, no one realized that labor was going to cost as much as it finally did, and no thought had been given to the impossibility of using partitions which required eight men to install.

But I remember very well -- this is by way of an anecdote, I suppose, and it fits in with my saying that the board of trustees didn't meet often -- one of the things, and I was young in those days, you see, that rather set me back, was to be asked by Mr. Crocker: "Well, do you think you can fill the galleries without bothering us?" (Laughter)

"Well, I think so. I'm going to try, anyway," I said. And of course I never failed to. The problem became rather, as time went on, how to choose between the great number of extremely fine shows that we could have shown. We became one of the places that cooperated regularly with the Museum of Modern Art, if it were having an exhibition that it wished to show elsewhere and that it wanted to have supported financially by sharing with another museum.

Riess: Was it difficult to hang an exhibit because of the great dimensions of the galleries?

Morley: Yes, the monumentality of the architecture was a problem. And when the galleries were redone, after the occupation -- they reopened in the spring of 1948, I think -- one of the things planned -- because I laid out the plans before I went to Unesco and it was done while I was away -- was to eliminate the chair rail and dado in order to give a unified hanging space and to minimize the architecture.

I didn't know at that time that there were going to be Rothkos and Stills of the dimensions these artists paint today. But already it was becoming evident that to have the gallery cut at a height of approximately thirty-two inches was not a good idea. Similarly, in order to bring the sight line down, we put in a molding about eight feet below the original molding of the cove of the ceiling, which gave us a very good clear wall space for hanging of maybe twelve feet. The galleries are, I think, about twenty-seven feet high, you see. It's terrific. So, from that point of view installation was difficult, and the rigidity of those black columns there in the entrance gallery, that sort of thing made it difficult.

Riess: They're still there, aren't they?

Morley: Yes, they're still there.

Riess: Was the original design of the museum that of most museums of art at that time?

Morley: It was what a very, very good architect, very sensitive to space, did as a worthy setting for exhibitions in the taste of the period. And don't forget that at that time the museum had no collection. It began with the ninety-eight fine French prints. So it was an exhibiting gallery, not a gallery for a collection. On the other hand, the architect, and I don't think one should blame him because there was no one to tell him, had not provided for the out-of-sight spaces, the office and workshop spaces, that you need for an active museum. And that was a great hardship to us in everything we did. We never had enough work space and eventually, of course, took off some gallery space in order to get a place for offices to house the people we needed to operate an active museum.

Acquisitions

Riess: Now what is the museum's permanent collection? And how was it acquired?

Morley: Well, there are several different phases. The collection includes prints, quite a good group of prints, simply because prints don't cost too much. We started with the small, good collection I mentioned, and in the ensuing years, when there was opportunity, tried to increase it.

There is a Latin American collection of paintings and prints which is built partly around the gifts and bequests of Albert Bender and William Gerstle, strong in Mexican material, partly built as the result of an intense cultivation of Latin American interest during the early years of the war and my own knowledge of Latin American countries.

Riess: Why during the early years of the war?

Morley: You wouldn't know, of course, because that period is so far in the past for you, but it was a critical time for the U.S. Interest in Latin America wasn't entirely altruistic; it was watching your back door. Latin America was filled with German companies, Italian cultural pressures, Japanese enterprises. I worked for the State Department (the Inter-American Office) in the early years of the war as a consultant. On my first trip down there, which was before the State Department assignment, I had been very aware of the German influences and the Italian ones. So to me the need to establish cultural exchange

Morley: between Latin America and the United States was quite a living thing, a part of strengthening United States defenses, by gaining the interest, sympathy and understanding of Latin American leaders by this natural means of showing them our art and bringing their art here.

As a result of these foreign bids for influence in Latin America, Nelson Rockefeller's Inter-American Office was set up -- as part of the State Department, you know. It carried on a very intensive program, and the San Francisco Museum of Art participated in it in various ways. One result was quite a nice collection of Latin American painting, not nearly as complete as I'd like to see it, but there were acquired a good Figari and a good Torres-García and examples of the indigenista group in Peru and so on.* We already had excellent Mexican examples.

Riess: That you got through this Inter-American participation?

Morley: No. Albert Bender and William Gerstle had fine Mexican examples and they gave them to the museum. I got other Latin American examples in various ways -- sometimes I

* Mexican Art and the Museum, Supplement San Francisco Museum of Art Quarterly Bulletin. Series II, Vol. III, No. 3, 1954; An Introduction to Contemporary Peruvian Painting, Grace L. McCann Morley, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1942.

Morley: wangled gifts, sometimes I got a little money and simply searched out significant examples. The Mexicans resulted from the local interest in the frescoes from the early 1930s; the other Latin American works date mostly from the forties. But it is a fairly good small selection, to illustrate the various phases of Latin American art, up until the early fifties, I'd say.

Of course in the Mexican collection there are some very fine things indeed -- almost a complete file of José Clemente Orozco's prints, for instance, which are magnificent, are really on a world standard, gifts of Albert Bender.

Riess: Is it true that after a Mexican artist dies you cannot get his art out of the country?

Morley: I don't think so. I suppose Orozco's work is fairly carefully controlled. The country would not want to lose it -- a sort of national heritage. Mexican archaeological material may be exported only by consent of the government. But I do not think the work of living artists is prevented from being exported.

Riess: Probably countries are becoming more aware of their own art, its value.

Morley: Oh, yes, but it's not peculiar to Mexico. After all,

Morley: England buys in, not so much work of its contemporary artists who die, but anything of importance in art history that's owned by an Englishman. The National Museum has first call on anything from an English collection that comes up for sale, and in some instances the work may not be exported if it is considered, in the national cultural interest, wise to insist that it remain in the country. France has approximately the same prohibition against exporting art considered national treasure, but I think in this case the restriction affects only art by French artists or those who by long residence or association may be considered of the French school.

Riess: Now what else did the San Francisco Museum of Art's collection include?

Morley: There is the art of the region, a very strong representation of the painting of the thirties and early forties, going back in some instances into the twenties and even before, and continued to some extent up to the present. These are mostly gifts, especially from Albert Bender and William Gerstle. Again, there was never quite enough money to buy systematically. Some are purchases prizes from Art Association Annuals. The most recent acquisitions in local art have been made from a fund set up by

Morley: the women's board of the museum. That group continues to support local purchases, but its funds are limited.

Finally there is a collection representing the evolution of contemporary art. As often as I could, I would get the money to get a good thing that didn't cost too much, that was an example of the currents of contemporary art, so that there would be in the collection a series of key points to which one could refer, you see.

Riess: Do you have these hanging continuously at the museum?

Morley: No, because there isn't space. But they are always brought in whenever appropriate in relation to exhibitions that are in the museum, and they are used for fill-in exhibitions in various combinations.

There are in the collection very fine examples of Matisse, of course, because of the Michael Steins, and of Sarah Stein's very great friend, Harriet Levy, who bequeathed to the museum a good group of Matisse bronzes, an important Matisse painting, many Picasso drawings, and other works of modern art.

Riess: This is the same family as Gertrude Stein, isn't it?

Morley: Yes. It was Gertrude, Leo, and Michael Stein. And Sarah Stein was Michael's wife and was the one who was most interested in Matisse, was a student of his for a while,

Morley: and they, she and her husband, Michael, were great collectors of Matisse. They came back from France in the autumn of 1935, for they had originally had their home in San Francisco. They let me show their collection in 1936, in February, I think it was. And we augmented it with a few Matisse things owned by others and borrowed from elsewhere in the United States that could bring the report on his art up to date. It is interesting to note that this truly great survey of Matisse's art stirred little interest then. By contrast, in 1952, when the Museum of Modern art's Matisse Retrospective came to the museum in San Francisco as first of the paid-admission series, it had a record attendance and a great amount of local critical notice.

Riess: And you've since been given works by Matisse?

Morley: That's right. There was Miss Levy's bequest of Matisse's to the museum. Then more recently, as a memorial collection to honor the Steins, the two great portraits of 1916 by Matisse of Michael and Sarah Stein were given. This was appropriate. The Steins' return to the San Francisco region just as the museum reopened was a direct help to its work. They lent to it generously on many occasions. They were among its first members. They gave interest and

Morley: advice. Their home became a center for interest in modern art and they welcomed students' and artists' visits. Stanford University's professors and students especially came to know the collection well, for they settled nearby in Palo Alto. They and their collection had an influence on Bay Region collectors of whom there began to be a few. They were also a great help to me. At that time it was still somewhat lonely to be exploring modern art in San Francisco. The artists were responsive, but among the people with whom I had to spend most of my time, boards, members, etc., there was curiosity but not much knowledge or understanding. My visits to the Steins, with talk about art in Paris, discussion about modern art, were to me a great stimulus and encouragement though I could see them only rarely.

But it should be noted that even before the museum began to have collections of importance, long-term loans augmented its resources. Matisse's from Miss Levy's collection not only were included in the 1936 show but stayed on loan at the museum for years at a time. There were other lenders too: members of the Crocker family who had lent the old master drawings and some tapestries for the Opening Exhibitions and, later, lent a very fine group of textiles, left all of them for many years in the museum's

Morley: care to be shown whenever it found them useful. However, it was the owners of important works of modern art in the Bay Region, making long term "indefinite," or "permanent" loans to the museum who contributed most directly to its work during the early years. Their loans supplemented the museum's own resources and were especially helpful before the war when its collections were just beginning. Thanks to them the galleries were kept filled during the intervals between touring and other temporary exhibitions. More important still, these loans allowed the museum to develop its program as a museum of contemporary art and to keep on view continuously a small group of works representing some aspects of modern art which the general public, as well as artists and art students of the Bay Region, needed for study, reference and comparison in relation to the changing exhibitions, and museum activities.

In addition to Miss Harriet Levy's collection, two groups of long term loans made to the museum during the first few years were of great value and help to it and should be specifically mentioned here. The first and earliest was a small collection of French art since 1880, offered spontaneously and unexpectedly, which remained for many years at the museum as the works of modern art of most

Morley: importance there. The loan was proposed to me at a critical moment in the museum's development. By 1936 it was clear that the museum must become a museum of contemporary and modern art, for that was the field that needed to be served in the Bay Area community. It would then not duplicate in any way work carried on by any other museum nor would it in any way compete with any other institution. But despite the busy program of changing exhibitions, already obviously successful, it found itself severely handicapped for lack of a collection of modern art of sufficient importance to serve as illustration and reference and as a standard always at hand, for comparison with visiting exhibitions and for educational work. The offer represented an encouragement to the museum's efforts in that it had been prompted by approval of what had been accomplished since the opening. It also meant a very important increase in the museum's resources, for the collection, though small, was important. Its quality was exceptionally high. Especially valuable for art development in the Bay Area were the three major paintings by Vincent van Gogh included in it: First Steps after François Millet, Landscape at Sunset and a Mademoiselle Ravoux. The last two illustrated well van Gogh's direct and nervous brushwork, while Mademoiselle Ravoux, like other late portraits,

Morley: exemplified the artist's innovations in composition, color and expressionistic style, so influential in later developments of modern art. Perhaps having these powerful van Gogh's in the museum for so many years had something to do with the development of the expressionistic movements for which the Bay Region became known after the war. At least, from the museum's point of view, it was immensely helpful, as long as the paintings were there, to be able to point to them as older examples of the tradition to which abstract expressionism, like other expressionistic movements of the twentieth century, belongs.

The circumstances of the offer of this collection remain vividly in my memory though it took place so long ago. One day in the autumn of 1936 I was in my office working into the early evening to clear my desk as was always my custom at the museum. The rush of the afternoon was over and the evening activities were not due to begin for an hour or so. It was dark outside, and quiet inside, for the staff members had left for home or were out for dinner. The attendant at the information counter telephoned in to me to say that someone asked to see me. A slim young man with a great mop of bushy dark hair and earnest eyes came in and introduced himself as Robert Oppenheimer, a member

Morley: of the Department of Physics at the University of California in Berkeley. He sat down across the desk and explained that he had been interested in watching the museum and would like to arrange to place in its charge on long term loan some modern works of art which were then at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He went on to say that he thought that perhaps works of modern art were more needed in San Francisco than in New York just then and that having this small group to exhibit might help the museum's program. It was a collection that he and his brother had inherited from their parents and that they would now like to have in a museum near them so that the local public could benefit and they could also see them from time to time. He gave me the list. (In addition to the three van Gogh's, it included a pastel portrait by Vuillard, a small fine still life by Renoir, a blue period Picasso, a portrait head in bronze by Despiau.) Then he asked if it might be an anonymous loan. I thanked him, though I had no way to tell him what the prospect of having a few first rate works of art would mean to the museum and indeed to me personally, just then in the midst of a period of struggle. It was the first time that any art of international importance had come within our reach, to be used and enjoyed on a semi-permanent basis. In a way getting that collection marked

Morley: a turning point; from then on it seemed that gifts and long term loans came more easily. For many years, until after the war, the collection remained at the museum and was a precious resource. Even during the war when other collectors asked the museum to find places of safety in the interior where their loans could go, together with what they valued in their homes, this collection remained in San Francisco. When the museum asked Robert Oppenheimer if he wished it sent away he replied that it should stay, for perhaps there was even more need of it than in ordinary times. This was, of course, true, for temporary exhibitions had to be reduced in number, and fewer loans remained. Even now, despite the growth of the museum's collection in size and quality, there has been no group of loans to replace this one that Robert Oppenheimer had arranged so generously and so self-effacingly.

The second plan for long term loans was established not long afterward by Mrs. Adolph Mack. Mrs. Charlotte Mack was a pioneer collector of contemporary art in San Francisco. She had specialized in science, but she had an inborn flair for understanding and collecting art. In her apartment, then at California and Gough, I was happy to find not only furniture and a plan of decoration and color

Morley: modern in design and expressive of a sure and, for the time, an advanced personal taste, but extremely important contemporary paintings and sculptures. Works by Kokoschka, Klee, Jawlensky, Chagall, (later of Miró, Picasso and Henry Moore among others), as well as examples of the few artists of the Bay Area who were at that time leaders in exploring abstract styles, decorated her home. David Park I remember among those local artists she had admired and from whom she had purchased. She was generous in making works from her collection available for exhibitions, but she also lent to the museum important paintings and sculptures which she was not using at the time. A little later she began giving each year one or more works of art from her collection to the museum. Oskar Kokoschka's fine city view, Aigues Mortes, was one of her first major gifts. The two important bronzes by Henry Moore which the museum owns are both gifts from her in recent years. So the museum's resources grew, by these long term loans which allowed it complete freedom in using the material in its charge for exhibition and for education; by generous gifts. Only much later was it possible to begin purchasing in a very modest way, first by interesting generous donors in the museum's particular needs and drawing their attention to a specific opportunity to acquire the item or items needed; later, in

Morley: the mid-forties from purchase funds that had been bequeathed to the museum. However, these funds were small, they were in some cases restricted, and as art prices increased after the war very rapidly their growth did not keep pace and only occasionally, if there were an unusual opportunity, were they sufficient or could they be turned to a definite museum need in rounding out its collections. There was always the hope that money for purchase could be included in the annual budget and that a well thought out program of regular purchases could be carried out. That time never came. The museum did the best it could with such help as was given -- women's board purchase fund, for example -- but the planned systematic growth of collections could not be established at any time during the first twenty-five years. It continues an aim for the future.

Riess: You spoke a while back of the exploration of modern art being a "lonely" pursuit in San Francisco, of boards and members not knowing about modern art. Didn't they come later to learn about it from the museum's collections

Riess: and exhibitions?

Morley: Some did, but it was slow. They were busy; had other interests; often were board members or museum members to support a cause they believed in in general for the good of the community rather than having a personal interest in art. The staff tried to help them get more pleasure and benefit from art in various ways. We all thought that since they helped the museum so much they deserved a satisfactory personal return in art terms. One effort was a board-selected exhibition of local art, prepared over about eighteen months, requiring study of exhibitions in the museum and elsewhere, and repeated balloting. It was quite a success. [See Appendix A]

Critics and Teachers

Riess: Could you set the scene for the art of the Bay Area at that time a bit more?

Morley: This was an extraordinary period, the thirties as a beginning, and then later, since the war and up to the present. There were coincidences of circumstances, all kinds of circumstances, and there was the development of art knowledge and the extraordinary vigor and quality of

Morley: artists' activity here. There was this and more that worked out well for art in the area during the museum's first twenty-five years in the War Memorial. A good many people were a part of it or contributed to it. I feel that I, myself, came along at a lucky time in 1934, and whatever virtue I had was mostly because I recognized possibilities and opportunities for a museum of contemporary art, the second one in this country after New York's Museum of Modern Art. I carried them through, and had the good luck to get support to do it and, I suppose, had the knowledge and the experience from the past -- the training -- to recognize them and act on them. I think something similar happened in the case of a good many other people in San Francisco from the thirties, not themselves artists, but connected with art and contributing to creating favorable circumstances for its development.

Take Alfred Frankenstein, for instance. He came to San Francisco as the critic of art for the Chronicle in the autumn of 1934 when the museum started, and I think his first interview on an art subject -- he'd written some reviews-- was one he did with me about the new museum. So we've grown with art of the period and

Morley: have always been rather close, so to speak. And, of course, he's always been very helpful to the museum.

Then Douglas MacAgy -- and I'm afraid I can't recall the exact date -- must have come to join the museum staff in 1938 or 1939. He's now director of the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Dallas, Texas. He had the appointment quite recently. Dallas has the fourth museum of modern art in the country.

Riess: What is the third?

Morley: The third is the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Boston.

The contribution Douglas MacAgy made was a very considerable one. In the first place he was a very good curator when he was at the museum, very imaginative, very scholarly, a very great help. He left it because of the war; he went into the information service, the agency which broadcast news and information about the United States, corresponding to the present Voice of America. And then after the war -- again I can't tell you the exact date, I think it must have been in 1944 or 1945 [1945] -- he became director of the California School of Fine Arts.

And it was at the time when the men who'd been

Morley: in the war came back and had scholarships. So it was an older and a very gifted group of students that came to the California School of Fine Arts. It was under his direction that people like Rothko and Still, and a good many others, came there and contributed their particular points of view to the school. It was a very creative atmosphere with all sorts of cross-currents of interest because MacAgy has, and had then, a very active and creative sort of mind. One of the important things he did was to organize a round table on modern art in April, 1949, at a time when art in the area was entering on its present successful phase.* A special exhibition was organized in connexion with it at the San Francisco Museum of Art. I was still away in France where I had been working for Unesco, but when I returned five months later I learned about the event and read the proceedings. It was an important contribution to art understanding in the area, especially valuable to the artists.

*"The Western Round Table on Modern Art, abstract of proceedings," edited by Douglas MacAgy, San Francisco Art Association, 1949. (Participants: George Boas, Gregory Bateson, Kenneth Burke, Marcel Duchamps, Alfred Frankenstein, Robert Goldwater, Darius Milhaud, Andrew C. Ritchie, Arnold Schoenberg, Mark Tobey, Frank Lloyd Wright.)

Riess: But he went to Dallas.

Morley: He left San Francisco in 1950. I think the school perhaps didn't satisfy those people who wanted, shall we say, a more systematic and more utilitarian teaching of art. And I suspect that he wasn't so much interested in commercial art courses and that sort of thing. Anyway, he went to New York and had a short period working on films for the Museum of Modern Art. Then he was for a good many years on the staff of Wildenstein, carrying on research.

Riess: Was his going a demand of students who wanted a commercial art approach?

Morley: No, I think some of those on the boards of the San Francisco Art Association who were not sympathetic to his point of view probably made him feel that his methods were not appreciated. I don't know, really, very much about it, because as I say I had been away on my Unesco service (1946-1949) and wasn't very close to the institution at that time.

But he did a first-rate job in one direction, in any case, and I think some time if he happened to be in the community it might be rather interesting to record his account of that phase of the development of the school. Certainly it was a creative and productive period there. It has had far-reaching influence. Out of it came a

Morley: great many -- some I suspect rather difficult -- students -- but very creative artists. Calcagno and Sam Francis, among others, there just after the war period, have now won international reputations, for example.

Then, who else? There are so many people who have touched the field. I suppose Fried, too, should be consulted for any complete account of art in San Francisco since 1934. I have the feeling that there should be a record of this extraordinarily productive period of San Francisco's growth as an art center and the basis on which it later produced many people who went out from this area to gain international and national reputations. It might be very useful. Claire Falkenstein, for instance, who's now active and recognized in Paris, in Rome, and in this country, is another example. And so on.

And too any thorough study should include reference to other creative personalities and activities in the area during this period, for a great deal was going on, and directly and indirectly it contributed to the "climate" in which art and the museum too, could flourish. I think of architects (William Wurster, Ernest Born and others), craftsmen (Anthony Prieto, Dorothy

Morley: Liebes, Margaret dePatta and many more), musicians (those of the Composers' Forum -- Darius Milhaud of Mills and Paris especially, and others less close to the museum) who were continuously helpful.

Riess: What do you think of art criticism in this region?

Morley: As American cities go, San Francisco is very lucky. It has two scholarly critics -- Alfred Frankenstein and Alexander Fried -- and a good many who write rather well from time to time. Of the two, Frankenstein is the more sympathetic, I suppose, to the more adventurous artists and movements. Fried is more interested in the background, the traditional side of art, but he is extremely well-informed, and his criticisms are very much to the point also.

Riess: Frankenstein is teaching American art at the University.

Morley: Yes, traditional American art, as well as the contemporary, of course. And he's a very good teacher, I understand.

Riess: A dynamo!

Morley: Probably so.

Riess: And what about art writing in general?

Morley: Some of the members of the art department here do some writing, but there's not a great deal of writing here

Morley: for one very good reason: lack of material. Generally art history and art criticism of the less ephemeral kind -- that is, book-writing on art -- isn't practiced here very much, partly because there really isn't enough opportunity. There are few collections, those there are are not important and generally speaking there is not enough material to work this.

Riess: And as yet there isn't much history.

Morley: No. For the area itself, of course, history is short. But still, a clever person could do something rather interesting on local art history.

Parenthetically I should like to call attention to an excellent short account of art activity in the twenties and early thirties in the Bay Region by a person who was very much a part of it, Beatrice Judd Ryan, one of the pioneers in understanding modern art and presenting it to the local public. See "Rise of Modern Art in the Bay Area," by Beatrice Judd Ryan, California Historical Society Quarterly, March 1959.

Leading Trustees

Morley: Part of the success of the museum and of the growth of art in the area must be attributed to a few outstanding trustees. They were active, responsible, interested, and helped in one way or another.

W.W. Crocker

Morley: Mr. W.W. Crocker was the financial leader; that is to say, because of his wealth, his great generosity, and the generosity of his family, the standing of his family in the community, the fact that his mother had been one of the first great collectors in the area, and his father had been associated with the old museum in the Palace of Fine Arts it was natural that he was elected the president. He had a very deep interest in the museum, but in the abstract generally. He was not concerned with details as Pfleuger was.

Because of his standing as a financial leader in the community, he was the one who was able more than anyone else to get the necessary financial backing to open it and to support it for the first couple of years. In

Morley: the beginning there were only about thirty-five people who paid the necessary funds to open the museum, and Mr. Crocker was responsible for securing the support of almost all of them. He himself was generous then and has always been a large annual donor. He also often purchased important works of art for the museum's collections: two great Braques, a Picasso, a Tamayo, a Rouault among others. He lent generously also, for his mother Mrs. W.H. Crocker had been San Francisco's first collector of great works of art in the serious way, with regard for quality, found in older communities. For example, the only three van Gogh's owned by San Francisco were acquired by her. He and his sister, Mrs. Henry Potter Russell -- also a generous supporter of the museum and lender to it -- inherited some of this family collection, and of course have added purchases of their own in the same tradition.

Mr. Crocker remained the president of the museum until Brayton Wilbur, who became a trustee in the forties, succeeded him in 1948, carrying on brilliantly the same pattern of constructive, somewhat informal leadership. Mr. Crocker then became chairman of the board, an office which was made his for life much later,

Morley: in the mid-fifties, when the constitution and by-laws of the museum were revised, the board was made rotating and a much more formal formula was adopted by the trustees, than had marked the early years of struggle and creative growth. Mr. Crocker has never wavered in his financial support of the museum and in his generous influence on others in this continuing effort to obtain sufficient money for operation. But the other trustees in the museum's early years we should remember too.

Timothy L. Pfleuger

Morley: Now Timothy Pfleuger had been interested for many years in the use of artists in his architectural projects, and he stands out in the memory of people who were here in the thirties because of the Stock Exchange. He commissioned a great many artists to do murals, wall and door decorations, and the like for it. The place is full of painting, sculpture, iron-work -- all designed by local artists for the most part, though the Mexican Diego Rivera and the American Edward Bruce received two major commissions in it.

He was always very much interested in artists and

Morley: made an admirable link for the museum between a place where artists' work would be shown and the artist whose work would be shown. So he was an extremely good president of the art association, and he was the effective leader in the San Francisco Museum of Art though he was only vice-president. He was the active and thinking member of the committee that worked with me before the board was actually set up as a legal entity.

Riess: When he was working with you in those early days was he working in his trustee's capacity or was he working as architect?

Morley: No, not as architect. He had nothing to do with the War Memorial Building, you see. That was done by Arthur Brown, who was on the board also, and who had been the architect of the Civic Center. Arthur Brown had also been a member of the board of the San Francisco Art Association and he had been very active with artists' groups there, but was less so by the time the museum opened in 1935.

Timothy Pfleuger was closer to the museum's operation. He was a most interesting and imaginative sort of person. It was he who raised the possibility of keeping the museum open at night and that, at that time, was

Morley: completely revolutionary. I think at that time no museum in the United States was open regularly at night and even now it's fairly rare to have any museum open every night of the week. The San Francisco Museum of Art was open all evenings except Sunday until long after the war, you see.

Mr. Pfleuger's idea was that artists themselves are painting in the daytime or sculpting in the daytime, that the public, except the leisured people, were not able to use the place during the day because of their own occupations. He thought that in its location, there next to the Opera House with the Veterans Auditorium downstairs, the Public Library in the neighborhood, the Civic Auditorium nearby, made it a natural evening center. And that, of course, was literally true. I was very, very happy at the idea when he proposed it, because in Cincinnati we had talked about evening hours but had never been able to offer them except for special occasions.

Riess: Why hadn't other museums been able to do this?

Morley: Because it's very expensive. For one thing, it means you have to have a more complicated staff pattern. It's hard to get guards to come at night, you see, cover both

Morley: day and night. But we solved the problem by opening at noon and staying open until ten o'clock in the evening. And that was every night except Sunday. Later, long after the war, when the symphony was no longer given on Saturday evenings, we closed on Saturday evenings, but only when the symphony changed its evening performances to other nights.

Riess: You worked this out with the symphony?

Morley: Oh, no. We adapted ourselves to conditions. The symphony makes up its mind what it can do feasibly and financially. We had observed that great crowds came before the symphony on Saturday night -- that was the music-loving, art-loving group -- and so obviously when the symphony was on Thursday night when we were open anyway, they would come then and they wouldn't come on Saturday. When the economic pressures became very great we closed on Saturday evening for that reason. There wasn't any longer on that evening our ready-made audience, in other words, and we could effect an economy without diminishing seriously our services to the community.

Albert M. Bender

Morley: Now, another important member of that very active group of trustees in the beginning, who may be considered the people really responsible for the formation of the museum in its original and very successful form, was Albert M. Bender. He was an insurance man devoted to the collecting of art, very interested in music, books, fine printing, but above everything else, a devoted friend of artists. He was the first one to give us material for the collection, and very good material it was, and through the years he continued to give art and at his death we inherited still more things, and a fund for the purchase of art of the region.

Riess: What was in that first collection? I think of mostly Oriental art when I think of Mr. Bender.

Morley: He was very fond of it, yes. You probably think of that because of the Oriental things you have here at the University that came from him. He was very fond of Oriental art but not a great connoisseur of it, I would say. He was interested in it, liked it, enjoyed it, but he was most interested in the living artists, really. His

Morley: first gifts were primarily works of local artists.

He was very enthusiastic about the Mexicans he knew then -- Rivera, who had worked up here and other Mexican artists who were continually, in the late twenties and early thirties, coming through San Francisco. The things that we inherited from him were Mexican things and the local work of the thirties, especially, in San Francisco. It was a nucleus, in a way, of a collection of that period, to represent the art of the region.

Charles Kendrick

Morley: Doing this alphabetically [looking at names of San Francisco Museum of Art board of trustees in catalogue of the Opening Exhibitions, 1935], next on the list of active effective leaders among the group is Charles Kendrick. He was influential in plans for the War Memorial. He had a distinguished war record, was an outstanding leader civically and among the veterans. He was very much interested in the cultural idea in general, music, art, and so on, and he was devoted to San Francisco. He had fought very hard to keep as much space for the cultural part of the building as possible. He was a very good friend, a very staunch friend of the museum, not so much

Morley: interested in contemporary art as such, but interested in the idea that art was of benefit to the cultural life of the city. He's still living and still a very good friend.

Riess: What did he do?

Morley: He was a business man, a civic leader, very prominent in the thirties in all sorts of altruistic things -- the Community Chest, that sort of thing. He also was on the art association, of course. Later he was very much interested in our international activities, especially in what we did in relation to Latin America. He himself know well South America, spoke Spanish, and supported in every way cultural and business ties with Latin American countries.

William Gerstle

Morley: I skipped, among the officers, William Gerstle, who was the treasurer and was extremely helpful at the time because he was himself an artist. He was a businessman; he had been president of the art association preceding the term of Mr. Pfleuger. He was responsible for bringing Rivera to San Francisco for the Stock Exchange mural and for the fresco in the California School of Fine Arts.

Morley: He was a collector, an enthusiastic one, and he was a person who, by virtue of himself being an artist, understood the problems of the artist, and the problems of art. He was very generous to the museum. Very often later on, when I wanted very much an example of a European period as a sort of key point in our collection, he would respond very generously.

Riess: What sort of examples of art would you acquire through Mr. Gerstle?

Morley: Well, Mr. Gerstle, like Mr. Bender, was always open to suggestion when acquiring art was proposed. As time went on we acquired, thanks to them, a very fine Utrillo of the 1922 period, a Kandinsky of the geometric period, a small Rouault -- one of the clown series -- all works not easily accepted at the end of the thirties.

Riess: How did you go about getting these?

Morley: Well, they became available in the area. In those particular cases the paintings were included in the Exposition of 1939 or in exhibitions that we brought here. They represented artists or art movements which it would be valuable to have illustrated in the collection. We talked over the works, their prices, the gaps in the collection. Albert Bender gave the money to buy the Utrillo and the

Morley: Rouault, from the Exposition collection; William Gerstle, shortly afterwards, purchased the Kandinsky for the collection from a museum exhibition, after we had discussed at great length its interest from our point of view. And it was these men also, later on, with their sympathetic understanding of the museum's needs, who made it possible to buy the early Jackson Pollock and who would accept gifts of such things as a Clyfford Still, or a Rothko, even though they were not convinced of their value. (I should point out that in 1945 or 1946 Jackson Pollock was little known and even in so early a work as Guardians of the Secret [1943] was already difficult to understand for those attuned to representational art. I believe that the San Francisco Museum of Art was the first museum to purchase a Jackson Pollock and this remains an outstanding one of the very beginning of his important period. Clyfford Still was even more controversial when this example of his work of the period was offered to the museum by Peggy Guggenheim. I personally had confidence in his creative integrity. The trustees accepted my advice and the painting. It, like the Pollock and two early Rothkos, acquired about the same time, is a star of the museum's collection.)

Morley:

It was these men, specially as I say Pfleuger, Bender and Gerstle, who were the working group, with Mr. Kendrick standing for civic interest and Mr. Crocker for financial backing. They and the other trustees had then confidence in the director, and even when acquisition proposals were not to their personal taste they would accept the recommendations of the director as their expert.

One of the interesting things at that time was that there were no regular meetings, no monthly meetings of the board of trustees. The women's board had monthly meetings, because its members were concerned with social activities, helping the educational development, and so on, and theirs was a more continuous activity. The board of trustees was made up, as you'll see by the list there, of extremely busy and important men in the community, but could be said to have no direct interest in contemporary art or in the museum's way of serving it, and there was no point in having a meeting for the sake of a meeting. It included not only the people who were active, like Pfleuger, Bender, Gerstle and Kendrick, but also people who lent their names and their backgrounds.

Whenever it was necessary I asked for an executive committee meeting -- the executive committee being these

Morley: active members, some of whom were also officers -- with whatever other members of the board would be especially pertinent to that particular question, whether it was a matter of money-raising perhaps, or whether it was a matter of acquisition or of policy.

Riess: Probably you got a much more responsive board, by doing it that way.

Morley: I think it worked extremely well. There was, of course, by law, an annual meeting of the whole board. At that time it was in February. I believe it still is. But it was an extremely flexible thing and I think to be explained in terms of the period.

You see, you had in the thirties, still, people who continued in the pattern of leaders who selected the people who worked for them, whether it was in business or whether it was in cultural affairs. They delegated their powers, then, to the executives that they considered competent, and they were used to giving a great deal of initiative and a great deal of liberty and a great deal of confidence to their able executives in whatever field. And then they backed them up. And it made for a very flexible arrangement and for the possibility of quick adjustments and for rapid growth. As contrasted with today when

Morley: the emphasis is on smaller enterprises or on specialized jobs in immense corporations and therefore for lack of scope for bolder action, on "do it yourself" interest, the leaders of the time delegated authority and encouraged initiative.

Riess: That earlier attitude describes the relationships between the board and you, then.

Morley: At that time, yes, during all these early years. It was the delegated authority, the support of initiative, the lack of interference in detail, and the confidence shown unflinchingly in the director's professional competence which allowed the museum to develop and grow so rapidly. It would not have been possible otherwise, for there was little money; a small staff being trained on the job; an enormous amount of work to do and no time to spare for explaining or justifying minutiae of professional action or for simply being attentive to people connected with the museum, however important. But these were great people, busy in their own affairs and they had no time for details and trivialities. So they delegated responsibility. I'm pointing this out because there has been a change in the social picture of this country that has to be explained a little bit for it has a bearing on recent

Morley: developments, including the San Francisco Museum of Art's.

Women's Board

Morley: The same thing was true, to a great extent, of the women's board. The women's board, from the beginning, was very important. The men's board, the trustees, represented to a considerable extent a continuity with the old museum when it was in the Palace of Fine Arts, with very few additions, and those few additions chosen to represent a connexion of somekind -- public interest or financial support in the community. The women's board likewise was chosen with great care, but there was not, I think, direct inheritance from the women's board of the museum in the Palace of Fine Arts -- which was called the women's auxiliary in those days. But each one of these women brought on the board of the museum in 1934 and 1935 represented an interest in the community, an interest geographically, an interest aesthetically perhaps, or an influence. Forming their board was extremely carefully done. And a great many of them were very great civic leaders indeed.

Riess: And were they members of the same circles, social or

Riess: otherwise -- or not necessarily?

Morley: Most of them were in the cultural group, the art and music group. A great many of them were very wealthy. A great many of them represented outstanding leadership either in a community or in an art. Mrs. Leon I. Liebes, for instance, is Dorothy Liebes, the textile designer. Mrs. Cabot Brown was a specialist in landscape architecture and garden design.

Mrs. Henry Potter Russell, the first president, of course was -- is -- the sister of Mr. Crocker. Though she was not at all active in the beginning, she became, after the war, very greatly interested in international activity, in connexion with Unesco especially, and supported the museum and its director in that aspect of the museum's development. Mrs. E.T. Spencer is an architect, trained in France, concerned with standards of museum activity. Mrs. John T. Kittle represented Marin County; Mrs. McDuffie the East Bay. Mrs. Sigmund Stern was a very great leader, especially in the musical world, but in many other fields as well, and a very, very great lady indeed, very generous to the museum in many ways. I use the word "lady" advisedly; she was indeed that in the old and good sense. Mrs. Milton H. Esberg, similarly, was a leader and staunch supporter of the museum in fundamental

Morley: and unassuming ways. Mrs. E.H. Heller, Mrs. Jerd Sullivan, Mrs. Nion Tucker, were other faithful and interested board members. Each one of these women represented a support that very far transcended their individual contributions, though they all were generous.

To me the women's board was a very great support at that time because they were the people who, as I say, met monthly and whom I came to know, in some cases quite well, and on whom I could call for help in small projects that wouldn't, in their busy lives, have attracted the men. For instance, Mrs. E.S. Heller made it possible, by paying my fare, for me to fly to New York to talk to the Carnegie Corporation of New York people and get a grant for the first big educational program we did. As long as she lived she paid the subscriptions for the art periodicals in the museum's library, with the result that it was a center for research and reference for the entire area. She bought the museum its first projector for educational work.

Mrs. Duncan McDuffie was very much interested in the educational development at all levels in the museum and gave a great deal of service and help. And later, of course, I worked with her in the Exposition, as director of Pacific House during the second year of the

Morley: Exposition. She was specially interested in it.

Riess: Does the women's board still act in these extensive capacities?

Morley: The women's board is still functioning. When it was set up it was meant to be primarily social, with the idea of a Lady Bountiful, you know, to receive at receptions and previews and so on. Well, these women were of a caliber to whom that would not have had continuous appeal. They were perfectly willing to do their duty socially, and it was very necessary and helpful, of course, to have that kind of social representation at our big openings and previews and so on, and the social publicity that it produced was very good. But they were of a type to respond with more conviction to other more serious interests, and that's why I called on them so continuously and so urgently, and very often at much sacrifice of their time, energy and even money, to give me support in the educational development of the museum.

We moved into that museum with absolutely no educational equipment. It's hard to believe now that there weren't colored slides in those days. We had no money to buy equipment -- I barely had money enough to pay a half dozen indispensable staff members. Other work was done more

Morley: or less well by young people whom we would dragoon into doing jobs.

And there wasn't this money for equipment and there was no way of my convincing the board of trustees, you see, when they had all these demands for salaries, that you had to have educational equipment to work with. Well, with the women it was possible to show the need, and in the beginning it was they who provided, in one form or another, for a baloptican and slide projector, and movie projection equipment, library funds, magazine funds, and slide funds.

Riess: Did they sometimes think of these things on their own or were these usually projects that you put before them?

Morley: Usually that I put before them, simply for the reason that there had been no experience whatsoever in thinking about an active museum here at that time. The other two museums were museums that preserved and exhibited well, but were not active in the sense of carrying on educational work in any form but gallery tours.

I should add that a good many of the women's board members were helpful in quiet and unofficial ways to the museum and to me. Mrs. Lloyd Ackerman, who became a member of the women's board a little after the opening,

Morley: for years took responsibility for the children's Saturday morning classes. She also took charge of the library from 1938 before the museum could afford a librarian and continues still to give two afternoons a week volunteer supervision for the reading room. She established in 1945 and maintains the Lloyd Stuart Ackerman Memorial Fund for the purchase of books for the library.

Mrs. Drew Chidester, who also joined the board after the first year, launched the rental gallery. The benefactions of the women's board, as individuals and as a group, have been continuous and important through the years. The thoughtfulness and generosity of some of them toward the director in personal ways was not their least contribution to the museum's well being, for they eased the work in times of great pressure. Mrs. Esberg became a close friend and wise counsellor. Mrs. Sullivan was a staunch friend in times of stress; Mrs. Stern and Mrs. Russell gave support in international projects. The list could be lengthened.

The women's board today continues some of these interests. It has added others, for example it sponsors the rental gallery and it has set up a purchase fund -- very important for a museum that has none of its own.

Artists' Advisory Committee

Morley: In those early days we had an artists' advisory committee which met occasionally with me. It was quite important, especially for the first big exhibition, the Art Association Annual, which was a part of the Opening Exhibitions. But, as time went on and the museum became technically more complex we found it better -- both the artists and the museum -- to have informal consultations when we needed them. The technical detail of operating an organization wasn't very attractive to the artists -- just to be told that so many exhibitions were booked and these were what they were, and for these and these reasons, was of no special significance from their point of view.

Riess: The same people that were on the artists advisory committee in 1935 also comprise the membership of the art association jury of selection and hanging and jury of awards. They were the powers that were?

Morley: Yes, they were active in the art association then and they were simply delegated by the art association to function in connection with this 55th Annual, their first

Morley: Annual in the new quarters, which was included among the Opening Exhibitions. This was a general Annual. It included painting, sculpture, drawings, and prints. As time went on we split the Annual in order to give more emphasis to the so-called minor media of watercolors, drawings and prints; painting and sculpture tend always to receive greatest attention. So we had a painting and sculpture Annual, then a watercolor Annual, then a drawings and prints Annual. This gave artists of each type of work more space and more opportunity for recognition.

Riess: You were also having one-man shows of local artists, then, weren't you?

Morley: Yes, we had a great many one-man shows of local artists in the years immediately following the opening. They were organized according to various patterns. In the first period, well-known local artists who had not had one-man shows in the area were shown as part of the effort to inform the public on local art and to encourage it. A series of small exhibitions by art association members was presented in 1937-39. But later usually groups -- "galaxies" -- of one-man shows were the rule, with the idea that that provided better cross-interest.

Morley: People would come for one artist's work and they would see that of others. Varieties of that system were usual until my exhibition programming at the museum terminated.

Jurying

Riess: The jury of selection and hanging was an art association function, but would you explain how that worked?

Morley: Well, a jury of selection is found almost everywhere that annuals are presented. A "hanging" committee is unusual. It is an old pattern that goes back to France in the nineteenth century. The art association had to maintain that pattern because they had no professional organization to present exhibitions for them, between the closing of the Palace of Fine Arts on the Marina and the opening of the museum in the War Memorial. During the preparation of this first, this opening show, the museum staff processed the receiving and return of the art association exhibition -- the shipping in and the shipping out. It also set up for the art association the circumstances under which they wished to jury. But they (this committee elected by art association members) juried the work

Morley: submitted. And after they juried the material they did the hanging of what had been accepted. It was a great help just then for I had all the rest of the Opening Exhibitions to install single-handed. But that method was never used again, simply because it's a great deal to ask of artists, to give time to that sort of thing. And if you have professionals to do it for you... This is the job of a museum. From then on the museum was in full operation and it served the artists by installing the Annuals. They continued to do the jurying.

Riess: Could these artist-jurors help but be biased?

Morley: In my recollection and experience I've never known artists to set out deliberately to be biased. I think it's perfectly natural for them to judge art sympathetically and on the whole justly. After all, they are the people best equipped to understand other artists' methods and aims.

Riess: Well, biased by their own artistic view?

Morley: Yes. Well, that's a difficulty with artists, of course, as jurors of art. They are necessarily committed to their own point of view. They believe in it and they should. So therefore they sometimes are not able to enter into the spirit of another artist. This results

Morley: in accusations of bias some times. That, of course, goes on endlessly. But, on the whole the charge of bias tends to be exaggerated. Ordinarily artist-jurors work hard to avoid any prejudice for or against the work of their fellow artists.

Riess: Who does the jurying for the Annuals now?

Morley: Recently the system has been changed. Until about five years ago, it was an elected jury, usually of artists, elected by the artists' membership of the association, as in 1935.

Riess: Out of the membership.

Morley: Out of the membership.

But, in recent years -- and this, I think, was in part the result of my continuous recommendation for a long time -- it finally was decided and became economically feasible to bring in a juror from outside who acted as a one-man jury. It was done with the idea, first, that you would get a fresh point of view in the selection, and you'd get a certain consistency, whether you agreed with it or not. Over a period of time, since the jurors would be different people, you'd get different kinds of cross-sections, which would supplement and complement one another.

Morley: And then, second -- and this was very deliberate -- we realized that bringing in people like Thomas Hess, who is the editor of Art News, would attract wider attention to local artists in the national art press. Similarly it was recognized that by inviting people like Lloyd Goodrich, who is the director of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and like Gordon Washburn, who is the director of the Carnegie's Art Museum in Pittsburgh -- both museums having exhibitions, invited exhibitions, which are very important to contemporary art -- they would become somewhat acquainted with the kind of work being done out here and might very well invite representation from this region for those exhibitions.

 From my point of view as a disinterested, but very sincerely interested, supporter of art in the region, it didn't matter whether these outside jurors took this artist or that one for the particular Annual for which they were responsible, or later wrote about or invited for a national or international show one or another artist. The important thing in my mind was that art in this region have some recognition on the national level, and from leaders important outside the area, because such recognition

Morley: in the long run helps all local artists, whether they are individually represented or not in any given show.

No, artists were never a problem in the San Francisco Museum of Art. Sometimes we didn't agree; sometimes we had to argue things out, or even demonstrate our proposal before it won acceptance by the artists of the art association or of some other group; but I never can recall any instance of a conflict.

Riess: You've done jurying?

Morley: Oh, yes, often.

Riess: But not for the museum.

Morley: Not for the San Francisco Museum of Art, no, except in the sense that always when you are selecting a show you are acting as a one-man jury. And of course I did innumerable invited shows from the art of this region in the museum, so I did have that experience in relation to art here. You ask about jurying a show? Well, you try to select the best from the material submitted -- rather quickly obviously, since you may have, as I did the other day, up to twelve hundred items to review in only a couple of days... Did I tell you about my experience in Buffalo? Well, it was my most recent jurying job...

Morley: Buffalo is a very important center of art. The museum, the Albright Gallery, has a great collection of modern art, contemporary art, and it buys continuously and well. It has two Clyfford Stills, for instance, the second museum after the San Francisco Museum of Art to own Clyfford Still, I believe. And it is also a very active center of artists. I had been invited to serve on the jury of the Northwest New York State Regional show. There were something like twelve hundred entries and they included painting, sculpture, watercolors, prints, drawings, and photography. Eventually we -- two artists and I -- came up with a show of some hundred and twenty-one things.

Riess: Is this the usual function of a jury, rather than just awarding prizes?

Morley: There may be a jury of selection and a jury of prizes functioning separately; we did both, and it is a usual procedure.

My colleagues were Philip Guston, who is an abstract painter, and Walter Murch who does -- well, it's a sort of magic realism painting, I suppose. That is, he uses recognizable objects but they have symbolic or associative values: he very often uses a bit of a machine or an

Morley: old clock or a pendulum, or something of that sort, and it has a very definite symbolic meaning, a suggestion of something beyond the object itself. He says he doesn't paint the object; he paints what's between the object and the viewer. And that's literally true.

Riess: Oh.

Morley: Very difficult. But he means it and he does it.

Riess: Well then, in jurying do you look at the work and operate on a kind of "your first reaction is apt to be the best" principle?

Morley: No. What you do usually in a show, any regional show, even quite large shows, and national shows, is to go through rapidly a good part of the material submitted. In all such exhibitions you get a certain amount of material done perhaps by Sunday painters or by inept painters or by students and it's immediately visible that they are not up to the standards of the region. Usually you go through a considerable amount of material to arrive at the standards of the region; in other words, your standard in even so good a region as Buffalo was serving in this Northwest New York State Annual would not be as high as the standard at the Carnegie International show, for which in the past a jury selected a section.

Morley: Now, I think it's all invited.

Then as you review the material submitted, there are certain things as they come up that are so good that you know at once that they have to be in the show. There are some obviously so poor that they can be discarded at once. A large group in the beginning is usually "doubtful" and therefore held for a second look. Sometimes the decisions are made by majority vote. Sometimes, if you have a jury made up of people who are completely opposed in point of view, you may have to settle for a selection in which each juror makes a certain group of choices. This produces a show which hasn't much unity usually. In any case you usually put a very large group into "doubtful" and then you review them to make sure no merit is overlooked in the rush of the first viewing. On second inspection, after all the submitted material has been reviewed, what is good enough to stay, what falls below the general level, are much more clearly seen.

Riess: Then when you think of a show you think of the total picture, the unity of it primarily, rather than seeing to it that a certain number of artists and schools are represented?

Morley: Yes. You do not forget quality in the effort to

Morley: represent all tendencies and styles; you try to obtain comparable quality whatever the tendency or style. You try to get together a show that is respectable in terms of art. You don't try to simply represent artists and styles as such; you are trying to give recognition to art.

Riess: I am puzzled about what kind of unity this is.

Morley: When a single person makes a selection, or when you have a selection by three people who choose according to majority vote, you have much more unity than when you have three people who have irreconcilable points of view, you see, each one of whom decides to show only the aspect of art he finds acceptable.

It is unity of standard of quality, I would say, versus the diversity of standard which you might have if three individuals were selecting independently.

But generally speaking, shows come out pretty well. I've never had two better colleagues than Guston and Murch. There was an awful row in Buffalo afterwards because obviously all the people who didn't get in were such that Mr. Murch had been outvoted by Guston and me, because mostly the people who don't get in to a juried exhibition nowadays are "representational" painters, and those in Buffalo who had not been accepted were sure

Morley: Murch was on their side, and that Gust and I probably were not. Representational painters tend, in our current period, to be less interesting, able, and creative than those working in other forms of expression, and they therefore often form a large group among the rejects in a juried show. They tend to fall into the group that are, shall we say, less adventurous, while the non-representational, abstract, semi-abstract segment of contemporary art tends to attract the artists that are more exploratory and creative, with the result that quite terrible things are sometimes produced in that segment, but also usually the more brilliant work is to be found there, too. This explains the dominance of this segment in exhibitions of any kind today, whether juried or invited.*

*[The exhibitions representing the United States at the Brussels Fair in 1958, at the Moscow Fair in 1959; the exhibitions circulated abroad by the Museum of Modern Art; recent Annuals at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, all illustrate this fact. It should be added that international exhibitions -- the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, the Biennials in Venice and Sao Paulo, as the most important, differ little in this regard from the United States shows. GLMcM.]

ART AND ART MUSEUMS IN THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

The Art Language of Our Times

Morley: Now, you wanted to know what I think of very, very modern painting, advanced, avant garde painting. Well, I think of it as contemporary painting, and to me there isn't any question of liking or disliking it. It exists and certain aspects of it appeal to me very much, certain personalities I find congenial, just as in any other art period. It's just the language, the aesthetic language, the art language of our times. As you become experienced in it you naturally have your favorites; and others much admired that you even think very highly of, perhaps on technical and critical grounds, don't appeal to you especially in a personal way.

I think this extraordinary vehemence and freedom and almost violence is characteristic, or has been characteristic, of art in this country since the war years, really, though it goes back in its almost violent

Morley: reaction against traditional art to Jackson Pollock. It isn't anything new in art, in the sense that art always came from the same sources as these people (often called "action" painters or abstract expressionists) use -- that is to say, the unconscious, sub-conscious reactions to experience, to visual stimuli or to emotion or whatever the stimuli are. But where it differs is that it is a more direct thing; it isn't strained through rules and dogma; it's almost automatic, in some cases, as in automatic writing. And it has a certain virtue of spontaneity and it has a sense of freshness and discovery. It also, of course, has certain dangers.

Riess: But with automatic writing the automatic process is only the beginning. What comes automatically is then worked over, I believe.

Morley: Well, I think some of the artists do the same thing. They may go through differing phases of this type of expression. But certainly the quality that has always been in art is to be found in this kind of contemporary art. It's just that it's a new language, if you like. But the essential creative qualities of art, art as a creative language, are there just exactly as before. And I believe in it.

You see, I believe in human beings, and artists are

Morley: simply human beings that have the gift of expressing certain personal reactions and recording them. They are extremely sensitive people. They very often are prophets without knowing it, in that they react and understand intuitively many things that are there and that other people learn to know about very slowly and long afterwards. That you should find artists today stressing the non-literal aspects of art is completely normal. After all, the kind of world we live in is one that is expressed in relationships, in algebraic equations. And in a way abstraction is the counterpart in art to the sort of thinking that we have in our time. To learn to understand and to respond to contemporary art the best way is to be open to what color, the texture of paint on canvas and all the other elements of art expression can convey in visual and emotional experience.

Riess: One thing that I think bothers those that resist this contemporary expression is the haste with which it is produced. Instead of "art is long and life is short" you have quite the opposite -- manifested in quantity and speed.

Morley: Yes. Well time will cure that. The things that have been done too speedily will drop out. Moreover, it is

Morley: well to remember that painting a work on canvas is only the final stage of what is often a long period of preparation. It is always the result of the artist's life, his knowledge and experience up to then. And even in the sixteenth century a lot of art was done that didn't get preserved, fortunately.

I do think that it is a very exciting period, especially so to me. Having been partly educated in Europe, having recognized and understood this great heritage that had developed in the older countries, having seen gifted artists here struggling with the problem of finding a way of their own under the tremendous burden of knowledge and prestige from abroad, it seems wonderful to see them entering naturally the international arena of art. Remember my telling you of the reaction against European painting of Thomas Craven and Benton and so on in the thirties? Well, they were not good enough; they were reacting against influences, all right, but they didn't have themselves enough personality, and experience, to find their place in competition with the Europeans. Well, in our time, this recent time since the war, things have changed. The quality and power of art in the United States has begun to be seen and recognized abroad.

Morley: The quality of Americans as artists has come through, has found a form of its own. I have certain reservations about some things that are characteristic of art in this country -- the haste, the vigor, the fact that very often the artists don't stop to learn their materials. But on the other hand I can't help but be exhilarated and pleased that this freshness, this aggressiveness, if you like, this tremendous quality of creative vitality that has come to a maturity here in this country in the last ten years, is obviously something that has great value. Anyone would recognize it. But, farther than being recognized by people who are sympathetic -- as I am, because I'm interested in discovering artists who are finding their way -- the quality of American art is recognized by people in Europe, for example, who have no special reason to respond to it, except that they see in it art that seems to them worth while.

After all, Americans are newcomers to the world of art. Three hundred years? That's nothing. So that, to me, the recent international recognition that has come to art here, is a very exciting thing. And I think trends of the highest quality, the highest percentage of what is produced, if you like, are going to go on developing

Morley: and will not be forgotten in our time. They will not be forgotten even in the future, as characteristic of our time and as a contribution to our time.

Riess: Do you think art trends spring up simultaneously in different countries?

Morley: I don't know. Art is an elusive sort of thing, you know. Artists everywhere live and work under similar conditions today; they may very well come to similar ways of expression in different places without direct connexion or influence. In our highly developed technological civilization art may well be the purest personal expression and freedom of the individual which is left, for the individual otherwise tends to be fenced-in, suppressed, controlled; perhaps necessarily so in an urban, industrial civilization.

The artist has to be a free being. He's responsible ultimately only to himself. He is, of course, very glad if other people like what he does so that he can earn his living by doing his art -- and that's happening more usually now than it did in 1935. But ultimately what other people say and think about his art touches him only indirectly. He is himself. His work must satisfy him.

Riess: Then it isn't communication that is important to him?

Morley: Not necessarily. He'd love, I think, to communicate what he thinks and feels about things but it may be that he's before his time. Van Gogh was; no one responded to his work and he went on with it anyway. His communication is more important for us now than it was for people in his own time. And I think art very often develops in that way. It explores continuously new frontiers of seeing, feeling, expressing human experience and emotion. It's a living, growing thing. First it lives and grows in the artist; but it lives in its own right and grows in its relationship to everything that happens afterwards, long after the artist is dead very often, long after it's external to him. And that's one of the interesting and exciting things about art. It is history in a direct expression, not only of the individual artist, but of his time, of his place.

Riess: Though from what we see art is not a living and a growing thing in the Soviet Union, for example.

Morley: Well, obviously in the Soviet Union there has been a condemnation of the free expression of the artist since from their point of view there it's necessary for the artist to serve the state, and therefore he does, officially at

Morley: least, very representational historic records of things that happened that are important to the state -- successful harvests, the honoring of labor, historic events and portraits, and that sort of thing. There is, very definitely, a suppression of freedom of expression in that he doesn't have a chance to show to people publicly whatever he does of a more personal, unofficial type. But apparently, from what one hears, there is an infinite continuity of experimentation there too.

Riess: Yes.

If there is a simultaneous springing-up of trends towards abstraction in art, or nearly simultaneous, can it be said that America is in the fore?

Morley: No, it isn't headed by American art. I think the American expression is a very important part of it and, as I say, for the first time in art history the Americans are recognized as equals and, in some cases, people who are enthusiasts think them superior in the abstract field. Certainly abstraction has been indisputably the dominant movement in the United States for the last ten or more years, and certain Americans -- Mark Tobey and Jackson Pollock, to cite two outstanding examples -- have made

Morley: great personal and distinctive contributions to abstract art and are recognized internationally as major figures in it. I don't think you can categorize things and arrange them in the particular way that your question suggests. It's much more subtle than that.

There have been exchanges of example and of influences in abstract art. The Americans have contributed importantly to it. They had been stimulated and had found suggestion in what was being done in other countries, just as now artists of other countries are interested and stimulated by them. The important thing is that some of them found that they could make abstraction their own, and within its varied expressions make their own personal and powerful statement.

But I think human beings -- and this is anthropology rather than art -- that human beings everywhere are pretty much alike. At every period artists tend to reflect their time, to be spokesmen for their time in a very intimate way. They are the truest historians, after all, because they record in a subtle way the climate of their times, things that are important, the feeling of what people are interested in, and so on.

And obviously the same conditions of living produce

Morley: similar ways of expressing them. As a matter of fact, at no time in the world has there been as much similarity of living, feeling, thinking, exchanges of influences everywhere -- from San Francisco eastward all the way around to China -- as there is now. And so you find to some extent the same things everywhere. The artists reflect this condition; they find similar ways of expressing it in their art. Often there are exchanges of influence but not necessarily. What is worth noting is not what started an artist off in his way of expressing himself, but rather how successfully he does it. Human beings inevitably have somewhat similar patterns everywhere today, modified naturally by their own experiences, background, environment. They all face a world of baffling problems, an unsatisfactory world.

Artists, being especially sensitive, probably know much more about the meaning of our time -- without knowing what it is, although they are expressing it -- than most other people. We just live our time blindly, most of us, while they are reacting to it and expressing it. And so they are recorders of the time and I think this is true everywhere.

The quality of what artists express in different

Morley: places naturally differs. If they see good work being done by their peers and are measuring themselves against it, why they are more likely to be a part of a more important movement than in places where they know what's going on in contemporary expression only through illustrations in art books. This explains in part the general superiority of work done in centers -- Paris, New York, London -- as compared with that done in outlying regions -- San Francisco, Lahore, Sydney -- where less is seen.

Riess: Contemporary art demands more from the artist than art in other periods, in a way, because the artist cannot stay as close to observed nature; he has to create.

Morley: Yes, that's true. On the other hand, there are lots of people who are "imitating" in the sense that they are following a recognized style, more or less well understood, and that's one of the things that makes for confusion today. That is, it's very easy, if you have a little taste and a little facility, to seem to "create" an abstraction, and it's harder, probably, to differentiate between an abstraction that's a good one and an abstraction that's an indifferent one, than between a good and bad traditional painting.

It's a little easier to evaluate bad drawing in a

Morley: representational work -- especially if it's very academic. If the shoulder isn't in the right place it's pretty evident, while in an abstraction it takes more study to recognize creative quality. Abstraction is a more mature, in a way, creative expression, and therefore it requires more experience and maturity from the viewer for an absolute judgment than the purely surface representation or imitation of nature in an academic picture does.

Points of Departure

Riess: Then do you think the San Francisco artist, as had been suggested, being an abstract expressionist, would be at home anywhere?

Morley: Yes, I think he'd be at home anywhere. It should be noted that all Bay Area artists are not abstract expressionists. Those who are are part of a world-wide art movement. But there is an interesting point here: does art of San Francisco, of the Pacific Coast, show some regional stamp within abstraction? I've had the question raised a number of times when Europeans have for the first time seen work done on the West Coast. These Europeans had been familiar with art done in New York to

Morley: a certain extent, and they, when they saw work by artists of the Pacific Coast, did feel something different, and inquired about it.

I do think that in the art of many of the artists who have lived and worked out here and who have developed a very personal expression of their own, like Diebenkorn, for instance, or Carl Morris, or Mark Tobey, there is a certain quality that comes from the place. This can't be light, because the light is quite different in Seattle from the light in San Francisco. It isn't Oriental influences, though many -- Graves and Tobey -- have been deeply interested in Chinese and Japanese art, and have sought deliberately influences from the Orient -- and have learned much from Oriental techniques.

I think perhaps it comes, the deep thing that is different, and characteristic of Pacific Coast art, from the landscape. This lies not in the superficial resemblance to Chinese landscapes which you find in some of Morris's or in some of Tobey's painting, which may or may not come directly from the fact that the scenery in Oregon and Washington and in China and Japan -- with their combination of water, forests, mists, mountains -- resemble one another on both sides of the Pacific. But the difference is something rather different from that, and I suspect -- this

Morley: is my idea -- that it is a space feeling, a spatial conception, the fact that this area, in the youth of all those artists, was still a countryside that wasn't extremely densely populated, that there were vast expanses, enormous distances, and the scale of things was large.

I don't know whether it's an idea that I push too far or not. It's difficult to say. But it's a possibility that interests me and I have talked to people about it. It happens that I am myself very sensitive to space, very much interested in it and influenced emotionally by it.

Riess: And in the East, in New York, people live down in a sort of man-made canyon, an entirely different space.

Morley: Yes. And, of course, there's quite a range from Oregon's hills and mist to the Southern California desert, but far distance, vast spaces, monumental scale are characteristic of the Far West.

Riess: Is art done mainly in the studio these days?

Morley: Well, mostly. Artists now hardly ever work from the object directly, though they may do an incredible number of very careful drawings which are motifs, in a way, or which are ways of thinking. They see, they think, visually and drawing is a way of exteriorizing their thinking, so to speak.

Riess: Do they do realistic drawings?

Morley: Sometimes. It doesn't matter. Most artists have a skill of hand and of vision. A realistic drawing is not difficult. They're usually not nigglingly realistic things, but they are expressively realistic, recognizable things, very often figure drawings, for example. Sometimes artists do them to rest themselves from the more intense exploration of the new frontiers of vision and expression which they are exploring in their abstract art.

The human figure's very exciting. When the Carl Morris show comes to the Palace of the Legion of Honor (and it's scheduled for 1961), go over and see that, because Carl Morris is an abstract painter, though there are sources in nature for what he paints. I did the Ford Foundation retrospective exhibition and catalogue on him, you see, so I know quite a lot about how he works and what he does.*

Well, his work comes principally from landscape, though he says the subject is not important to him. But

* Carl Morris, a Ford Foundation grant to the American Federation of Arts for a retrospective exhibition to be circulated nationally, 1960-1961, and a monograph and catalogue, New York, 1960.

Morley: nature is his motif very often. It's his point of departure. And he does ink drawings, rice-paper paintings, of an abstract kind that are similar to his oils. They are a preparation and working up of the themes later used in the oils, often, though never a continuity that leads directly to an oil. By contrast there are also figure drawings. He told me the other day, I believe, but rather a reference or allusion to it -- when I saw them for the first time, really, in Portland -- that when he had been stirred up by a trip to New York, with all the influences that go on there, and all the excitement of seeing a lot of art of all kinds, he would come back and draw figures for a while, because that was a way of getting the excitement out of his system, so to speak. And these are beautiful, very free figure drawings, wonderful, evocative things.

Riess: These drawings were a better way for him to get it out of his system than through painting?

Morley: Well, it just happens that that's his way of working with these influences and digesting them, if you like.

Riess: What direction do you think art will go next?

Morley: I don't think anyone knows that.

Riess: People suggest that it has really exhausted the canvas.

Riess: Do you think that's possible?

Morley: No, I don't think so. I think people saying that are making phrases. Art goes on, renews itself, finds new ways and always has.

After all, live with art and enjoy it. That is the important thing for now. Not all contemporary art is great and that isn't important. What is important, though, is that there be a general high level of activity in art. After all, being an artist is a way of life, as being in business or being in anything else is. There are only a few that stand out in any profession, in any line of work. Well, it's the same thing in art. But if there is a very strong movement, and the general level is very high, why then you begin to have the peaks coming up from there, from a plateau instead of from a depth. And that, I think, is what has happened in this country.

What is the important thing is that art is not only in New York; it's spread all over the country around in a great many centers, a great many of them university and college centers, where artists are professors or are artists in residence. They have students who perhaps don't become artists themselves, but for a brief time have the experience of artists. There you find people who are

Morley: interested in art, enthusiastic about it and well informed. This produces a climate favorable to art, and such centers are found widely distributed throughout the country. They provide an increasingly good setting in which art and artists may develop.

Interest in Art Grows: 1935

Riess: Would you describe in more detail the art of the area when you returned to San Francisco in 1935?

Morley: Well, you see, California was very far away from the big museums and the eastern centers for artists and the art market. The artists' group was a very strong, very interesting one here at the time. The California School of Fine Arts and the Art Association had maintained a high standard. There's no doubt about that. The Art Association had occasionally been able to bring an exhibition, an invited exhibition, from somewhere else, but it was too infrequent -- oh, perhaps several years might elapse between such carefully selected shows -- and the result was that the artists, for the most part, were ten or fifteen years behind the movements of their time, simply

Morley: because they didn't see enough of what was going on in art. They didn't have other's work against which to measure their own. They didn't have sufficient stimulus.

Also remember that you didn't have then the kind and quantity of color reproductions that you have now, the great movement back and forth across the world of art work in that form. Color reproductions are not sufficient for artists and art students but they help. Also, travel was less frequent then. That is the reason why during the first years of the museum we emphasized exhibitions, the basic exhibitions that were summaries of the history of the development of modern art, exhibitions that were reports on what was going on by artists who seemed interesting, leaders at the time, as a stimulus, as a standard, against which the local artists might measure their own production, and as a means of informing the public so that they, too, would become interested, stimulated, and have standards. For the local artist, too, an informed public was needed. The program seems to have worked extremely well. And the results, I think, were evident fairly soon.

Of course the Carnegie grant [1937] was extremely valuable in building up a small nucleus of a very earnest

Morley: and informed public.* The first year -- the grant was spread over three years and provided for courses, very serious courses with sessions two hours long -- the first year was devoted to demonstrations of techniques, illustrating the way artists work, and explaining art through the manner in which materials are manipulated for expression. The first hour was devoted to a demonstration and explanation; the second hour the people broke up into groups and tried their hands at whatever the technique was, so they'd get the feel of it in their fingers, which is one of the ways of learning what it's all about.

The second year was history. And the third year took in architecture, the decorative, applied, industrial, and the minor arts, and put them in their place in relation to the general development of art history.

Riess: Was this a program suggested by the Carnegie?

Morley: No, it was our program, submitted to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which gave us the funds for carrying it out. The Carnegie had subsidized other art programs at different times in the past, but nothing of this sort --

*"The Carnegie Grant: What it Meant to Art in San Francisco," by Grace L. McCann Morley, San Francisco Museum of Art Quarterly Bulletin, Series II, Vol. VI, No.2-3, 1957, p. 13.

Morley: beginning with the the techniques and materials of art to provide a direct experience of it -- had been done before, and they were therefore interested in supporting it.

Riess: Did the same students take the entire course?

Morley: Yes. They were adults. We had, in the first year, three sections of seventy-five each. By the second year about a third had dropped out. But then while carrying the original group into the second year we re-started the first year. You really had a cycle of two three-year courses. And they were, as I say, basic, and seemed to have been very valuable in giving those who attended a sound approach to understanding art. Of course there were reading lists and much discussion and consultation. We had a waiting list for the first course of almost enough to begin the second immediately.

Riess: Was it free to members?

Morley: No. There wasn't any membership at that time; it came a little later. The fee was -- oh, I've forgotten how much -- I think ten dollars.

Riess: And materials and everything were paid for with that?

Morley: Yes, but that was because of this Carnegie grant, you see. And also that grant allowed us to have our first curator,

Morley: an educational curator.

We also did an extension service under the same program, in which we used fine color reproductions -- which allowed us to build up our color reproduction collection -- organized them in a manner to give in simpler form essentially the same courses, and sent them throughout Northern California with one appearance of a lecturer during the time of the showing.

Riess: After the Carnegie grant ran out did this same sort of educational program continue?

Morley: Well, by that time we had equipment and we could go on on our own and we built up a very large educationally interested group. But the Carnegie helped enormously in providing equipment and staff at the beginning. Even before the Carnegie we had already started courses. They consisted usually of six weekly meetings, lectures and demonstrations on all sorts of phases of art and art history, illustrated as best we could. As I say, in the beginning we even had no black and white slides.

Riess: Who taught these earlier courses?

Morley: In the beginning my assistant and I did. We were the only people who were trained, you see. And there was a tremendous public response. One of the curious things

Morley: about this sort of offering is that you get a wonderful response early in any development; later on it tends to taper off.

Riess: Because you've drawn off the people who are interested?

Morley: Partly that, and partly the novelty of it has passed, I suppose.

Then it was in 1937, I believe, that a membership was finally established. There was a reason for this: first, I'd come from a museum where there had been a membership and I very heartily believed in the interest that it represented in the community at large, the direct contact and wide support that a museum had in its community as a result of having members. And also I was faced with the fact that the museum was growing very fast and the thirty-five or forty people that Mr. Crocker wrote to personally didn't produce enough money. You see, in the beginning a secretary, a very good secretary, better than you find very often now, cost sixty-five dollars a month. And that, of course, as the depression was more or less resolved, wasn't any longer true.

The membership proved in the end to be a life-saver for us. Some of the more conservative members of the board of trustees were rather apprehensive because they

Morley: felt that if you had a membership you had a nuisance -- people you had to do something for and about. But it worked out extremely well. We had close to a thousand members, as I recall, by the time of the war. It was more or less static during the war period. Then after the war it began to grow very, very fast. When the museum was renovated and I came back from Unesco it took great spurts. Nothing to do with me especially. It just happened that that was the period of expanding activity, bigger exhibitions, and so on. By August 1958 there was a membership of over 4,600.

Riess: Could we go back to what the regional school of this area might have been in 1935?

Morley: Well, the San Francisco-Bay Area had always been good for art activity. You had Carmel and you had artists here in San Francisco, in the Montgomery Block, in the settings which attracted artists -- pleasant, inexpensive living, delightful subject matter, interesting people, a certain amount of interest in art, especially in the person of Albert Bender, of course. Even at that time the studio part of art teaching at the University of California was producing good artists and it had on its staff

Morley: artists who were leaders in the art community. The San Francisco Art Association was active and held to high standards.

Then you had the immense stimulus of the construction of a building for the art association's headquarters and for the California School of Fine Arts. You had a similar stimulus in Mr. Pfleuger's buildings in the community, in which he so often made commissions available to artists.

Riess: When someone commissioned Mr. Pfleuger to do a building did they realize that they were going to get a complement of artists and so on to decorate that building?

Morley: I doubt whether it was quite as overt as that. I think Mr. Pfleuger, with his great enthusiasm for the work of artists...

Riess: Would just convince his patron.

Morley: Yes. And the use of art in the Stock Exchange, for instance, made it a unique building, a tremendously expensive building in a way, but it's a handsome structure and lavish use of art, especially local art, was the pride of the Stock Exchange here.

So you had a very active and a very able group of artists in the area. Then the WPA, with the Coit Tower

Morley: as one of the first big projects, and innumerable other projects scattered throughout the city and the general area, gave a great deal of opportunity for artists here in the Bay Area. The direction of the government's art project here was especially enlightened.

I think it should be noted that here in this particular area you had a more extensive development of mural painting in general, and especially of fresco painting than elsewhere. That was certainly because of Diego Rivera's work here and the fact that he had many of the younger artists, who later became more or less prominent, as his helpers. In fresco work, you see, you use a great deal of help since a lot of the process is mechanical, putting plaster on the walls and then transferring the cartoon to the walls. So Rivera had influence in teaching the fresco technique and in proposing mural decoration as appropriate for public buildings and government sponsorship.

Riess: How did they transfer the cartoons to the wall? Did they punch them on?

Morley: After preliminary drawings have been made they are often transferred in a scaled enlargement to paper which is then held against the wall and the guiding outlines are

Morley: traced on the wall, either by working charcoal through small perforations in these outlines or incising or tracing the outlines through the paper. Rivera did this work very freely and very easily, but his preliminary drawings were, at this period, very detailed. William Gerstle bought up the series of the "Hands" that Rivera had done for frescoes in Mexico, and also those drawings he did in preparation for the frescoes at the California School of Fine Arts and at the Stock Exchange. These careful, rich and brilliant studies for mural decoration were treasures, shall we say, for the artists in San Francisco at that time. They were examples they studied for their own mural work. These drawings belong to the art association and are lent to the museum, which has exhibited them repeatedly. The museum also owns another important group of drawings by Rivera, executed in various media, among which are some studies for figures and for compositions intended for murals.

The WPA to a certain extent, in its administrative pattern, borrowed something from the Mexican plan of government commissions to artists of the early twenties. That is to say, artists received not an artist's wage but almost a labourer's wage, but they were allowed to do the work that their skills prepared them for, instead, as

Morley: they said, of "having to rake leaves."

Evolution of a Museum of Contemporary Art

Riess: How did the San Francisco Museum of Art evolve into a museum of contemporary art?

Morley: Well, that's an obvious development. When it was founded by the San Francisco Art Association in 1916, as a result of the success of the Fine Arts Palace's exhibitions at the Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915, the San Francisco Museum of Art was, as I have said, the first museum devoted entirely to art in the city. The deYoung included at that time other subjects as well as art. The California Palace of the Legion of Honor was founded later. In the Opening Exhibitions we more or less covered the field because we were recalling the museum's early years and were spanning the interests of the people who were most involved in it as well as recent art developments. The art association with its Annual was interested primarily in contemporary art and in art of the region; the Crocker's were the leading collectors and they lent tapestries and paintings, but especially their great old master drawing collection, always of interest

Morley: to artists and art students of today, a unique thing in the community and very valuable. The French nineteenth century paintings, the Impressionists especially, which were included in the group of exhibitions for the opening, represented an early period of modern art little known in San Francisco, basic for any museum which would show contemporary art, while the most important recent art event in the area, a Chinese exhibition at Mills College, which Salmony, who was a great scholar, had done, both honored the college's contribution to art in the area and indicated that the museum was not limited to art of the European traditions.

The next exhibition, to follow the Opening Exhibitions, which had been arranged long before I was engaged for the job, indicated the museum's concern for contemporary art still more precisely. That was the European section of the Carnegie International, to which, at my suggestion, we added an invited section -- a sort of representative cross-section -- of contemporary Americans who were represented in that show. All the prize-winners, American and foreign, were in it. And this made a very handsome, very stimulating review of the whole world of contemporary art.

Riess: This exhibition came only to San Francisco? It didn't travel?

Morley: No. And it was in March 1935 that we were representing the International that had just closed in Pittsburg, the 1934 International. In those days I think an International took place every year.

But it was very good. It was a very sound basic survey of what was going on. Perhaps it 's significant to note that it was not as adventurous as Carnegie Internationals are now, but that was a different period. People were still looking back more than they were looking forward, in art.

Riess: And you say the development of the San Francisco Museum of Art as a museum of contemporary art was logical too because of the two historical art museums in the city.

Morley: That's it. There was no point to duplicating what was being done well. And both of those museums had, within recent years, come into the form that they continue to the present day.

Riess: Were there people from the Fogg Museum out here?

Morley: Mr. Howe was from the Fogg; he was trained at the Fogg. And Walter Heil at the deYoung came to the deYoung from the Detroit Institute of Arts and was a very highly-trained European scholar before he went to Detroit.

They were museums in the best sense, but they were

Morley: not at that time especially active in having many exhibitions, though they had some, and very good ones. Nor were they active in offering many educational or cultural activities. And as time went on the San Francisco Museum of Art did more and more activities -- partly because of its changing exhibitions and field of art, partly because of being open at night and its location. It wouldn't have made sense for the other two to have been open at night. They were too remote, you see. The more familiar fields of art they served and their permanent exhibitions likewise seemed to require less educational work. What we always did was to seek out, feel out, those aspects of the art needs of the community that were not already being served. Programs in art education and cultural activities at night, which adults busy in the daytime could attend, were an obvious development for us.

In 1937, again, we introduced the motion picture as a living art form and were the first out here to use the Museum of Modern Art's motion picture rental services, which it had started only a year or so before. Of course we had a tremendous success with that. In time it brought us to all sorts of use of experimental movies, and ultimately to the Art In Cinema [1946] under Frank Stauffacher,

Morley: who was a very great scholar in the field and himself a motion picture maker.*

Riess: And in 1938 the bookshop started. Had that been a part of a gift?

Morley: Yes. It had been an information desk principally before that, selling only catalogues for the current shows, but the women's board gave twenty-five dollars to buy a stock of the Museum of Modern Art's catalogues for resale. And that's what started the bookshop, these excellent catalogues the Museum of Modern Art had been publishing for a year or two. They were beginning to appear in hard covers and they were the basic literature of modern art.

Riess: Each one grew out of a museum exhibition?

Morley: Yes.

Riess: And the library...

Morley: The library was present from the beginning, because we inherited a certain number of books and periodicals, from the old Palace of Fine Arts on the Marina. But, from 1935, even if most modestly, we tried to build it systematically around our exhibitions and our growing collections, trying also to have all the indispensable publications on modern art, all the leading art periodicals

* See Art in Cinema, edited by Frank Stauffacher, San Francisco Art in Cinema Society and San Francisco Museum of Art 1947. A symposium on the avantgarde film together with program notes and references for series one.

Morley: published in the United States and Europe, some from Latin America, and later some from Asia. It was open one or two nights a week and weekday afternoons, and was much used by students. But it was also an indispensable reference and research instrument for the museum's staff members when organizing exhibitions or preparing educational programs.

City-Museum Relationship

Riess: What is the relationship of the city to the museum?

Morley: Well, the San Francisco Museum of Art is in a city building, built by a bond issue. The art association had been responsible originally for providing the private funds for the building but they were insufficient and the city had to supplement the sum by launching a bond issue. The veterans had brought that about. So it was, is, a public building and the physical premises have been maintained, from the beginning, by the city. That is to say the city of San Francisco supplies janitors, heat, light, cleaning supplies, wax for the floors, that sort of thing, and our elevator operator is also provided by the

Morley: city. All the other posts in the museum have always been paid for privately, and have been directly under the director and the board of trustees.

Riess: If worse had come to worse and you had exhausted your supplies of money could you have fallen back upon the city?

Morley: With very great difficulty, I would think. It would require, I suppose, special action by the board of supervisors or possibly even a vote by the citizens in an election to permit the city to take it over as a municipal museum, with operating expenses completely at the charge of the city as is the case for the other two.

Now in addition to maintenance and rent-free occupancy the city from time to time provides for improvement of the premises. Also it has from the beginning made an annual grant from its publicity and advertising fund to the museum on the argument that an active museum in the city is a tourist attraction. The grant has varied: it started at about \$10,000 a year and at the present time is \$15,000 or a little more. This grant could be used for exhibition expense only, not for salaries, not for maintenance, but only for exhibition expense, (including transportation; printing of announcements and

Morley: catalogues; insurance). This was a very great help at that time, in 1935, when it opened. Even very big museums in the East had then only a couple of thousand dollars for changing exhibitions.

You see, this museum represented a new pattern. Only the Museum of Modern Art was having changing exhibitions to any great extent then. Other museums had an occasional special exhibition. But we had the funds to do a large program of changing exhibitions as our principal activity, and they became our program, for we had no collection to mention at first.

Riess: That grant probably influenced the activity of the museum greatly.

Morley: It was an opportunity which we seized. And that's why, in the thirties, until 1939, when we deliberately cut down our program somewhat in order not to compete in any way with the Exposition, which had a very great art show, we usually had from eighty to over a hundred exhibitions a year.

Riess: Well, that's extraordinary, isn't it?

Morley: Yes, it is. I don't suppose any other museum has ever had quite that amount of exhibition activity.

Riess: It amounts to more than one each week.

Morley: Well, that's true. Some of them were very, very small ones, obviously. And the galleries lent themselves to small groups of paintings or sculpture. I remember in 1935, I think it was, bringing a group of Miros, very beautiful, small Miros, and putting them in one of the galleries -- there were fifteen of them. Well, people came and gasped, and when they saw them the second time it wasn't quite as bad, you see, and they began to decide they liked this one better than that. It was an educational method -- exposure, familiarity, and eventually discrimination. Since, of course, Miro has been shown many, many times.

Riess: One more question on the subject of the city's relationship to the museum: does the city have anything to do with appointment of trustees?

Morley: No. They are a self-perpetuating board.

Role of Local Galleries

Riess: What do commercial galleries do in the way of sponsoring art? Do they generally have a high level of selectivity?

Morley: Well, galleries of course are business enterprises, and they have to do the best they can. And very often they make a tremendous contribution in that they will assure an artist two or three years of security to work. They obviously think that they are going to gain from that, but they do pay him what is essentially a salary so he can live. And that's a very important thing.

Now that kind of enterprise, I think, is non-existent here. Even the small galleries, which you find on -- what is it? -- Union Street now, I think, artists' cooperatives, that kind of thing, are, in the number which exist in San Francisco now, a very recent development. In the old days there was literally nowhere for artists -- artists who were not, so to say, representational, almost commercial artists -- to show. That's one reason why the museum carried on a very considerable gallery activity.

Riess: Did you have the art rental program then?

Morley: No, though that went back a long way. It went back to 1938, but it was a long time taking form. It took a long time before people thought it smart to rent a painting or sculpture and before there was competition among renters on the opening of the rental gallery in spring and autumn.

Morley: This type of success for the rental gallery dates back only about ten years. Such things are always very slow of growth. The rental gallery would have been beyond the means of the museum, but in its early period it was operated by volunteers. More recently, it has been staffed by someone paid by the women's board, a more efficient system certainly, but one that sacrifices much of the spontaneous character of the original plan.

So many other things that we did when I was at the museum we had thought would flower, say, in another ten years or so. That is normal. Things don't happen right away unless someone gives you a tremendous amount of money. Then you can do anything you want. Otherwise, you have to plan; very slowly build solid foundations; gain support; make a long term effort. Before I left I tried to finish up as much as possible, to do as many of the things as I could which had been begun, but many of the things, obviously, will lapse, simply for lack of continuity in nurturing them. In many cases they will be taken up in another form in time to come.

Controversies

Refregier Murals

Morley: One of the illustrations of what a museum of the kind the San Francisco Museum of Art represents is that controversy over the Refregier murals in the Rincon Hill Post Office. That's really an interesting episode in San Francisco art history.

One of the values of such an institution as the Museum of Modern Art in a great way, and the San Francisco Museum of Art in a small way, is to give leadership for points of view that are somewhat confused by popular prejudice and lack of knowledge. The Museum of Modern Art, as you know, has opened up whole avenues of development in the decorative and the fine arts; it has always resisted attacks from the uninformed on modern art, whether inspired by political bias, by ignorance, by economic rivalry. All that we did in San Francisco very definitely goes back to the fact that we could get material from them to do similar things on a smaller scale in this area and that we could point to their example for defense

Morley: of modern and contemporary art and cite the principles that they had formulated and depended on, whenever we faced prejudice. They defended art and artists and insisted judgment should depend on art value alone, and so did we.

Well, the Refregier murals controversy is a very interesting local case... A number of artists, one specially here, a writer at that time for the Argonaut, John Garth, contended that any contemporary art, modern art, was directly inspired by a desire to subvert the United States government. (And there's a very interesting article by Alfred Frankenstein examining the whole proposition.*) But part of the result of continual hammering away at the subversiveness of contemporary art and its Communist roots was an attack inspired by him on the murals by Anton Refregier in the Rincon Hill Post Office.

I do know Refregier, though not well, and I have no idea what his politics are; he may have been associated with some left wing organizations, but certainly his

* See clipping following: "A Discussion of the Charges That Communists Influence Modern Art," by Alfred Frankenstein, San Francisco Chronicle, This World, March 23, 1952, pp. 28,30.

By Alfred Frankenstein

THE ENVELOPE bore the name and return address of the Society of Western Artists, 111 Sutter street, San Francisco. It was postmarked Dec. 1, 1951, was addressed to the writer of these lines, and was placed on his desk on December 2.

Inside was a reprint of an article which John Garth, art critic of the Argonaut, had published in his column on October 12. Its general tone was quite familiar, for Mr. Garth has long been playing St. George to that protean monster, modern art. This time, however, the wielding of the Garthian lance was something special: the piece was, in fact, the humdinger to end all humdingers. I quote:

"The plan to conquer the world through internal subversion was conceived and put in action immediately following the Russian revolution. I myself attended the first meetings here in San Francisco, where the whole conspiracy was laid down in detail, to affect not only painting and sculpture, but every other aspect of our esthetic and spiritual life. The art museum personnel, the school art faculties, the art schools themselves, the more influential art critics were the first targets selected for either conversion or gradual liquidation to make way for the installation of fellow travelers.

"In the intervening 30 years this task has been accomplished to a very marked extent, the directives being executed usually with maximum success, and with the attempts always being marked



with maximum attention to detail."

The article went on to develop the thesis that contemporary experiment in art is a Communist plot to create "a mood in our people of doubt, uncertainty and defeatism" and asserted that "the subversives in the art field" have "boasted openly of what they had done to our art, what they were doing, and intended to do." But, Mr. Garth continued, "the Communists permit no irrational, defeatist art IN RUSSIA. There they allow only confidence-building subject matter: The dignity of labor, the beauty of parenthood, the valor of strength, courage, loyalty. The power of art to shape men's minds, to instill confidence in the existing order, is well understood in the more mature countries."

After a few cracks at "self-deluded amateurs" and "deluded fashionables," Mr. Garth touched upon the charges of Communism in modern art made some years ago by Congressman George A. Dondero of Michigan, and added that "no one has ever dared to contradict him or the Argonaut because everyone, even though

they may, at times, find it convenient to deny it in certain company, knows it is all true."

HERE, THEN, was an article phrased in such a fashion as to cast doubt on the loyalty and honesty of every art teacher, every museum official and every art critic in the Bay Region. It was being circulated in the form of a reprint and came to my attention in the envelope of a local art society. Since there was no covering letter or explanation of any kind, one might have assumed that the society itself was responsible for the reprint, or at least for its mailing, but one could scarcely credit this explanation, normal as it might seem; after all, there are many intelligent people in the Society of Western Artists, and they should have been able to see that for their organization to endorse a document of this kind could only bring it into disrepute.

Having made a few inquiries and discovered that some others had received the Argonaut reprint in the society's envelope, I wrote to its president and asked if the mailing had been done with the authorization of the society as a whole or of its board of directors, or if it had been done by individuals acting without authorization. The president was out of town and I received no reply until February 2; it was a very pleasant letter in which my questions were ignored. Meanwhile there was a change in the society's presidency, and ultimately, after two more inquiries, I was informed by Mark Mohler, present chief executive of the organization, that, except for a brief period prior to the publication of Mr. Garth's article, he had attended every meeting of the society and of its executive board and at none of these did he "know or hear of a vote or authorization of any kind relative to the reprint mentioned."

Mr. Mohler was kind enough to do more than answer my inquiry. In his letter he bore down hard on Congressman Dondero and his views, especially those expressed in his speech of Aug. 16, 1949, and declared that "all I have heard from certain groups to date about these reports is curses and imprecations, but no convincing denials." He went on to state an interesting hypothesis: "If preferential consideration is given by publicly owned museums, or those in control of the exhibitions in such museums, to persons listed in the Dondero reports as being definitely 'leftist' sympathizers, and if the facilities of such museums are denied groups of representational artists who are loyal citizens, as charged in the Dondero reports and by Mr. Garth, it is not at all surprising that credence is given the Dondero reports."

In reply to this I asked Mr.

San Francisco Chronicle,
This World, Mar. 23, 1952.

A Discussion of the Charges That Communists Influence Modern Art



This drawing of a beardless Uncle Sam, in a striped business suit and a star-studded vest, won for Eliot Freedman of North Hollywood the \$2000 first prize in a Nationwide contest to find a symbol of Uncle Sam, 1952.

Mohler if he had any evidence to show that preferential consideration IS given leftist sympathizers in our public museums and that loyal citizens are excluded from them; I asked, furthermore, if he could demonstrate that such leftists as may be exhibited are given the right of way because they are leftists and that such loyal citizens as are excluded are tossed out because they are loyal. Up to the time of writing, this question has remained unanswered.

AT THE TIME of my correspondence with Mr. Mohler, early this month, my recollection of the Dondero incident was vague, but I have since looked into it, and I can well understand why the speech to which Mr. Mohler referred me was met with "curses and imprecations." Dondero had been taken to task for suggesting, in a previous speech, that the art critics of New York be muzzled, and on August 16 he lashed back like a man

possessed. An example of the incredible length to which he went is the following sentence: "In 1914, Kandinsky, a Russian-born Expressionist and nonobjective painter, who found it safer to live in Germany, returned to Russia, and three years later came the revolution." Quoted out of context this statement may seem to be a mere non sequitur, but in full context it can only be read as an effort to blame Kandinsky for starting all the trouble in Russia.

Dondero aroused the Irish of the late Peyton Boswell, the salty editor of the Art Digest and a conservative critic whom Mr. Garth has often quoted with great approval. Boswell had at the gentleman from Michigan in four editorials published at intervals in 1949. One of these—Boswell's particularly devastating piece of June 1—formed part of a very well-reasoned reply to Dondero delivered on the floor of the House

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A Discussion of the Charges That Communists Influence Modern Art

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by his fellow Republican, Congressman Jacob Javits of New York, on August 23 of the year in question. But Dondero was really served up on toast by Emily Genauer—far from a modernistic extremist, as witness her famous feud with the Museum of Modern Art—in an article in Harper's for September, 1949. All in all, I was able, without the slightest trouble, to find ten instances of extensive published "contradiction" to Representative Dondero. They may not be convincing to Mr. Mohler, if he is aware of them, but to assert, as does Mr. Garth, that they do not exist at all, indicates a disregard for easily obtained fact which scarcely inspires confidence in his views.

SINCE, as a local critic, I am more interested in what Mr. Garth is saying in San Francisco today than in what Mr. Dondero said in Washington four years ago, I wrote Mr. Garth and asked him about the meetings he attended and the plots unfolded there; I also asked him if the meetings had been reported to the proper authorities, and requested the names of the art teachers, museum officials and critics who had been liquidated or converted and the names of the fellow travelers who have been put in their places. In response, Mr. Garth very kindly came to my office and we spent two hours discussing the entire situation in a very friendly, objective atmosphere.

A conversation of this kind always wanders off into side issues and into tangents that are not at issue at all. Mr. Garth declined to name any names and therefore could not cite any instances of the boasting about Communist

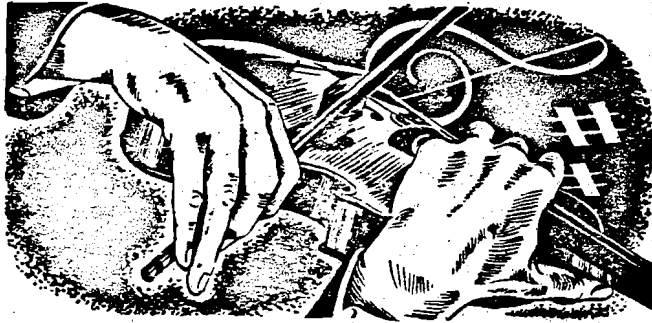
success in the field of art about which he had written. He said that in his opinion the active Communists in the art field accounted for about 10 per cent of the whole, and that the rest whose activities he disapproved were doing the Communists' bidding without being aware of it. He said that the existence of a Communist plot proved itself by the fact that so little representational art finds its way into museums, but he also said that he himself admires much abstract painting. He insisted, like Alfred Barr, that abstraction is nothing new, but goes back through the whole history of art; and he said he uses it in his own painting. How this ties in with the view that abstraction is a Communist plot hatched in Russia after 1918 he did not say.

Mr. Garth agreed with me that, in the last analysis, "modern art" is impossible to define, and that what may seem to one person conducive to "doubt, uncertainty and defeatism" may seem quite otherwise to a different person of equal sincerity. He said the art he is interested in is the art that appeals to the common man. When I suggested that the common man—whoever he may be—may learn through experience that there are many different levels of meaning and appreciation in the world of art, he protested that art should not require special indoctrination and that too much art of this kind is shown. (By this time, as you will see, we had drifted some distance from the question of Communism into some of the age-old questions of aesthetics.)

So far as Mr. Garth's Communist meetings were concerned, he said that in the 1920s he was himself involved in leftist activi-

ties and was a witness to the Communist directives for artists handed out at that time. He said these directives were so well known to the FBI that there was no need to report them, and he offered to bring me documentary proof of their existence if I would give him a signed letter stating that in return for this favor I would discontinue my investigation of these matters. I declined to give Mr. Garth any such blank check, but on further questioning he said the directives were to the effect that artists were to paint pictures of poverty and injustices, a thing one might well expect left-wing artists to do without any directive at all. He cited a recent statement of William K. Foster—"Art is a weapon in the class struggle," or something similar—but admitted at the end of our talk that he could adduce no documentary proof that the Communists in the art world had been ordered to employ abstract or nonobjective idioms.

One dislikes to use the technique of the opposition and hint at dirty work in secret conference, but the timing of the Garth' reprint may be significant. It appeared just as the Society of Western Artists was closing its twelfth annual exhibition, the third such annual to be held at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum. The de Young accepted the society's shows with the provision that they be juried, and the jury, by agreement, has always consisted of two members of the SWA, one member of the de Young staff, one local critic, and one mutually acceptable artist from another city. The grapevine has repeatedly brought reports of restiveness under this arrangement among certain members of the SWA, especially last



fall, when the number of rejections seems to have been especially large. On November 4, 1951, Alexander Fried, who had served as the critic-member of the jury for the twelfth annual, published a locally unprecedented article in the San Francisco Examiner defending the actions of the committee of selection from an unspecified attack, and characterizing the rejected material as full of "worn, out-of-date formulas, anti-artistic sentimentality, false prettiness and banality."

Whatever Mr. Garth—who was too busy this year to submit to the SWA annual—may have had in mind when writing his article, it may well be that it was circulated in the mails by some of the disgruntled rejectees as a means of expressing their displeasure. Recently in New York certain members of the National Sculpture Society, with the strenuous dissent of men as conservative as Paul Manship and James Earle Fraser, their past presidents, circulated a violent letter attacking the sculpture awards at the Metropolitan Museum despite the fact that the society had itself appointed half of the jury of selection and one of the three sculptors on the jury of award. This letter was rammed through by a minority of the committee appointed to draft it, and at least one member of that committee was not even permitted to see it. Commenting on this matter in the Saturday Review of Literature for March 1, James Thrall Soby remarks that "it is the long-established technique of minorities within art organizations to speak as if they had the backing of their absent colleagues." We may have a similar situation in the case of the SWA show and the Garth reprint.

Perhaps this ascribes more deviousness and subtlety to the affair than it merits. At all events for minorities within organizations to make use of the names of those organizations without authority is a familiar Communist tactic, and the SWA would

do well to disavow such performances.

THAT THERE are some Communists among practitioners of experimental idioms in art is beyond dispute; there are also some Communists—or there have been—among atomic scientists, but no one suggests that nuclear physics is a Communist plot. (Incidentally, there are also some Communists among artistic conservatives.) The linkage of experimental art per se with Communism is, of course, the product of a common psychological falling: We tend to lump together our likes and dislikes, our pleasures and our fears, and to play upon this tendency is one of the oldest tricks in the art of propaganda. When a universal fear like the present fear of Communism arises amongst us, propagandists will instantly seize upon it for their own ends. When the Armory Show, the first big display of modern European art to hit this country, was taken to Chicago in 1913, the police scrutinized it suspiciously for ideas subversive to morals; now it is political subversiveness that causes people to look under their beds at night.

How far this tendency can go is indicated by Mr. Garth's article in last week's Argonaut. Here the policies of the Nazis and Bolsheviks, which led to the extermination of artistic experiment in their countries, are described as "wise," "intelligent" and "nationally strengthening"; we are told that "the combating of all disintegrating ideology in every social structure is right," and that the former masters of Germany and the present masters of Russia are "social experts." When the instigators of the Siberian forced-labor camps and the practitioners of mass murder as an everyday instrument of social policy are held up for our admiration as "social experts," and when the ruthless regimentation of artists is cited as an index of cultural maturity, I submit it is time for Mr. Garth and his friends to sit down, and think where this art controversy may be leading them.

Morley: murals in the Post Office gave no indication of it.

Riess: This work dates from the time Rivera was here, or later?

Morley: No, from much later. I think this decoration was commissioned about 1937 or 1938 under a plan that the United States government then had for devoting a percentage of the budget for any federal building to art for its adornment. The new post office had been completed and had admirable wall space. A national competition had been held. Refregier won it. The fee for the series of twenty-seven mural panels was ten thousand dollars. Refregier submitted his sketches; they were accepted by representatives of government and the panels were executed over a period of some years. Most of them are dated. They record the history of California from pre-Spanish times right straight through to the United Nations Charter (1945).

Well, the stirring up of the controversy resulted in questions in a congressional committee and locally in a move -- in part led by the American Legion -- but a lot of other patriotic societies too were involved -- to have the government remove these murals from the Post Office. They couldn't be taken from the walls without destruction; they were not on canvas but they were painted

Morley: directly on the walls in some sort of, oh, dry fresco, or tempera painting.

Riess: This move to remove them was in the fifties?

Morley: Well, let's see, that took place in 1953, though there had been intermittent attacks on them during the preceding two or three years. These took the form of articles in the Argonaut, letters to the editors of the local papers, and resulted in queries by the responsible congressional committee to the local federal government officers. They in turn would call on the directors of the three art museums and other competent persons to look once more at the murals and to testify to their being free of political taint. This happened several times. It was, I believe, an echo of the McCarthy business which opened the way to political accusations of all varieties.

We three art museum^s directors, local artists, and San Francisco people interested in art knew the sources in this case: a conservative artists' group, the Society for Sanity in Art, of which Garth was a leader, stirring up patriotic organizations, easily puzzled by the mild distortions of the murals' style. We decided that we must now make a stand and defend the murals. They are excellent and worth fighting for, but also it had to be done on

Morley: principle. There were indications that if these murals were destroyed, a movement to remove from public buildings all art good and bad, would sweep the country, always as here based on prejudice and on opposition to contemporary art in general.

The WPA had provided mural art for public buildings. The Treasury Department had had a program to reserve one per cent of the construction budget of any federal building for art decoration, and numerous states had programs during the thirties and forties for public decorations. Some were good, some were poor. This series by Refregier is probably the finest, and the charges against them were frivolous or untrue. For example, one charge was that ass's ears had been placed on the American's head in the panel referring to the United Nations Conference. It happens that the stage of the Opera House where the meeting was held was decorated with blue drapery hung in swags, and the person who thought the ass's ears were on the American's head had never seen the mural in color and did not recognize the blue swags of the Opera House behind the American's head! That kind of hysterical prejudice would have swept the country. It had to be stopped. We felt it here.

Morley: And so, a citizen's committee was formed, including Mr. David Zellerbach, Mrs. Henry Potter Russell, and many other leaders of the community, to defend the murals. Petitions were circulated. Finally the historians were consulted and the California Historical Society was called in to refute the accusations that California history was misrepresented, for example that the depiction of a lynching scene and the anti-Chinese riots were inspired by race prejudice and brutality, and other criticisms of that kind founded on misunderstanding.* Eventually Chauncey McKeever, a lawyer, and Mr. Thomas Carr Howe, Jr., the director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, were sent by the citizen's committee to Washington to testify before the committee of congress. The attack was defeated. And the murals are still there and all other murals -- perhaps not as good -- elsewhere, were saved.

That was the kind of leadership in community action that only the museum could give. On the level of the art museum profession we could set up a committee of directors here; we called on all our art museum colleagues

*[George R. Stewart, professor of the University of California, wrote a careful letter examining the charges. GLMcM.] See copy following.

COPY

George R. Stewart
100 Codornices Road
Berkeley 4, California

Dr. Grace L. McCann Morley
Director
San Francisco Museum of Art
San Francisco 2, California

April 29, 1953

Dear Mrs. Morley:

You have asked me as an expert on California history to comment on the historical accuracy of the Refregier murals. What competency I have in the field would lie in the period before 1900, and would be based on the work I have done in the preparation of my biographies of Harte, Phoenix, and Thome, my Ordeal by Hunger and various other writings. Since I do not consider myself qualified on the recent history of California, I shall confine my comments to the pictures that date before 1900. This is apparently the important period involving the murals, since the H.J. Res. 211 mentions the character of the "pioneers", and people appearing in pictures this side of 1900 can hardly be called pioneers.

I have studied the murals by means of the black-and-white reproductions that you have sent me. In most respects I consider this method superior from the point of view of historical research to an attempt to study the originals. The prints can be laid on the desk and studied carefully through the hand lens whereas the originals can only be observed by standing and leaning the head back. I doubt whether in these pictures the historical accuracy is involved with the use of color.

Before giving an opinion it is necessary to make some statement as to what constitutes historical accuracy in paintings.

1. I would take it that literal accuracy is not demanded. It is not usually demanded of historical paintings. For instance, in The Spirit of '76 we do not demand to know on what battlefield three such unusual individuals were so grouped. In Washington Crossing the Delaware we do not expect any precise evidence as to the grouping of the figures in the boat, and we skip the point as to whether a practical man like Washington would have stood up at such a time, thus jeopardizing the craft's stability. Such pictures are imaginative reconstructions, usually with an allegorical element. The same has to be allowed for historical paintings generally, or we shall have to get rid of all of them.

2. I would take it also that minor deviations in detail must be allowed to the artist. He must be allowed some latitude for expression in his medium, and also by the very fact that he is an artist he cannot have spent his life at studying the details of California history. De minimis non curat lex, and the same must be allowed for historical painting -- or again we

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must throw them all out. Only major matters are pertinent. For instance, I should take objection if the artist had represented the Indians in a motor-boat or shown the padre using a power-saw.

On the basis of criticism I find the Refregier murals (before 1900) to be on the whole historically accurate. (Certain details will be discussed below).

The second paragraph of H.J. Res. 211 involves also the question of historical accuracy, that is, it in effect levels a charge that the murals libel the pioneers and in a case of libel the question of truth is of great importance.

Since I have already stated that I consider the murals historically accurate in general, I might merely let the case stand at this point. It is, however, true that while the details of a look or painting may be true the whole effect created by selection of details, emphasis, etc., may be such that the result may be, for all practical purposes, libelous.

I have not seen any written indictment of the murals, but I think someone told me that objection was taken to the faces of the pioneers. These faces, have a certain sameness, which I myself find rather monotonous. Because of the sameness anyone who thought the faces objectionable might claim that the artist had consciously satirized the pioneers. Actually, however, I should say that the sameness results from either a desire to give a unity of effect or from a mere stylistic unity existing in the artist's own unconscious mind. This is a well-recognized phenomenon in many arts. Thus, in literature we speak of a Hemingway character or of a Shakespearean tragic-hero, because they have certain resemblances from springing from the same artistic imagination.

Moreover, I do not find the faces of the murals objectionable as such. The apparently undue length, as observed in the prints, is doubtless partly caused at least by desire to compensate for the murals being seen from below. This length contributes something to the sad effect of many of the faces. On the other hand, I would say that the faces are neither stupid, nor vicious, nor villainous. They are sometimes stern, often homely, and generally serious.

Possibly I have gone out of my field to discuss physiognomy, but I believe that there is a historical connexion. Padres, pioneers, etc., were historically hard-working and often under-fed. They ran to tall, rangy types. I have, in fact, made something of a study of this point historically. There is actually a tall, thin type which can be called the "early American hero figure." Here belong the young Washington (he put on weight later), and also Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln. Here also belongs Leatherstocking, as described in the first chapter of the Pioneers, and he has become the type of the frontiersman. These men often had emaciated

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and sad faces. In fact, when Mr. Refregier's figures are bearded they often show a considerable resemblance to Lincoln.

Whether he was conscious of it or not, Mr. Refregier has been, it seems to me, remarkably sensitive in his feeling for early American physical types. You will note that only in Torchlight Procession are stocky, well-fed types represented, and these are city-dwellers.

The question can also be raised as to whether any of the individual pictures represent the pioneers derogatorily. I shall discuss several pictures.

1. Chinese Riots. I shall say nothing in defense of these race-riots. (But see below for some general summation.)

2. Vigilante Days. This apparently refers particularly to the San Francisco Committee of Vigilance of 1856, although there are certain suggestions of the 1851 Committee also. These incidents have occupied a highly controversial position in California history, having been attacked and defended by various historians. I myself once made a very careful study of them, and ended with having very great respect for the way in which they were conducted. In recent times there has been a tendency, largely through ignorance, to think of them as mere lynching parties. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Although, to be sure, the mob once or twice got out of hand, the affairs of the Committees were in general conducted with decorum, with justice, and with a respect for Civil Liberties that puts many of us moderns to shame. The opposing so-called Law and Order Party was actually composed largely of grafters, corrupt judges, and criminals. I would think therefore, that anyone believing this picture to be derogatory to the pioneers would believe so only through ignorance.

In fact, I think that the artist has been amazingly informed in this picture. The ordered ranks of sober citizens hold the foreground. The mob is suggested in the background. The two figures on the left well suggest the necessarily somewhat equivocal nature of the affair. I am not sure whether the figure with the raised hand indicates a genuinely shocked legalist, or a hypocritical "Law and Order Man".

3. S.F. as a Cultural Center. The faces, in so far as I recognize them, represent well-known literary figures. I am not sure in what way the semi-nude figure represents culture, and the show put on by Adah Mencken in lazzeppa was not of the kind usually termed cultural. I would suspect either ignorance on the artist's part, or a quiet pleasantry. But these are extremely minor matters.

In this connexion there is, for complete fairness, another and very important matter to be considered. In the eighteen pictures which I have not considered as even possibly derogatory has the artist compensated for one or two derogatory pictures by avoiding derogation and by actually presenting the pioneers in a complimentary fashion? It seems to me that he has, and very strikingly.

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He might have represented the Conquistadors as torturing and enslaving the Indians. He has not.

He might have represented the Indians at some primitive practice which would seem to us disgusting. He has not.

He might have represented the padres as being disciplinary and harsh to the Indians. Instead, he has shown them highly beneficent.

If he had been attempting Communist propaganda, he could have represented the Russians at Fort Ross differently. (But anyway these were Czarists.)

He might have represented the pioneers as killing Indians, perhaps even as wantonly massacring squaws and children as they did on various occasions, notably, near Eureka on February 26, 1860. Instead he shows an emigrant killed by an Indian.

Many historians have considered the Bear Flag Revolt as a stupid and not very ethical affair. The artist has not chosen so to represent it.

The Forty-Niners frequently indulged in drinking, gambling, and generally licentious living. Their descendants indeed often emphasize this aspect of those riotous good old days. The artist has chosen to show them hard at work or else at the dull but respectable task of getting their mail.

The Vigilance Committee could also have been much more harshly presented.

I would even speak of the Chinese Riots. It is well known that the rioters against the Chinese were predominantly Irish. Instead, however, of pinning the riot upon a particular group the artist has let them escape into general anonymity by showing here his usual American face without any Irish suggestion.

In conclusion I should say that, in my opinion, the only picture of these twenty-one that shows the pioneers derogatorily is Chinese Riots. Of this it can be said:

1. It is only one picture. Whatever derogation is here presented is much more than compensated by the complimentary nature of most of the other pictures.
2. By not pointing the finger against a particular racial and religious group the artist has to some extent avoided the sowing of dissension.
3. The picture can be considered historically accurate.
4. If something derogatory were not included in such a comprehensive view of history as this, the artist would be subject to the charge of falsifying the record, and his pioneers could be properly presented only with sprouting wings.
5. The suppression of unpleasant incidents in a nation's history is dangerous. We should keep them to some extent before us, like a death's head at a banquet, to remind us, first, that our fathers like ourselves were fallible men and that we therefore need not think we are wholly degenerating and second, that we may have a warning before us against falling into errors and excesses.

Sincerely yours,

George R. Stewart

Morley: in all parts of the country to write to their respective congressmen; and then the local patronage groups, of trustees, women's boards, interested intellectual leaders of the community, and laymen spoke up. And that, I think, is one of the things that a museum, especially a museum of contemporary art which is in the middle of things anyway, must consider part of its function - to take a stand on the art questions of the day, to furnish information, to give leadership. (A complete file on the controversy is in the library of the San Francisco Museum of Art.) [For illustrations of the Refregier murals see Appendix B.]

1947 State Department Exhibition

Riess: Maybe you would say something about the State Department exhibition, the traveling exhibition in 1947. Did you have an active part in that controversy?

Morley: You mean the exhibition that was withdrawn?

Riess: Yes.

Morley: I saw it in Paris. It was gotten together for use abroad and I think its first showing was in Paris at the time of the Unesco first general conference, to which

Morley: I had been summoned. It was a very good exhibition, very carefully chosen.

Riess: By whom?

Morley: By LeRoy Davidson, an art expert now teaching at Claremont Graduate School in Claremont, California, who had originally worked for some government agency, O.S.S. I believe, which was the intelligence and the information arm, the propaganda arm, of the government at that time. This particular program was taken over by the Department of State at the end of the war and it fell heir to the group of paintings Mr. Davidson had selected. It was a very carefully chosen survey exhibition of contemporary American art. [For list of artists exhibiting see Appendix C.] At that particular time there wasn't anything very surprising about it or in it for people who were used to art. There wasn't very much abstraction; there was a good deal of semi-abstraction.

It was sent for the showing in Paris at the Musée d'Art Moderne, in which all countries interested in Unesco had participated as one of the cultural events in honor of the general conference. After that showing it was supposed to tour Europe. I think it got as far as Czechoslovakia. I think that was the next stop and there it was withdrawn.

Morley: Many years later the paintings were sold at auction as "surplus," and because they were fine they were in great demand.* I understand the government had a profit.

I think the attack was partly by people who weren't very well informed on contemporary art, partly by artists who were hurt that they hadn't been included, and who pointed out that some of the artists who were included had been prominent in one organization or another that in most cases, later, long afterwards, had received the label of "subversive." It was a very complicated and difficult thing, something that we're not completely out of at the present time, because the United States Information Service, which asks organizations to make exhibitions available for its use abroad, has repeatedly been subjected to similar attacks. Its exhibitions have fared rather badly in some cases, and have been withdrawn.

More recently it's been admitted that you are hanging pictures and not artists, so to speak. If the work has no message that by any stretch of the imagination can be interpreted as subversive, why obviously it's a little

*Advancing American Art 1947 (text by Hugo Weisgall), published by U.S. Information Service, Prague, 1947, is the original introductory catalogue. The Catalog of 117 Oil and Water Color Originals by Leading American Artists published in 1948 by the War Assets Administration is the sales announcement.

Morley: silly to withdraw the painting simply because the artist is thought by some -- usually other artists who don't believe in his point of view -- to be subversive.

It's a very complicated matter and for a good many years -- something like twelve years -- a committee of museum directors and other people interested in the arts have been working, sometimes as part of a visual arts committee only, sometimes as part of a general committee representing all the arts -- music, drama, and so on -- the committee for government in the arts, to help the government arrive at a reasonable policy for using art, at home and abroad. Lloyd Goodrich, director of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York has been a leader in this movement over many years. Recently a committee to advise the State Department on the arts has been formed and includes Charles Nagel, director of the City Art Museum, St. Louis, and Mrs. Henry Potter Russell, trustee of the San Francisco Museum of Art to represent the visual arts. A good deal of progress has been made; I think eventually the situation will be corrected and competent people will be used to advise on these exhibitions, and when they've chosen a good exhibition nothing will happen afterwards. At present, all exhibitions are

Morley: vulnerable to attacks by congressmen and irate citizens, untutored in art.

The most recent evidence of the kind of criticism that started with this exhibition that we are speaking of in 1946-47, with which I had direct connexion, referred to the Brussels Fair show in 1958, for which I was one of the jurors. The Moscow Fair show exhibition in 1959 repeated the experience to some extent.

It's a complicated business, representing a country by art, and you can understand that people who don't know very much about art and are a little suspicious of artists because they don't know them either, can be upset by having things that they don't understand sent abroad to represent them. But it's a very benighted and untenable position to attack exhibitions selected by competent people to win prestige for a country.

Riess: I'm suprised that the artists were in the fore of this attack.

Morley: Well, it is curious, and it's always been somewhat of a sore point, but there are a couple of artists' organizations that are extremely conservative in their point of view. Some of them have members who have enjoyed a great many official commissions in the past; that's

Morley: especially true of one of the sculptors' groups. They have consistently attacked on political grounds anything done by anyone outside their own group, and there's evidence, as a matter of fact, to indicate their having fed garbled information to Dondero when he attacked practically everyone in the modern art field at various times.* There is apparently a connexion between the Refregier controversy and other attacks by artists' groups and by those whom they inspire, like Dondero.

I've been called a Communist by Dondero, for instance; I'm in the Congressional Record as such, or accused as being such, because of exhibiting abstract art. And therefore, every time I come up for a special job of an official kind, why I have to go through the process of being vindicated once again. I've never failed to be, but it's a nuisance because as officials go through the file on me they see such a reference and they say, "Well, well, what is this?" You see?

Riess: The division between the conservative artists' and sculptors' groups and the others is not on stylistic

*"Communism Under the Guise of Cultural Freedom - Strangling American Art" in Congressional Record (House of Representatives), June 14, 1956, p. 9377 is a recent example of Dondero attacks. GLMcM.]

Riess: grounds then?

Morley: Not completely. It's partly economic. Quite frankly, it's largely economic rivalry. Again, you can understand the human element: if for years you've been the person who's gotten all the commissions, it's a little disturbing suddenly to see this new group whose work you don't like coming into public favor and competing successfully for patronage. Of course, it's a losing battle. However, such attacks are very uncomfortable when they happen.

WIDENING ACTIVITIES

International Leanings

Riess: How and when did you become involved so internationally?

Morley: Well, in spirit it goes back a long time, back to the Berkeley campus. After the League of Nations, you know, Wilson appeared here at the Hearst Greek Theatre. I was a student then. And I was convinced from the beginning that the League of Nations was a good idea. Charles Mills Gayley used to give lectures on it in those days -- I suppose it was in 1920 and 1921? And I was disappointed that the League of Nations in the end didn't have the support of the United States. I thought this was a great error.

Naturally after being partly educated in another country I was later even more internationally inclined. At least I realized that there was an advantage in having several countries that one knew well and with whose patterns of thought one was at home. As I think back I always had an interest in international affairs.

Morley:

Then I came back to California and settled in the San Francisco Museum of Art. Obviously being a very poor museum it couldn't send me abroad. And I didn't do much traveling out of the country. But in 1939 the State Department called together experts in education and the arts for a meeting to discuss international cultural activity. Soon afterwards a number of advisory committees were set up by the State Department under the direction of Waldo Leland, then director of the American Council of Learned Societies. I was appointed to the committee on art. Charles Thomson was the officer of the State Department with whom we worked, giving the best advice we could.* Much of our attention was turned to Latin America. This was the first groping towards the cultural activities which our government has gradually developed, in connexion with Unesco and on its own account, for example, in the United States Information Service.

My first trip to South America fitted in with my State Department committee work. In 1940 under Timothy

*[Charles Thomson was later representative of the United States to Unesco and then executive secretary of the U.S. National Commission for Unesco, State Department, Washington, D.C., now professor at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, and author, with Walter H.C. Laves, of UNESCO; purpose, program, prospects, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1957. GLMcM.]

Morley: L. Pfleuger, of whom I have spoken, the art section of the Golden Gate International Exposition in its second year decided it would have a survey of contemporary art of the Pacific Basin countries in the Latin American area, as well as an appropriate representation from the other side of the Pacific. I went to choose the paintings -- no sculpture, too heavy to ship -- from Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica and El Salvador. Mr. Howe of the Palace of the Legion of Honor chose those from Mexico.

As always happens, one thing leads to another. Early in 1941 I was asked by the office of the coordinator of inter-American affairs to go to South America and make the arrangements for an American exhibition to be shown in all parts of South America and Cuba. I did the survey of the principal cities and of places in them where it could be shown and I made the preliminary contacts with the Latin Americans in charge of them.

Then I was, for the years 1941 through 1943, an advisor to the coordinator's office on art in Latin America. So that was an international job. The reason for all this was that in addition to my interest fostered by the State Department advisory work I am fairly fluent in Spanish

Morley: and in French and therefore useful to people who don't speak English. (Laughter) As a result, I was the first museum director from the United States to become well-acquainted with South America and contemporary art there. And it worked very well and was to me a very satisfying opportunity.

Then, of course, the war came, and there was no traveling and the museum had no staff. All the young men left. I had one old man, who was an excellent packer, but that was all; the others in the museum were women. In 1945 the museum's premises in the War Memorial Building were taken over by the United Nations. The museum's floor, the fourth floor, was the communications headquarters of the meeting, (for example, in two minutes the army experts who were in charge of the center could reach any part of the world.). The mimeograph department was up there too, and so were the interpreters and translators of documents.

We had to move the museum at a week's notice. I got as our temporary quarters a shop on Post Street, next to the St. Francis Hotel. But I did get back to the War Memorial fairly frequently because there were several large plants, very valuable plants, that were so big that they couldn't be moved. So I had a janitor's pass!

Riess: To water them!

Morley: And also we received shipments of art in the storerooms at the War Memorial, unpacked them there, and then I took them down to the temporary museum on Post Street.

Riess: Did you leave some art for the United Nations people?

Morley: No, they didn't want the responsibility. But we had certain festivities for them down at the Post Street quarters. A good many Latin Americans I knew attended the U.N. Conference. Some of those in international activity in the U.S. government, whom I had known when I worked for the coordinator's office, were in attendance. I attended many of the sessions.

So that was further experience in the international field.

Then Unesco had been in people's minds in Europe during the last years of the war. Ministers of education, especially, got together in London to discuss the international organization to be formed, for all those of the occupied Allied Nations were in exile there, you see. This proposed new organization to take over the functions of the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (of which the International Museums Office was a part), and which was responsible to the League of Nations in various ways, led finally to the formation of Unesco.

Morley: I was one of the people who briefed the American representative for the preliminary meetings of the preparatory commission in London in the summer of 1946.

Unesco

Morley: Then in October of 1946 as I was going on board a submarine with other members of the navy's civilian advisory committee to have lunch and make a "crash" dive a cable arrived for me there in New London from Julian Huxley in Paris, asking me to come and be advisor on museums to the library division for the meeting of the preparatory commission of Unesco which would launch the first conference which hopefully, at that time, would result in Unesco being set up as an international organization.

So I had my luncheon and my dive and called Washington that night to find out more about the offer. I got to Washington the next day, got a passport in twenty-four hours, went back and arranged things at the museum so that I could be absent, and by -- that was the 5th of October when I received the message -- the 20th of October I was on a plane for London. I spent about a

Morley: week in London at Julian Huxley's request, living in his house in Hampstead, as a matter of fact, for he was in Paris, and then went over to Paris on the 3rd of November.

I prepared -- rewrote -- the museum program to be presented to the general conference since it had been originally drafted in very general terms by someone who wasn't familiar with museum procedures, and presented it to the conference after the Unesco charter was signed. There were sub-meetings in each subject, you see, and I presented the museums part of the program. Then it was adopted and Unesco asked me to return for as long as I could stay. Well, I got permission from my museum to have leave for two years.

Riess: Was that easily done? Did the museum have a full staff then?

Morley: Yes. Experienced staff members who had been away with the army had returned. Also I got an assistant director, Richard Freeman, who became in essence acting director and who did an excellent job in my absence.

So I finished up the various commitments I had for the museum. One of the things that made my absence easy, of course, was that the United Nations -- not deliberately

Morley: but because of all the structure that was built within the premises -- had pretty well torn to pieces the galleries. We had been covering their walls with display paper but it wasn't really satisfactory. The renovation was to take place in my absence. Of course that was a long and complicated process, taking about nine months altogether. So my absence was not too noticeable.

I reported for duty on July 1st and stayed with Unesco -- I had promised the museum to be away not more than two years -- until the end of February 1949. And I got back to the museum in August of that year.

Riess: Did you start Unesco's Museum then?

Morley: Yes. Museum's first number, a double issue, appeared in July 1948, for the first general conference of the International Council of Museums, in Paris. That publication, of course, like Unesco itself, also goes back into the past in that it is the continuation in a new form of what was known as Museumion (the Greek form of "museum"), which was published by the International Museums Office of the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation. It had been voted in Unesco's program and budget at Unesco's second general conference in Mexico in 1947. It was planned and designed under my direction.

Museums Division Head

Morley: When I went back to Unesco for the two years beginning in July 1947 I went back not as advisor on museums to the library division, but as head of the museums division, and that was one part of our program, that periodical. At that time Museum was in French and English. It has recently become more international still in that it has added summaries of all the articles in Russian and Spanish, and all the captions of the illustrations are in all four languages. Since it is primarily a visual communication this makes it very useful to all museum people. Obviously Museum isn't of great concern to Americans and British and French -- all museum people in places where there is a very highly developed museum profession and organization -- but it's of incredible value to those in far-off places where there are very few museum workers. It is for them a link with the profession; it is the substitute for annual meetings and that sort of professional interchange, and it helps them in keeping in touch with what's going on in the other more active centers.

Riess: It is a sort of teaching magazine?

Morley: Yes, for professional technical matters. It's meant to keep people abreast of what's going on in museum techniques. For instance I expect to see within the near future an article on the new installation, that modular structural installation, of the Lowie Museum here in Kroeber Hall, because that's a contribution to technical museum operation. Museum is supposed to be a technical magazine discussing the philosophy, the various technical skills that are employed in museums.

Riess: Like restoration.

Morley: Yes. Well that's very important. And of course in Europe it's carried to a tremendous point. They had to develop it for one thing, because they had a great many problems as a result of the war years, destruction and damage that occurred to masterpieces.

Riess: Everything but the Louvre's "brown" pictures.

Morley: Yes. Well, they haven't cleaned them quite as much as some of the other museums do. There's a great controversy on this subject still going on as a matter of fact. That's another thing that I knew a lot about when I was there in Unesco, and I followed it to a certain extent as one of my responsibilities.

Morley: Well, the other thing that started in those first years of Unesco with the help of the museums division when I was head was the International Council of Museums, ICOM, launched originally by an American, Chauncey Hamlin, former president of the Buffalo Museum of Science, who had been president of the American Association of Museums. He was able to engage the interest of a great many Europeans and Latin Americans so that the organization started immediately after the war and has grown steadily since.

Riess: And how is it related to the museums division?

Morley: Well, it's the international professional organization in the museums field. It's made up of national committees representing the museum profession in each of its member countries. It has headquarters in Paris; general conferences are now held every three years and business and committee meetings in between times. It receives a subsidy from Unesco, and Unesco asks it to do certain professional and other tasks of interest to its own work in the museums field. So in a way it's the professional and action arm of Unesco, because the museums division is very small and is more a clearing house, a direction center, a leader, if you like, rather than being itself

Morley: an operating organization.

Monuments

Morley: The big museums program right now, of course, is being carried on by my successor, J.K. Van der Haagen, a Dutchman, who's especially interested in monuments. This is the international campaign to save monuments in Nubia. With the building of the Aswan Dam all the Nubian monuments of upper Egypt are threatened for they will be flooded. You'll be hearing a great deal about that.*

Riess: What can be done?

Morley: Well, they're launching a worldwide campaign for funds. First, of course, they had to get information. They're also collecting photographs as documentation. There's an extraordinary new technique of taking photographs of sculptures or of any art object of a three dimensional kind which gives you an absolutely exact measure of its form, so that through these pictures you can reconstitute the spatial organization with accuracy. (If you're

*See, for example, "The Coming Flood of Pharaoh's Temples" by Etienne Drioton, Horizon, July 1960, Vol.II, No.6, p.8.

Morley: interested in this sort of thing, the number of the Unesco Courier on Nubia has a great deal of information about it. All this effort to save the monuments and to document them has been formed and guided by the Unesco people.*

Riess: Are technical developments in art of this sort usually the invention of the people in art, or of scientists?

Morley: No, of scientists rather. Egyptologists in this case. The advisor to Unesco on the project and the person who has carried on a great deal of the negotiation with the Egyptians directly, on the professional level, is a Frenchwoman, Christiane Delaroche Noblecourt, who's the curator of Egyptology at the Louvre. Of course you should remember, in the case of museums in Unesco, the museums division -- the museums and monuments division as it's called now -- that it includes museums of every kind, everything from aquaria to zoological gardens. They all have in common the collecting of specimens --

*See "A Common Trust: The Preservation of the Ancient Monuments of Nubia," UNESCO, Paris, 1960. Also "International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, Official Inauguration, 8 March 1960," UNESCO, Paris, 1960.

Morley: whether of art, history or science -- and using them for the pleasure and instruction of specialists and the general public. They are the indispensable adjuncts to research and they serve education at all levels. Since my service in Unesco I continue to be connected with it, sometimes formally, as when I was director of the international seminar on museums and education in Athens, Greece, in September 1954*; as a member of the advisory board of Museum, as a contributor to its publications; as an expert for one or another technical task; or informally and in its professional or national connexions (a member of ICOM's executive committee; a member of the United States national commission for Unesco for two terms; a member of the United States national committee for ICOM, called ICOMUS, and other such committees) to help Unesco causes. The international interests have indeed broadened and deepened, and the international connexions have multiplied. They have contributed to the San Francisco Museum of Art's development in various ways. Exhibitions have been possible here in San Francisco

*See "UNESCO International Seminar on the Role of Museums in Education," report by Grace L. McCann Morley, UNESCO/ CUA/64, Paris, 21 November 1955

Morley: because of these international interests and, especially in Latin America, they were responsible for the museum's being invited to assemble the United States representation for the third international Biennial at Sao Paulo, Brazil, and for my serving as United States commissioner there. To me this was an especially satisfactory international chore. The other national commissions from outside Brazil were mostly colleagues I had known for a long while; I was interested to see what other Latin American countries were doing in art since my earlier observations in the forties; I was delighted to discover what the Biennial in its short existence of six years had done for the artists of Brazil; and I was very happy to be able to bring to international attention our Pacific Coast artists. They had a great success.*

* See "The Pacific Coast Artists Brought Their Climate To Sao Paulo," by Grace L. McCann Morley, San Francisco Chronicle, This World, October 2, 1955, pp. 22,23.

New Delhi National Museum

Riess: And I understand that in the fall you are going to New Delhi to direct the National Museum. Is this another outgrowth of these international interests?

Morley: Yes. Only last summer my international activity and my interest in Unesco led to a new opportunity for me: my appointment to the position of director of the National Museum of India in New Delhi. I had attended ICOM's triennial fifth general conference at Stockholm July 1-8, and had given the report on Unesco's major project for increasing appreciation of the cultural values of Orient and Occident. I then stopped in Paris to work on the number of Museum devoted to the museums seminar in Rio de Janeiro, then in preparation. There I was asked by the Unesco museums division staff to meet Dr. A.M. D'Rozario, joint secretary of the ministry of scientific research and cultural affairs, and to discuss with him some of the problems of the National Museum for which a new building was then under construction. He inquired if I would consider a post in it and some time later, after my return to the United States, the formal offer

Morley: of the directorship was made.

Riess: Have you ever been to New Delhi, to India?

Morley: No, I've never been to New Delhi. I've been to Pakistan and other countries of southeast Asia, but never yet to India.

Riess: What is the National Museum like?

Morley: Well, it's a new building that's not quite finished yet.

Riess: They had a museum before.

Morley: Oh, yes, a great collection. Thousands of objects! Pre-history, archaeology, anthropology -- cultural and physical -- and then art, which includes sculpture -- stone sculpture, bronzes -- and painting, mural painting, such as that in the Ajanta caves, and miniatures, Mughal and Rajput, for example. They have been exhibited in the president's residence and in various government buildings and much has been in storage.

Riess: And you will have to learn Hindi?

Morley: Yes, I expect to. I'd like to.

Riess: And will you have to learn Indian art history?

Morley: I know quite a bit about it. One of the last exhibitions I did in San Francisco was for the Unesco conference -- the sixth national conference of the United States

Morley: national commission for Unesco which was held in San Francisco in November 1957.* And that exhibition was planned to illustrate the theme of the conference: "Better Understanding Between the Orient and the Occident," one of the major projects of Unesco. We did a very big exhibition tracing the whole tradition of Oriental art and then bringing it down to its influence in the present on architecture, painting, and prints. There's been a great deal.

Riess: Strong around here.

Morley: Yes, but especially in the Northwest.

It made a very handsome show, a very interesting show for it both reviewed Asian art development and illustrated, by a careful sampling geographically and in type, how well it is represented in public collections in the United States. And I prepared that show. In it were something like fifty very fine Indian bronzes representing various periods: Indian stone sculpture from Gandhara, Mathura, Gupta and later periods; Khmer, Cham, Thai, Javenese, Nepalese, Thibetan, Chinese and Japanese sculpture; painting similarly representative.

* Art in Asia and the West, San Francisco Museum of Art, October 28 - December 1, 1957.

Riess: But I think it's brave to go to New Delhi.

Morley: Why? (Laughter)

Riess: Well, it seems as if you're settling yourself...

Morley: Far away?

Riess: Far, far away.

Morley: Yes, it's a long way. Doesn't take so long. About seventeen flying hours from New York, I think, if you flew straight through.

Riess: You look forward to it?

Morley: Yes. Oh, India is a great country! And I expect to enjoy the Indians in the mass as I've enjoyed those I've known as individuals. Theirs is a very great art heritage, and of course the problem is preserving the heritage, making it vital to life today, in a country that is adapting itself to the contemporary technological civilization of the West. And of course they're doing that very well as far as economic and other adaptations go. I shall be very happy if my experience in developing museums according to their contemporary ideal of scholarship and public service for enjoyment and education can be helpful.

Guggenheim Museum

Riess: What was your year's experience at the Guggenheim Museum in New York?

Morley: Well, I wasn't there a year. I was there about six months. And it was while the museum was in the temporary quarters on 72nd Street. I left for an assignment in Europe almost immediately after the move to the Wright building. So I don't really know very much about the new building except its defects and difficulties from the point of view of installation. It's a very handsome building, very exciting as a spatial experience inside. But there are problems because of the ramp and the very strong limitations of space imposed by the structural pattern.

It's like a nautilus shell, you see, and so you have ribs about every twenty-four feet, and that means you have little bays breaking up the space and no continuous wall. And the lighting in those bays wasn't very satisfactory as Frank Lloyd Wright set it up, and so the only thing to do was to introduce artificial light, and that's been done and it's very strong light.

Morley: Part of the problem was that the walls, because of this curious structure, slope outward. Of course normally you hang paintings either straight against a wall or tipping forward slightly. But Frank Lloyd Wright's theory was that when the artist paints he usually has his canvas inclined on an easel. That actually isn't so; most artists paint on a vertical surface. So this sloping wall, he thought, would be a sort of continuous easel. But it doesn't work; it would have made it very hard to see the paintings.

So James Johnson Sweeney, who is the director and who is a genius at installation, decided that the only thing to do was to put the paintings on little stems of metal projecting out from the wall so they would be held forward and straight. And it works pretty well, it works quite well especially for the contemporary things. All paintings, you see, are being hung without frames. But it's quite hard on a Cezanne to have no frame though, and this painting actually is against the wall, for it is on the lower level.

Riess: The method of projecting the paintings would give an external dimension of depth, though, that might be in conflict with whatever space is in the painting.

Morley: Yes, and people object to that, just as some people do

Morley: to the intense light. On the other hand, it was the only solution, and it's really a stage effect, the blotting out of the space behind the paintings by light. It works quite well.

But when we moved to the new building...

Riess: You were in it for a short period, then?

Morley: Yes, I was there for the six months that just overlapped the move.

It became very quickly evident that there was really no possibility of doing the kind of work that I'd been expecting to do when I went there, which was the supplementary program. The problems of the installation, the presentation and exhibition part of the museum, which Mr. Sweeney likes, and for which he is quite adequate, took all effort. You see, less than 130 things can be shown at one time as the museum is now arranged. But there was no need for me in that part of the enterprise and there was no possibility of doing supplementary program because everyone was putting all his attention on this problem of exhibitions. So...

Riess: Some day there will be?

Morley: I don't know. You just can't tell. Things evolve, you know.

Riess: But isn't there some empty space at the top of the ramp?

Morley: Well, there's not empty space there because it has been reserved for other use than exhibition. The building doesn't provide any storage space elsewhere. Mr. Sweeney has taken the top turns of the ramp for storage and for certain work areas. These have not as yet [May 1960] been put to their intended use. Obviously they have to be sealed off for protection against dust and that is another problem. So the ramp is only about three big turns below that, and that's the only exhibition space, you see. There is a little theatre, not very big, seats about three hundred. Charming. It would be nice for concerts and lectures and that sort of thing. And at one time it was hoped that there could be development of an important supplementary program; I had hoped something new in museum "education" and in museum cultural activity could be developed.

But obviously presenting exhibitions is a tremendous undertaking under the circumstances and it will require a very long period of adaptation, after moving into so unorthodox a building, to find your way. [For more recent developments at the Guggenheim Museum see Appendix D.] The problems are complicated by inadequate and

Morley: poorly arranged office and work space behind the scenes. And after all I haven't too many years at my disposal and I didn't want to wait until things could come to a conclusion. I want to keep on doing things.

Riess: In another five years you could pop back.

Morley: (Laughter) Well, by that time...

So I went over to the International Council of Museums meetings in Stockholm in July; made a trip to Helsinki and Copenhagen, and later to Barcelona for some research, then I worked at Unesco in Paris for some weeks and then did some writing. When I returned to the United States in the autumn I got together some exhibitions, including this one down here*, and the Carl Morris, a Ford Foundation retrospective exhibition which I started the preceding autumn.** Now I'm out here to supervise the return of the Art from Ingres to Pollock' show.

Riess: Could one be a free-lance exhibition arranger?

Morley: It's very hard work and it's not very profitable. You need an office, a permanent organization through which to

* See note p. 37.

** See note p. 103.

Morley: work. In doing this exhibition I was the director of the exhibition, the selector of it, the presenter of it, the installer of it, the registrar that writes all the paper work -- plus the maker of labels for the express company, all that, you see.

Riess: And the packer of it! I don't think they knew what they were giving you to do.

Morley: They didn't. But that's all right. I knew. It interested me. I thought it would be amusing. Meanwhile I was waiting for -- you see, I've known of this Indian appointment since last August, but it had to evolve too. And so I was very interested in doing this small job for my university.

Riess: You mentioned the theatre in the Guggenheim. Had you done concerts and other extracurricular programs of this variety at the San Francisco Museum of Art?

Morley: Oh yes, a very great deal of that kind of activity. In a sense the San Francisco Museum of Art acted as a sort of cultural center in general. So there was an overlap of the various arts.

Riess: How about dance?

Morley: Yes. During the late thirties, thanks to the WPA programs,

Morley: dance was very, very active in San Francisco. And the museum helped a good deal by presenting programs.

Outstanding Exhibitions

Riess: If you had stayed at the San Francisco Museum of Art where do you think you might have tried for even more improvement?

Morley: Well, if I had stayed it would have continued to be a small scale museum but essentially the same type it was. That is to say, it would have continued trying gradually to become more perfect as a small museum -- building collections, building program, trying to have the very highest standards of professional operation, very definitely continuing the policy of trying in a modest way to be a center for study of modern art and to serve as it so frequently had in the past as an international center, originating a certain number of outstanding exhibitions and bringing to the area major high level exhibitions originated by other institutions -- the type begun in 1952, presented two or three times a year, that we called "paid admission" exhibitions. These included such shows

Morley: as the Matisse retrospective that the Museum of Modern Art circulated in 1952; the Leger show originated by the Art Institute of Chicago; the Dufy, which we originated and shared with Los Angeles; the Renoir which Los Angeles originated and shared with us; the Art in Asia and the West exhibition I have described; the Fauve and the Juan Gris shows from the Museum of Modern Art; the Marquet which was one of the last I put on (1958), originated by the San Francisco Museum of Art, and which later traveled across the United States to five other museums, (Seattle, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Syracuse, Boston). The museum would have gone on with that kind of activity, continuing to explore the contemporary field, its immediate background and antecedents and so on. Admission fees supplemented whatever special exhibition funds were available, made a catalogue possible, permitted bringing works of art from abroad -- and other things not possible otherwise.

Riess: How can a museum afford the "not paid admission" exhibitions?

Morley: Well, the museum had always a city subsidy for exhibitions. Ordinary ones are not quite as costly in that you don't publish a catalogue. If they are touring exhibitions

Morley: there is sometimes a catalogue available, but only those sold are purchased and there is no expense involved. They've been quite fine exhibitions in some cases. But they're not as highly organized, not as elaborately installed as the paid admission exhibitions.

Riess: And when you send one out from San Francisco your grant from the city can cover that cost?

Morley: Oh, yes. It covers the cost of organizing the exhibition for our own use. After it starts traveling the participating institutions pay the transportation costs and a fee, which takes care of insurance.

Of course we did organize exhibitions, like that for the Sao Paulo Third Biennial in Brazil, you know, which I mentioned earlier, that were not under the city grant. That was independently financed. The Los Angeles County Museum shared in sponsoring it. Money was raised by people who were interested; the Museum of Modern Art's international council gave a certain amount too.

Riess: How does it feel to be raising money all the time?

Morley: You wish you didn't have to, because if you didn't have to you could spend your energy on other things. But you don't consider the money raising a major part of

Morley: your life; it's a means to an end, and the end is bigger than the unpleasant means, and it's rewarding, the final result. You concentrate on that.

MUSEUMS: EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL

Museum as Art Patron

Riess: What about the question of the museum as patron, as collector?

Morley: Well in older centers, in European centers for instance, and in New York, the museums feel that they don't have the same responsibility to the artists' community as a museum like the San Francisco Museum of Art thought it had. At the time the museum opened in San Francisco there were practically no commercial galleries, certainly no galleries that were interested in the less familiar aspects of the contemporary development. There were some that were quite sound and that would show things that were well established.

But in recent years that has changed. There are a great many dealers' galleries in San Francisco now. You see, in New York for instance, there are something like a hundred and eight galleries, good ones, and so

Morley: the Museum of Modern Art, which has its own particular program of exploration of contemporary art and of historic modern movements, very rarely shows the work of artists unless they have already arrived at a position of being recognized leaders (Matisse, Picasso, Sterne), or of artists that they are trying to bring to attention after discovery (Americans, 1942; 16 Americans, etc.).

Generally speaking the tradition of museums is to insist that art is something that is established. It's only in our time that they've to some extent gone into the area of living artists. Previously museums were collecting agencies, preserving and presenting the art of the past, and they felt no great obligation to have a connection with art of the present. Now almost everywhere, every kind of art museum does have a program of contemporary art because it has been proved that people are immensely interested in that growing aspect of art today and showing it is a method of getting people into the museum.

We thought that we had two functions in San Francisco. First, to inform the artists on what was going on in art of their time, for their benefit, and incidentally to help the public, by informing it, to understand what

Morley: their own artists were doing, as well as about living artists in general. And second, to do our part in bringing to wider attention, locally, nationally, and internationally, the art of the area, because we were, in a sense, a regional museum -- representing the region.

Conflicting Interests of Museum Supporters

Riess: In a recent article by Katherine Kuh in the Saturday Review she complains of the tendency of museums to think in terms of numbers, of the "gate receipts."* Perhaps this signals another revolution in museum thinking.

Morley: I know her very well. We often talk about her articles.

Yes. That, of course, is a very ancient complaint, that museums too often think that attendance is the only way of measuring their success. We museum people don't normally think that. We naturally quote attendance because it's the thing that impresses outsiders if we need money, interest, attention, and the like.

* "Can Modern Art Survive Its Friends?" by Katherine Kuh, Saturday Review of Literature, Vol. 43, No. 11, March 12, 1960.

Morley: But what is important is the repeater, the person who comes in again and again. And in our program in San Francisco our deliberate policy was to try to build up a visiting public of repeaters. And we did that by a certain continuity in program, by certain ways of developing activities, and so on. And it seemed to work quite well. The person who comes once when Aunt Susie's coming to town, you know, then doesn't come again for three years until Cousin Katherine does, doesn't get any good out of the museum.

I think even a very casual exposure to art, however, is likely to do a person a bit of good. Also you remember it's percentage you're working with. You draw people in: to most people it doesn't mean very much except a momentary, pleasureable experience, you hope; but a certain number of that casual group suddenly discovers he or she is caught by the revelation of a new experience, a new kind of world, a new way of living, really. And that's what art is, you see, it's a broadening of experience.

Riess: Another problem Katherine Kuh mentioned was the tendency for museums to compete with popular entertainment.

Morley: Well, I think a great many museums feel that they must do so. They have a broader group -- in visitors and in supporters -- than in the past. And this more or less leads to a point that completes what I was trying to make clear when we talked a while ago. That is, since the war you have an entirely new group of people who are interested and involved in cultural and altruistic enterprises of different kinds. They are, obviously, younger than the former group; they come from a different kind of a background, in that they are more "do it yourself" people, the counterpart of people who build or finish houses for themselves.

This older group, of whom I spoke previously with considerable admiration and affection, the "great lady" type, were the people who were used to delegating detail to others; the women had butlers and the men had great business managers. And they all had great wealth. They had great power. They gave everything, if they believed in an institution -- whether it was a hospital or a museum -- they gave everything without expecting any return whatsoever because they had no reason for any return in prestige, recognition, power, advantage. All that they had already and were bringing to the institution of

Morley: their choice.

Since the war, and this is very, very general, you have a different group -- speaking from a social science point of view -- concerned with museums. In the general public it is younger, larger, more varied and from all kinds of backgrounds. Museum supporters also are different. They are people who don't have fortunes for no one has such fortunes as in the past. They are people who, because they have more recently gained a certain amount of financial standing, are very aware of what that represents to their status in the community. They do things very generously, very often, but they are also very aware of what are the best things to do, in their terms, for the kind of prestige they want, whether it's a prestige of social recognition, civic advancement, or even business advantage.

Therefore you find, in a great many museums, a very great emphasis nowadays on social activities because that brings the individuals associated with the museums the fastest popularity, shall we say, with more mention in the public press, more status among those about them. They are, in other words, a somewhat more practical group than the former one. They're doing, for the public good,

Morley: all sorts of very good things. But at the same time they are people who, in terms of our times, are very aware of doing them the best way for themselves. They're very, very often unselfish, but not unaware, shall we say, of the advantages to be gained.

And so that's what Katherine Kuh was complaining about in her article. A great many museums, a great many very good ones, at the moment are not in a very happy state and mostly it is because of conflicts between groups of their boards of trustees and the women's boards, perhaps, and so on, so that their good professionals have very often left to go elsewhere simply for that reason. They couldn't do anything further in terms of professional development, which they thought was paramount, because of this conflict and of this effort to be socially active and to provide prestige.

I think this is a natural development. I think it will pass. It just happens that museums at the moment have a great deal of success because of the high prices of art and therefore a great deal of prestige value. They therefore are under great pressures from people who do not think of their scholarly, cultural and educational importance, but rather of making use of them for personal

Morley: advantage and in somewhat trivial ways.

Riess: How will it pass? Where will the change be?

Morley: Well, I think people grow up in the course of time. More responsible and serious people will assert themselves in the leadership when it becomes clear, as it inevitably does with time, that serious professional direction and integrity alone can bring permanent success to a cultural institution. Just now this is not yet clear and the situation is muddled in many places.

Riess: They mature out of this, the trustees too?

Morley: Yes, yes. Trustees and committee members and so on. Yes. In other words, I think the more permanent and important the values that a museum represents -- because a museum is a great educational and cultural instrument -- the more definitely those values in the end will dominate. Because obviously you can't do adequately everything in this time of tight budgets and limited staffs and do things at a proper professional level. So you have to choose; trivial social activity must bow to the serious responsibilities of the museum.

The third thing that Katherine Kuh was trying to point out was that in the enthusiasm for contemporary art which has swept the country, modern art, art of the nine-

Morley: teenth century, Impressionism and so on, there tend to be people who think of themselves as great connoisseurs because they own some great moderns that have advanced phenomenally in price yet who don't know anything about art in general. And that leads back to this question: you asked if I felt frustrated because I was not in a general museum of art.

No, because art's always the same thing, you see, to me. Every time I deal with contemporary art it is only the manifestation at the moment of creative values that I see going back as far as I can look into art history.

Riess: Then how can you let someone go through the museum without telling them this history.

Morley: Well, we did very often emphasize this continuity. We tried to do so for any important exhibition. Museums often can't afford the time and energy to do it all the time, at least in detail, but invariably somewhere in the museum you would find that contemporary art being shown was placed in its context of art history. But in the museum we do, or did, try very definitely to show quite thoroughly the lineage of any important exhibition, so that the visitor would get the relationships to art in general, and a sense of the continuity. And in the

Morley: educational work there was never any limitation to contemporary art. We were continually giving courses that were leading back into the past, with the idea of shedding more light on the present.

Ranks and Titles

Riess: When you joined the San Francisco Museum of Art in the War Memorial Building were you director, or curator?

Morley: The title of curator was the original title simply because no one among the trustees knew any better. The former head of the museum down at the Palace of Fine Arts had had the title of curator, but in modern parlance curator means head of a department, a scholar, an expert in his special field, and not the administrative head of an institution. Director implies responsibility both for the policy aesthetically, but also for the policy economically and for the management financially. So my title was changed from curator to director -- I can't tell you exactly when -- I think it was at the end of the first four or five months.

Riess: Then later you had curators at the San Francisco Museum of Art.

Morley: Yes, we had. That was one of the ranks toward which a person worked. We usually took people in, if they were in the professional side of it, as museum assistants, then assistant curators, and eventually curators. By about 1955 we were able to have a curator of prints, who was also librarian, who was professionally trained; and we called the chief -- well, he was the head of installation, but also did a great deal of the research for exhibitions -- a curator. And we had usually a curator who was primarily charged with research and educational work. But it's too small a museum to have large departments, except for the prints. That's like Cincinnati, as I explained, because prints take little space and one can acquire many of them, and they serve well to illustrate art history.

Administration, Organization, Budget

Riess: One would expect that administration would go against the grain of the art expert.

Morley: Well, obviously people who are art experts suffer when they have to give time to administration, but there is no help for it, because if you have an institution you

Morley: have to have it administered. It's just a way of making the thing run. And art museum people, though they hope to spend as much time as possible with art, do work through institutions. They don't work as individuals, or can't do the full scope of their work as individuals as art historians can, or artists can. Their medium, their instrument, is a museum organization, whether it's a very small one and they have a very personal control of every part of it, or whether it's a very large one with delegation of all detail. And they do use it knowingly as an instrument of, shall we say, education, enlightenment, and enjoyment for the public they serve. Whether it's a case of a university museum, where exhibitions and activities would to a very large degree supplement courses and serve student, or of a community museum -- a place like the Richmond Art Center, for instance -- which has certain features of museum operation in its exhibition program and which provides studio or workshop activities and courses as well as exhibitions for a completely different kind of public.

In San Francisco again it depends on opportunities. A museum of contemporary art of course has, to a certain

Morley: extent, a specialized public and you keep that public's needs in mind. This exhibition that just closed here, Art from Ingres to Pollack, was a more focused exhibition than normally is put on in a museum. A museum would cover the same ground, perhaps, but it would cover it from all the different points of view which a public interested in that particular period of art that would come to visit might conceivably have. While here at the University the exhibition was deliberately chosen and installed to illustrate fairly precisely a course of which the art department is proud and which it used it to celebrate.

Riess: What is the organization of a museum?

Morley: It depends. A very small museum may have a chief administrative officer who may even be called curator and yet does administration. Ordinarily the administrative officer of a museum, who is very often also an art expert, is called the director, and in very small museums there may be no curator. In larger organizations the director may be an art expert, but he is primarily an administrative head. And heads of departments are called curators and they have administrative responsibility only for their department. They are primarily

Morley: scholars.

Riess: How much of a problem to a museum is the budget?

Morley: Budgets are difficult always. (Laughter) It's very difficult to get enough money to do things in cultural fields in general. Museums, a great many of those in this country, were privately founded and are still to a great extent privately supported, by endowments, memberships, and donations. Most of them, though, even the private ones, are today recipients of subsidies from some government organization, usually the city, occasionally the county -- Los Angeles is a county museum for instance. Museums in the Smithsonian system -- national museums -- in Washington including the National Gallery, for instance, are federal, like the Smithsonian Institution itself, which includes museums of science, of history, and of American art.

Riess: But they received a great deal of their collection privately.

Morley: Yes, they did. The Smithsonian was founded by a private donor and given to the nation with some funds; the National Gallery was presented, together with the beginnings of the collection and endowments, to the federal government.

Worley: And an administrator struggles with budgets, of course, and with staff, and with all the machinery of making an organization go. Some people like it very much. It's primarily business. Obviously you have to, whether you like it or not, suffer through it, if you are responsible for a museum. I never minded too much because of the result -- I always thought of it as a means to help art.

 Here perhaps I should speak in detail of budgets in relation to the San Francisco Museum of Art, for I remembered that you mentioned earlier having specific interest in them as they affected museum operation and growth. You are quite right, of course: funds and how they are used are basic to any enterprise. The San Francisco Museum of Art never had an easy time; there was never enough money to do what needed doing. No one's fault, just circumstances. It has no endowments, just what income its trustees raise, its members bring in, and its various subsidies from the city add. As I look back it is obvious we did miracles. Most museums have some endowment; in recent years there was a dream that the San Francisco Museum of Art might some day have one. Perhaps it will come eventually.

Morley:

Meanwhile, Mr. Crocker's friends provided funds for operation during the first couple of years. Membership helped greatly thereafter. When the museum opened, my own salary was \$2400 a year; the half dozen other employees all earned less than a hundred a month. The budget for the first year exceeded slightly \$35,000. When I left in 1958 it was in the neighborhood of \$170,000. These figures are not quite comparable for they were calculated in somewhat different ways. However, there was an enormous increase. How costs have increased is suggested: My salary was then (1958) \$9,000, plus a travel allowance of \$2400, annually, after twenty-four year's service; my successor was recruited at \$13,000 annual salary, plus allowances. A secretary cost \$60 monthly in 1935 and costs \$285 to \$300 now.

It was our custom to set up an "ideal" budget to meet our needs. In fact, income never came up to expectations, though hard work on the part of the trustees and staff and increasing activities for members made it grow steadily. Therefore expenditures had to be held as closely as possible within the limitations of income. Over the years, at incredible sacrifice, deficits at the year end were avoided or held to a thousand or two.

Morley: Only in the exhibition fund, subscribed in 1952 for the paid admission exhibitions, was there a cumulative deficit, for admissions did not cover the expenses of most of these great exhibitions and most showed some loss. In that fund, there was a deficit of less than \$12,000 by 1958, however. In other words, earned income from admissions, plus the original subscription of about \$9500 and a deficit of less than \$12,000, had provided two or three major exhibitions each year from 1952 to 1958. But increasing cost of salaries and of every item in operation, usually quite beyond the museum's control, mounted steadily. The membership did not suffice as a source, and though the trustees of the time worked hard, they could not bring in enough.

Leaders in a community differ a good deal in their ability to raise funds and few in San Francisco can match Mr. Crocker. Even when he became chairman of the board instead of president, he continued to call on his friends, but he did not greatly expand the group. The others did their best, but income growth was slow. Yet expense could not be held down, for membership growth depended on building up activities, and those could not always be self-supporting. As a result it was a continuous battle.

Morley: And the director found it wearisome sometimes! It was discouraging too, for it stood in the way of accomplishing much that needed doing. For example, Mr. Crocker was so intent on getting funds for operation that he never allowed solicitation of money for art purchases. As a result the museum could buy little and has only small funds for acquisition bequeathed by Albert Bender and William Gerstle, and more recently gifts of the women's board. Similarly, emphasis had to fall on public aspects of the museum's work -- exhibitions, activities, etc. -- and more prosaic things behind the scenes, like conservation jobs (that is, the technical care and preservation and, when necessary, restoration, of works of art: For example, if a canvas' painted surface is scratched or dirty or the varnish darkens and must be removed and a new coat of protective varnish applied), had to wait sometimes for years for the money to be found to get them done. Sometimes they never did get done; I always looked forward to the next ten years!

So fund limitations were a very great handicap. I do not recall any period when they were not. But somehow the essential was done, the museum did not go

Morley: into debt, and it grew. Whether membership -- including corporate membership -- fees could have ever been built up sufficiently to make operation efficient and easy, I feel I cannot guess now. For the last few years before I left the "ideal" budget had been kept at the same figure. Income increased each year but not sufficiently to meet it. Expenditure exceeded income by only a very small sum each year, however, so the deficit was minor. I hope the future will be easier.

Riess: What proportion of your time did the administrative work take?

Morley: Practically all the time when the museum had grown and became very active, by about 1951. Any time I gave to writing or to activities or interests of a private scholarly kind was on Saturdays, Sundays, nights. The public relations business, seeing that the staff did the things that were necessary, meeting with boards and committees, all that machinery of making the thing run, took practically all the time spent in the office during the day. And that is general. It is a certain sacrifice one makes. But on the other hand I think devoted art museum people have the feeling so keenly of the instrument -- that is,

Morley: using the museum to give enjoyment, to translate art and information for the benefit of the public, to educate and so on -- that they are satisfied when it operates well. And exhibitions themselves are used in that fashion to transmit information, to educate. They are communications, as if you were writing, you see.

Incidentally museum people do a good deal of writing of a technical kind of one kind or another, popular articles, catalogue introductions, sometimes catalogue articles, translations. My specialty is technical writing for Museum, and other professional journals. I write on art too, of course, but more frequently on museum techniques.

Riess: Who makes up announcements and bulletins from the museum?

Morley: Various people on the staff. That [looking at "The Anatomy of Art," twelve illustrated lectures, season 1956-1957, San Francisco Museum of Art] was done by the man who gave that course, and it was a very personal expression of his own feelings. He's a very good artist, John Baxter. Some of the catalogues we ourselves designed; sometimes we had a designer in to do it for us; sometimes they were the result of collaboration between a designer and the museum.

On the Job Training of Curators

Riess: How much educating of your curators do you have to do?

Morley: A considerable amount. I always tried to recruit people who had very serious professional training, usually in art, and some experience in museums. In some cases they came from the Fogg; in other cases they had degrees in art history; in some cases they were artists. It all depended on our needs at the time. But the practical work, the work of museum routine, almost has to be learned on an apprenticeship basis. And in a small museum like the San Francisco Museum of Art we did a great deal of training.

A great many of our good people there went out afterwards to other museums. On the other hand, it was a limited kind of training and it happened that people who had good equipment and I thought might become good museum people I have deliberately told to leave after a certain period because it was too limited an experience -- only contemporary art, only so small a museum, and in a city the size of San Francisco. They needed broader experience after a time. So a number of them have gone to bigger

Morley: museums where they get more general background.

It should be emphasized however that the success of a museum depends very directly on the abilities of staff members. San Francisco was very fortunate through the years. It was able to bring in an occasional well-trained curator or educational specialist. Its technical personnel it recruited locally and for the most part trained. They were a skilled and devoted group, with high professional and technical standards -- very necessary, for on their care and skills depended the safety of art in the museum. Changing exhibitions and dependence on loans to such an extent made this dependability of the staff of major importance.

Professional Associations

Riess: What are the activities of the professional associations such as the American Association of Art Museum Directors?

Morley: The American Association of Art Museum Directors is limited to seventy-five members at the present time. They're elected on the basis of their heading a museum, on personal qualifications as well as on the basis of the

Morley: quality of work they and their museum do. That is, they are selected personally in a sense, but as representatives of a museum. And it isn't automatic at all. They meet annually, usually just before or just after, and generally before, the American Association of Museums meeting (which is inclusive of all types of museums and all ranks of museum workers). The directors consult together about all the problems of administration, connoisseurship, and general art museum operation.

Riess: This would be a "clearinghouse" of sorts in the United States, like the Unesco museums division?

Morley: Yes, only it's professional and corresponds rather to ICOM. Also it's more limited to very confidential matters concerned with art and art museum operation. And also we enjoy one another's company; we're entertained nicely, we see collections, we exchange professional news and views, that sort of thing.

Riess: I wondered whether the directors' group make sweeping policy changes, that sort of thing.

Morley: No. Within the group, yes, but on a confidential level. Also unlike other professional art organizations it is not an action organization. It is rather a personal

Morley: contact and clearing house organization.

The Western Association of Art Museum Directors, by contrast, is an action organization in the sense that it circulates exhibitions. I understand that recently they've changed the title to Western Association of Art Museums. It started long ago because of the need of people here in the western region who are remote from New York, with that large jump from Chicago across a country where there weren't any museums at all, to get together on exhibitions. It was, to a very large extent, and still is, strictly an exhibition agency, with a certain amount of confidential consultation but much less because it's a much more open group.

Riess: On what level would "confidential conversation" be? On employees?

Morley: No, it isn't a trade association in that sense; it's a professional association. It discusses policy to some extent. But it is the American Association of Art Museum Directors which does most of this type of confidential consultation among its members. For instance we would be likely to pass around among ourselves information if there were a forger at work in the art field in this

Morley: country or abroad. The art museum directors can help them, on a very highly confidential basis. If we're having reports on problems of buying, of attribution, they might be discussed and experience shared would be helpful. Reports might even concern sources for acquiring pictures, that sort of thing. It's the kind of information that can't possibly be published but is very valuable to know if you are in the field of art. It's a very important professional assistance.

And indirectly the art museum directors' association does make policy. That is to say if over a period of years the American Association of Art Museum Directors "frown" on something it's likely to be corrected. But it isn't an "action" association in the strict sense. It proceeds at a very high level and confidentially always. But it has improved director-trustee relationships on occasion, by formulating ideal standards; it has given guidance on employment practices and relationships, in an indirect way; it advises on the control and copyright use of color reproductions and on other technical matters where sometimes there has been exploitation for commercial purposes. We work very hard. They're

Morley: usually three-day meetings, or two and a half.

Riess: Many such professional associations have an almost unwritten law against "shop talk" when they gather, and thus invalidate the whole cause of their conferences.

Morley: Oh no, the shop talk is the thing that counts for us because we're dispersed, all busy. It's hard to exchange information by correspondence, though we do that too. But in so large a country as the United States getting together at least once a year is very valuable.

The other organizations of importance in the art museum world are the general ones, like the American Association of Museums, which has art sections of various types, educational and conservators' sections as well as sections in the fields of science and history. The American Federation of Arts has museum as well as individual members and serves museums, principally by circulating exhibitions, helpful above all to the smaller art museums. The Smithsonian Institution has a traveling exhibition service, also, and it provides a great many art exhibitions. Then, of course, there is the College Art Association, which is of interest to art museums, but especially helpful to art historians and teachers of art. There is a conservation organization,

Morley: the IIC, which has an American chapter.* Most of us are members of these organizations and use their service; we participate or contribute as the occasion arises, when something they do is pertinent to us, and most of us at one time or another hold office on the governing boards of these organizations. There are also regional organizations, concerned with art and with museums. Most of us also participate in them.

Riess: "Us?"

Morley: Members of the art museum directors' association. In other words, we include the leaders, the active people in the profession who try to help as they can to guide and form it into a profession.

Museum Education

Riess: We've mentioned museum education several times. What is its role in the museum structure?

Morley: It's very important, more and more important as a matter of fact, though a good many of us don't much like the term "education," simply because it tends to be regarded by a great many people as a boring, pedestrian sort of affair. In a way we feel that everything an art

*International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

Morley: museum does that serves the public is education in a very profound sense. But apart from that there are activities which are definitely organized from an educational point of view. They differ usually from the educational activities of a university or a school in that there is no compulsion. The museums have not a captive audience, you see; theirs is an audience that is attracted. And that audience may be attentive and work or it may not, and be rather casual. Usually the programs in this category are very diverse and they may be, some of them at least, directed to the general public that just wants a certain amount of background. Some may be very specific.

To me it's a very interesting field because I came into museum work when there was a very violent controversy, to which I earlier referred, going on between the curators and those people who were scholars in the art museum field, and those who were, shall we say, the go-betweens, the popularizers of scholarly information, who were the educators and who were fighting very hard for recognition in their own right as a part of the museum hierarchy. That battle was won, I would say, during the early thirties, so that most big museums have

Morley: had from that time on education departments that enjoyed a certain amount of prestige within the museum organization itself and were respected by the curatorial staff.

Riess: And were headed by their own curator?

Morley: Well, usually not called a curator. But again that controversy goes on at the present time. A curator is a person who's the custodian, the keeper if you like -- the English term for the same thing -- of tangible material, the collections, while the head of education is often called supervisor or director, or dean in some big museums like the Metropolitan.

And on the staff of an educational department you have all sorts of people. You have -- in a very big museum -- specialists in child instruction in art, you have lecturers in all categories, you have guest lecturers who come in who may be all kinds of people -- from abroad, local scholars, and so on.

Riess: Does this describe the way it is in San Francisco?

Morley: Usually in the San Francisco Museum of Art, which I know most intimately, we had one person who specialized primarily in the educational part of the program. He usually helped out with other things as well. And then all the people of curatorial competency, including the

Morley: director, lectured or did demonstrations or whatever was needed, from time to time in a rather wide range of lectures, demonstrations, forums, panel leadership, and the like, both in the museum and outside it.

Riess: And the program would differ from semester to semester?

Morley: Yes, and there were changes to meet changing conditions over the years. On Saturday mornings we had a children's program, a very small one now. I think I said earlier in our talk that in the beginning we used to have up to three hundred children on a Saturday morning simply because at that time no one else met that particular need. But now a great deal is done for children in the city. The deYoung and the Legion both have active educational departments and they both have their special activities serving adults, young adolescents, school groups, children in general, as well as the general public, just as the San Francisco Museum of Art does.

Riess: Are the people who come to the classes usually members of the museum? Or is this a way of getting members?

Morley: It depends. Usually if it's a paid course -- and very often in order to get a certain amount of seriousness we ask for a token registration fee -- the fee is waived or very much reduced for members. And sometimes people

Morley: join in order to profit by those courses at a reduction. If they're at all interested in that sort of thing and participate to any extent in courses, attend lectures and movie programs and concerts, they save their annual membership fee very easily.

Riess: Was Park Merced part of the education extension service that you had under the Carnegie?

Morley: No, Park Merced came much later and was an independent experiment. Park Merced was a community, you see, near San Francisco, that theoretically would have been a neighborhood, with opportunity for more or less cultural and everyday life integral in itself. Local leaders were very anxious to have the museum set up a branch there. So we arranged to do it on an experimental basis. I had hoped to carry it with volunteers, mostly, and to make it a women's board project. And I think probably if we could have gotten people to carry on long enough their service as desk attendants there it might have worked very well, but it had to be staffed by volunteers who got bored when there wasn't a lot of activity all the time. It seemed a little thing compared to the museum itself, you see. It did not offer enough prestige to

Morley: hold their interest.

Riess: Volunteer members of the women's board?

Morley: Yes. And other people who were interested in the museum. They didn't realize that sometimes the museum didn't have lots of people in it either. They just thought that it was always very busy and very active -- had no idea of the long years of building it up. Board members are likely to visit the museum when big events are going on, previews, and the like, and so they are inclined to overlook the quiet times in between the activities. In their projects they tend to get discouraged if there is not great activity, and quick rewards. (Creating interesting volunteer work and rewards and prestige is the task of the director, and often the effort to do so almost outweighed the benefits!)

Curators as Educators

Riess: Generally how do curators feel about being educators?

Morley: It depends. In smaller museums, middle-sized museums, curators almost inevitably have to do part time work as educators though they may do it on the higher, more

Morley: specialized levels of education rather than just Sunday afternoon gallery tours, for instance, which are the lowest form of museum education and communication. Nowadays, however, curators are not so much in "ivory towers" as they used to be, and they usually participate in educational activity in some way, as a matter of course.

It's not a matter of objecting on principle, usually, it's just that to prepare for a good lecture takes a very long time and curators very often are fine scholars and have so much that they want to accomplish that they begrudge the time. And you're always behind in scholarly work in a museum anyway. (I recommend that you look up a recent number of the College Art Journal in which there is an article by Valentiner on the problem of curators in American museums as compared with his own youthful experience in Europe, and suggestions for what could be done here.*)

American museums, by the pattern of living in our country, by the fact that they have to earn their way to a great extent -- there are private museums, but even public museums must appeal to the public to get public

*"Scholarship in Museums" by W.R. Valentiner, College Art Journal, Fall, 1959, Vol. XIX, p. 1.

Morley: support -- have a heavier load to carry of extra-museum activities than do museums of countries where support is provided traditionally by government. And so, only in the very great museums, where the curators can be protected from demands for education and popular services, are curators able to devote their whole time to scholarship. And it is a sore point with many. That's why at the present time so many of our very gifted young people, who might very well be ornaments to the museum profession, are drawn into teaching art in colleges and universities. We -- that is, those of us who are veterans in the museum profession -- are worried right now because we can't get enough good young people to enter the profession.

Riess: There will be conflicting demands upon them in teaching too.

Morley: Yes. Still they do have long vacations as they have not in museums. And they don't have to cope with trustees directly, and committees of boards and that sort of administrative demand that devours time. So there isn't quite as much waste of human energy. And that means a great deal to a scholar. Their starting salaries are usually better, too, right now. Then they have more security, because at the present time the museum profession in general,

Morley: and especially the art museum profession, is fairly chaotic. It hasn't taken a stable form and won't, I think, for a little while. Tenure is rare and salary scales are not logical.

Riess: Is that something that the American Association of Art Museum Directors would try to correct?

Morley: Well yes, indirectly. The American Association of Museums is trying to do it on a broader scale because it is more a trade organization, you see, and it is working for better salaries, tenure, and that sort of thing. Very often the art museum directors, if it is a matter for action, will pass it over, with their recommendations, to the museum association for study and action.

Well, it's quite understandable. We're a new country. We haven't in the past had too much -- in the recent past, shall I say -- had too much respect for intellectual activities. And art museum work is even more removed than teaching from direct practical intellectual activities because it has so much association with fluff, prestige, social activity, and so on. So many people, especially out here in the West, but to a certain extent everywhere in this country, think of it as a luxury

Morley: activity rather than a fundamental cultural or intellectual activity.

Openings and Social Events: Museums and Changing Conditions

Riess: Has public association with museums become more of a luxury activity in the sense you just mentioned in recent years? I gather from our earlier conversations that it was a serious commitment in the beginning -- in San Francisco in 1935.

Morley: In a way, from the broad point of view of the general public and for the legislator, art was always a little bit of a luxury. But from the point of view of the devoted people who founded art museums -- back in the seventies and eighties it started, and went on into, oh almost up to the beginning of the war, I'd say -- there was deep respect for their cultural importance. In general that attitude of devotion to a cultural institution like a museum, without asking for any return of a personal kind tended to prevail until after the last war. There was always a certain amount of peripheral development of social activity and that sort of

Morley: thing, of course, but it was recognized as subordinate to serious museum functions, like collections, exhibitions, education.

But in the struggle after the war to get a broader base of support, get more people interested, obtain more money in order to pay higher salaries, and to care for all the other things that were costing more and more, the groups associated with museums changed to a certain extent. Also the former serious group was older and tended to disappear, and you had new people coming in who were not quite so altruistically devoted in some cases; who did a good job and devoted themselves but who very often were aware of the advantages of attaching themselves to a successful cultural institution and sharing in the prestige it represented.

To a certain extent that's going on in every kind of organization that depends on public support at the present time. It's not unique to art museums, but a little bit more evident there simply because of this association of art with prestige and social success. It's a complicated sort of thing, you see, and very interesting from the sociological point of view, shall we say, from the social science point of view. That is, museums' place

Morley: in the community and in scholarship is in flux now, so it's very hard to make any definite evaluations and appraisals. You just note what's happening and consider it a sort of shaking-down period.

Riess: But even so un-social, non-luxury an opening as a showing of an artist here in Kroeber Hall is preceded with engraved invitations. How does this fit into the scheme?

Morley: That goes back much farther, actually. It has been always the habit of artists opening a one-man show to invite friends and patrons to the opening. It is the vernissage (...meaning opening or preview because artists sometimes were still applying varnish when their friends came!), the tradition of French gallery shows and of the French Salons, a very old tradition.

An opening can be used -- and we did deliberately use it in this way in San Francisco -- as a means to attract members, because an opening is very gay and can be very pretty. The members preview, for instance, of the Art in Asia and the West show was a great spectacle. The stage in the auditorium was filled with large brass Buddhist candles on great yellow and white blocks so it looked like a Buddhist temple and it was a very brilliant occasion. There were two or three thousand people there

Morley: -- I don't remember how many -- all dressed up. And it was pretty nice.

From my point of view I like that kind of social, or "society" if you like, manifestation around a museum event, like an opening, because it's of a very broad and democratic kind. Anyone who is a member comes, and a member may bring a guest, and it's fun, and one has a chance to talk to other people interested in art. There is a sense of gaiety but also art is part of it. Probably one doesn't get a chance to look too much at the art, but that's normal too. But some there come back to see the exhibition, we hope. But in any case there is no limitation to any particular group of members within the general categories that the museum services and depends on, but all members come.

While for anything more specific that doesn't have a natural limitation, the museum gets into a difficult position if it does anything that is not open easily to the whole membership. For instance, if you were having a dinner in the Members' Room before an opening you'd naturally ask board members and their wives or people in the community who have special connection with that event, and that would be a natural situation and no one

Morley: could criticize. But when you have a small activity, for instance a ball, well the museum is very small and you couldn't have comfortably more than a thousand people. Well that means turning away several thousand members and wives, or asking so much for tickets that it is out of the reach of many members of a museum serving the public at large in a place like San Francisco.

In other words, I think art should be surrounded with gaiety and elegance on appropriate occasions, to introduce an exhibition, for example. Why not? It's the human thing. But I don't think an art museum should ever be dependent on the stimulation of snobbishness; it must never fail in any way to serve the membership as a whole and of course the general public as well.

Riess: What were the outlines of an average few days for you at the museum, both in the early days and recently?

Morley: Well, in the days of getting the museum opened or in the early years while getting any large exhibition opened, one started, as I've been doing here (Kroeber Hall) recently, at eight o'clock in the morning and one worked late, supervising the staff. Everyone was being broken in and I had to keep very close track of things. In recent years, trained assistants carried on the detailed

Morley: supervisions. Then of course one met with committees, getting ready for a preview, for instance. The women's board, for example, took care of the social aspects of that kind of activity. But one met with them to discuss and decide on plans. One met with committees for concerts. And from twelve when the museum opened until dinner-time one was in the office and probably had a succession of interviews, talked with staff, and so on.

In more recent years, because of a very well-trained staff, mostly trained by us directly there, the machinery of operation went very smoothly indeed and it was just a matter of conferring with staff members for the preparation of an exhibition and modifying or approving the way it would be put on. And very often, if I were very busy planning an exhibition, or writing, I'd stay home in the morning and get to the office at about two o'clock.

I always did a great deal of night work. I always believed it was very necessary when the museum was open to the public to have a competent staff member present behind the scenes. He might be doing something or other connected with his regular work but he was on call. I especially liked to be there when there were any public activities -- concerts and so on -- so I usually took

Morley: night work and Saturdays because I was freer than some of the other people who had wives and children and other commitments at home. It worked well too because I felt free to use my mornings for quiet work.

Riess: It was a very large public relations job?

Morley: Yes, it has to be, necessarily. And it's a very complicated one. Especially the San Francisco Museum of Art was complicated because it didn't have its own building. It was in a public building, but as a private museum you had to walk the line very carefully. Always if there were a very exclusive social event I used to get abusive letters criticizing the use of the museum for any special segment of the population.

Riess: From museum members who had missed out on something?

Morley: No. They were very often unsigned, which is most annoying. If I got a signed complaint or attack, why then I would always make a point of writing and explaining why such and such a thing was done.

Usually there was a reason.

Very often I won friends for the museum in that way from among those who had been critical.

But I remember quoting -- and I remember my board members were very shocked by it, but it was the sort of

Morley: thing that I had continually received in the past -- an anonymous note saying that the social groups connected with the museum were taking "advantage of public facilities for 'society' purposes." And you could see why that type of reproach might be dangerous to a private museum in a municipal building. And so I made it a point never to close the museum to the general public, even when we had a special event for members, and that's why our openings were on Monday nights when the museum is closed anyway. And it worked out very well.

The only other time we ever closed the museum was for the Unesco conference here in November 1957, and that was on a Thursday night. That was so big a public event that it really transcended anything else. We had some 1300 delegates from all parts of the county who had supper and saw the Art in Asia and the West exhibition -- illustration of the theme of their conference: increasing understanding of Asia in the United States.

CONCLUSION

Riess: You minimize your part in the museum's growth and success by saying it was "just the moment" rather than the person.

Morley: Well, I think the museum developed at a very lucky moment, in the sense that many circumstances were favorable. San Francisco was becoming more mature, and you had a place for a museum of our kind. You had the Museum of Modern Art in New York which could make exhibitions available which we profitted by. I suppose that my personal contribution was that I happened to be there, that I had the proper kind of background, training, experience, and interest, which is a little bit unusual, in the contemporary living art, and at the same time in the historic tradition. To me they seem a continuity, and not too different, one from another, in their essentials. The external appearance obviously differs. Now it is the reaction to the environment, to the moment, to the spirit of our time of which we spoke earlier as the conditions in which art is developing now, its direct

Morley: response (as in "action" painting) and its universality (similar movements and expressions are everywhere) that count. The external expression has been quite different in other periods but essentially in art the creative stream flows on.

I was lucky to be able to understand somewhat these developments and to respond to them. And to me it's very exciting to have had an opportunity to be a part of a place where art was developing very fast, as it did in San Francisco from 1934 to 1958. It was rewarding to work where the stimulus that we were able to bring in in the form of these exhibitions of abstract art -- the Museum of Modern Art's Picasso, Forty Years of His Art, the Surrealist, Fantastic Art show, and all the others that were summaries or illustrations of the background and of the great leaders of the contemporary movements -- had a direct effect on artists and public. It was satisfying to see the stimulus that that sort of exhibition was to the artists, to see them responding, to realize that having great things of their period against which to measure their own work was important to them.

And then, why the San Francisco - Bay Region school should develop so extraordinarily well was again a com-

Morley: bination of accidents. There was a Diebenkorn and a Sam Francis; Still and Rothko came here, and so on. You see? So art development is a combination of things.

And a very happy combination... among other things, of having people who believed in the kind of institution the museum was, who got as much money as they could to back it, had confidence in the sort of program that we worked out, had confidence in me as the director for that long and very profitable period of steady growth, until about 1955. And that gave me the kind of freedom and assurance I needed in which to work.

And then, obviously, as opportunities arose for me -- the Unesco opportunity, the connections abroad, the State Department trip under its "leader" program in 1955-56 which took me to East and Central Africa, to Asia and Australia and New Zealand -- these helped me to learn and made me of greater service to the museum. Without demanding very much money, because we tended to have relatively less and less as costs rose, I could still get exhibitions that were extraordinary. It's incredible that as small a museum as the San Francisco Museum of Art should have originated any exhibitions at all, let alone participate in the Museum of Modern Art

Morley: exhibitions, and those major ones like the Leger done by the Art Institute of Chicago. Similarly it was fantastic that the museum could present Dufy and Marquet retrospectives or an Art in Asia and the West exhibition of major stature. (They were all three the result of my research for the museum had no one else who could carry on that kind of scholarly work.)

But it was a matter of building connections, being interested, giving a great deal of time to all sorts of professional activity, which again made it possible to bring threads together. It was also the scholarly training, the languages, the knowledge of art. It was more than anything else being resigned to giving time, endless time when one wanted to be studying or writing. Of course that's the reason why I was able to do this little show here. I knew where to go and I had the confidence of professional people; they knew their things would be well taken care of and well used. I knew what were the trends to illustrate.

So all those things counted. You can't say one thing more than another. I was very fortunate in the early days with Tim Pfleuger and Albert Bender and William Gerstle. Also certain members of the women's board,

Morley: who cared about the museum, backed me, got me the money for important professional projects, the Sao Paulo Biennial in 1955, for example. I've mentioned their names. Mrs. Henry Potter Russell, who also became interested in Unesco, worked very closely with me in international activity for a long time and occasionally we work together still. It was her support that for many years made my international activity possible.

All that was part of it.

I worked hard. Don't think when I went on a trip it was a holiday. Whether it was a State Department trip -- as was the one around the world, you know -- or a trip to New York -- sometimes I would go for a weekend to do a job and then I'd be back -- it was a part of the general pattern. There were no hours; I lived the museum's work all year long and round the clock, wherever I was. It was, I think, an advantage that I had a certain freedom and a certain feeling that this work was more important than personal convenience and therefore I felt a certain dedication to the task which, certainly in the beginning, and for a long time, and perhaps even today, was a very great advantage. Unless you have a big organization, plenty of money, plenty of staff, there

Morley: are lots of things that you can't hire people to do and some of those things that needed doing I could do, I knew how to do. And so I suppose I was a fairly valuable person therefore. We hope so.

Riess: And not anybody could have walked into these circumstances and made a success.

Morley: Well, I was lucky in my background and my special combination of interest, lucky too in the opportunities that came my way. I am happy that what I was could be of value because, after all a second generation of San Franciscans -- San Francisco - Bay Region rather than San Franciscan to be exact -- but having known San Francisco in art and cultural terms from my early youth, having this tremendous possibility of giving time and energy and what talents I had to helping along something that was there and nurturing it a little bit, encouraging it, seeing it eventually flower to the extent it did was to me a tremendous satisfaction and I'm very glad it happened. I should have liked to see it through another ten years...

Riess: Why did you retire then in January 1958?

Morley: As a matter of fact I did not retire, though that was one of the reports. But as you see I continue my profession. I did resign January 30, 1958. The reasons

Morley: could furnish a complicated explanation. Of course economic pressures were great, with money difficult to get and those supposed to get it not too successful, but that was nothing new. Essentially, and in simple terms, it was because I had found conditions increasingly unfavorable, from about 1955, and they finally made it quite impossible for me to continue to carry the development of the museum forward according to the standards of the past, and I had to remain faithful to those. So we came to an agreement, the boards and I, convinced on both sides that an open conflict on the change of policy would harm the museum and the cause of art here. So I left August 15, 1958, and let the active direction of the museum pass into hands of the boards' choice. I finished what I could and provided favorable conditions for continuance of such projects as I could. But of course some had to be dropped; started in some cases long ago, they would have produced their results only some years hence, perhaps, and depended on connexions of mine... I could not assure those. However, since being in New York I have been able to help somewhat, to contribute toward securing several important gifts for the museum, for example. But I cannot help much now. That is why I regret the next ten years.

Morley: I should have liked to see it through but only if, needless to say, the favorable conditions of the best years, the years of struggle but of creative growth, and of the kind of support given by the group that helped me start the museum, could have been found again. But while I was its director the museum did contribute to a moment of art history in the Bay Region and it was a part of it -- and the results have obviously been good -- for the artists and for the public. They are a deep and lasting satisfaction to me now, and wherever I shall be.

Grace McCann Morley

Grace McCann Morley, 84, a longtime director of what is now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and a legendary figure in the international museum community, died yesterday in New Delhi, her home since 1960, after a brief illness.

The world-famous art expert was born in Berkeley. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in French and Greek at the University of California.

While earning a doctorate at the University of Paris, Morley's academic interests shifted dramatically, and she decided to devote her life to art rather than teaching languages at the college level.

She taught both French and art at Goucher College in Maryland for three years before becoming chief curator at the Cincinnati Art Museum in 1930.

Four years later, Morley returned to the Bay Area to direct the

San Francisco Museum of Art, now known as the Museum of Modern Art. During her early years at that institution, the first modern art museum in the western United States, she led a tiny, dedicated staff that mounted as many as 100 special exhibitions annually.

During the 24 years that she headed the museum here, the self-described "archfiend for modern art" established the first gallery tours in any museum in the West, art history courses, a public art reference library, the institution's art rental gallery, the first regular film program — "Art in Cinema" — at an American museum, and television series, "Art in Your Life," that was shown in San Francisco during the 1950s.

After leaving the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1958, she spent a year as assistant director at New York's famed Guggenheim Museum. From 1960 to 1966, she was director the National Museum of New Delhi in India. In 1968, she founded the International Council

of Museums' regional office in New Delhi, which she headed for 10 years.

She remained active as a consultant and lecturer until shortly before her death.

In the 1940s, she became deeply involved in worldwide museum projects, among them the first exchange exhibitions with South American museums and establishment of the International Council of Museums.

In 1947, she took an 18-month leave of absence from her job here to become the first director of the museum division of the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization in Paris.

In 1949, Morley was named a Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor. Over the years, she was awarded honorary doctorates by the University of California, the California College of Arts and Crafts, Smith College and Mills College.

She is survived by nephews and nieces in the Sacramento area.

Funeral arrangements will be announced.

APPENDIX A - Project for a Board-selected Exhibition of
Local Art

First Draft - for suggestion and improvement, please.

Project for a featured exhibition of work by artists of the region selected by choice of Board Committees.

Proposed for discussion by
G. Morley, October 8, 1953

Purpose To encourage study and active judgment of contemporary art by those closest to the Museum as a means of providing for them some of the pleasure of experiencing art and of planning a major exhibition. It is an effort to emphasize art - art in formation and of the place - as the core of the Museum's existence, and to obtain deeper understanding for contemporary art and increased regard for artists in the Museum group.

Parallels For a good many years with great success the Museum has depended on the artist community to help it in planning at intervals an invitational exhibition, reviewing art here, to supplement the juried annuals of the San Francisco Art Association. This is done by sending ballots of the names of all those recognized by inclusion in annuals in recent years - with opportunity to make additional nominations - to all those artists listed, requesting them to nominate the twenty or thirty artists they consider, among their peers, leaders at the time. Tabulation allows for an exhibition of the necessary number of artists from whose recent work the actual exhibits are chosen. The result is an exhibition of high quality based on the judgment of artists themselves who are in the best possible position to evaluate what is significant from their point of view in contemporary production, and to draw attention even to promise.

The proposal To request as many members of Boards, under Board leadership and museum and artist counsel, as are willing to do so, to form a committee of study and selection of artists

of the area (exhibiting in the three annuals and in the Rental Gallery, in any group, in the rare one-man shows and in the artist-selected surveys like the above) for a featured exhibition to be held in approximately a year from now, probably the major exhibition of the late autumn of 1954.

Method The Museum will send to all Board members an invitation to give assistance in this manner. Obviously some members will be uninterested and unsuited, or unable to contribute.

Board leadership is required to help in launching soundly the idea. Certainly a good deal of persuasion should be applied to younger and as yet inexperienced members of all Boards to participate in order to fit them better for their services to the Museum, as well as to begin to establish through them an informed nucleus of art literate people in their respective circles.

Each exhibition as it occurs during the year will be called to their attention and they will be invited to form a judgment on the basis of the works in it. This process should begin with the Watercolor Annual opening next week and should probably continue at least through the watercolor show a year from now in order to iron out initial misjudgment based on inexperience. At the time of each pertinent exhibition all will be invited to see it, to study it and to form and record a judgment as to the twenty or so artists from whom to select exhibition material for the projected exhibition. It can be anticipated that from time to time they will be urged to consider other exhibitions as points of reference or clarification for their own studies. At the end of the period of studying in the exhibitions work of the local artists their judgments will be submitted to them for re-evaluation and final decisions and then tabulated to produce the exhibition. To aid with advice the Museum will set during each exhibition a period or periods when the Museum staff will be available for an intimate discussion of the exhibition either with groups or with individuals of the Board Committees. Established artists and art-informed people on the Boards, like Mesdames Cox, Cross, Dailey, Haas, Hamilton, Martin, Sinton, Smith, Wurster, and W.W. Crocker, Gardner Dailey and others on the Boards, or to join them who have experience or knowledge of art will be asked to assist in instruction as well as in leadership. Occasionally artists may be asked to help. Reference books, of which the indispensable ones may be borrowed for home reading, will be provided in the Library and visual reference

material will be available in the Study Room. No need to go further into mechanics at this time for they will not be difficult for the Museum to administer and will be an adaptation of familiar techniques.

Results The experience should be stimulating for Board members and add interest to their position. The exhibition can hardly help being excellent. The selection of artists from which the eventual exhibition will be drawn is already on an exceedingly high level. For the individuals participating there will be an incentive to know, understand and evaluate the prevailing styles and artists here, and also to obtain sufficient background to place them in relation to art movements in this country, as well as on the international scene. It will inevitably create conversation and discussion which in themselves will have value for the community. It should lead to broader and more discriminating knowledge, a deeper interest in the artists of our region, even some purchases perhaps. Most of all it will assure Board Members' becoming a part of art here which has not been true before. It will give them a more intimate connexion with what is probably the most important and exciting of the Museum's functions: helping people to know and enjoy art of their time and to establish a direct and friendly contact with the artist as a creative human being valuable to contemporary society.

If the plan works at all as it should the results for the Museum in professional publicity will be gratifying. Locally it should be stimulating to the artists and to the public. It should be launched with the greatest amount of care with publicity on the beginning of the plan as soon as it is functioning. The exhibition should open with a major preview to assure publicity of every kind, but focused whenever possible on the art meaning of the show and to give prominence to the importance of artists in our community.

It is to be hoped that this will be "art education" in the most profound sense, but "education" as fun not pain as it should be.

The Board Committees - and if they work it is to be hoped they will continue indefinitely - will be a sort of trial run for a plan which it can be foreseen may in some form be extended to the Museum's membership or such part of it as can be engaged to participate. However, it is important for success of the

extension of this form of "museum education" to have a leadership well formed in the Boards before the expansion into the broader field is undertaken.

Suggestions and comment please! To me this plan seems to offer a possibility of swinging back to art the emphasis that the Museum should always maintain, though in the multiplicity of its other activities and services this primary responsibility appears sometimes to be lost to sight by the public if not by the Museum staff.

It seems to me that it can be a very exciting adventure in spreading art knowledge, in providing Boards with a greater part in the most valuable contribution the Museum has made here.

Because there is no indication that conditions will improve in our time it seems even more necessary than it has been in the past to consolidate our gains up to now. One of the most important means of doing so seems to be to make sure that Board members know the art that their Museum shows, in order to believe in it and not simply give to the Museum support out of blind loyalty as sometimes has been the case. They should know enough about art of our time to be able to refute prejudiced, ignorant and hysterical attacks out of their own knowledge. It seems to me that our artists here who are an extraordinarily gifted and creative group deserve this understanding from the people who support the Museum of this community that is most important to them.

Will you please study the proposal, consider it, ask the questions that will help me clarify it for us of the Museum as for you, make the comments and suggestions that occur to you. It is an effort to extend art knowledge of a serious kind beyond the habitual circles of those already instructed and concerned. It is my idea, dredged up out of long uneasiness over the situation of art today in this country, but to be successful it must become a group effort. The support and leadership it gets from those of you who head the Boards is very important as is the extent to which participation can be obtained from Board members. I should hope that many from the Women's Board, a few from among the present or new Trustees, and all or most of the Activity Board members would participate.

It is the intention to give them a real task - which can take much or little time as they choose, but it is not made work. It is actual participation in the formation of an exhibition and a chance to grow in knowledge as much or as little as they choose while they carry out the task. It is essentially what we of museums do in planning exhibitions of contemporary art. It is on the level that is most living and vital - here in our own community - where it counts most, where one can know the artists as living human beings as well as at a distance - a creative expression in a work of art.

How can it be made better? I should like to have it on the Agenda of our next meeting for means to support it - not for discussion as such, for that is too cumbersome. This should be a Museum invitation to assure a professional flavor but then should be discussed and explained at meetings to increase interest and assure support.

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NOT AVAILABLE FOR MICROFILMING**

APPENDIX C * - Artists Exhibiting in the 1947 State
Department Traveling Exhibition

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Beal, Gifford
Bearden, Romare
Bennett, Rainey
Ben-Zion
Booth, Cameron
Bouché, Louis
Breinin, Raymond
Brown, Douglas
Browne, Byron
Burchfield, Charles
Burlin, Paul
Constant, George
Crawford, Ralston
Davis, Stuart
Dehn, Adolf
De Diego, Julio
De Martini, Joseph
Dove, Arthur G.
Drewes, Werner
Evergood, Philip
Feininger, Lyonel

* As taken from the Catalog of 117 Oil and Water Color
Originals by Leading American Artists offered for sale
at sealed bid by the War Assets Administration, 1948.

Gottlieb, Adolph
Gropper, William
Grosz, George
Guglielmi, O. Louis
Guston, Philip
Gwathmey, Robert
Hartley, Marsden
Heliker, John
Hopper, Edward
Howard, Charles
Jules, Mervin
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Kingman, Dong
Kleinholtz, Frank
Knaths, Karl
Kopman, Benjamin
Kuhn, Walt
Kuniyoshi, Yasuo
Lawrence, Jacob.
Lewandoski, Edmund
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Liberte, Jean
MacIver, Loren
Maril, Herman
Marin, John
Marsh, Reginald

Margules, De Hirsch
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Moller, Hans
Motherwell, Robert
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Pereira, I. Rice
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Rattner, Abraham
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Robinson, Boardman
Shahn, Ben
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Spruce, Everett
Tschachbasov, Nahum
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Weber, Max
Wilson, Sol
Zerbe, Karl

APPENDIX D - Resignation of James Johnson Sweeney from
Directorship of the Guggenheim Museum

From the New York Times Thursday July 21 1960 Page 1.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM DIRECTOR RE-
SIGNS IN 'DIFFERENCE OF IDEALS'

Sweeney Revised Wright's Design
for Building Before Opening
Last October

by Sanka Knox

A conflict that has been simmering for some time between James Johnson Sweeney, director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the foundation that runs the museum boiled over yesterday. Mr. Sweeney resigned.

The newest development in the history of the museum, now housed in Frank Lloyd Wright's controversial building, brought an acknowledgement from both sides that each was motivated by differing "ideals."

Neither side offered any explanation of what the differing ideals were and neither Mr. Sweeney nor Harry F. Guggenheim, the president of the foundation, could be reached after a formal statement had been sent out.

Mr. Sweeney's short letter of resignation, dated June 24, said merely that he was resigning because of the difference between ideals held by the museum "and my own ideals, which I feel I have a responsibility to follow."

The resignation will be effective on Aug. 15.

Mr. Guggenheim's statement, while expressing gratitude for Mr. Sweeney's services, implied that such services were no longer needed in view of the foundation's plan to broaden "the scope of its activities" and that the foundation would "require new approaches to the objectives sought by the founder."

"Mr. Wright's creation, an architectural achievement of great moment, has proved to be not only unusually well suited to the display of paintings but also extraordinarily attractive and interesting to people in all walks of life," Mr. Guggenheim said.

"More than three quarters of a million persons have visited the museum since it opened its door to the public last October," the statement continued. "In view of this the trustees believe the time has come to develop a series of activities that will be interesting, informative, and educational to an ever-widening number of art lovers."

The Wright building, which has its violent champions and detractors, is a tourist attraction of such magnitude that a line sometimes forms on Fifth Avenue at Eighty-eighth Street.

It was no secret in museum circles that Mr. Sweeney regarded the building's vast interior, with its "galleries" spiraling around an empty core, as a challenge, at the very least.

Many museum people believed that Mr. Sweeney had worked out a brilliant answer to what they considered an almost insoluble problem -- making the Wright "architectural exhibit" into an exhibition place for paintings and sculpture.

As one said, "with Wright it was architecture first; with Sweeney, pictures first."

Mr. Sweeney changed Mr. Wright's plan of illumination, which depended largely on natural light. Mr. Wright had planned that the paintings would be displayed on the angled walls along the spiral ramp as though "on an easel."

Mr. Sweeney found this unworkable, and had metal arms made to hang the pictures out from the wall. He also changed the color scheme.

Tensions began between Mr. Sweeney and Mr. Guggenheim with "what was undoubtedly looked upon as Mr. Sweeney's disloyalty to the building," as one museum man put it.

Mr. Sweeney, who is a former director of paintings and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, has been director of the Guggenheim Museum for eight years. Mr. Guggenheim did not mention a successor.

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