LEADING THE MOVEMENT:

INTERVIEWS WITH PRESERVATIONIST LEADERS IN NEW YORK'S CIVIC SECTOR

The Reminiscences of

Frank Sanchis

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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Frank Sanchis conducted by Interviewer Sarah Dziedzic on October 8, 2012, and December 12, 2012. This interview is part of the *Leading the Movement: Interviews with Preservationist Leaders in New York's Civic Sector* oral history project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The views expressed in this oral history interview do not necessarily reflect the views of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

Frank Sanchis became interested in preservation while working a summer job in Philadelphia drafting buildings. He discusses how he became involved in the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), the Municipal Art Society, and the National Trust for Historical Preservation. While at the LPC he helped develop guidelines for landmarking different kinds of buildings and worked with community groups. He speaks about how attitudes toward preservation, and the Landmark Preservation Commission itself, have changed since he first became involved in the 1960s. He worked on many high-profile projects including rebuilding Lower Manhattan, the Glass House, the Trans World Airlines Terminal at JFK airport, and the High Line.

Frank Sanchis received a bachelor's degree in architecture from Pratt Institute in 1967, followed by a master's degree in historic preservation in 1969 from Columbia University, where he studied under James Marston Fitch. Beginning his career as a project architect, Sanchis practiced at the New York City firm of Goldstone and Hinz in the early 1970s. The firm's partner Harmon Goldstone served as the second chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission from 1968 to 1973. While working for Goldstone, Sanchis designed such buildings as the Rockefeller Archives Center at Pocantico Hills, New York. He also worked at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, serving between 1978 and 1986 as Administrative Architect, Field Director, Director of Preservation, and finally Executive Director. Sanchis then moved to Washington, D.C., to become Vice President for Stewardship of Historic Sites at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He served in that position until 1999, when he moved back to New York to serve as Executive Director of the Municipal Art Society, and later as Senior Vice President and Senior Advisor. Since 2010, he has been the Director of US Programs at the World Monuments Fund.

Transcriptionist: Jackie Thipthorpe Session: 1

Interviewee: Frank Sanchis Location: Manhattan, NY

Interviewer: Sarah Dziedzic Date: Oct. 8, 2012

Q: Today is October 8, 2012 and this is an interview with Frank Sanchis for the New York Preservation Archive Project, interviewed by Sarah Dziedzic. Can you start by telling me about the place where you grew up?

Sanchis: Well, I grew up in the Catskill Mountains, which is about two-and-a-half hours north of New York. A very rural area. And it had been a popular destination resort for working class Hispanics in the 1930s and my parents were both Hispanic. My father was Cuban and my mother was Puerto Rican—is Puerto Rican. They had gone up to a resort there and they met there and liked the Catskills and had bought a summerhouse in a place called Pine Hill, New York, which was, I gather, a fairly unusual move at the time.

Then World War II came. I was born in 1943. My father was away. He lost his printing business in New York because he was in the [United States] Army—his partner couldn't run it—and so all of a sudden they found themselves in financial straights. He said to my mother, "Why don't we move up to the house in the Catskills?" So my mother grabbed my grandparents, his parents, who only spoke Spanish, and moved up there. I was a year old so that was 1944. Then they liked it there. When my father got out of the service he joined them up there, and my grandparents eventually went back to Spain. But they liked it there and so that's where I was brought up.

So we were Latins from Manhattan up in the middle of the Catskill Mountains and they eventually turned the house into a boarding house with a Spanish clientele and did that for a few years. There was a bar and grill across the street, which was a fairly jumping spot, where I learned how to dance, and that's where I recreated and it was very nice. For a little town I think it was two hundred people, Pine Hill. They assimilated. My father ran for mayor. I mean, they assimilated into the community, which was largely some sort of ex-pats from New York City and some hillbillies who have lived up there in the country all their lives. But it was nice.

In 1953, I think it was, New York State centralized its school system. I had been in a one-room schoolhouse in this little town with two hundred people, and all of a sudden, kids from a twenty-mile radius all went to one school—including me—starting in fourth grade. I think if I were to think of something that probably got me out of the Catskills it was that because included in that radius was Woodstock, which was an artist colony just about on the other side of the diameter from where I was. But those kids came to school every day and I befriended them. A lot of their parents were artists and radicals and all kinds of stuff and that's who I essentially grew up with.

So it wasn't like I went to a school in a holler somewhere. I went to a school with a class of ninety instead of a class of six, with all these sort of with-it kids from Woodstock, and that right away gave me a different perspective. Also the fact that in that school the art

teacher happened to be interested in architecture and when I was a senior offered an elective architecture course, which five of us guys took—no girls—sorry.

So I had a year of essentially design in high school, which was very unusual. Then when it came time to go to college my high school supervisor recommended that I go into architecture, which I kind of thought was a good idea. I thought I wanted to be an artist actually, but my father wouldn't let me because he said I'd starve. Little did he know that architects don't make a whole lot of money either *[laughing].* They didn't have starchitects then.

So I did, I went to college and took a degree in architecture and wound up eventually at Pratt [Institute], which I liked a lot. I guess I'm a city kind of person. I started out at Penn State [Pennsylvania State University], which is where my supervisor recommended that I go, which had an excellent architecture program, but everything that they were talking about was not there. It was somewhere else *[laughs].* So I said what am I doing out here in the sticks even more so than where I grew up? Because it was further from New York City and I said I want to go to school in New York, so I wound up at Pratt.

While I was at Pratt I had—I guess it's winding up to be a conversation about teachers—while I was at Pratt, I had Sibyl Moholy-Nagy as a teacher and she was a very famous person whose husband, Laszlo [Moholy-Nagy], was one of the Russian deconstructionist artists. And she was an architectural historian and an impassioned one. And she was a wonderful, fabulous lecturer. She just loved her subject and I was enthralled.

One day she assigned us a research project—this was 1966, maybe ‘65. She assigned us a research project and I wound up having to go to Avery [Architectural and Fine Arts] Library to do my research and I had never—my grandparents on my mother’s side had lived on Claremont Avenue, which is right next to Columbia [University], for fifty years so I knew the neighborhood because when we came to New York to visit my grandparents that’s where we stayed. I knew Columbia but, you know, it was kind of a lofty place for me and none of my family up until me had gone to college except one aunt.

I went over there to do research one day and in the elevator was a sign that said, “Do you want to go to Hawaii?” And I said, “You bet.” So I read it and it turned out to be an advertisement for architects, people who could draw, to join a historic American building survey team in Hawaii the summer of 1966. So I’m going to guess I was over there the winter of ’66—you know, January, February ’66 is when I must have been over there doing research. I followed up on the sign. I applied and I got the job. And the job was reading—the recruiter turned out to be Charles [E.] Peterson who, with James Marston Fitch, had set up the Columbia course, the masters degree in historic preservation in 1964, I think. It had been running about two years.

I was all excited that I was going to go to Hawaii and Peterson interviewed me and, “You got the job, Frank. We’re going to set you up, blah, blah, blah.” A week before I was going to go he calls up and says, “I’ve got bad news. We had to give the job in Hawaii to

somebody else. You're not going." I said, "Oh, really!" *[Laughs]*. "Well, what's your plan? I don't have another summer job!" And he said, "That's all right, Frank, I got another job for you." I said, "Where?" He said, "Philadelphia." And I said, oh, no. *[laughing]*. "I don't want to go to Philadelphia. I would have gotten a summer job here in New York." He said, "Well, that's what I can offer you."

I went and it turned out to be working for an architect by the name of John [M.] Dickey, who was an early restoration architect here in the United States. And there are a lot of historic buildings that I was unaware of around where he was, which was Media, Pennsylvania. Well, I wound up that summer going to Media and the head of the team—the drawing team, recording team—was a fellow named John Milner, who has turned out to be a major restoration architect, and so we've been friends ever since 1966 when he headed up the civil drawing team. And we measured buildings in downtown Philadelphia, Media being about a half hour away, which were being slated for demolition for I-95, which runs along the Delaware River. There were big warehouses, Federal period warehouses, which were being torn down.

I didn't know anything about historic buildings at that point. I thought, "Oh, hell. What am I going to do stuck in Philadelphia measuring these filthy old warehouses when I could have been in Hawaii?" *[Laughter]*. "What's happening to me!" *[Laughter]*.

Well, I fell in love with them. It was an amazing summer. There was a team of about three or four of us and we spent every day measuring these buildings and then drawing

them by hand, which was how you did HABS [Historical American Building Survey] drawings at that time. I was a pretty good draftsman so I was able to crank out quite a few and it was just a great experience. I loved working with the old buildings.

So I came back after that summer and I finished my last semester at Pratt because I took a half a year off. So I graduated from Pratt with an architecture degree in the winter of 1967 and went into Columbia that February of 1967 because by then I had gotten to know Peterson and then I met James Fitch and he said, "Why don't you apply for the course?" And so I did.

So there were about fifteen of us maybe that went in, in 1967, and I absolutely loved it. I had a great class. Many people are still my dearest friends who are probably being interviewed for this project *[laughing]*. I had the luxury, which I didn't know then, of having both Jim Fitch and Charlie Peterson as professors, along with some other remarkable people from preservation at that time that they brought in. Retrospectively, it was just—sometimes timing is right for things and the timing on that for me—or for any of us at that point—was just amazing timing because the whole field of historic preservation had sort of become established and ordered right then in 1966 when they established the National Register of Historic Places. The [New York City] Landmarks [Preservation] Commission here in New York had just been established in 1965 and things were getting organized. I don't think there were any—there might have been statewide organizations then or they might have just been forming. The state historic

preservation offices were being created in the various states to help with the National Register and I was, you know, in graduate school in that subject.

So the people who were creating all of this were of course friends of Peterson, who had, unbeknownst to me, established the Historic American Building Survey and set the whole thing up and created the Historic Structures Report, which is this major form of documenting the history of historic buildings. And these guys were my professors. And the people that they brought to Columbia to lecture this hodgepodge little group of people were the founders of historic preservation in the United States and there I was in the middle of all of that.

So that was incredible timing. While we didn't have a lot of the amenities I think that Columbia offers right now we had the tremendous good fortune to have those two people as our main professors to sort of guide us and set us up. And Fitch, more than Peterson thereafter, mentored me for years to come after that. He watched out for his students. I'm sure he didn't only do it for me. He really was with us. He's one of the reasons I got the job at the National Trust [for Historic Preservation] years later. He was always around. That network of Columbia has been—still is—an amazing network.

Q: I'd like to hear about your were in the Brooklyn campus. Pratt in Brooklyn at the time.

Sanchis: No, it wasn't Pratt it was Columbia. Oh, yeah, Pratt. When I was at Pratt I was in Brooklyn.

Q: Yes. So I would like to hear about the neighborhood of Pratt, where you were living at the time, and also the Morningside Heights neighborhood—the places where you spent time when you were a student and when you were learning about the field and the idea of historic preservation. How did that change the way that you interacted with the spaces that you were in every day?

Sanchis: Not much. When I was at Pratt, Pratt was pretty gritty when I went there, which is what I wanted. Because, if you remember, looking back, that was the hippy generation and I had, you know, hair then—long hair and a beard and jeans and boots. I wanted a place that felt like that. A black turtleneck. So I didn't want to be at Penn State where everybody was running around in their shaker sweaters and chinos. That's what appealed to me about Pratt and that's one of the reasons I went there—because it was really run down. The Myrtle Avenue El was still there. It was a dangerous neighborhood. Kind of crummy, old buildings. It was just what I wanted *[laughs]*. And it had sort of radical teachers and then brilliant ones like Sybil. But the teachers were also kind of scruffy looking. It was just a very artistic sort of offbeat environment, which is not what Columbia was at all, or at least by reputation.

But when I was at Pratt, the buildings—I wasn't particularly affected by the buildings. In fact, I thought that the buildings with the beautiful Pratt houses on them, Washington

Avenue for example, were kind of ugly. Actually, if I were thinking of living at Pratt, being an architect, I would have liked to have lived in Clinton Hill towers, which was a housing project. But it appealed to me more than living in an old brownstone building. Actually where I was living was with my aunt and uncle who lived in Jackson Heights.

I was a country kid so I had a car. When I first came to live in New York I lived with them in their apartment in Jackson Heights and I was driving to Pratt everyday on the BQE [Brooklyn-Queens Expressway] or on the double G train if I didn't want to drive. Then I wound up getting an apartment in Jackson Heights, which was, for some reason, more affordable than around Pratt. Maybe because they were taking advantage of the students, I don't know what, but it was cheaper to live in Jackson Heights than it was in Brooklyn. So I never moved to Brooklyn so I just commuted to Pratt.

Then when I switched to Columbia, by that time I was on the verge of getting married, because I got married—I started at Columbia in February '67 and I got married that June. Then my wife and I lived in my apartment in Jackson Heights. So I wasn't a kid student at that point. I was like a married student. Then I was driving to Columbia and *[pauses]* I guess that's when I first started to have that appreciation. Now I go back to Pratt and I look at the buildings and I say, "Wow!" And of course that whole area around Pratt has radically changed and there has been a lot of investment in the historic buildings—and there are great historic buildings around there.

At Columbia, I was so familiar with that neighborhood, having my grandparents on Claremont all that time that, again, it didn't strike me as a particularly fabulous environment. It was a lot cleaner and safer than Pratt but I never entertained the idea of trying to find an apartment on Morningside Drive or anything and never did it.

After I got out of Columbia, just about the time we bought our first apartment, and that was also in Jackson Heights in what is now a historic district. It was the Chateau apartments, which were some of those '20s apartments that were built there for the burgeoning white middle-class. They were beautiful apartments and we had a beautiful apartment there. But no, it's funny, I don't remember ever being affected by that at all.

By that time, I guess I was a real stick-in-the-mud, being married, and I was at Columbia during the riots and the big student protest when they took over Avery and they locked themselves into the buildings. Some of my classmates did that, notably Adele Chatfield-Taylor *[laughs]*. But I was scared by that and I wasn't about to lock myself in anywhere. I dropped out that semester and got a job—my first job as an architect—because I had the architecture degree. So I got myself a job as an architect. Somebody Roth. They were hospital architects. A very nice firm. Isadore and Zachary Rosenfield. They were in a building on Bryant Park.

I dropped out, got myself a job, got myself a suit and I went to work everyday during the riots. Then I went back to Columbia in 1969 and eventually graduated then. So I

disappeared for that point of time. My wife was working for Pan American [World Airways].

Q: Can you talk more about the cohort of students that were in your class and about how you all worked together? I mean, I'm thinking about this as not just a new field but also a new program—and you have all these major leaders in the field shaping the program. I can only imagine that it was figuring out how to be an academic practice but then also a practice in the field.

Sanchis: I never thought of it as an academic practice at all and I'm not an academic. Fitch—you know, those first preservation courses were all in schools of architecture. There were three of them. One of them was Columbia, one of them was Cornell [University], one was the University of Florida, and they were all set up at the same time, I think, about '64. And they were all set in schools of architecture and I think Fitch was the radical who decided that preservationists didn't need, per se, to be architects. They could be anything. The field of preservation, while it dealt with buildings, did not require that you be an architect in order to succeed in understanding and preserving historic buildings.

He made a particular effort, which I talked about in the film about him, in my little segment of that. It was about the fact that he specifically recruited people who were not in schools of architecture and he also recruited women. Women who were like second career at that point, having had a career and then had kids and were coming back to

school and he was very interested in them. Two of the people in my class, Selma Rattner and Billie [S.] Britz, were both exactly from that mold. Billy was in interiors I think and then had kids and then came back to school. Selma was a businesswoman whose husband had a paint company here in New York and she had had kids, one of whom is now—he was [Barack H.] Obama's car czar. One of them is Donald [M.] Rattner, who is a classical architect. He has a firm specializing in classical architecture. The other—what the heck was his name [Steven Rattner]. He was a big shot on Wall Street. He's hugely rich and connected. That was Selma's other son. And then she had a daughter who was a doctor. Her husband ran the paint company and she came back to school. That's what Fitch was looking for. And she had lots of brains. But she wasn't what you would think of as an academic. Billie wasn't, certainly.

The other guys in that class—Allen Trousdale was in that class. He's still practicing. He's here in New York. Jim [James] Guthrie was in that class. He was an architect. Theo [Theodore] Prudon was in that class, who has become a major preservation architect. I don't know, I'll think of others. But Adele was in it, who went on to a distinguished career in the arts—not necessarily preservation.

But it wasn't particularly academic. It wasn't setup like Columbia is now, where you chose to be either in a conservation focus or architectural history focus or a design focus. It wasn't like that but it was being formed. So you just did your thing. They had lecturers who came in to tell you about various aspects of the field that they were involved in. I always remember one of them was historic cooking. I thought, why am I listening to this

woman talking about historic recipes? Yeah, it wasn't like that and most of it was just listening to folks like them and listening to Fitch and then you kind of did your thing.

There were field trips. There was exposure to places. I remember we took a great field trip to Charleston. Blaine Cliver was another person in that class who went on to the National Parks Service. I guess that's the most distinguishing thing about it for me—who I met and what they were doing and getting to know what they were doing and getting to be friends with them. That was what fascinated me about it. And I always liked to draw so I was always drawing. I was an architect so my little career path was that, for my thesis, I did a design thesis—not an architectural history thesis or a conservation thesis—I did a design thesis.

So I cooked up this project and it was unlike anything I would ever do today. It was taking three churches up in the Catskills. The three congregations had closed and nobody knew what to do with the buildings. So my thesis was to sort of tear the buildings apart and put together the chunks to create a new building. Not something I would do now. But, you know, it was thinking anyway. So Fitch invited to my thesis presentation the chairman of the Landmarks Preservation, who was Harmon Goldstone. So there I was in 1969—I did the presentation and then he offered me a job, like on the spot, because they were staffing up the Landmarks Commission and he needed a young guy there.

So I went to work at the Landmarks Commission because of that—strictly because of that. I remember it was a big deal because they were paying less than I was making at the

architecture firm where I was still working. It was like a three thousand dollar cut. From ten thousand to seven thousand but it was what I liked. It was preservation. And I guess at that point I was enjoying preservation a lot more than design, or what I was doing as a draftsman anyway, which was mostly designing bathrooms or something.

So I went to work at the Landmarks Commission and that was very nascent at that point, things were just kind of coming together. I remember the first historic district that was designated must have been in ’65 or—’65 was Brooklyn Heights and I remember some of my earliest projects were working with storeowners on Atlantic Avenue or something on the edge of Brooklyn Heights, who wanted to do the most horrendous things to their stores *[laughing]*. I distinctly remember being a real Fitch product and saying, “No, no, the store has got to be modern. It’s an old building but the design has to stand on its own and you have to be able to distinguish it from the historic parts of the building.” I was promoting this real modern, horrendous looking thing *[laughing]*. Forcing it on some poor storeowner who didn’t know what I was talking about *[laughs]*.

But that’s how I wound up there. I guess the most interesting thing from that period at Landmarks was that the Greenwich Village [Historic] District was in the process of being designated. So I got to work with the people who were doing that. It was sort of my introduction to grassroots preservation, which has been one of the—turned out to be a very important aspect of the field and one in which I’ve worked a lot through my efforts at advocacy later on in my career. But then there were three women who were not trained preservationists. One of them was Ruth Wittenberg, who lived on Tenth Street. Another

one was Verna Small, who lived on Fourth Street and Regina Kellerman, who lived on Ninth Street. The three of them had done a lot of research on the Village, and particularly Gina, and they were the impassioned ones who were pushing hard for the Village to be designated.

There was another one, Doris Diether, who was very interested in the planning of it—planning aspects—and she did have, I believe, a background in planning. She's still around. Just watching the determination of those people who sort of took me in under their wing as a kid out of college, and I thought whatever they thought. But they were really nice to me and had me to their homes and had me to meetings about designating the Village and big arguments about why the avenues should be included in the designation to make one big district—rather than a bunch of little districts of only the historic pockets because the avenues had different scale and kinds of buildings. And all of the thinking about that and why they were promoting it, I just listened. Eventually they got that. That's the way the Village was designated.

Then being at Landmarks I started being involved in regulation right away and applications to alter buildings and seeking my approval to go—*[laughs]* it's funny. I don't know. That was a great time. There was one commissioner, Evelyn Haynes, who was also desperately interested in all of this and once the Village was designated, was particularly interested in appropriate alterations to Federal period houses there and then Charlton-King-Vandam Historic District. And she became a good friend. A fellow who worked there, John Barrington Bayley, who was a historian and classicist—who was one

of the founders of Classical America—was there then. Margaret Tuft, who had been another one of my classmates from Columbia who was working there. I don't know. It was a pretty small world. Harmon Goldstone was the chairman. Geoffrey Platt was the vice chairman.

I stayed there for three years but at that time historic preservation—working at a place like the commission in historic preservation did not count towards getting my architectural license. I wanted to get my architectural license because I had a degree and I figured, what the hell, I may as well get the license. But you had to build up points by working for architects until you built up three year's experience and then you could take the exam to get your license. I was informed midway through, after about a year and a half or two years at Landmarks, that that would not count toward my credit to take my licensing exam.

We made a big federal case out of it because I was working for Harmon, who was the chairman of the commission and he was a registered architect. Wound up they would only give me half of my time; that's the [New York] State Education Department or whoever does licenses. I don't know what it is now. But I must have been one of the first kids to encounter that issue.

Long story short, Harmon offered me a job in his office, which I took. So then I went to work for Goldstone & Hinz, his private architectural firm right here on Fortieth Street and Park [Avenue]. I stayed there for six years as an architect. I took my licensing

exam—I passed it, thank god, the first time—and I worked as a project architect for him for six years. I did three buildings and the last one of those buildings dealt with the historic building. It was an addition to Hillcrest, which is one of the [John D.] Rockefeller buildings at Pocantico [Hills]. The family was turning that building into an archive to hold the papers of Nelson [A. Rockefeller] and David [Rockefeller] and Winthrop [Rockefeller] and some of the other brothers, Jean Beauxet *[phonetic]* Harmon Goldstone was their college friend, I think. He was good friends with the Rockefellers and so they used to give him architectural commissions and he got the one for the addition to Hillcrest and I was the project architect, so I designed that project, actually.

That was completed and at that point, it was now nineteen—what happened then? Oh, I know what happened. That was completed and I knew I didn't want to be an architect and that I wanted to get back to historic preservation, which I missed. I got an offer to write a book about Westchester County—that book with the red binder—which was a real fluke because I had never written anything. But it just happened that the bicentennial year was coming up—this was 1976 now—and I had bought a house in Westchester. We had moved up from Jackson Heights to Westchester in 1973. I was living in Croton[-on-Hudson]. This thing came up, the opportunity to write a book about the history of architecture in Westchester. I submitted an application of interest in it and I got the job.

That was a job to write a book in three years—yeah, three years—and it was supposed to be finished in '76. So that must have been '73. I would say that was probably '74. So I quit work, which was pretty radical. Of course, all this time my wife was working

steadily for Pan Am so we had steady income. I was working as an architect and they were wonderful years because we were flying all over because she had a job here in the Pan Am building and she was an executive so she got free travel. We had no kids at that point so we used to travel every weekend. That got me more interested in preservation, too, because we traveled all over the world and I saw things all over the world and I was hooked on preservation by then so that really worked well.

So we're travelling around and then I get this job and so I wrote a book about the history of architecture in Westchester. It was a survey. I wound up—I surveyed for eighteen months and I wrote for eighteen months. At that point, also, I had started teaching at Columbia. I started there in 1974. I was teaching and I was writing the book. I had some students help me with the book. It was fun.

Q: What was the survey like?

Sanchis: I was trying to be practical so there were all these—each town had a historical society, like the Village of Mamaroneck and the Village of Ossining and the Village of Croton, the Village of New Rochelle and Somers and White Plains and Yonkers. They all had their little historical societies. They had all done pamphlets and stuff like that on what they considered to be important buildings in their community.

I met with each historical society. I took their pamphlet and I said to them, "I'm trying to do this book on all of Westchester County. What do you think is important in yours? I see

your pamphlet, tell me more." I wound up with a list of what they all thought was important. And I knew that I wanted to span everything, right? I just started driving and I went to see all the buildings that they thought were important and then everything else that I saw on the way. I built up this huge photographic archive of, you know, two thousand or three thousand buildings so that I knew where they were and a little bit about them.

Then I culled that down to the six or seven hundred that I put in the book that fit. I figured out how to categorize them so you could get through it. So I did like residential buildings, industrial buildings, religious buildings, public buildings, in categories, and then just took—if you were trying to see what interesting religious building is there in Mamaroneck you would look under religious buildings and you would see it. But you could compare it to religious buildings in Croton at the same time and in Port Chester and in New Rochelle. It just was an easy way to see how things emerged architecturally in the county. Transportation was another category because of all the train stations in Westchester—tons of them.

Anyway, that was a great project and, as I say, I'm not an academic. I'm not a writer. My editor said that I was a popular writer *[laughing]*. He meant it as a compliment. I never knew how to take that. But I photographed the whole book.

Q: I think what struck me about your book is that it's so much of a social and cultural study in addition to a very useful index and catalogue of the buildings that exist. So where did that come from—that ability to look at the larger context?

Sanchis: Fitch? I don't know *[laughing]*. I don't know. It seemed to me that there had to be some kind of a way to get into it. I guess just reading those little—it was probably reading the individual village histories because I collected them all. I still have them. You see what was important to the people who were writing and they were all coming at it from a historical—not an architectural—point of view. Nobody was coming at it from an architectural point of view. It was all about who lived there and what they did and that kind of thing, historical figures. But it sort of—and I don't think that way so it kind of, I guess, made me think that way a little bit and set it up a little bit that way. But I am very visual and so I was coming at it from what looked like it was interesting and then I was learning about the development of styles and at that point there was not a whole lot on residential architecture—for which there's tons of books now on that but there wasn't much then. I was just kind of flying blind. So it turned out well and I finished that in 1977.

Then I was doing some consulting for the State of New York in Albany and that was my introduction to the state and working with the State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO]. They had some kind of a project where they needed somebody to assess buildings to get grants and I was the one. I went through a ton of applications for some economic development corporation project—I don't know what—on behalf of the SHPO and I got

to know all the staff there. At that point, I think [J.] Winthrop Aldrich was the deputy commissioner and Orin Lehman was the commissioner of Parks, [Recreation] and Historic Preservation. He was a great guy, Orin Lehman.

I sort of learned about the whole structure of the state and I met all the staff members who were working on National Register projects all around the state and got to know them pretty well and got to know the office pretty well. That was really nice. The upshot of that was I was invited to join the State Board for Historic Preservation, which I stayed on for twenty-five years starting then. When I finished that one project I didn't know really what to do and that's when I applied to go back to work at the Landmarks Preservation Commission because Adele was, at that point, working there and she was working for Beverly Spatt as her assistant-I-don't-know-what. Adele said, "Why don't you come and work here?" I applied but it was just when Beverly was going out. It was the end of her reign and the beginning of Kent Barwick's reign—*[phone ringing.]*

Q: Would you like me to pause?

Sanchis: Excuse me. I guess I knew Kent from when I was first working at the Landmarks Commission after school. Anyway, he was the person who was then chairman so I applied and I got the job to go back. That was 1978. By that time, the commission was more well-formed and he was there a couple of years. Adele had then become the executive director of the Landmarks Preservation Foundation and she was working with

Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, then Diamonstein only, who was the head of the—who had created the Landmarks Preservation Foundation. I think that was the way it was.

The three of us wound up working there together and Tony Wood was there. And I think Lenore Norman was the executive director. I went in as the architect and that was another special project. It was called the Façade Improvement Project and it was helping homeowners by giving small grants of up to ten thousand dollars to help homeowners in historic districts improve the facades of their historic townhouses and you had to qualify with a certain income ceiling. They were almost all in Brooklyn, a couple of them in the Bronx, hardly any in Manhattan because the owners were over the income ceiling. And Sarah Latham worked on that with me who had been one of my students at Columbia. She and I worked on the Façade Improvement Program. She's now Sarah Latham Kearns. And that was fun.

But then that was a period where I was like in my mid-thirties. So at that point in life you're going up, so I did. I went from architect to—I think it was head of Manhattan. They've reorganized the commission. I guess I was head of preservation and then they reorganized the Commission by borough and I became head of Manhattan in terms of reviewing alterations. Then I became executive director. In other words, I kept going up. That was fun. Those were an interesting number of years there and it was a lot of hard work. I worked on—well, there were a lot of districts coming in yet but I guess the most useful thing that I worked on was writing the guidelines for Madison Avenue because the Upper East Side [Historic] District was being considered for designation then and it must

be—unlike Greenwich Village, the business owners on Madison Avenue were raising a big ruckus against the designation of the district because they would not be able to alter their storefronts on Madison Avenue and that argument didn't come up in the Village because the avenues are not really shopping streets to that degree. Sixth Avenue was but Seventh [Avenue] is just a mess and the others were residential kind of.

But it came up loud and strong in the Upper East Side District and Kent asked me to do something. I said, "Well, how about if we come up with a guideline on Madison because, after all, the bottom two floors are essentially non-historic because they've all been changed. All of the historic part of the buildings that line Madison Avenue is above the second floor in the townhouses, so why don't we just come up with a guideline that gives you freedom to change pretty much whatever you want to do on the first two floors—because wait two years and they'll change it again. What's the sense of going through a big process of review where it doesn't matter? The bottom is already different from the top. Just let it change."

So we wound up writing a guideline that—I guess with that concept the first thing was to assess the buildings on Madison, to pick out where historic details might remain on the ground floor or where there were actually historic storefronts, which turned out to be two or three or four cases—that was it. And then there were big buildings. You know, like a whole block long, apartment houses or something, where the ground floor was shops but there was actually a design intent where they were all within a framework. The idea there was to allow it to change within that framework but not to destroy the framework, and

where the framework was missing to put it back so that you wound up with the framework again with little shops in between. Then where it happened to be six townhouses in a row and they had all been changed below the second floor, just let it go. Whatever happened, happened. There was a loose framework but it gave a great deal more flexibility to make approvals for changes at staff level rather than having to have a Certificate of Appropriateness, which meant a huge time difference, which meant that they bought it. We presented it to the owners along Madison and they went for it.

Q: If it didn't come from the shop owners where did the—who was advocating for preserving that section of Madison Avenue?

Sanchis: The community. The Friends of the Upper East Side [Historic Districts]. I don't know if they existed but the Ruth Wittenbergs and Verna Smalls of the Upper East Side were the ones who were pushing for the designation of the district and they wanted Madison in it because there are a lot of historic buildings along Madison. But they didn't have a way to convince the owners of those buildings to support the idea of a district designation because they didn't have a way to assuage their fears about not being able to change their shop fronts without a huge hassle. And it would have tied up the commission also if they had had to have a Certificate of Appropriateness here and every one of those shop front changes over and over and over—it would just tie the whole thing up. So it didn't make sense without that set of guidelines.

That led to another set of guidelines that I wrote for a different kind of a designation, which was the theater designations—the legitimate theaters in New York. I made a great friend that came out of that, Gerry [Gerald] Schoenfeld, who was head of the Shubert Organization. That was not dealing with a whole bunch of people—that was dealing with one egomaniac, Gerry, who was, you know, set against designating the theaters because there were both exterior and interior designations was the rub and—same argument as Madison Avenue—he wanted the flexibility to change the insides of the theaters for each show. If it's a designated landmark how do you do that?

What I wrote there was a—I think I wrote—yes, I think it's guidelines. It was—I guess it was an assessment again. Everything starts with an assessment in historic buildings. So it was an assessment of what was important on the insides and as long as you didn't irreversibly change what was important you could hang within that whatever you wanted. If you wanted to hang Spider-Man and make a few little holes in the ceilings where you could hang this enormous armature from which you could hang whatever you wanted that was fine. You couldn't see the historic ceiling for the show but that didn't matter. It was still there. For the next show you might see it but it was there. It was not about the visual impact of the change to the interior of the theater, it was about the preservation of the original fabric that remained. Once Gerry realized that he could create any kind of an armature that he wanted inside the house to have whatever effect he wanted or not it was fine. And then they went ahead with the theater designations *[laughs]*. But I knew him for years after that. He only just died a few years ago. He was a real character but we became friends *[laughs]*.

Q: So what were these negotiations like and how many different kind of groups were involved? Was this just you at your desk late at night brainstorming or were you going to other city agencies?

Sanchis: No, I wasn't going to other city agencies. It was really—with Gerry it was like a one-on-one because they were mostly his theaters and the other theater owners were following his lead. So I never did meet with anybody like from Jujamcyn [Theaters] or from Nederlander [Organization]. I just met with Gerry. But once he was satisfied then I guess he talked the other guys into it.

But the Madison Avenue stuff—I really don't remember it that well but I have a feeling that was more, like, going to community meetings and making presentations in the community to calm down people. That the world wasn't going to end with the designation. Here was a simple way. We were adopting this.

Q: You bring up a really good point, which is that in working with community groups—communities often include a lot of sub-communities. So how much were you, I guess, an advocate or a mediator between the different groups within a single community?

Sanchis: A lot I guess. I mean that's the point of preservation that I personally have always liked the best. I've always liked working with people and I've always liked making them realize that preservation is not a negative, which is, you know, it used to be

a universal perception. Preservation was stopping any change to any thing. I've always enjoyed explaining to people that it isn't that. And I like people and I've always enjoyed talking with people so that's been a great pleasure for me. I tend not to be incendiary and so that's good when you go out *[laughs]*. I've seen somebody who goes around, "Well, how could you think of changing that? We want to preserve every inch! Back off." *[Laughing]*. You're going to kill them. So it's been a lot of fun.

But those two projects probably were my best contributions to Landmarks because, after all, at that point—by the time I left there I was an administrator and I wasn't a hands-on person anymore. I think I did those when I was in the role of director of preservation although I can't really remember. Then it was fun working on things like St. Bart's [St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church] and stuff like that. But those two things were probably my best actual hard-thinking contributions.

Q: Do you have a sense of—even though you were there in different roles the first and second time, what's your sense of how the commission worked within the structure of other city organizations and how the other side—there's the community on the one side and then I imagine the commission kind of in the middle and then city organizations and agencies on the other end. What were those sorts of negotiations like between those two different groups in the '60s and '70s?

Sanchis: Well, I didn't have that much access to that level of negotiation when I was there the first time. I was the lowest person on the totem pole. When I left, I had a little

more sense of it. I guess it seems to me that in a way it's probably—the commission, I think, and Landmark's administration in the city has become much more politicized than I remember it being. When I was at the commission between I think it must have been Harmon and John [V.] Lindsay, who I never met, or between, I think, when Kent was chairman it was [Abraham D.] Beame and then it was [Edward I.] Koch.

It's hard to say. I did not have the inside view. But it seems to me that preservation was less of a business then and it was more of a passion. I think that the chairs of the commission, certainly that I served for—being Harmon and Kent and Gene Norman—the three of them had, I think, a tremendous passion for preservation and their heart was in preservation. They really believed in it, they understood it, they advocated for it and their rapport with their boss, the mayor, I think, was one in which—this may be completely off, I just don't know about this—the mayor was more willing to give the chairman and the commissions their way than has happened more recently with [Rudolph] Giuliani and with our current mayor.

Of those two I think one was just a very intense lawyer and control freak, Giuliani, and the other, [Michael R.] Bloomberg, is just an uber-businessman with a definite interest in the arts for sure but just a very strong corporate type with tremendous background there. I don't think that either of those mayors, both of whom served long terms, are willing to give the chairman of any of their commissions—and certainly not Landmarks—the ability to do what they felt was right. I think they've both constrained their chairmen to take an awful lot of factors into account in their regulation of historic buildings. And that

just takes you further and further away in many cases from what's actually appropriate for the historic building.

The chairmen themselves changed from chairmen who had been interested—after Gene left I think David [F.M.] Todd was chairman for a little while and then after David it was Jennifer I think, Jennifer Raab. I'm not quite sure of that sequence. But Jennifer came in under Giuliani and Jennifer is a lawyer with a strong allegiance to the mayor, her mayor. Similarly Bob [Robert B. Tierney] is a lawyer with a strong allegiance to his mayor. And the independence with which decisions are made by the Commission, from a preservation point of view, I think has changed sort of radically. It's like a different passion is driving it.

I guess that may be necessary but I can sort of feel the change. The change in politics in general is very different. I mean, with the media jumping—look at our presidents. They can barely say a word without the media jumping on every word and interpreting it ten different ways. So in a much smaller version, when you filter it down to the language of the commission—and the staff has become so tortured in terms of not misspeaking—that it's hard sometimes to figure out what's going on.

I would say that probably the rarest illustration of the inability to really say what you think was in the Huntington Hartford Museum [2 Columbus Circle]. I mean, the fact that the commission did not re-hear that seemed—I was just incredulous that they wouldn't

re-hear it and I'll never believe that they wouldn't re-hear it on preservation terms. They wouldn't re-hear it on political terms.

So that kind of thing might have been going on when I worked there and I just wasn't high up enough to understand it or else it really has changed. But I think in many ways the preservation heart of the commission has been impaired by politics and I think that's a shame. I'm waiting to see if, under a new mayor—who may not have all the resources that Bloomberg has because nobody does—this pattern of lawyers as chairman rather than preservationists as chairman will continue.

Q: Can you talk about, from your perspective, working under the chairman that you did work under? With Harmon and Kent and Gene, what made them different as leaders from one another?

Sanchis: Well, I guess the difference—they were quite different people although they all cared about preservation. Harmon was an elitist from a very elegant New York family and well-placed and well-connected and a man of the arts. He just operated sort of on a very high intellectual plain. Kent, I think, was probably the most passionate of them and cared so deeply, and still does, about preservation and was very much a do-the-right-thing, fall-on-your-sword kind of guy. He's always been that way. And I think he more than anyone was very brave in terms of that. But then again he was with Koch and Koch, I think, gave him the leeway to be brave and didn't lower the boom when things didn't go

exactly the way he wanted. Or, behind the scenes, I don't think probably tried to control things as much.

Then Gene was probably the most workaday of the three. You know, another really nice guy who really cared about preservation but came from much more of a he-earned-it background and had just worked his way up to a position like that as an architect and came to it from an architect's point of view with an interest in preservation, whereas Kent was the journalist and came from there. Harmon was an architect but of a different kind.

They each brought their own sort of stamp. Gene's probably been the most democratic of the three and the most every-man personality of the three. But he was also very strong and you have to remember: guiding Kent and Gene in the background, and all of us, and me, was Dorothy Miner, who, as the legal counsel, was fiercely independent. I mean, there was a practical side to Dorothy but she never minded saying what was right and standing up for it and in the end that did her in at the commission. That remains one of the insidious moments of what the new leadership was like because Dorothy would not compromise and she couldn't have been fairer or clearer and, in my opinion, the advice was always right on. So either you took it and figured out a way politically to make that work as a chairman or you didn't want to hear it *[laughs]*. And in the end I don't think they wanted to hear it.

But that was, I think, an amazing moment when Dorothy left the commission. If anybody's heart and soul was wrapped up in that for the major part of her professional

career, it was her and she was brilliant. So that was a definite signal that something had changed.

I guess the last—Laurie Beckelman was chairman. She was the last one before the big change. So Dorothy was—I'm trying to figure out who—Laurie's mayor must have been [David] Dinkins and Dorothy was her counsel. Then after Dinkins came Giuliani and that's when Jennifer came in and then that was the end of Dorothy.

Q: I'm not familiar with the terms on which Dorothy left. Do you want to talk about that a little bit more?

Sanchis: This might be something that we'll wipe out—but Dorothy left because she was fired because Jennifer fired her. Because Jennifer was Giuliani's stool pigeon and she was completely under his control.

Q: Was it around a particular building or district?

Sanchis: No. I think it was just that Dorothy kept saying—I wasn't there but I can picture Dorothy. I mean, she was a pile driver so she was probably saying to Jennifer on decision A, B or C, you know, "You cannot do this. This is what's right and this is what's wrong." And Giuliani was probably saying, "Screw it. Just do what I tell you." *[Laughs].* So I think it quickly became impossible for Dorothy to function under that.

Q: It's a little bit after seven but I would like to ask you about St. Bart's if you have time.

Sanchis: Sure.

Q: So it strikes me as—I suppose the court case might have been after you left, right? But it strikes me as another moment when there—

Sanchis: The decision was while I was there. The decision to not allow the tower.

Q: Yes. Can you talk about that?

Sanchis: Well, it seemed ludicrous to me from the beginning that the church would have the fudgery to suggest that a building that overhung the cathedral was in any way appropriate or necessary. And I guess they came back with that on a hardship because the design was patently unacceptable as a work of architecture. So they must have come back on a hardship and then had to go through all this process of proving that they could not get an adequate return from that building without the building that was there or some smaller building without constructing the monster that they wanted to construct. And they couldn't prove it. It's that simple.

And the question was always, in a religious building or most any building with a specific subject—it usually comes to bear in a school or it comes to bear in hospitals, education

and religious buildings—where you say, well, what's more important? People's lives, their souls, their brains or a building? How can you be so stupid to not realize that?

So the argument of preserving the building because it's a significant work of art is challenged all the time and I think in that case—and the hardship law exists because it's fair. Well, we're not saying you can't make any return from your real estate. We're just saying that you're not entitled necessarily to mop up at the expense of the real estate. And in that case I think they showed that they actually could get an adequate income from that building or a smaller version.

I can't remember whether they actually designed a smaller version and then didn't go with it, because you really could design something on top of the chapter house or whatever they called it, without interfering with the church. You just don't have to put up a sixty-story building. I'm sure that if they put up a smaller building they could have made an adequate return and indeed help the church and I'm sure the commission would have approved it because there was nothing that fabulous about the chapter house itself. It was a perfectly nice-looking building and it goes with the church but there's a composition there with the GE [General Electric] building behind it, which is the same brick and the same color and is like a tower almost, and it's got that beautiful top, which looks a little bit like a campanile. Then there's St. Bart's and then there's this space and you actually could build into that space to some degree. You could easily, I thought, have a twenty-story building or even a thirty-story building there and not interfere with

anything in particular. And that would have given them an adequate return but it's just not what they wanted. They wanted to clean up with this monster building *[laughs]*.

I guess I had left already. I left there in '86 to go to the National Trust and maybe the court part of it played out afterwards. I can't remember. I just remember we were all very happy that it was not approved and they had to find another way.

Q: And has that decision influenced other similar proposals?

Sanchis: I don't know. Didn't the same argument come up with that church on the Upper West Side on Amsterdam Avenue and Ninety-Sixth Street? There was a church that was going to be designated there and they had a chapter house and they wanted to build on top of it. It was about whether or not they would oppose the designation unless the chapter house enlargement plans were—it seemed similar but wasn't so crazy as St. Bart's and I think that was approved.

Q: I'm not sure.

Sanchis: I think I'm remembering it right. But St. Bart's was very high profile just because of what it is and where it is. Sort of like Grand Central [Terminal].

Q: Yes. We'll have to talk about Grand Central next time.

Sanchis: I didn't have a whole lot to do with Grand Central.

Q: Well, working—

Sanchis: That was Dorothy.

Q: Working in the aftermath of it I think had a lot to do with the way that preservation has gone. Well, we'll save that for next time. Sound good?

Sanchis: You're a good listener with all that rambling.

Q: It's not rambling at all. Thank you so much.

[END OF SESSION]

Transcriptionist: Jackie Thipthorpe | Session: 2
Interviewee: Frank Sanchis | Location: Manhattan, NY
Interviewer: Sarah Dziedzic | Date: December 12, 2012

Q: Today is December 12, 2012. Twelve-Twelve-Twelve. This is an interview for the New York Preservation Archive Project with Frank Sanchis by Sarah Dziedzic and this is our second session, and we're in the Empire State Building in the World Monuments Fund's office. Last time we talked about your education at Pratt and Columbia and also your time working as an architect with Harmon Goldstone and your work at the Landmarks Preservation Commission and also your book on Westchester County.

So today, I would like to start with the transition from the Landmarks Preservation Commission to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and how you made that transition and what that decision was like for you.

Sanchis: Well, you can plan what your career is going to be like and then things happen to you and you just kind of have to decide to go with the flow or not and I guess my career has sort of been that way. Some things have happened that I would never have expected. Other things I have sort of planned and they did happen. So the transition from the Landmarks Commission to the National Trust was a big surprise to me because I had just become executive director of the commission and that's what I had been trying to get to do and I finally achieved it.

Then a year later the Trust had hired a new president, Jack [J. Jackson] Walter, and Jack Walter was a controversial kind of guy and he was determined to change around the Trust. I guess he did a big shakeup of the staff there, unbeknownst to me, and was in the final stages of hiring five new vice presidents because he had a vision of what the Trust should be, various departments, and he was hiring all these people. Right at the tail end of the hiring process a friend of mine suggested to me that this might be a nice opportunity for me to go get a new job. I said, "Well, I've just gotten where I want to be here at the Landmarks Commission but, what the heck, I'm always open to something new."

The short story is I went down and I had an interview and Jack thought I would be good as the vice president for historic sites, his only qualification being a really weird one that I wasn't expecting. He said, "You know, Frank, the only thing is this is a national job so you're going to be going all over the country and you're from New York and people are going to have to get used to you as a New Yorker." *[Laughter].* I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, you know, New Yorkers—they bring a certain quality and sometimes it's off-putting for people. Do you think that you can do it?" And I said, "Well, I always thought New York qualities were pretty good *[laughter].* I don't have any particular problem being a New Yorker." I was thinking, what? Does he want me to change my accent or what?

I said, "Well, I don't think that will be too big of a deal." Actually, one of the people that was instrumental in convincing Jack that I would be okay there was Fitch. I don't remember whether he was a consultant of the Trust or what. But I know Jack talked to

Fitch and I know that Fitch's recommendation for me was one of the factors that swung it in my favor, and it was very last minute. So it was strange because I didn't go through a long process. I mean, it came up, I went down, I was interviewed and like a month later I got the job offer and I said, "Oh my god. Now what?" Because I had two kids living in Westchester and my wife—the kids were little and it was a move to Washington [D.C.]. It was a big deal.

But it turned out that I took it and I think it was probably the best job I ever had because it gave me a national perspective, which, being not only a New Yorker but a New York City person you tend to get swallowed up in New York because it has everything. So you don't have to go anywhere else; everything is here. But the experience of travelling nationally for—that job wound up to be thirteen years. In retrospect it was probably the most important thing that ever happened to me career-wise.

Q: What was D.C. like when you moved down there?

Sanchis: I hated D.C. In fact, part of my deal, since my family was in New York, which I think was a very big exception on Jack's part to hire me, was that I said I don't want to move my family to D.C. because they're settled in Westchester and the properties of the National Trust are all over the place. One of the properties of the National Trust, Lyndhurst, is twenty minutes from my house. And another property that you want to have in the National Trust, which is the Glass House, is also twenty minutes from my house. You're talking about bringing in the Rockefeller property [Kykuit], which is also twenty

minutes from my house. So I have a circle of National Trust properties that are already in the collection and you want to get in the collection and a lot of my work is going to be focused there. So how about if I come to Washington and be here full-time for six months, five days a week and get to know everybody, get to know the properties? I'll travel a lot those first six months so I'll get to know where everything is, establish myself, and then I'll start coming in three days a week, which for me meant two nights. And so he said yes and that's what I did.

So after the first six months, I set up an office for myself at Lyndhurst and I wound up working out of there. By the sixth or eighth year most of my time was at Lyndhurst because the job was a high travel job so, in fairness, I was on the road most of the time. But I just travelled from New York instead of from Washington. It was almost easier because New York has such good connections. So that's what I did.

It was great for me because of all the things I saw and the people I met and it was great for my family because I really racked up jillions of frequent flyer miles so we had great vacations while the kids were little *[laughs]*.

Q: And was your wife still working for Pan Am, too?

Sanchis: No. No, she had retired. We had two children at that point. She was a full-time mom. But we did have some great vacations thanks to all those miles *[laughs]*. And plus the people I knew. So that anywhere I went, I had friends and I still have them. That's

why it was the best thing. I mean, I would never have gotten as connected throughout the United States as I did. The funny thing that I found was that Jack was wrong about New York. People were attracted to the fact that I was from New York and they loved my accent and I loved theirs. You get to know people from Louisiana and from California and from Iowa and they've all got their own accents and they're not shy about those so why should I be shy about mine *[laughing]*. So it was great. It really was. And it just worked out beautifully.

Of course then Jack was only there about, I think, three years and then he left the Trust and Dick [Richard] Moe came in as the new president. So three years into the job I sort of had to re-establish a relationship with Dick, which turned out to be great and lasted for the next ten.

Q: So can you talk about a few of those places that you worked on that were outside of New York City? I'm thinking about the Gaylord Building.

Sanchis: Well, actually, the Gaylord Building came in a little bit later. The whole premise of my work at the Trust was that the organization had been created in 1949 as an organization focused on sort of second-tier historic houses that were at risk. There's a wonderful book called *With Heritage So Rich*. That's the title of it. It was about the fact that Americans were happy to save major places like Mount Vernon or Independence Hall or places like that that were connected to mainstream characters in history. Monticello. But the secondary places, of which there were many more and which sort of

formed the backbone of American domestic architecture, were not being protected and in fact were being lost in the late '40s and post-war. And that the National Trust should be formed to accept those places as gifts from their owners and then proceed to raise the money to protect them and operate them sometimes as historic houses sometimes as other things.

So starting off with Woodlawn Plantation, which is in Virginia, which they accepted I think right then in 1949 or 1950, they went on accepting gifts of houses. Sometimes it was weird. Like, they accepted this gift of a place called Casa Amesti, which is in Monterey, California. The owner, who was a very well-known interior designer—whose name escapes me—decided that she would like to give this gift to the National Trust but only if the National Trust allowed a private men's club to move into the house and use it as their clubhouse. And the Trust did and they never blinked. At that time I guess private men's clubs were not such an awful thing but when I arrived at the Trust in 1986 I quickly thought to myself: this is an embarrassment. There's no women allowed in this place and the National Trust is running it *[laughs]*.

Things like that happened but they did wind up accepting eight or ten historic sites and they accepted them often without gifts of endowment to sustain their operation. The Trust was getting in trouble for that by the time I went there because they were putting money into these places—that was costing a lot. Meanwhile, their vision for themselves had changed from an organization that was accepting properties and running them as historic sites—theoretically to preserve them but also to introduce people to the values of

preservation through their visits to these places. It had changed from that into an organization that was advocating for broad preservation, especially after 1966 when the National Register was created and our whole identification system of significant places in the United States and that veered off towards historic districts and neighborhoods and vernacular architecture and all things that these houses did not represent.

So the Trust had turned into an advocacy organization trying to support state preservation efforts to preserve neighborhoods in historic districts. Meanwhile, it had this collection of houses that kept sort of falling further and further away from the focus of what the organization was. That's the thing that Jack asked me to address. "What are we going to do with these places?" And not only those but we've got some donors who now want to give us more that I think we should take, i.e. the Glass House and Kykuit, Pocantico.

What I did was—after I thought about it for a while—I said, well, I think probably what you should do is broaden the collection so that it represents more than just big fat houses and be strategic about what you bring in and then recast some of the properties that you've already got so that the emphasis and the interpretation is different. I said, if you change the collection so that it's more representative of the American experience and then tweak what you hear when you go there so that they relate more to efforts to preserve neighborhoods and broader aspects of preservation—and maybe become meeting places for people who are trying to preserve main street and stuff like that—but they meet at the historic sites then they'll become more relevant. So you could have a poster child, literally, of all these different buildings showing, this is the stuff we're

trying to preserve in America and these are our symbols for preserving that. It might have more relevance.

Jack thought that was all right. So I started thinking of other kinds of properties to bring in and a couple that we might have to let go, like Casa Amesti, and how we should interpret them and, in bringing properties in, how we could get out from under being poverty stricken by taking on responsibilities for places that didn't have an endowment to sustain them because visitation to properties, with very few exceptions, does not sustain them. It's about a fifth of what you need and then the rest of the money to operate them has got to come from somewhere else.

That turned into a really interesting process and in that process—to get back to the Gaylord Building—that came along about four or five years into my tenure from a donor in Chicago who had restored the Gaylord Building, which was a dry goods store and a warehouse on the Illinois and Michigan Canal and had been a very work-a-day building right there on the public landing in Lockport. I went to the donor *[laughs]* and I'll never forget it. There was this guy, Gaylord Donnelly. The Donnelly family was a very wealthy family in Chicago; they made their money in printing. At one time, they printed telephone books and even the *National Geographic* I think, so they were a big outfit.

You know, we got the sniff: "Are you interested in this building?" I went out to see it and it fit the profile I just told you. I said, "Yes, we'd be interested in it." So I made an appointment to go and see Mr. Donnelly, who—at that point they still had their big

printing press business and his office was on top and it was a gothic building. Mr. Donnelly was an old man and so I'm ushered in to see him and I get out of the elevator and—you know how it is when you see the queen? You have this long axial view and you kind of walk down a long hallway and the queen is at the end. Well, Donnelly was sitting behind his desk at the end.

I get out of the elevator and I'm looking down this long gothic corridor *[laughs]* and it's dark with big curtains and the usual trappings. I approach from a distance and, "How do you do, Mr. Donnelly?" And I said, "You know, we're very interested in your building but we would need to have an endowment and you would need to give a gift of"—I think I said five million dollars at that point. He looked at me and he harumphed and he said, "Okay." And that was like the end. And he didn't give it to us. Eventually, he died like three years later I think and then his family, mostly led by a woman named Barbi [Barbara C.] Donnelly, who was a trustee of the National Trust, did give an endowment sufficient to sustain it and then we accepted it.

But another thing that came out of that was that there were going to be lots of properties where there just was not going to be an endowment. There wasn't enough money. Another one that I eyeballed and wanted was the Tenement Museum in New York City. And the Tenement Museum at that point was—there was a woman who was the head of it, Ruth Abram, and Ruth Abram was brilliant. She had created a historic house experience sort of like none other in the United States with an absolutely wonderful interpretation about the families that lived in this tenement building and also had

connected it to a completely different theme, which was immigration and the story of immigration to New York, which resonates with ninety-eight percent of New York since everybody is an immigrant.

She had also connected it to the theme of becoming an American citizen. So she was having citizenship classes at the Tenement Museum for immigrants—connecting to the story of immigration. She eventually developed a larger theme, which was tolerance, and invented this thing called the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience dealing with other places around the world that dealt with tolerance in one way or another. Her theme was tolerance for immigrants on the point of Americans when other places were elected—there was a log camp in Russian, a slave house in Dakar and some place in South Africa. And she created this big network of which the leader was the Tenement Museum. So you can't ask for something that ties into history and what people care about as a historic site more than that.

I was dying to get the Tenement Museum in because it was also a complete contrast to a place like Kykuit. In fact, people that would have lived in the Tenement Museum went to work as service staff at Kykuit. How great would that be to have both of them? But they had no money. So we had to work out something and eventually, with a fellow who is still on staff down there, Tom Mayes—he's one of the attorneys at the National Trust—we worked out this deal where we would long-term lease properties. We would accept them on a long-term lease so we would have no financial obligation. And they would sign a long-term lease to become part of this Trust symbolic group, which would give them

national exposure, and we would call them a National Trust property. They would have an obligation to abide by our public relations, marketing, maintenance, and interpretative standards that we had established for our properties. They would have to abide by those. And they would have to be part of our group in terms of their leadership—coming to regular meetings of all the property directors and all of that.

So we developed this lease agreement and the Tenement Museum was the first one in. Then that became a mechanism, mostly after my departure—I think the Tenement Museum must have come in about maybe nine years in or something like that—so that became the model by which the Trust took on a whole bunch of other properties after I left, including Touro Synagogue, the African American History [Black Heritage] trail in Boston and others. So that was good because it allowed me to bring on properties that we wanted to diversify our collection so it could be a better symbol of the American experience, but we weren't getting ourselves into a financial hole. And then by letting some properties go, which were very few—I think Casa Amesti might have been the only one—which is very difficult for the Trust also because by the terms of their gift you can't ever deaccession them. But in that case, it worked out because that was a problem. And we began to mold the collection.

So the things that I brought in—The Glass House was great because it gave us an opportunity—or a potential and future because Philip [Johnson] was still living there—to talk about Modernism, which is exactly what has happened because now that's a focus for a discussion of Modernism. So that had that whole aspect to it and we didn't have

anything of that Modern age and it turned out to be from the exact year that the Trust was created. 1949 was when he finished the Glass House. That was a good one.

Kykuit I always felt was sort of opportunistic because it wasn't helping me to expand but that was a major public attraction, which was coming in with a big endowment. So that was sort of the way that went. The Tenement Museum I think was a big departure and that was a great addition. The Gaylord Building was another one, which I thought was a very good diversifying addition.

Then I started to have a lot of fun going around seeking new sites that I thought would diversify. There were a bunch of—I mean, ninety-eight percent of those don't work out but there were some goodies. There was a ranch in Texas that I really wanted. It takes forever to discuss these things and bring them in. But there was a ranch in Texas where—do you know the story of *Lonesome Dove*? It was where that was based on, Charlie Goodnight's ranch, and it was fabulous. It was like stepping back. Oh, god, that place was just incredible. That never worked out. I do remember that the person who owned it, the descendent of the family, was an unusual, very free-spirited woman and when I went down there to see her and talk about a potential gift we wound up jumping on a trampoline *[laughing]*. I thought to myself, this is unusual. I'm jumping on a trampoline in the middle of nowhere *[laughs]*. Seeking a gift. But that was a great potential one.

Another one was a windmill factory in Nebraska City that would have been, oh, just ideal, because that had—windmill factories are tied to the whole history of the

development of the Midwest because everybody had to have water so you needed a windmill to pump and they were like—you know, every neighborhood of like fifty square miles would have a church, it would have a village with a town hall and it would have a windmill factory. It was one of the essential features of life in the Midwest and this was a gorgeous windmill factory that someone had just turned the key on and left in 1930 so it had all the windmill parts, everything. Never got that one.

I wanted a coffee plantation in Puerto Rico. I got into a very interesting conversation with a conservation trust in Puerto Rico about partnering on a coffee plantation in Ponce that was operating as a historic site very nicely. The other two were not. They would have had to have been converted into historic sites but this was already going. That would have been great.

I wanted George O'Keeffe's house in Santa Fe. We had another artist's house—we had Daniel Chester French's house—and her house would have been a real nice complement to that in a completely different part of the country. We had nothing in that area in the Southwest and we almost, almost got that. In fact, that was one of my more tragic moments at the National Trust. They actually, after five years of negotiation, decided that they would make the gift. We had our conference in Santa Fe at that time when they made their decision. We announced the gift, they came to the conference and made a speech about it and then decided not to give it to us *[laughing]*. Oh, god, I mean, you know? So there were ups and downs. But that would have been another wonderful property for us to have. And I'm probably forgetting sixteen more.

But at the end of the day, I guess while I was at the Trust I probably brought in five more. When I left the Trust it was just short of twenty and then I think it went up to twenty-seven or something like that. But it was fun, thinking of that as a method.

Everything doesn't work out. I mean, I never felt that the marketing department picked up adequately on the opportunity to make these symbols. Another huge problem, which I never did solve, was that when visitors come to a historic site—aside from the problems of maintenance and appropriate capital improvements and collections care and all of that, which we were able to address and I think we got pretty good at all of that—the bottom line is when people come to a historic site, if you were a preservation organization like the Trust is, they're in your clutches. I mean, there they are, right? You have an opportunity to affect them by what you say to them. And if you want to say to them, "This place is a symbol of Modernism and you should become interested in protecting Modernism, blah, blah, blah." You can say it and you can affect the way they think about some aspect of historic preservation.

But the people who tell them that story are the docents. It turns out that the docents at historic sites are like, in many cases, the least loved. A lot of them are volunteers. A lot of them are not professionals. And a lot of them are there because they happen to love the furniture and they don't give a damn about preservation in the community. That's not why they're there. So it becomes a really heavy lift. And also a lot of the directors of the museums are coming—not out of historic preservation. They're coming out of museum

management. So a lot of them really don't care about the larger scope of preservation. They care about maintaining their beautiful collection. That became the nut that I couldn't crack because it takes too much time to change all of the directors to people who are preservation-motivated rather than museum-motivated. And the docents—to change their minds is like a huge training initiative and that costs money and takes an awful lot of time.

Over the thirteen years that I was there I guess I made a few little inroads but nothing major. And I think it's still—at the time I used to lecture about that. That was one of my favorite lectures about the issue, what are we going to do about this? It was something that I just never got to the bottom of. Now, there's a fellow among the Historic House Trust board here in New York City right now and the director of that is a fellow named Frank [Franklin] Vagnone from Philadelphia who came in a couple of years ago and he's got this big thing about how we have to change the way that we present historic houses and the activities that take place in them. He's being very way out front just to get attention about things that you should do with historic houses. You should exhibit contemporary art and you should be able to sit on the furniture and have a cup of coffee and that kind of thing. All of which is true. It would make them more attractive to the public but it requires a sea change in the way that you approach them, which if he's still campaigning about this fifteen years after I left the Trust, it's still an issue *[laughs]*.

It's one of the conundrums because among American places and the realm of historic preservation historic houses are—or historic sites, I should say, because it's broader than

just houses—are like at the top of the pile. They're the ones that people go to visit. They're the ones that have some protection. They're the only places where you hear their story because buildings can't talk. The Empire State Building is not telling you its story when you walk by on the street. So they're at once this very special kind of preserved building but they're, like, unrelated from historic preservation. It's the weirdest thing.

Q: Do you think that that is somehow related to where they're located? That that may be—

Sanchis: No.

Q: —the discussion of historic preservation in rural areas?

Sanchis: No. Well, it has to do with the kind of place they are. Often if they're enormous places, they're disconnected. I mean, it's not like where people live, right? Who lives at a place like Lyndhurst? They seem foreign and you have to make an effort to relate them. This is a historic house just like your house that you live in, in Tarrytown, which was built, you know, fifty years later or twenty-five years later. They're both historic places and they both have relevance—this is just a fancy one—but here's what you can learn from it and here's how it affected your house, because they were thinking this way about Romantic design and you happen to live in a Italianate house in Tarrytown. Well, your house was very much affected by what happened at Lyndhurst in the gothic style. Those connections are the ones that aren't made. And as you get more diverse properties like the

Tenement Museum, you can easily connect that to where people in the East Village live, aside from the immigration theme. So there are ways. They do a fabulous job at that and there are just not that many that do.

Q: How is the conversation around the Glass House, given that it strikes me as intersecting with architecture and Modern art and this concept of high art in a way that differs from some of the other buildings that are part of the National Preservation Trust?

Sanchis: Well, the Glass House is very much like Lyndhurst. It changed the way that people looked at living in houses and it did it one hundred years later. So actually, between those two buildings there is a great intersection. And Philip always liked Lyndhurst. He thought it was—he said to me more than once, "It's the best property the Trust has got aside from my house." *[Laughter]*.

I had nothing to do with this but I think that the way that the Trust has handled the Glass House on the interpretive side and relating it to larger themes of American architecture is fabulous. There was a woman, Christy [MacLear], she was named the first director of the Glass House and she was the one who sort of invented this—making it the center of a discussion about Modernism and Modern architecture and the relationship between art and architecture and architecture as art. I think they did a great job at that and they have put it in a very special place.

Now, since then, the Trust acquired Farnsworth House. That was after my tenure. And Farnsworth House obviously has the potential to be a center for the same kind of discussion in the Midwest. I don't know if it is or not. On the other hand, I think that running a house museum or a historic site—I think what has evolved at the Glass House is sort of a lesson in that because being a historic house director is very multi-faceted and you can't just be from one place. I think that at the Glass House it went very heavily to the conversation—the more global placement side. But the maintenance side and the upkeep of the property and its operation as a place that you are curating, which is another big responsibility, I think suffered. They've had some really tough times with the physical condition of some of the Glass House buildings and they've had quite a bit of criticism about that. It's a tough row to hoe.

It's a challenging position to be the director of a historic site because it's not what it used to be anymore—it's a historic site. You have a big curatorial responsibility both in terms of what's in it and the buildings and the landscape. You have this responsibility to try to connect it to preservation or to something bigger through your interpretation and you've got to know about all of those things.

So I think with—I don't know how you get people that are that rounded. Sometimes you get lucky and you do and I think most of the time you don't. It's a hard business. And nobody actually teaches it because I think historic museum management is one end, historic preservation is the other, but this falls in between. I don't think there is any

course or curriculum that I've ever encountered—I could just be ignorant of it—that adequately prepares you for operating a historic site.

Q: And from my end I see this other part, which is the outreach component or the education component—

Sanchis: Yes.

Q: —seeing the community within its current context as opposed to the historic context.

Sanchis: Right. You're right.

Q: Was the purpose of the long-term lease, or one of the purposes, to facilitate an endowment in the future?

Sanchis: No. It was strictly to insulate the Trust from having any fiscal responsibility. So there was no liability. Part of it, as I said, was that you would maintain it at a level that met the Trust's expectations. So if you didn't maintain it—I mean, if it started going downhill the Trust had the ability to cut it off.

Q: Did you see any—were there any cases where an endowment was raised not from maybe one or a few wealthy individuals but from a more broader base?

Sanchis: No. Nope. Nope. It either comes—it's too much money. It's millions and millions of dollars and if the Trust is raising millions and millions of dollars it's not going to be to sustain one place. It's going to be to try to engage people in historic preservation. It just wasn't in the cards.

Mind you, I think at this point the Trust is completely shifting direction and I think now their properties—I'm not sure they know what to do with their historic sites and I don't think they're broadening the collection any more. I think they're trying to figure out how to decrease the collection but I think they're stuck with the terms of the gifts. The properties that are leased they probably have an easier way to get out of if they want to. But if they do reduce the historic sites, the number, they're going to wind up with just a bunch of extraneous properties again. I think what they've done is they've called the ones that they have National Treasures and as National Treasures they might be trying to raise some money for them. And some of them are closed, like Lyndhurst is closed.

Q: How did that connect to your move to the Municipal Art Society [MAS], which in my mind has a more active civic engagement component to it?

Sanchis: There was no connection. The only connection there was that I am a New Yorker. I was continuing to live up here and at that point I had to come back for personal reasons because my wife was ill. So I couldn't be travelling around anymore. It's one of those things you can't plan. You just have to deal with. But I was not in a position to be away from home. I just—the opportunity to join the Municipal Art Society came up

because they were undergoing a transition and I knew everybody there, especially Kent Barwick, who has been a long-time friend of mine from when I worked for him at the commission.

So, you know, there was an opportunity and they needed an executive director and it was kind of a strange situation because Kent was a person who was completely identified with the Municipal Art Society, having worked on and off for it for thirty years. But he was distracted by a new endeavor, which was this waterfront alliance. It was a project to preserve New York City's waterfront. And it was a Municipal Art Society-inspired effort—Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance—but it needed nurturing and Kent was essentially running it.

I mean, everything crosses over. Part of its support was Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which was the operating entity for Kykuit. So I knew them, I knew the MAS and they essentially needed an executive to run the organization because Kent was focused on the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance—and I needed to come back to New York—so those things sort of fell into place.

So I came back and it worked out really well. I do love New York and I was very happy to be back and it worked out personally and it worked out I think for the organization. So I was back. And preservation is part of it. It was interesting for me because preservation is not all that it's about because it's about planning and it's about public art and so that

part of it was broadening for me because I had to learn some new tricks because I'm a preservationist and an architect—not a planner or an artist. So that was fun.

Then it wound up that the lease agreement that the Municipal Art Society had with the [Lotte New York] Palace Hotel was coming to an end, which was tied up at the beginning of the designation of the Villard Houses as a landmark and the related responsibility to create a home for an organization like the Municipal Art Society and all of that—that was running down. It was interesting to be involved in the end of that and what was coming next because we were not going to be able to stay there. I wound up moving the MAS to its current location in the Steinway [Hall] Building. That all happened while I was there. That was kind of fun.

Then I think the most amazing thing that happened to me while I was at the Municipal Art Society was dealing with the aftermath of 9/11 [September 11 attacks]. I mean, again, you just happen to be in a place at a particular time. Who would have expected that a year after I got there, or two years after I got there, this happens to New York and the Municipal Art Society is in the position of having to respond. What are we going to do about preservation and about the way New Yorkers feel about the site, about anything? And that experience was amazing. It was really amazing being involved with that.

We had this thing called Imagine New York where we solicited New Yorkers' opinions about what should be in the [World] Trade Center. We were heavily involved in vetting the proposals for the new design at the Trade Center. I got very involved with the design

that was selected, the [Daniel] Libeskind design, and the aftermath of that and how that was sort of transformed into what actually happened. I was heavily involved.

Then also with the creation of this thing called the Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund [LMEPF], which just sort of happened, but that was fascinating. The short story is that a number of organizations after 9/11—this organization, World Monuments Fund, the New York Landmark Conservancy, the New York Preservation League [Preservation League of New York State], the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Municipal Art Society—all had offers of support from our donors to help us respond in some way. So what we did, and the MAS sort of led the effort, was to combine our gifts into a pool and create what we called The Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund to focus on preservation issues stemming from 9/11 in Lower Manhattan. I think this outfit, the World Monuments Fund, got the biggest gift but between the five of us that was a really interesting period.

What we decided to do was to survey Lower Manhattan, which had been sort of sporadically surveyed but not really, to identify what we felt were the historic resources in Lower Manhattan, put them on a map so that the public could understand what they were and then channel the money to support preservation initiatives in Lower Manhattan specifically stemming from damaged historic buildings from the Trade Center collapse but also looking at some bigger picture initiatives.

We wound up giving money—I'm not going to remember this—but I know we gave money to a number of the buildings right around the Trade Center where flying stuff had hit the buildings and damaged them. St. Peter's [Roman Catholic] Church was one. What is that—is it the old AT&T building? It's something right on Vesey Street across the street from the Trade Center that had some beautiful mosaic work and Guastavino tile work and stuff that had been damaged. Ninety West Street, which was a big Cass Gilbert building right to the south that was converted into an apartment house, we gave money to that. I can't remember if we gave money to St. Thomas's Church *[phonetic]*, churchyard.

Anyway, we distributed the money among properties that had been physically damaged and we did the survey to increase awareness of historic resources downtown. And we wound up getting in some very specific issues that stemmed from the construction coming off of the Trade Center, one of which was, and most notably and recently in the news, was the Corbin Building, which was on Broadway at John Street or something like that. It was immediately adjacent to the—what are they calling it, the Downtown Transportation Home [Fulton Center]? What the heck is the name of that thing? It's a building with the dolomite—it's a glass box and it's where all the subways intersect at Cortland Street.

Q: The Cortland Street Station? Is that what it's called?

Sanchis: No, it's got a fancy name.

Q: Okay.

Sanchis: Downtown Transportation Center? I don't know.

Q: I see how well that's catching on *[laughs]*.

Sanchis: So that building came out of 9/11 because they were redoing all of the subway intersections and new passageways coming over from the new Trade Center. As part of that project, naturally, they wanted to take down the whole block and on the south side of that block, for the new transportation center, there was this incredible historic building, the Corbin Building, which had not been designated or anything but it came up in our survey. So we jumped on that and eventually were able to get the Corbin Building made a landmark, put on the National Register and incorporate it, sort of, into the scheme for the new building.

It was pretty interesting because the Corbin Building—I mean, you get into all these funny things in preservation. The Corbin Building had a very strange floor plan because it was real long and skinny along the south-facing street, which I think was John. But I mean really skinny, like twenty feet or something and 125 feet long. It was like a wall. And the north side of it—the south side was this highly decorative, gorgeous façade and the side facing Broadway, which was only twenty-five feet wide, was also very beautiful and covered with terracotta and stuff like that. It had a tower on the top. But the north side, which faced into the block, had an adjacent building and so it was a blank wall.

We proposed to the transportation center development thing—because all of it belongs to MTA [Metropolitan Transportation Authority]—we proposed that they design the new transportation center so that on the south side where it abutted the Corbin Building—they doubled the Corbin Building in width. So instead of making it a twenty-five-foot wide building they make it a fifty-foot building with the north façade facing the new transportation center—that was integrated into the transportation center but also gave you a much more viable floor plate for the Corbin Building that you could rent, because it was useable space. It wasn't this long skinny corridor. It was a really good idea *[laughs]* and it would have integrated the historic building completely into the transportation center. No, we couldn't do it.

In the end we managed to save the Corbin Building, which is now restored and which David [W.] Dunlap just did an article on. He remembered to call us who were involved in it and interviewed us. I was in the article. But it's kind of dumb because the historic building sits there but it's unrelated to the new building. It's got all of the issues with its floor plates that it used to. It looks gorgeous. I think MTA is going to stick offices in there but it really doesn't relate and it has a blank wall facing north and the new building is kind of pushed up against the blank wall. So it could have been a much more creative solution both economically and from the point of view of design and preservation. That never happened. But that was a great thing that came out of this whole thing.

The other issue that we got deeply involved in as LMEPF was saving the Survivors' Stairs, which was the only remaining above-ground piece of the Trade Center that came through and it was wrecked. I mean, when they took down the Trade Center, it came through the destruction almost intact and it was on the Vesey Street side of the Trade Center. When they took the Trade Center down—what was left of it—and they cleared the site, they severely damaged the stair but it was still there. So we argued that as the only remaining above-ground segment of the Trade Center it should be preserved in situ because it was a place marker for where the Trade Center actually was and it was this amazing essentially archeological artifact. Well, that was a huge battle also. They had to go through a 106 procedure [Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act] because there was federal money involved in taking apart what was left of the Trade Center and rebuilding.

So the five organizations went through endless meetings with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, LMDC, which was the entity that dealt with the physical aspects of the Trade Center. We had endless meetings with LMDC to save that thing in situ, which even extended to a discussion with the architect of the proposed new building on the site, which was Norman [R.] Foster—because that was supposed to be—Tower Two [Two World Trade Center] fell where the Survivors' Stair was—about incorporating it into the lobby of Tower Two but Larry [A.] Silverstein who was the developer and did not like the idea. He already put up Tower Seven [Seven World Trade Center], which was the first new building to go up down there, and was getting ready to do Tower One

[One World Trade Center], the Freedom Tower, with David [M.] Childs and it was a battle that we lost.

The best we could do there was to convince the LMDC to preserve the stair. Half of it. Preservation solutions—in the one case of the Corbin Building we wanted to double it and we didn't get there and in the case of the Survivors' Staircase we wanted to keep its integrity and it got chopped in half. So what we finally agreed upon was that it would be moved into the museum as one of the artifacts and it wound up being at the very bottom of the museum. As you descend to bedrock you go down the stair, or an escalator I guess, that is against the remaining segment of the Survivors' Staircase. So it wound up in an important spot but it would have been, I think, much more meaningful to preserve it at grade. So that came out of that.

Then my other big experience that came out of the Trades Center was being involved in Tribute in Light, which is right there, which was my sort of first experience in being deeply involved with a work of art because that also came out of the response to 9/11, where this group of artists went to two organizations: us, MAS, and not the Public Art Fund—I'm forgetting the name of it. But these artists went to two organizations with the same idea of creating a tribute to the Trade Center created from light and we brought them together and created a group of five artists who had an idea but didn't know how to make it really constructive. We put them together with a lighting designer and that group of five came up with what turned into Tribute in Light and that was an amazing thing to be involved with. I see it as one of the highlights of my career. Nothing to do with

preservation but to do with memory—but preservation is about memory. It's an internationally-acclaimed thing and still goes on and means so much to New Yorkers. So to have been involved with that was a real privilege for me.

Q: I can imagine that working in response to September Eleventh is unique in a lot of ways and I'm wondering if you can talk about how it was unique in terms of—I mean, you said that you were called upon to respond in some way and so that is, I would imagine, a professional but also a personal call. How is that different—to maybe be more personally invested in what comes about? And also, given that it's a site of a violent event, how is that different in how you operated and planned and designed?

Sanchis: I guess the big difference there was that every step of the way we involved the public. Like the decisions that I made about historic houses were my professional decisions that I decided and then we just did. I mean, I had to bring along the staffs at the historic sites to accept the vision and also the property boards—each property had a board and I had to convince them—but it was pretty direct: here's an idea and now just get it done. But in the Trade Center—I think the way it came about was that after 9/11, when everything was such a mess—were you in the city then?

Q: Yes.

Sanchis: Everybody walking around staring into space.

Q: Yes.

Sanchis: Two or three days later we were all beside ourselves and so was our board. We had a meeting at the Municipal Art Society of our staff and all of our board members who wanted to attend it, which most of them did, and we just sat there in a big circle and said what could we do. Everybody had so many opinions that we sort of decided that what we really should do is ask New Yorkers' opinions. So our whole direction that we took in terms of the Trade Center itself—not the LMEPF idea but in terms of the response—was to get the public's opinion through this Imagine process: what do you think should happen and what does it mean to you and what is it all about.

That fed directly into our support of the one design, of Libeskind's design, because that's the one that the public, through our Imagine process, seemed ultimately—first it was should we rebuild or not? And that came out yes, we should rebuild. Then through the selection process we always kept getting public opinion, public opinion. What came out of it was completely a reflection of what the public expressed to us was important to them and that's very different from having made an executive decision to do A or B. It was a big effort and we had a lot of volunteers that helped us gather public opinion. We had these public hearings all over the city. I mean, it was a long—it was a big deal.

Q: It seems like a really contentious issue that I think, from my perspective, the—

Sanchis: It wasn't so contentious at the beginning. It was just really sad. It got contentious later on. The design of the museum was very contentious because the families took a very personal view of how the museum should be. The public hearings at LMDC, which went on for years, had brought family representation in there—and those were screamers.

Q: Yes.

Sanchis: And there are still unhappy people with the design of the fountains and all of that.

Q: Yes. I was going to ask if you had been to the 9/11 Memorial and if you had any thoughts about that?

Sanchis: Yes. Do I have personal thoughts about the memorial? Yes, of course I do *[laughing]*. They're not worth any more than anybody else's but I do. I thought that—Libeskind's original vision had been to have the memorial as a hole. His idea was to make all of these new buildings, sort of in a descending spiral, around the Trade Center bathtub site, which incorporated the two Trade Center towers but was a bigger site. It was a rectangle. And that rectangle he envisioned as being a hole down to bedrock. So you would walk around the edge of it and you would look down eight floors and down at the bottom would be bedrock and there would be a memorial down there, undesigned, but basically down in this big open space surrounded by these glittering, glassy shards

because his buildings were very angular. I mean, it was just a concept but I thought it was just a gorgeous concept to embrace this horrible hole. And the hole was not meant to be pretty. It was meant to be ugly and very severe.

As it developed, that idea of a hole went away and the thing came back up to grade as a design. Then there was the competition, which Michael Arad won. And Michael's idea, his original idea, was also not pretty. It was just this barren space. It was at grade because it had the museum underneath it, which was not in Libeskind's plan—there was no museum—but the museum wound up filling that void and then the plaza was to be at street level. Michael's idea of the fountains falling down and then falling down again I thought was really effective because the water dropping—I thought it was excellent. But there wasn't supposed to be anything else. There was just supposed to be this barren plaza with these two holes and I thought that was really strong. I liked it a lot.

At the time, when he designed that, the light idea had already come up. We had a mini campaign to design the lights into the scheme and some way connect to the two holes so that the light would rise from it. That was a big discussion we had with City Hall and LMDC and, again, it was an idea that we just couldn't get in. But to my mind Michael's original scheme with the lights coming up out of the holes would have been amazingly effective. So that didn't work.

Then what happened was that I guess somebody decided—I don't know, the city, LMDC, somebody—decided that it was too severe and so they forced this union with Peter

Walker and Partners, I think is the name of it, for landscape design and he came up with this idea of the groves of trees. Then when they figured out the museum and all of that some more buildings popped up. The entrance to the museum all of a sudden became an object and there were two other buildings that were—I think they're ventilators or something—over by West Street. They popped up.

I think that Michael's scheme was corrupted and lost its power because it's too fussy. When you go down there now there's these planter beds around the bottom of the trees and there's a bunch of mulch in the planters that gets all over the walkways and people walk in the planters because there's not enough room. There's just too much crap there.

Q: The acorns fall.

Sanchis: Hmm?

Q: The acorns fall.

Sanchis: The acorns fall *[laughs]*. It's just too much stuff and it diminishes the power of the two fountains, which I think was not like Libeskind's scheme because it was a grade but it kept the idea that this was going to be severe and not pretty. I think that that was the appropriate thing there. It's a horrible thing that happened and that severity kind of spoke to it. It's not that it's unrelieved. I mean, the idea of surrounding it with these glittering

towers—it's not that huge a space so it would have been, I think, a very effective composition. I don't like it much, so I came out.

The museum is going to be amazing when it finally opens. I had a tour of that and I was aware of the original design and it's almost exactly like the original design. That didn't get fussed around with much at all. So I think it's going to be a wonderful museum when it eventually opens. But I also regret that we weren't able to convince anybody about the Tribute in Light because the Tribute in Light is going to have to find a new home eventually. Where it is now is on top of an MTA garage and that's a development site. So when they put up a new building—whether it's five years from now or ten years from now—on that site, Tribute in Light is going to have to move. There are a number of potential sites around there but none very close to the Trade Center and I think that's where you want it to be. When that descending spiral of buildings eventually gets completed—because right now there are holes in it, all the towers are not going up—when that gets completed that would be, I think, correct to have the lights come up from the center of it but how they're going to do that I don't know *[laughs]*.

Q: One of the criticisms of the memorial and, I don't know, maybe also Tribute in Light, is that the focus is on the buildings, the World Trade Center Towers, and that somehow that detracts from the lives that were lost. So as someone who has worked with buildings as the sort of physical manifestation of your work, was that something that came up? What sort of argument would you make to that criticism?

Sanchis: I don't agree with that. I think that everybody wanted to rebuild. We want there to be new buildings. We want there to be a lot of life and activity there because that's victory and I think everybody—we kept getting that. We don't want to be defeated by having nothing there. We wanted to come back bigger and stronger than ever and I think that will happen. I think that the memorial itself—you don't focus on the memorial. The memorial makes you think. I think Michael's design is brilliant—the cascading water makes you think about the lives that were lost. There's nothing to see. You just stare at this hole of water going down into it and it makes you think about the people who were lost. And I think that the ephemeral nature of the lights—I think that's why they've been so popular. They make you think about people. They don't look like the towers. They're just these shafts of light and they change so much when the clouds go by from the atmospheric conditions that it's not like—they're very contemplative. They make you think. We heard back, over and over, that it made people think about the people. They were beautiful but they're so simple that they make you reflect and that's why I think it's such a brilliant design.

Q: I would agree.

Sanchis: Both of them, except that Michael's got corrupted and Tribute in Light didn't.

Q: Well, I hope it's able to find a home in the future.

Sanchis: Me too. But I'm telling you I've looked everywhere and I don't know where they're going to put them. I was so happy to find the rooftop, you know, because the Tribute was originally on Goldman Sachs' site, which is right there at Vesey and West and that was a construction site. It was a parking lot about to be the Goldman Sachs building and then they put off the construction for a couple of years because of 9/11 so it was just an empty lot. And the first two years the lights were there. That's where they came up from.

Then it got to the point where they were going to go under construction so we had to find another site. I sat there with Google Maps of downtown and I said, "Where the fuck are we going to put this thing?" Then I saw this, like, white thing that I didn't know was there and I said, what's that? And it turned out to be this garage. And it was white because it's just a big parking deck and nobody ever parks on the top. It's an underused parking lot. They park on the lower floors but nobody parks on the top of that thing. I said, "Whoa, look at that," and its due south of the Trade Center. So we investigated and that's what we found out—that it belonged to MTA, that too many people don't park there, and they were willing to make a deal for cheap rental of the space and we were able to store the lights there. It was perfect and it happened to be exactly the right size so we only had to modify the relationship of the two squares to each other by a few feet. A few feet. It was just perfect. But I can't find another. I would have found it in that round and it wasn't there.

So the other thing that we haven't talked about at all, which was my other big MAS experience is TWA [Trans World Airlines Terminal].

Q: Let's talk about that *[laughs]*. How did the MAS get involved with the terminal?

Sanchis: We got involved with the terminal because the Port Authority [of New York and New Jersey] announced—I guess my MAS time could be viewed as my Port Authority time because Port Authority was the managing entity of the Trade Center and also of the airport. And the Port Authority announced that as part of its re-visioning of JFK [John F. Kennedy International Airport] they were getting rid of all of the individual terminals and were going to rebuild new terminals and they were in the process of doing that. They had taken down international arrivals. They had put up Terminal 1, which was the old Eastern Airlines building. They were in the process of getting ready to take down the American Airlines building, which was the one with the big glass front. They had already taken down—they were taking down United [Terminal 9]. They had plans to take down I. M. [Ieoh Ming] Pei's Sundrome [Terminal 6], which was originally National [Airlines] and then the Pan Am terminal, and the TWA terminal.

This was sort of known and the TWA terminal had already been designated a landmark. I don't remember exactly how it came about but it came about right away after I got to MAS. I came to MAS in '99, maybe it was 2000. They sort of publicly announced that they were going to take it down but they really couldn't take it down because they hadn't

gone through that 106 review, just like the Trade Center, because they were obviously using federal funds in their renovation project.

They announced that they were going to take this thing down but they hadn't gone through this process so the preservationists immediately rose up, including us, and said, "You can't do this, you have to go through a 106." Then they said uncle and then a whole bunch of organizations got involved as consulting parties, which is part of a 106 process. It said that if you can establish that you have a stake in the outcome you become a consulting party to the process of reviewing the proposed alterations to whatever it is. We were able to establish that we had a stake in it because MAS had always been involved in review of buildings in New York, blah, blah, blah.

So we became a consulting party, along with the National Trust and the Preservation League. I don't think World Monuments Fund was part of it. The Landmark Conservancy was part of it, the State SHPO office, Docomomo, the Finnish Consultant because [Eero] Saarinen was Finnish. There was a whole bunch. They started off these meetings but in our role it was complicated because the Conservancy, unbeknownst to anybody, apparently had had behind the scenes discussions with the Port on preserving the building before it was publicly announced that they wanted to alter it. The Port had backed off—thanks to those quiet conversations—on demolishing the head house but did want to demolish everything else except the head house.

The announcement that they made was the one about demolishing everything but the head house and then building this new terminal behind it and that's when everybody threw a fit and they started this process.

We would lead the process to preserve the terminal, all of its parts, and not build this monster behind it. That broke—I guess it was that summer of '99 or maybe the spring of 2000. Or maybe it was the summer of 2000. We kicked it off by having—what did we do? I guess the shit hit the fan in spring of 2000 and we decided to go all out with a press conference in the summer of 2000 I think.

We had a press conference with Philip Johnson who, of course, I knew from the Glass House so I was able to bring him in, and Bob [Robert A.M.] Stern, and somebody else at the MAS, where we denounced the idea to take down the terminal. We argued that it was too amazing a design. It was a New York City landmark and all of its parts—the head house, the tubes and the flight wings—were part of Saarinen's vision to transition the traveler from curbside to an airplane and no terminal had ever as brilliantly thought that out. And that the view of the tarmac when you walk into the head house and you see your airplane's out there but to get to them you have to go through those skinny dark tubes and then into these glassy flight wings—that was all part of the process and that for all of those reasons it was inappropriate to remove the parts, inappropriate to have a design behind the head house so that you could no longer see the tarmac when you walked into it because you'd be looking at another building. It was essential to preserve the airline use of the building because it had been so specially designed to fit that use. Without using it

as an airline terminal you would endanger it forever because airports are such high-function places where everything has got to be about getting on an airplane that secondary buildings have no place—i.e. the midfield chapels at JFK, which didn't last very long. It had to be about airline use and therefore it was essential to keep this thing as an airline terminal. It had problems but you could solve those problems.

Well, that immediately went up against a lot of preservation thought, which was an adaptive use. Buildings do become obsolete and adaptive use is the best way to preserve them. Our argument was that that was true but in some cases adaptive use is not the answer. And in fact, their best use is what they were always used for. Miami Marine [Stadium] is another example of that. So, no. You have perhaps the most unique airline building ever designed—keep it functional for its original use. You can do this. Just make the effort. That was the press conference.

It raised a lot of interest in preserving the terminal. But then 9/11 hit. So we had gotten into a series of meetings off of that about how to do this and we had proposed an alternative to them that this guy, Hal [H.] Hayes, who was an aviation architect who had designed Terminal 4 for Skidmore Owings and Merrill—had been in charge of Terminal 4—and he knew the airport inside out. He knew all the crap about how much space you need to turn a [Boeing]-747 around. He knew it and he knew the requirements for baggage, for security, everything. He came forward and volunteered to us to create an approach for saving the entire terminal and he did that.

We were in discussion about that with the Port Authority, United Airlines and JetBlue because United and JetBlue were the users of the new terminal when 9/11 hit. Then the Port just shut down because their executive director was killed. Neil [D.] Levine was killed. He was killed in the attack and they shut down for like two years. So the whole project went to sleep. Then when it picked up again, which must have been 2004 or ’05, United had tanked as an airline so the terminal that they wanted to build now was half the size because it was only JetBlue, so it was twenty-six gates instead of fifty-two gates. Our design made more sense than ever.

Then we went to this long battle with the Port and JetBlue and eventually our design was not accepted because the terminal, as Saarinen had conceived of it, had two wings. There were two tubes, two flight wings—our design kept that—and then when you got into the flight wing you kept going. There were two concourses that went out from that. So the idea was that when you went out the head house would essentially be like a foyer. You’d do ticketing in the head house, then you would go through the tubes into the flight wings, and the flight wings was where security would be—because that had made a mess of the head house so we moved security to flight wings—and then retail, which was the other big thing, would be in the new concourses. Then when you came back you’d come in through the concourses back to the flight wings but at the flight wing, when you got there, you’d go down. Then you would go to a central connector under the tarmac, come back towards the TWA building and come into a big underground room with a glass ceiling so that you looked up at the terminal—that would be the baggage coming back in—and then you would come up into the terminal and exit.

We separated all the functions. It really was a cool idea and it could have saved the whole thing and saved that view—the whole experience. They didn't do it for two reasons. One, they claimed that the underground stuff was not viable because of the water table at JFK, which was bullshit because there's a lot of other stuff that Hal knew was underground JFK already. That was just an auspicious argument. Secondly, and I think this was the bigger one, they couldn't do it because it was not economically viable to bifurcate security and sales, because they'd have to duplicate somehow. Although it seemed they wouldn't have to duplicate security because it would be the same number of security people—it's just that half of them would be there. So far as the retail, it's true. It's easier to have a central retail. Have you been in JetBlue terminal?

Q: No.

Sanchis: Oh. It works really well. It's easier to have a central retail than two separate ones. But this is a solution that you're making to accommodate the preservation of the best airline terminal that ever was. So, okay, you have to bifurcate your retail *[laughs]*. Just get over it and do it! You're saving the goddamn building. No. So we lost.

Seems like I'm telling you tales of more loss than win but that's what it is. They didn't buy the scheme. We were able to reduce the size of the new terminal. Originally, it was this really high thing behind TWA. We got it down and we simplified the design. We had to give up on the flight wings. We saved both tubes but the biggest loss to me was that

JetBlue originally had liked the idea of linking the head house to their terminal. And they even wanted to use the head house as the symbol. It was in their graphics for the new T5 [Terminal 5], which is their terminal.

But we got into a fight between JetBlue and the Port Authority over who was going to take the responsibility to restore the head house. It was kind of a stupid argument because the back building, the new terminal, cost like $685 million, part of which was put up by the Port, part of which—much less—by JetBlue. It was mostly the Port. The restoration of the head house was estimated at $11 million and neither one of them was willing to do it. The Port was still bent on using the head house for something else—a sports facility or whatever—and they wanted to put the responsibility to restore it on whoever the user was. JetBlue just didn't want to put up the money.

It wound up that that argument took so long that by the time it was resolved that the Port was going to restore it, JetBlue was already halfway through the construction of its terminal. So the restoration of it by the Port, which eventually cost like twenty-two million dollars—but still, relative to $685 million, is peanuts—for the centerpiece. The restoration took so long that the back building, now no longer using the front building as an access point, was finished and opened while the restoration was still going on. So the chance to open it together, so that it would imprint on your brain that this was one building, was gone.

Now the thing is sitting there and now the very latest is that the Port wants it developed as a hotel and has made a deal with a major hotelier, André [T.] Balazs, which they are going to reveal the scheme—ready for this one?—Friday. Friday I'm going to a meeting at JFK to see the scheme that is being proposed to convert the head house into a hotel.

Q: So what's your attitude as you approach this proposal?

Sanchis: *[Laughter].* Well, I've been the greatest skeptic. If you look at the news articles throughout this, I've been the great skeptic of this and the thorn in the Port's side. I think that the integrity—the shape of the TWA terminal is a hard one to fool around with. It's got a big center and then it's got these low wings. In order to get enough rooms to make a hotel economically viable—I can't believe that you can get them in the wings. You can't build in the middle because the middle is a big open space—you can't subdivide that—and it's beautifully restored. The original baggage wings on the sides are obviously space but it has no windows and the outside perimeter of it where you would put windows is very limited. Even if you did put windows all the way around the back, it's very limited. You could cut a hole in the middle, I guess, and get some rooms looking into the middle of the baggage wings. But still, without adding something I don't—I can't imagine how you would get enough rooms in there.

My conclusion is that they're going to approach us with adding something and I think adding something is probably architecturally unacceptable. So I don't know what they're going to—I'm just waiting to see and it might get into another battle. It might not. But I

am still charged by MAS as being their representative, so *[laughs]* we'll see what happens.

Q: Currently, it's only open when it's part of something like Open House New York.

Sanchis: It's not open now.

Q: Right. So it's one day a year or something when you can maybe have the opportunity to see it.

Sanchis: Right. You know, having lost the battle on keeping it an airline use I want to see it used as much as anybody else does and I want to see it open to the public. You will still be able to get your tickets there if you want because one of the points of agreement was that there will be some electronic ticket machines for JetBlue there. And the fact does remain that if you park in the parking lot in the infield at JFK there that's near T5, if you're a daily commuter or a weekly commuter and you're driving in from Westchester or Connecticut or something like that—and I think that's about ten percent of their users—and you park in the one end of that lot, which you get to know when you're commuting which door to get on the train and all that, you have a straight shot through the terminal and through the tubes into the back.

Now, we also lost another campaign at the end of this. To make that transition obvious and easy we wanted an elevator or an escalator in the garage so if you parked in that end

you could get down quickly because the garage is like four stories. We wanted clear signage saying that this is the way and we wanted an escalator connection at the end of the tubes at the new terminal that would take you quickly from the tube to the departure level so that you could park, run through the terminal, have a moving walkway in one of the tubes, go up an escalator to departure and it's almost a straight line and you don't have to go all around the side the way you do from the train.

Now, the estimated usage of that terminal was twenty million people a year. They estimate that ten could come in private cars or black cars and come to the front of the TWA terminal. That's two million people a year who would go through that thing. That's a lot. We didn't get it. The parking lot is there, there ain't no signage, there's no moving walkway and when you get to the end of the tube you have to go down a stair or one of those excruciatingly slow hydraulic elevators. You have to go down to the arrivals level and then go up two things of escalators to the departure level in order to get to the ticket thing. Nobody is going to do that.

Q: Yes.

Sanchis: They really squelched any opportunity in terms of timing, in terms of the relationship of the two buildings, the ease of access, the identification of the building with JetBlue—that's all shot. It's not happening. They have restored something beautifully and now they're looking for an alternative use. This seems to be the best thing

they've had, this hotel thing, but it may or may not rely upon unacceptable architectural alterations to the historic building.

So, it's there. It's one of my more frustrating projects because the public was never really conscious of the flight wings. It just wasn't there. But even though they're gone the public feels, I believe—they saw what the feedback has been by anybody that knows that I was involved with it. What a great job—they've preserved the terminal. Whereas I think we lost seventy-five percent of the battle and the twenty-five percent, which is that the head house is there un-restored, is true. But it's a very Pyrrhic victory.

My consolation is that because it's a historic building—and because preservationists will always battle to save the head house and we have the head house and the tubes—that the whole premise that airport architecture is quickly obsolete because of the changing industry and the needs of airplanes and servicing them that the new JetBlue terminal will be gone in fifty years but the TWA head house and the tubes will still be there. So it will have another round of possible use as an airline terminal because who knows what the demands on JFK will be? Who knows if people will be flying smaller planes in there or personal planes or jet packs or who knows what? But that terminal will be there because people will fight for it to be there. So the opportunity for a better solution that engages it into airline use remains. That's my consolation.

Q: I'm not sure how much you were involved directly with the High Line but maybe we can talk about that in terms of success.

How are we doing on time?

Sanchis: We can talk about—oh, it's almost eleven. We can talk about that briefly.

Q: I can also put it to you: whatever you would like to talk about in addition to what we've already covered about the Municipal Art Society and your time there.

Sanchis: Well, I guess the most rewarding projects that I wound up working on there were the Trade Center in its various aspects, TWA, which still is going on, and the High Line. The High Line was interesting. It was an easy thing. It's like Miami Marine—and we haven't even talked about World Monuments Fund, which I think is a very interesting sort of finish to my career in preservation, being here now, because I don't expect to have another job *[laughing]*. But it was great going from the city to national to a broader view of preservation at MAS to—I'm back to national but really this is an international organization and seeing it from an international perspective and what preservation here in the United States means in terms of preservation worldwide—that's very interesting.

But the High Line in a nutshell was just—I think my contribution there and my pleasure at being involved with it was being able to recognize the potential of something at the very outset and being able to help these two guys raise its profile enough so that other people saw its potential by putting the MAS at their disposal for their first show. I thought they had a great idea. The minute they came—I didn't see it. I never saw it. I

don't think I even—I've been in this city for forty years, fifty years. I don't think I ever even focused on the fact that the High Line was there. It's so hidden from the street because you only see it in little bits when you go down a block. It doesn't look like anything. It was this rusty old thing. I didn't even see it. It's not there.

As soon as they came in and said that they saw the potential as a linear park and they showed me the pictures from a different perspective, which I had never seen because New Yorkers had only see that from below. But when you looked at it from above—which is the photographs that that guy took for them, that series of photographs from above—it already looked like a green park because that's what it looked like. It looked like a green river right through.

So it was so obvious and they had such a good idea just to take photographs of it and make an exhibit about the potential as a park when it already looked like a park. And it was a complete surprise because from below it looked like this rusting hulk with bird shit falling out of it and from above it looked beautiful and serene and green. That just blew me away. It took me about three seconds to say, "Oh my god. You've got a perfect idea. Of course we'll make MAS available to you as a place to hold your exhibit." Which they did in—what was the election year? 2000? Even years?

Q: Yes.

Sanchis: Yes. So they must have had that exhibit in the spring of 2000. It was about TWA time. I didn't do anything. I just made the place available. They put the exhibit on. Bloomberg came. He was as knocked out by the pictures, I think, as anybody. He said he would support it if he were elected. Then he got elected and then he did support it. So my part of it was very small—being in a position to make MAS available to them for an exhibit and then they did everything else. We testified over the years. I was at all their public hearings arguing for the logic of it but they did that by themselves.

This is another one in a completely different venue. But when these guys—this is a fellow named Don Worth. Don Worth and his friends in Miami Beach created—they came to the Municipal Art Society about that same time—I'm looking for a booklet that I don't see—and they said, "Can Municipal Art Society come and mentor us in Miami Beach because we want to preserve the 1950s and '60s architecture post-Art Deco because nobody values it and it's coming down right and left." And I said at MAS, "Sure, we'll come down and we can do a session for you about raising public attention and media and how to get something going about this." So we did. And that must have been 1999.

Then Don and his wife, Nina [Worth], and a couple of other people including David [J.] Framberger, who was a graduate of the Columbia program who had moved to Miami, asked if they could do an exhibit at MAS about preserving Modern architecture in Miami and New York. And I said that's a great idea because we need to focus on Modern architecture in New York and there are a lot of similarities. We share one architect,

Morris Lapidus, who did a lot there and did some singular things here. And so they did the exhibit and it was a fabulous exhibit. I have to give you the little booklet because it's a very cool booklet and this picture is from it.

So Don and Nina came up, they did the exhibit and that was fine. And then years later, while I was still at MAS, Don came to me and said, "You know, we're going to get behind saving this cool stadium. What do you think?" I have a place in Florida so I went over and I saw the stadium. I was blown away by it and I said, "Oh, yeah. You guys have got to do this." Then I suggested that they get the National Trust involved and that they get the World Monuments Fund involved. I wasn't here. So they did.

I introduced it here and they applied to list it on the 2010 watch. They went to the National Trust and they got the Trust to list it on their eleven Most [Endangered Historic Places] list and again I did nothing. I saw it and I encouraged them. He's done all the work. He's amazing. And this group is now a long ways towards preserving the stadium. It was on the brink of demolition. So they're going to preserve it. It was kind of the same thing as Robert and Joshua. I was simply an observer with a background in preservation. None of these people have backgrounds in preservation. It's the great thing about the field. They just had a sense that they saw an opportunity. It involved an old building or an old structure and they needed somebody to validate their idea because they just needed professional, high-profile—if you want to call it—validation of their idea and I had the opportunity to do that and I did. I think all of us in preservation do.

Fitch always said, "If you call yourself a preservationist you are one." And it's such a weird field. There is a whole bunch of professional knowledge you can gain by going to Columbia and being all this stuff. On the other hand, some of them have the greatest success stories—this, the High Line—are people who had no background in preservation, they just had a sympathy for it and they were willing to put their lives on hold, which is what you have to do for five, eight years *[laughs]*. It's a sacrifice but there are people that will do that and those are the people that we need who really have made careers in the field. It's up to us to support them and to just make the connections that they need. They're brilliant. These guys are brilliant. All they need is a clue and to set them off and they go and that's what happened in Miami Marine and it certainly happened in the High Line. So those are the easiest things that I've ever done—as opposed to beating my head for ten years on TWA with the Port Authority or something like that. It's so different but it's amazing.

Q: Well, having described yourself as a steward in that way I wonder if you can talk about how that—did you get that sense from people like Fitch and Goldstone?

Sanchis: Yes, completely. Completely. He felt—he was the one that was bringing housewives to Columbia to learn this new field. It was because he knew that anybody—it was what he said, "You call yourself a preservationist then you are a preservationist." So in that case, it was people that wanted to learn more about it. Basically, he wasn't saying you had to be an architect, which was the prevailing thought at the time. It was intimately connected and he saw through that in a minute.

Yes, he always did for me what I'm trying to—now that I'm an old man—what I'm trying to do for others. He was always supportive. He made some of my most important professional connections. He also got me into the Landmarks Commission I think and he was always there, supporting. Now I've got all this experience and I can support people doing stuff like that. It's in a different setting. It's not in an academic setting, which he was, but I completely believe about if you call yourself a preservationist and are interested in it you are one.

Q: Last time you talked about how at the Landmarks Preservation Commission the passion had waned over the years for historic preservation.

Sanchis: Yes.

Q: I guess, keeping in mind the similarities that you see between your role now and maybe Fitch's role thirty or forty years ago, how is your role as a steward different now? Given the current climate for historic preservation in the city—that it's maybe more business oriented?

Sanchis: I don't know. I mean, to a degree, I guess it—I mean, I'll never approach Fitch in my impact on anything. He sort of changed the way that preservation education was. I'm a participant in it. I think that I have had a luxury, which is working for non-profits. I see my role primarily as a cheerleader and perhaps, just by dumb luck, by association

with projects that I've been lucky enough to be involved with and what I've done with them as an example. But having worked for non-profits has, in a way, allowed me to always take the high road and not have to make compromises. TWA was compromised but I never agreed to them *[laughing]*.

So I've always been—I think that's a real privilege to be in that position. I guess I don't know how other people view me but I'm very pleased having been able to, in my own mind, not become compromised or sell out. I've never had to sell out. I've always been on the advocacy preservation side of the angels kinds of thing. That's sort of a standard that people who are going into the field, who may find out about me, can look at and say okay, here's a guy that never really settled. They may realize that he didn't have to because of the nature of his work but he never settled and we need to keep that approach of not settling somewhere in preservation. And it should wash over where it can. Sometimes when you're in the fray of preservation and you're a consultant, or you're a preservation architect or something, you're working for your clients and you have to compromise. Otherwise you'll starve because nobody will hire you.

I recognize how lucky I've been that way. But I do think that the value of that is to keep people thinking about not compromising even if they have to and what happens when you don't. Maybe that's a very limited value. If I have one, that's what it's been I guess *[laughing]*.

Q: The lesson of integrity is a very valuable lesson.

Sanchis: Yes, well, you phrased it better than I did. I also think that I've always been an enthusiastic person and I think certainly that has been very important in what I wound up doing because when you are an advocate your passion and your enthusiasm always shows through. And if you happen to be less of an outgoing person, a personality like I am, it's tougher to do that. So I think I wound up, given who I am, I kind of wound up in a very good place in the profession. I wouldn't have been nearly as good as a preservation architect or something like that and I would have been much less happy.

Q: You mentioned that working here at the World Monuments Fund gives you a stronger sense of how preservation in the United States has an impact worldwide and I wondered if you could expand on that and if you want to bring in a couple of the projects.

Sanchis: Well, yes. Part of being here—what I'm trying to do at the World Monuments Fund—this is an international organization but it's American-based and it's based right here in New York in the most famous building in New York. Our American program has been small compared to our work in the rest of the world. We have done some percentage of our projects here in the United States, maybe ten or less than ten. I think over the years since we were created there have been like eighty projects here in the United States. There have been thousands worldwide.

The American program—people need to understand why we are involved in the things that we choose to be involved in, in the United States because if we're going to have an

American program it's got to have a real reason. It can't just be random projects. So what I've sort of come up with here, which is still not accepted but which I think people are getting accustomed to, is that we focus our American program on things that are uniquely American that don't exist anywhere else. And one of the things that—that's the idea. You can't be quite that pure but that's the motivation.

What I've come down to is focusing on Native American things, which are uniquely ours, and Modernism. The two things bracket American architecture, one's at one end, one's at the other, right? That's easy for the public to understand. The Native American stuff is very popular internationally because the American southwest and cowboys and Indians—that's what people think of the United States very often. It's a big tourism destination, the southwest. The Native American population has always been underserved and they have an awful lot of issues and so we can help that.

I think that in terms of Modernism—from my work at the Trust, at the commission, with things like TWA—it's obviously not embraced by the larger American public so it needs publicity. It needs attention to get Americans interested in valuing Modernism. And one other aspect of it is that our most famous product in terms of architecture is Frank Lloyd Wright. Uniquely American, completely associated with us and known internationally and known among the general public—about the only architect the general public does know and he's part of Modernism in America.

So what I want to do is focus on Native American things and Modernism with an emphasis perhaps on Frank Lloyd Wright and try to help those two things in the United States. I think that that's understandable to the public and it's needed for the reasons I've just said. There are a lot of organizations that focus on Frank Lloyd Wright though so I haven't got that answer to how we carve out our little niche.

But we already have our foot in the door because we've been involved with Florida Southern College for quite a while, which is his campus in Lakeland, Florida, which is unique among his designs because he only did one campus—that's it—and it's the biggest collection of his buildings in one spot. There are eight of them. So we're already into that and I would like to expand that by associating ourselves with a couple of other Frank Lloyd Wright buildings and stick with them long-term. But I think we do better if we stick with projects long-term.

At the moment we just finished a very successful project there and that's probably, in many ways, the premiere American, Native American site. That's the one you learn about in fourth grade when you're learning about the pueblos and it's Taos. And there's work there for the next twenty years. We've just begun. So we could have a long-term association with Taos as well as do other Native American things. Walpi—that's another Pueblo in Arizona, which is just amazing, that we're starting out with. Petroglyphs are getting destroyed right and left. I don't know if you read about the bishop site in California where they went in with chainsaws and sawed it out.

Q: Wow!

Sanchis: Right. So if this was the king of our Native American sites there is room for us to become involved with others while continuing this relationship. And then we have short-term relationships. Likewise, with Frank Lloyd Wright, if we stuck with the college. And I would like to see us get involved with Taliesin East, which I think can be argued—because it was his home for so long of his life—it can be argued a major if not the major Frank Lloyd Wright site. They have a ton of work there for years to come. So if we got involved with that as our Frank Lloyd Wright king and then did others as far as Modernism—you know, establish a relationship with some striking Modernist site like the St. Louis Arch or something and then stick with those for a while. We could make a good argument about why that's our focus in the United States.

I've been here now two years. I came up with that about a year ago and it's not in the blood here yet but I'm trying to get it that way. And then when I leave here, if they adopt that, I think it would do them very well.

Q: I think it's good to end with some hopes and dreams for the future of preservation. But I want to give you the opportunity to mention anything that we haven't covered in these two sessions.

Sanchis: No. My god, you've talked me out. I've talked myself out. No, it's just—I keep telling young people: go into preservation. You're going to love it. I sure have *[laughs]*.

Q: Alright. We can end there. Thank you so much for your time.

Sanchis: You are welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]