



The Metropolitan Museum of Art Oral History Project

Since 1993, Museum Archives and Counsel's Office have coordinated a program to preserve memories of the institution as seen through the eyes of those people who knew it well and helped to shape it. We are pleased to share a collection of oral history interviews with former staff, Trustees, prominent donors, and others who made significant contributions to The Met.

Digitized transcripts are available for most of the interviews and are accessible by clicking on the links within the list below. Researchers are encouraged to use digitized transcripts when available for their initial access to this collection. Requests for access to non-digitized transcripts may be sent to archives@metmuseum.org. Please visit the Museum Archives [webpage](#) for more information about our access policy and procedures.

[Peter Barnet](#) (1951- ; Curator in Charge and Curator Emeritus, 1998-present)

Peter Barnet was Michel David-Weill Curator in Charge, Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters (1998-2013) and Senior Curator (2013-2016) at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. He was elected Curator Emeritus in 2016.

[Herbert Brownell](#) (1904–1996; Outside Counsel, 1960s–1980s with the firm of Lord Day & Lord)

Herbert Brownell was an attorney with the New York firm of Lord Day & Lord from 1929 until his retirement in 1989. He was the United States Attorney General in the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower from 1953 to 1957. Lord Day & Lord was for several decades the primary outside legal counsel to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Brownell served as lead attorney in this role beginning in 1969. He provided legal advice to Met leadership on issues including the expansion of the Museum building, gifts and bequests of art and money, and artwork acquisition policies and procedures.

[Mary Griggs Burke](#) (1916–2012; Trustee, 1976–1995; Trustee Emeritus, 1995–2012; art collector, 1950s–2000s.)

Mary Griggs Burke assembled one of the premier collections of East Asian art in the United States. The core of the collection was Japanese painting, consisting of 450 works in screen, hanging scroll, handscroll, and album formats, and around 40 works of Japanese calligraphy, as well as ukiyo-e prints and woodblock printed illustrated books. Burke served as a Trustee of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and bequeathed to the Museum the bulk of her collection.

[Walter Burke](#) (Trustee, 1980-1997; Trustee Emeritus, 1997-2018)

Walter Burke was a financial advisor to Sherman Fairchild, the inventor of the aerial camera. Burke succeeded Fairchild as Chairman of the Board of the Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation, and for many decades served on the board of the Sherman Fairchild Foundation, including 35 years as its president. Burke was a Trustee of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and served on its Finance Committee. He was interested in art conservation, and over the years numerous Fairchild Foundation grants supported conservation activities at The Met.

[James David Draper](#) (1943–2019; ESDA Curator and Curator Emeritus, 1971–2019)

Jim Draper was a curator in The Met's Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts who specialized in the history of 15th- and 16th-century Italian sculpture, and 18th- and 19th-century French sculpture, with a particular interest in terracotta.

[William H. Forsyth](#) (1906–2003; Medieval Art and Cloisters Curator and Curator Emeritus, 1937–2003)

William Forsyth was a leading American scholar in the study of medieval European sculpture. His affiliation with The Metropolitan Museum of Art began in the early 1930s, when he served as a volunteer. In 1937 he joined the Museum's staff as a curator of medieval art, working on artwork installation with James J. Rorimer, then the director of the Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters. Forsyth played an important role in the acquisition by The Cloisters of the famed Unicorn Tapestries.

[Roswell L. Gilpatric](#) (1906–1996; Trustee, 1964–1984; Trustee Emeritus, 1984–1996)

Roswell Gilpatric was an attorney and government official who served as Deputy Secretary of Defense in the administration of President John F. Kennedy. Gilpatric was a Trustee of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and served on its Legal and Education Committees, and also chaired The Met's 100th Anniversary Committee.

[Prudence Harper](#) (1933- ; Curator, Curator in Charge, and Curator Emerita, 1973-present)

Prudence Harper joined the Met in 1958 as a Curatorial Assistant and held positions of increasing responsibility in the Ancient Near Eastern Art department through the 1960s-1990s. An expert on ancient Sasanian art, Harper coordinated Met exhibitions "The Royal City of Susa: Ancient Near Eastern Treasures from the Louvre" (1992-1993) and "Assyrian Origins: Discoveries at Ashur on the Tigris" (1995).

[James R. Houghton](#) (1936-2023; Trustee, 1982-1998; Chairman of the Board of Trustees, 1998-2011; Trustee Emeritus, 2011-2023)

James Houghton, CEO of Corning Glass. James Houghton was Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and cousin of Arthur Houghton, who was President and also Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum.

[Julie Jones](#) (1935-2021; Curator and Curator Emeritus, 1975-2021)

Julie Jones was a Curator of Pre-Columbian art in the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas from 1975-2013, when she was elected Curator Emeritus.

[Bradford Kelleher](#) (1920-2007; Merchandising Department, 1949-1986)

Bradford Kelleher began his career at The Met as a Museum shop sales manager, and later headed all of its merchandising activities as well as its book publishing program. Under his leadership, the Museum dramatically expanded its product line to include reproductions of fine jewelry and decorative objects based on artworks in The Met collection.

[John Laszlo](#) (1931-)

Dr. John Laszlo is the nephew of art dealer Ernest Brummer; Brummer was instrumental in the acquisition of objects for the Cloisters.

[Clare Le Corbeiller](#) (1931–2003; ESDA Curator, 1967–2000)

Clare Le Corbeiller was a curator in The Met's Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts, specializing in porcelain and metalwork. She was closely involved with the exhibition *The Arts Under Napoleon* (1978) and with the installation of the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Galleries (1991).

William B. Macomber (1921–2003; President, 1978–1986)

William Macomber was a diplomat and government official who served under five U.S. Presidents, with positions in the Central Intelligence Agency and State Department and as Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs. In 1978 he was appointed as the first staff President of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. He oversaw administrative operations of the Museum, including major construction projects defined in The Met Master Plan developed in the early 1970s.

Harvey Murton (1907–2004; Armorer, 1929–1972)

Harvey Murton was an armorer who served for more than 40 years on the staff of The Met's Department of Arms and Armor, where he was responsible for conservation and installation of the collection. He was trained under the founding curator of the department, Bashford Dean. After retiring from The Met, he continued to work as a consultant to private collectors.

Roy R. Neuberger (1903–2010; Honorary Trustee, 1968–2010)

Roy Neuberger was a financier and arts patron with a special interest in 20th-century art. He was an Honorary Trustee of The Met who gave to the Museum works by Hans Hofmann and Milton Avery, and funds for capital campaigns and artwork acquisitions.

Joseph V. Noble (1920–2007; Operating Administrator, 1956–1967; Chairman of the Administrative Committee, 1966–1967; Vice-Director for Administration, 1966–1970)

Joseph Noble was an arts administrator who oversaw administrative functions at The Met, including human resources, construction, and visitor services. He also advised Director Thomas Hoving on exhibitions, artwork acquisitions, and special projects. Noble left The Met in 1970 to become Director of the Museum of the City of New York.

Harry S. Parker III (1939- ; Administrative Assistant to Director, 1963-1966, Executive Assistant to President, 1966-1967; Executive Assistant to Director, 1967; Chairman of the Education Department, 1967-1970; Vice-Director for Education, 1970-1973).

Harry S. Parker worked under Directors James J. Rorimer and Tom Hoving.

James Parker (1924–2001; ESDA Curator, 1954–1993)

James Parker was a curator in The Met's Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts who specialized in French and English furniture. He played a central role in the installation of the Museum's Wrightsman Galleries, an ensemble of period rooms that present French decorative arts in an authentic setting.

Kevin Roche (1922–2019; Master Planner and Architect, 1967–2000s)

Kevin Roche was an architect and partner in the firm Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates. He led the development of The Met's Master Plan (1970), a comprehensive framework for the expansion the Museum's main building that guided construction projects into the 21st century.

Katherine S. Rorimer (1908–2000; librarian, spouse of former director James J. Rorimer)

Katherine Rorimer was an art librarian at The Met. She was married to Museum Director James J. Rorimer.

Jean Schmitt (Staff member, 1951-1974; Curator of Far Eastern Art, 1975-1983)

Jean Schmitt was an administrator and curator in The Met's Far Eastern Art department.

Carl Spielvogel (1928-2021); Trustee, 1984-2004; Trustee Emeritus, 2005-2021)

Carl Spielvogel was a Trustee and Trustee Emeritus of the Museum. His business savvy and corporate connections helped bring in support, sponsorships, and revenue for the Museum's programs and operations, while his network in government paved the way for partnerships with elected officials.

Ambassador Spielvogel and his wife, Dr. Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, supported initiatives across the Museum and donated works of art to several curatorial departments.

[Edith A. Standen](#) (1905–1998; ESDA Curator, 1949–1970; Curator Emeritus, 1993–1998)

Edith Standen was a curator in The Met's Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts who specialized in European tapestries. She oversaw the Museum's Textile Study Room from 1949 until her retirement in 1970. During World War II she served as a "Monuments Woman" and directed the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, where thousands of Nazi-looted artworks recovered by Allied forces were identified and returned to countries from which they had been stolen.

[Arthur Ochs Sulzberger](#) (1926–2012; Trustee, 1968–1999; Chairman of the Board of Trustees, 1987–1998)

Arthur Ochs Sulzberger was a publisher and businessperson who served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Met from 1987 to 1998. Under his leadership the Museum launched an ambitious capital campaign. He attributed his lifelong commitment to the Museum to his boyhood fascination with objects displayed in its Arms and Armor galleries.