

Interview with John Hubbard
Marquette, Michigan
23 March 2010

START OF INTERVIEW

John Hubbard (JH): Set go? Am I supposed to start? Who suggested we have a gallery? Good question! [Laughter]. Nobody I don't think. Remember this is a long time ago, like how many years ago?

Interviewer (I): I don't know.

JH: When I first came here almost.

I: When did you come here?

JH: 1969.

I: So in '69 you came here there was no gallery? And then about?

JH: Now, wait a minute now. We had 1 faculty person, Judy Degal [spelled phonetically] who was doing some exhibits in the concourse of the library.

I: LRC?

JH: On a somewhat erratic basis. And then she left so I took that over, and we did that probably for I don't know for, it's hard to remember, 2 or 3 years maybe. Then we moved to, at some point we moved to Lee Hall, 19 what '76 or something like that? Then we started having the exhibits over there so that was the first time we actually had a real space. So before that it was the concourse, and we did put a couple exhibits up in, you remember, in the music department...

I: Area.

JH: Over that way. So there was those two spaces. So the Lee Hall was the first time we had a real space other than the student gallery which was 222, what was the name of that... over in the University Center?

I: 226? I think 226. You showed exhibits at Thomas Fine Arts near the music rooms right? That's where it was, that little?

JH: And we had the other gallery, where we had shows for a long time. So those were the two exhibit spaces, 3 exhibit spaces, on campus. So we moved to Lee Hall then we had an actual space we could use for exhibits. So nobody ever asked for it, it just sort of appeared and we used it. So the first show we had in that space was right after we moved. It had old grungy green carpet on the floor, the walls weren't painted. Were you there then?

I: No I came in '77.

JH: '77. So anyway I remember hanging that first show, and it was kind of a grungy looking area, so it actually had a hole in the wall that was not repaired by the time the show went up. So we hung a painting over the hole.

I: Nice!

JH: How's that? That's what paintings are for.

I: Pretty creative! I would say.

JH: Cover the holes in the wall.

I: Pretty creative, good.

JH: So it just kind of happened.

I: And what was the first show you think you hung?

JH: It was a faculty show.

I: Oh, the faculty show.

JH: See I wish I had all that stuff. I had all of that stuff, all the show announcements, all the posters. All organized in a box, I threw it all away.

I: You did?

JH: Yeah.

I: Why?

JH: I used it for promotion stuff, because to show people what we did. And finally I said "I don't need that anymore." I finally threw it out. So I had every single one of those there, all sequentially organized and all my correspondence, everything.

I: That would have been great for the archives and writing the history.

JH: So that was the first show.

I: How did you fund that?

JH: Oh, the university gave us no funding. We had to apply to ASNMU to get any money at all.

I: Okay.

JH: So we had no funding, I had no help. I had to recruit students to help. So every show that went up, I'd go and say "hey what are you doing on Saturday morning? I got a show to hang, want to help me?" So that's how it went for the whole time that we were in that position. I can remember doing all kinds of shows, but we had to do it on a shoestring basically. And we probably averaged maybe 6 to 8 hundred dollars a semester as our budget. That was all the money there was.

I: So did that become department funds?

JH: No, that was for the gallery specifically.

I: Oh so you're saying that's the money that you got from ASNMU?

JH: That's the only money we had, the university gave us no money for that.

I: Okay. How did we decided to have a director? I mean, I think I remember in the past you telling me that you got a third time off the run the thing?

JH: So in the beginning it was like, just one of the things you did to help the department out. And then at some point maybe, I don't know exactly when it was but probably if we moved there in '76. I did it from 19 what was is '71 through '78, probably about 19 maybe '75 or 6 the provost, Glen at that time.

I: Bob Glen.

JH: Finally made it an official position and he called it, I think it was called 'Exhibits Coordinator' and that's the first time it had a real title and was an official position. Probably at that same time it became a release, one third release time, to do the gallery. So at that point that was the first university support that we had. Up until then it was just extra work for whoever was doing it. So I did it probably another 3 years as exhibits coordinator. Then I said "this is too much work, there's no funding, no help." I was tired of doing it and I wasn't doing anything else so I said I'm not going to do it anymore. So the department said we'll have other faculty take it on for 3 year periods I think it was. I was trying to remember, who was the first one that did it? It seems like it was Marvin Zinder. And then Bill Wedick [spelled phonetically] and Bill Leek [spelled phonetically] did it and I think that's it. And then at that point we hired Wayne Francis, whenever that was. That would have been 9 years later after I left.

I: I think it was, yeah in 1985. So when did you leave?

JH: 70... what did I just say, '78?

I: '78 and 9?

JH: '78 is according to my notebook. So then it would have been Marvin for 3 years, and then other people for 6 more, '78 so '89 ish? We hired probably Wayne Francis.

I: '89ish, but no he actually came in '85 when the seat cord collection of, I have an image of him in '85 as the new director. So he probably came '84 '85. The exhibit behind him is the seat cord exhibit of illustrations. So maybe it was 2 years after.

JH: Could have been 2 years.

I: Yeah, 2 years would be more probably appropriate.

JH: So then it would only be 6 years, which makes more sense with you date.

I: Yes I think that's how it went. So it was like 2 years instead of 3 years. Was there any trouble with any works or anybody not?

JH: No we never had many problems because we used to exhibit in the concourse and there's no security right? I don't recall ever having many problems. But most of the shows that we put up where either cheap things that weren't worth anything or faculty shows that no one would come.

I: [Laughter]. And they weren't worth anything either!

JH: No, it was _____. I don't recall any big problems with security even though we didn't have any.

I: And how about triumphs?

JH: Triumphs?

I: Do we have any triumphs?

JH: Triumphs I guess was getting it be called an actual position. Wayne, that was the real triumph because we had a full time person then. Before that it was only one third, so that was the real triumph.

I: And was it considered a gallery, when was it decided?

JH: Yeah. When we moved to Lee Hall, somehow we ended up with the title "Lee Hall Gallery." We had one of the design students create a logo for that. Do you remember the big thing that we had on the outside of the building?

I: I do, actually I have a picture of it.

JH: John Kiltanen [spelled phonetically]?

I: John Kiltman [spelled phonetically] did it?

JH: Maybe? John somebody, one of the graphics people.

I: John Kiltman was a painter, who looked like this. John Banowski [spelled phonetically]?

JH: No, not John Banowski. But yeah that's the logo, so we had stationary with that logo on it.

I: Yeah?

JH: So yeah that was it kind of when it actually became a real thing with a presence that we didn't have before.

I: Then Wayne came in the fall of 19, I think '84 or '85.

JH: '85 yeah.

I: It was always Lee, when did it turn to be the university museum? Northern Michigan University Museum?

JH: Probably when we moved here don't you think?

I: Nope, because remember we had one room and then somehow we got the second room and we got the second room...

JH: In this building you're talking about or the other one?

I: No in Lee Hall.

JH: Oh we got more storage area, then when we moved out of the office across the hall to the other new office we had more room. I don't remember exactly when that was.

I: And then I think that's when it became 'Northern Michigan University Art Museum.' Because I think by having...

JH: You need Wayne here to ask those kinds of questions.

I: I'm going to interview Wayne.

JH: Because he was the one doing it then.

I: Exactly. So I think that's when it became the university and then it was the university up until we got the Devos Art Museum money and it was changed to the Devos Art Museum. So is there anything else you'd like to add?

JH: I notice they're using the same little tool box that we had when we started in Lee Hall.

I: They are?

JH: Yeah, it's got these little flowers on it, it's painted yellow.

I: Well, an antique. We have an antique tool box.

JH: I thought that was kind of strange.

I: Well you know we keep things and we recycle them over and over again. Is there anything else?

JH: No.

I: I mean how do you feel about, being sort of the keeper of the flame and now we're to this brand new building with all of that.

JH: Well if we hadn't done it we wouldn't have it today. Just like health care, you got to start some place.

I: Yep, exactly. You chip away at it.

JH: Just start it and have no support, and now they have the real thing. That's what happens when you do things. Hopefully it turns out.

I: Yes. Hopefully we'll have a budget. Alright if there's nothing else to add, I thank you for having this small little interview with me and I will stop the tape.

END OF INTERVIEW