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**Oral History Project
Interview Transcript**

**Oleg Grabar
Interviewed by Linda Arntzenius
December 1, 2009**

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Linda Arntzenius: It's December the first 2009, and I'm here at the Institute for Advanced Study to record an interview with Professor Oleg Grabar.¹ The interview is sort of in three parts. Before coming to the Institute, being at the Institute, and then being Professor Emeritus at the Institute. And I think I would –

Oleg Grabar: Eventually there's a fourth part!

Linda Arntzenius: Well, we won't go there. To begin with then, I'd like to go back. You actually were born in '29, so you are –

Oleg Grabar: Eighty.

Linda Arntzenius: Almost the same age as the Institute.

Oleg Grabar: I just turned 80. I never figured out whether I was younger or older than the Institute.

Linda Arntzenius: The Institute gives its birth date as 1930.

Oleg Grabar: Yes. And I'm '29, so.

Linda Arntzenius: Just one year older. So, if we could start perhaps in 1929, Strasbourg, perhaps you could say a little bit about your background and your early development?

Oleg Grabar: That's easy because I come from a highly academic family. My father was a major professor; my mother was an M.D., and my uncle was a major professor; my aunt was an M.D. In other words, it was a family where both men and women practiced some academical power, academic activity. And therefore, it was a world in which one always read, and the only gifts I remember receiving were books. I don't remember ever having an electric train or anything like this. It was always books.

And very early, very learned books. This has problems, but I won't get into that. And that went like that through my secondary education, during the War in France, in Paris - we moved from Strasbourg to Paris in '38 - and until 1948. In 1948, my father was invited to spend a year at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. He had been there before. He was in Princeton in '46. He got an honorary degree for the Bicentennial at Princeton in '46, and we have wonderful pictures where he is together with Truman, Eisenhower, Marshall, and all kinds of celebrated people, then poor professors in the back whom everybody has forgotten. People only know the names of the big shots at the beginning.

And then he came back in '48 because they were offering him to come permanently to Dumbarton Oaks, for reasons which I'll cover in a moment. He didn't do that. But he brought his whole family, and I was 18 or 18-and-a-half, and nobody knew what to do with me, because I had been preparing fancy competitions in Paris for a year. What you do then?

¹ Oleg Grabar (1929-2011), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1990-1998; Emeritus Professor, 1998-2011.

The only thing anybody knew [was] that someone like me should go either to Princeton or Yale or to Harvard, but none of us knew the difference between them. What *are* those places? They were different in colors, that I remember very distinctly.

For mysterious reasons, I ended up at Harvard as a junior and I became a classmate of Giles Constable,² who is the person I've known longer than anybody else around here. And I went to Harvard and stayed there two years in order to get a degree. My parents and my brother went back after a year because my father decided – first, my mother never liked the United States - she didn't know English very well, she was not happy here, she was not very well treated, and so on – and my father felt that he was more at home in France than the United States, so he went back.

But I did two things. A, I fell in love - and I've been married for 58 years to the same person - at that time. And, secondly, it was a liberation for me from my family. I'm very fond of my family, they are wonderful, but it was a very demanding family. It was a kind of totalitarian family, whereas by living in an American university, I felt like I could have fun and study, which has never occurred to me before. I mean that you only studied, that was what 18-year-olds were for.

So I stayed. I came back to France, then I came back here. And then another funny episode and then we'll get to the interesting part. I was going to get married; we had no money. So I thought I would get a job. And how did you get jobs after you graduated from Harvard? Well, of course, you always had a classmate who knew somebody who knew somebody, and it turned out I had a classmate whom I met in Paris whose wife was the daughter of a Vice President of General Motors. And so I was going to Detroit to be something or other in General Motors. I don't know what it would have been, but those were days when you had a Harvard degree, you're good for something wherever you are. I mean it doesn't make any difference.

And on the way to see my wife-to-be and eventually on to Detroit to become something in General Motors, I stop at Princeton because that was the only place, the only institution in the United States that had a strong program in Near Eastern Studies, and I was always interested in Oriental matters. Already in France I wanted to deal with Asia, with exoticism, that was an old passion.

And I went to see then Professor [Philip K.] Hitti, now dead, in January 1951. His daughter just died recently.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh.

Oleg Grabar: But I could tell you all kinds of stories about him, and I wrote an article on him, so you could read it.

² Giles Constable (1929-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1985-2003; Emeritus Professor, 2003- .

Linda Arntzenius: Ah.

Oleg Grabar: I went to see him in January, and there again, it gives you the climate then, and he tells me, "Why don't you come to Princeton right now? Why do you have to wait until you have made money at General Motors?"

I said, "I have no money."

"Well, I'll give you money. We have fellowship money."

And he got me money as a graduate student in the middle of the year without having asked any of his colleagues, any administrator, any dean, any – I didn't apply even.

Linda Arntzenius: Those were the days.

Oleg Grabar: Those were the days. It was a kind of free era. So then I became – and from then on, if you want – my career was so boringly high-level academic that it's not even fun. Three and a half years later I had my PhD, which is remarkably early for a Humanist.

I spent a year in Jordan. On the way back, I got a job at the University of Michigan because one of my teachers here, Burt Friend, called his former student who was at Michigan and said, "We have this bright young guy of 24. He ought to get a job." "For you, Burt, of course he will give a job, so they arrange a job for me and, again, all kinds of things which are just completely out of the present system.

And I started at Michigan, and then something interesting happened, actually, I was first an instructor for one year, then assistant professor. I finished my degree, and George Forsyth, who was a very remarkable man, he was a very good scholar, [from] an 18th century Princeton family - people sort of go back, then everybody has gone to Princeton since the 18th century - who ended up by despising Princeton precisely because they treated him so well. "They took me for granted," he said. Real American institutions are state universities. That's the real America, not the private ones. The private are for the rich. There you become a servant of the rich. In the state university you are the servant of your country.

He felt very strongly about that, and because I had an offer from Princeton, which he persuaded me not to take, and then he also – but he had gambled on a number a young people he had gathered, it was a good expansion, it was rich. General Motors was doing very well then, and it was a rich state. He had a gamble that we were supposed to fulfill certain roles in his vision of his department, in relationship to the University. So one of us was supposed to be the future chairman and administrator. I was supposed to be the scholar – the thing is that we fulfilled those dreams. I mean I became a scholar, and presumably a good one. So I spent 14 years there, and then 22 years at Harvard, and why I went to Harvard is simply because after 13 years in the same place

I felt I had to move. Retrospectively, it was not a happy thing, Michigan was far more pleasant than Harvard.

Harvard was a bunch of snobs, rich snobs that only tried to impress each other with what they do. Michigan was friendly, it was personal, we dealt with our children, with grandchildren, I have no grandchildren yet, with children, with families, that sort [of thing]. At Harvard you only deal with who impressed which dean more than another one. The snobbishness of Harvard was just absolutely unbelievable. Whether it is still [like that] now, I don't know.

But then it turned out that [I] was fairly good at that, too, so I managed to play that role. But I was never happy there the way I was at Michigan.

Linda Arntzenius: What about your wife and your children?

Oleg Grabar: My wife got a Ph.D. in Michigan and has been teaching ever since, and we had two children. It was something so normal: the house - except for the working wife, that was, for the '50s, a very rare thing. The Institute is interesting from that point of view, because you would notice that even among retired people most wives had jobs, which is not true of the woman of their age, of their age group, it's true of the younger ones, but that's something that was peculiar to her, but we had children. But then life is more fun at 30 than at 50 anyway, so I'm not sure now whether I liked Michigan because I was 30 and disliked Harvard because I was 50 - I was 40 when I got there, but was 50 that I'm not sure I can answer that.

Then at Harvard, you get to know academic life, the book every two years, the congratulations from the dean, and so I become chair of the department. Then the other thing that happened to me that was very important was when the Aga Khan from Paris and Geneva decided to create a prize for architecture, and he created a committee, and I was one of the first members of that committee. For about 20 years, I was involved in that with him. It was lucrative; I built a new driveway in our house in Concord. It was very exciting because I'd met the modern world. As a Medievalist and someone dealing with the past, I always dealt with the past.

Here I met the modern world, architects, ministers, governments, and the sad part, I only travelled first class, which gave me very bad habits for later in life. I just can't stand the idea of not travelling first class, it's just repulsive. The peasants can do it, but I won't. But that was important because he kind of made me realize that one's scholarly achievements are only worthwhile if they have a broad social meaning. 'Broad' being for the whole of society in which [it] would have meaning, not for everybody obviously.

Linda Arntzenius: And this was something that you were thinking about already at Harvard?

- Oleg Grabar:* Well presumably. It's at Harvard that Aga Khan found me, because he was a Harvard graduate. He was a Harvard snob of the first order. That goes without saying, he never took anybody who was not from Harvard – because that was the *only* place – he changed his mind late in life, but at that time that was the only place where there were appropriate people.
- There I stayed for what, 20 years, 21 years at Harvard, then our daughter died, that was a major – she was 30 then, it was a major event, that was very disturbing. And I think that I got a little tired of teaching. See, the trouble is I had my Ph.D. at 24, I was an assistant professor at 25, I was the youngest full professor in the humanities Michigan has ever had, and at a certain point, it wears you out. I mean you just don't produce. I knew I had to write because I had prepared a lot of things.
- So when I was, I think, I was approached, I don't remember exactly how it happened, but there again the fact that Constable, Bowersock³ and Irving Lavin⁴ have been friends since God knows when makes it a little incestuous that I'm here, because there's something just not quite right there. So they approached me, and I said yes, because it was important for us, and my wife wanted to retire also. So it was important for all kinds of personal reasons to come here, and Princeton is a very nice place to die.
- Linda Arntzenius:* You hadn't been a Member here though –
- Oleg Grabar:* No, never. No.
- Linda Arntzenius:* No that's interesting. Glen Bowersock neither –
- Oleg Grabar:* No.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Yes, I wondered who it was who had extended the invitation to you.
- Oleg Grabar:* I think it was Giles Constable or Glen Bowersock, primarily from rumors I heard afterwards, but I'm not absolutely sure about that. I was invited once to meet with the faculty and had a pleasant chat. But it's very interesting. I told you how I was hired in Michigan with a phone call from my teacher there, and I was hired at Harvard without ever having showed up in that department. No lecture given, no – half of department had never met me. This is all based on the word of mouth of a certain number of kingmakers.
- Linda Arntzenius:* The right people.
- Oleg Grabar:* The right people, that's right. It was a little bit still like this here at that time. This has changed since.

³ Glen W. Bowersock (1936-), Visitor in the School of Historical Studies, 1975; Professor, 1980-2006; Emeritus Professor, 2006- .

⁴ Irving Lavin (1927-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1973-2001; Emeritus Professor, 2001- .

- Linda Arntzenius:* Mm-hmm. We've skipped over a lot of questions and I want to just backtrack a little bit. It's clear that you never considered any other career, but an academic career from childhood.
- Oleg Grabar:* No. Well, as a 20-year-old, I wanted to be a newspaper person, but that's not very serious.
- Linda Arntzenius:* What did your brother do?
- Oleg Grabar:* He became a businessman. My brother, this is a tragedy. He's younger, and he was not made for academic life. And my father's view was always if you are stupid, you become a doctor. So he tried to make him a doctor, and he didn't want to, it didn't work. So he had a very hard time, so he eventually ran a travel agency, he's retired now. But he had a hard time.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Before we get to the Institute, at Princeton I read that you had taken a seminar on illustrated manuscripts with Kurt –
- Oleg Grabar:* Weitzmann.⁵
- Linda Arntzenius:* Weitzmann. Could you speak a little bit about some of the other people, you mentioned Aga Khan, other people who influenced you.
- Oleg Grabar:* Aga Khan influenced me by his activities – his money and so on. Academically there's a range, a rather interesting range. Direct teaching, Kurt Weitzmann, and Baldwin Smith at Princeton, who I think was a far greater teacher than he's given credit for in the history of architecture. He was one of those quiet people to whom going to New York was almost like going to Timbuktu, I mean it was something you did as rarely as possible. But he was a remarkable teacher, and he had this kind of genius of giving to his students as subjects the things *he* wanted to learn. So when you gave your seminar reports, he was sitting taking notes, I'm sure - this was before recording machines - taking notes, and [asking] "Could you spell that?" which made the student feel very good.
- E. Baldwin Smith. I forget what the E. stands for; again an old Princeton family.
- History of medieval architecture, it was Bert Friend, you know his house because it's when you turn on Mercer Street coming from Nassau, the first house to the left next to the club, with the column –
- Linda Arntzenius:* That big one. Yes, I know it. Yes.
- Oleg Grabar:* – that was his house. He used to live there. He was a very Princeton person, a bachelor. In fact, when I got married, he refused to see me for a year, that was against his principles. You don't get married.

⁵ Kurt Weitzmann (1904-1993), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1935-1972.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, and not because he felt that you were worthless, because your head was in marriage for a year?

Oleg Grabar: Probably. Whatever the reasons were, that's not a serious reason right there. I can't say – he had an indirect inference of me, but Baldwin Smith and Weitzmann definitely. Hitti was a wonderful man, but a very bad scholar, and the whole Department of Near Eastern Studies was much overrated at that time, I mean the only one in the country, which was very odd. Art History at that time was one of the best ones in the country. It no longer is, but at that time, it was.

But there was another side to it, this is where my father and Dumbarton Oaks come in. Because my father used to come almost every year to the meetings at Dumbarton Oaks, to the symposium, and I used to come and visit him and attend the symposium. There I met – for instance, Kantorowicz,⁶ who was at the Institute at that time.

That was a striking figure, and I remember my main teacher at Harvard, Charles Taylor, who also one of Giles Constable's – used to tell me beware of Kantorowicz, and I can see why.

Linda Arntzenius: Why?

Oleg Grabar: It was not science for him, it was love. History was love, it was passion, you were passionate for an event, for a person, for – and this is something [that] for a 20-, 21-year-old was fascinating, I mean. You just want to be taken by it and like love affairs. So he was very important from that point of view. He was also a great cook, which irritated me a great deal because he used to ask me to help him cook, and my job was, usually he had prepared some strange concoction and I was supposed to do something to the concoction between the skin and flesh of chickens, but he never invited me to eat it. I was the assistant cook, as his graduate student, I was not part of the elect who were eating.

But he was a terrific person and it's very interesting because I did not associate him with the Institute. I mean I didn't know what the Institute was. At least I didn't think. But as a person, he was very important, and similarly there was a person in Paris, by the name of Sauvaget, if he had not died young, I might have gone back to Paris to study.

Linda Arntzenius: Who was that?

Oleg Grabar: Sauvaget, he died of at 50 of tuberculosis, but he was one of those unbelievable, again like Kantorowicz, but in a very different way, exciting person. The other thing which was very important for these early years, and again when compared today, is I wanted to travel. I wanted to travel. During the war, you couldn't travel in Europe, but I read travel books, I read all the books on Tibet on Siberia, on Nepal, and so then, and when I first traveled in '53 with my wife we went to Beirut, and then through

⁶ Ernst Kantorowicz (1895-1963), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1951-1963.

Damascus, it was so easy to travel. I mean you got visas at the frontier, nobody paid any attention to who you were, you could do it, and now you can't anymore.

Linda Arntzenius: Were you American by this time?

Oleg Grabar: No. No.

Linda Arntzenius: No, you were still French?

Oleg Grabar: No. I have two nationalities even now, but I became American when I became director of the American School in Jerusalem. I had to be American to be director of the school.

Linda Arntzenius: And your wife is American?

Oleg Grabar: Yes, she's American.

Linda Arntzenius: So it was not a problem traveling in the '50s?

Oleg Grabar: Absolutely not. Even my students, I remember one of the best students, the first students I had at Michigan was a, who is just turning 70, an Orthodox Jewish girl who was Myron Shapiro's last Ph.D. at Columbia, who came as a graduate student already knowing French, German, Arabic, Persian, and Hebrew. So the only language she had to learn as a graduate student was Russian. She travelled all over Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia alone. Which you couldn't do now.

Traveling was a very important part of creating the – in fact I would even say that the students of mine who were 10 to 15 years younger than me, travelled even more than I did.

Linda Arntzenius: Mm-hmm. Talking about that; I've read that the prevailing trend in American historiography is isolationist and Anglophone, and I wondered does this –

Oleg Grabar: Anglophone definitely.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. And was it then?

Oleg Grabar: Oh, no it was not then. But even today, I mean some like Glen Bowersock would despise the idea of people who don't know French, German, Latin, and Greek, I mean it just doesn't exist, such people don't count. But that's finished.

Linda Arntzenius: That's finished. Why is that?

Oleg Grabar: Partly because of American power. Partly because of the disappearance of the 20th century émigrés, I mean I think that it's very important that a great deal of the people who made the moods around my generation were all émigrés.

That is, English was the second, or third, or fourth language they all had learned other languages, and in fact, even the story used to go in art history that at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York, which is regarded as the highest institution, nobody spoken anything but German, I mean that's the only language you spoke.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. Panofsky⁷ was there, wasn't he?

Oleg Grabar: That's right, Panofsky was there then here. Panofsky was a little bit more opened minded than that, but even there, he probably knew French, but he knew Latin well, yes. But they all knew Latin, that's true. And the impact of the sciences, I mean what made America great is the sciences, and the sciences [are in] English. Well you know, I used to think it's bad and so forth, and even my next book, my last book which you can see there, is written in French first, I wrote it in French, it was translated into English, and the two appeared simultaneously. But I don't mind that part because I know that is the way it's going to be.

And I'm at the moment, in fact, as soon as we're through I'll start writing that – I'm supposed to prepare something on how to deal with Jerusalem and Palestine, since I've been very much involved with Jerusalem over the years. And language is absolutely – is essential.

When I first went to Jerusalem, the Hebrew University people only spoke German. Now they only speak Hebrew. They don't even know English very well. I mean, they know enough English, but it's like the taxi drivers of Beirut, I mean it's not the easy language for them.

Linda Arntzenius: Rudimentary. Interesting. You didn't mention Hetty Goldman,⁸ is she someone you met?

Oleg Grabar: Well I'm trying to remember. I'll tell you the story. I always thought it was Hetty Goldman, I'm not sure that's right. In 1959 or '60, there was a congress of Orientalists in Russia, and I went there to Helsinki, and then arrived in St. Petersburg, Leningrad. I went to my hotel, and there were three or four us who arrived at the same time, one of them was an American woman scholar of a certain age, I mean I was 30 then and she was older than that. She was kind of plump, I remember. It was, I don't know, eight or nine o'clock and we saw a dining room full of people eating, and we were hungry. We decided to go and we arrived at the door and the maitre d' says, "No sorry, it's all full." I say, "We're looking at [empty tables]." "Full, can't do it," he said. And in those days you usually didn't argue.

⁷ Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1935-1962; Emeritus Professor, 1962-1968.

⁸ Hetty Goldman (1881-1972), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1936-1947; Emeritus Professor, 1947-1972.

And I told it to that woman, whoever she was, and she stands up in front of the maitre d', [emulating shaking all over] goes into a trance. We got tables immediately. She said, "That's how I handle Turkish authorities. Whenever people refuse something to me I go into a trance, and they're so scared of a woman in trance that they give me anything I want."

Linda Arntzenius: Works in Russia, too.

Oleg Grabar: That's right. It works every place. I mean nobody wants a woman in a trance. (*Laughing*)

Linda Arntzenius: A table quick.

Oleg Grabar: So, but is it Hetty Goldman?

Linda Arntzenius: We would have to have it corroborated by someone else.

Oleg Grabar: All the people who were there, whose names escape me at the moment, one was a great cuneiform specialist from Yale, a German also, he's dead and I can't remember who the fourth person there was. So they're probably all dead by now. This is interesting thing, I've reached the stage where most of the witnesses of my life are dead, so I can say anything I want. (*Laughing*)

Linda Arntzenius: And Ernst Herzfeld⁹ died long before you ever came on the scene.

Oleg Grabar: Yes, I never met him. But I was an assistant to George Miles¹⁰ at the Numismatic Society, and George Miles had been an assistant to Herzfeld here, and Ettinghausen¹¹ my main mentor was also an assistant to Ernst Herzfeld. So I knew a lot about Herzfeld.

Linda Arntzenius: So he is your predecessor [at the Institute]?

Oleg Grabar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: You've been credited with bringing a new interpretive note to the study of Islamic art, what do they mean by that?

Oleg Grabar: Well what *they* mean I don't know. What *I* would mean is that – well, there are two things that fit here . One is I was the first, I think I was the first, to have been primarily a teacher. All the other specialists were collectors and museum curators, and I was the first to be primarily a teacher. Therefore, the whole emphasis was with the public of young people, which is a completely different attitude.

⁹ Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948), Professor in the School of Humanistic Studies, 1936-1944; Emeritus Professor, 1944-1948.

¹⁰ George C. Miles (1904-1975), Member in the School of Humanistic Studies, 1938-1939; Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1961.

¹¹ Richard Ettinghausen (1906-1979), Member in the School of Humanistic Studies, 1937-1938; Visitor in the School of Historical Studies, 1974).

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. Yes.

Oleg Grabar: The other one is that I always was a historian, and always tried to fit objects or buildings into a history and telling a history through objects. I think that's something that nobody had done. So that I would say is probably is fairly new.

Linda Arntzenius: So that probably answers, in part, my next question which is, when you began your career in the early '50s there were very few historians of art and Islamic art and architect in the United States, and now there are dozens, and –

Oleg Grabar: That's right. Almost all of them are my students. It's true and I'm thinking, I'm trying to remember. If I think of all the ones who existed there when I was, say, in my 50's, most of them were foreigners, mostly German and Austrian. There were a couple of Americans, both women that's very interesting. One is a rather extraordinary woman, Florence Day, who lived in Beirut. Her father taught at the American University of Beirut so she knew Arabic fluently, and French, and she allegedly was the mistress of one the main French archaeologists, but I wasn't there so I don't know - she cultivated that myth herself actually. She liked to make people believe that. She arrived to get a Ph.D. here shortly after the War, must have been '48 right then. And went to Michigan which was the only place you could do it because Ettinghausen was teaching in Michigan for a few years before going to the Freer Gallery.

Linda Arntzenius: Which gallery?

Oleg Grabar: Freer Art Gallery in Washington, that's where his main career was. When she was at Michigan, now again this is a story I have from other people, she was a snob, I mean at that time because I knew her fairly well later, and liked to show off, which is fine. But she especially liked to impress those Midwestern girls by the fact that she lived an exotic life with a French lover travelling all over Syria, and for them to go to Detroit was a big deal.

So they hated her, they absolutely hated her, and one of the ones who hated her to whom she was very nasty was the second American who became a specialist, Dorothy Shepherd, who comes from a small town in central Michigan – a very attractive woman – Florence Day was not, but Dorothy Shepherd was very pretty, very beautiful. It's an interesting story for academic history. I can't remember how she got into that field at Michigan, probably a course from Ettinghausen or something like that. She was interested in textiles. Then comes the war and that little nice provincial girl from the boonies goes into the army.

And suddenly starts traveling in Jeeps all over Europe, visits churches, visits monasteries, sees treasures of one kind or another. Learns all kinds of things about everything, and comes back with all kinds of new ideas and wants to reform everything. She did. Eventually she got a job at the

Cleveland Museum where she stayed for a long time, and built a remarkable collection, but she never managed to do a great work. And she had some failures and she eventually killed herself.

In fact, the first three people who got Ph.Ds in Islamic Art in the United States, as I recall, killed themselves, which is kind of interesting. I didn't know them well. The first two are American, and one is British. I don't know the other American, I never knew him, a guy by the name of Ruthven.

I always used to threaten students with that, that it's something that happens to you in this field. But, you see it was, it took a good 10 years of teaching in Michigan, and then at Harvard, and there I think Harvard was very important, because of the fact that you create good students at Michigan does not count that much in the academic scale in America. Whereas, in fact, at Harvard a bunch of stupid people become well educated, that makes a point immediately. I was lucky also. The '60s, '70s, were periods of plenty of money, plenty of facilities, and it just not comparable to what it became now.

Linda Arntzenius: Well that brings us nicely to the Institute. We've moved quite a bit ahead, because you joined the faculty in 1990, that's after your 22 years at Harvard. You hadn't been a Member. You spoke a little bit about being invited here; what considerations went into your decision to come?

Oleg Grabar: That is very simple, and very clear. I wanted time. I wanted free time, because I had masses of things I had prepared over the years, which I had never had time to finish, because of teaching, the Aga Khan activities, administration, and so forth. I wanted to finish it. It's not an accident that in my 10 years here that I suddenly had 10 books came out or something like that. They were all two-thirds written before hand.

And that the Institute gave me time. In fact, I remember when I first came, it was remarkable. Here I have a beautiful big office, before I sold my library, a beautiful office, and nobody came to see me. At Harvard, I had to have a secretary to prevent from people from seeing me, but here nobody came. It was wonderful.

Linda Arntzenius: Was it really, or did you?

Oleg Grabar: Well it was a little funny at the beginning, but eventually yes, it was wonderful. The closest conversation I had with Glen Bowersock who had to room next to mine, and we talked about Greek inscriptions, and well the gossip too. But especially it was the time. I had the time, and the facilities I don't know, I still don't know how the Institute works in terms of economics: when it has money, when it doesn't have money. I think it's one of the big hidden secret of the Institute. But in those days, whenever you want something, you got it. It's a little bit more difficult now.

Linda Arntzenius: Is that because you're Emeritus?

- Oleg Grabar:* No. No. Well, yes, Emeritus has been bad too, but it, no, I think it, I think the institution was very wealthy.
- What has changed, you can see it here, you see you can see three buildings here [pointing to view of Fuld Hall and buildings C and D as seen from corner office in Archives]. When I came all these buildings were occupied by professors. Now this is all administrators, and this is almost all administration. So we have now more administrators than faculty, I think. I haven't really counted. And you can recognize administrators at lunch time, because they always wear ties. The faculty doesn't wear ties. And I would like to know whether this was justified or not.
- Linda Arntzenius:* It was certainly not something, or it was certainly something that the original founders tried to proscribe.
- Oleg Grabar:* Partly, of course, the computer screwed everything up, because you suddenly have a technology of reading, writing, and communicating, which didn't exist. Well, none of us were trained to do it. And we still have one hero who refused to learn.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Is that Giles? (*Laughing*)
- Oleg Grabar:* Giles doesn't even have an answering machine on his telephone. I know two people like this now. My brother is like that, too. But still that required technical help but whether it requires 15 of them working at that, I don't know. What it requires technically, I don't know.
- And where did they find the money for them? The theory was that that will remove secretaries, they're not secretaries. What do you call them, assistants?
- Linda Arntzenius:* Administrative assistants.
- Oleg Grabar:* Administrative assistants. They still exist. There is something which I haven't completely understood, and either way, I don't care.
- Linda Arntzenius:* So development hasn't touched you –
- Oleg Grabar:* No. No. No.
- Linda Arntzenius:* – really? You don't feel that, I mean I've spoken to other people, and someone mentioned being occasionally trotted out to give a talk.
- Oleg Grabar:* Yes, they tried with me, in a way I've failed the Institute there, because I'm sure that one of the reasons why their administration was interested in getting me, is because of my relationship with Aga Khan. They hoped that Aga Khan would support it, the Institute, with a large gift.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Was he approached, do you know?

- Oleg Grabar:* I knew it wouldn't work.
- Linda Arntzenius:* You knew it wouldn't work?
- Oleg Grabar:* Not anymore.
- Linda Arntzenius:* He wouldn't have been interested, because it wasn't Harvard?
- Oleg Grabar:* Partly because it wasn't Harvard, and partly because he was so attacked for giving so much money to Harvard. By the Muslim community. In the Muslim community, you can't do that. "Why do you give money to the rich? You have to give it to poor." So he started giving money in Pakistan, in Kenya, and so forth, and not to an American Institute. That is reasonable. Again, this is part of my luck, that I was involved with him when he gave money [at Harvard].
- Linda Arntzenius:* Right. So do you think that that was - do you know for fact that was as kind of a...?
- Oleg Grabar:* Oh, I think it was a contributing effect.
- Linda Arntzenius:* To your being drawn here, no?
- Oleg Grabar:* Not, not really, I don't think at that time, I don't think that was a major issue. I think that the issue has become now, because the character of the membership has changed so extraordinarily over the past 10 years
- Linda Arntzenius:* Oh, tell me about that. In what way?
- Oleg Grabar:* Youth. They're young people. In the past when I first came here, they were my colleagues –
- Linda Arntzenius:* More senior.
- Oleg Grabar:* – they were people of my age – now we can't afford them. They're too expensive, and also there is no need for them, because most of them have nice juicy positions now which didn't exist then. So we get now, like the scientists, young people who are early in their careers, who are seeking jobs, who are trying to publish their first book – which has changed completely the whole atmosphere.
- It is no longer a bunch of colleagues together, it is a bunch of people who have achieved something who get a nice job, and people who hope to get a nice job. It's a very different mood, atmosphere. It's not – I'm not too opposed to it. Initially I was. I didn't like it, I'm not really opposed to it because I think it's a reasonable point to make, but for this, we need more money than we have.
- I think we are the only school that lives – I think 80 percent of our budget comes from the Institute. Whereas everybody else is, has much less.

- Linda Arntzenius:* It's also the biggest school I think.
- Oleg Grabar:* I thought Math was the biggest.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Actually, I just looked at the number of faculty, current faculty and faculty Emeritus –
- Oleg Grabar:* Uh-huh. Yeah. Because we don't die as fast (*crosstalk*).
- Linda Arntzenius:* That has been noticed.
- Oleg Grabar:* Why we live so long, I don't know. And why they die so fast, I also don't know.
- Linda Arntzenius:* That has to be stress, don't you think?
- Oleg Grabar:* I suppose. Well, I think there must be other reasons, that is, I think that something that also makes sense, most of the scientists weaken as they grow older, and a lot of them left the Institute fairly, when they were in their 60's, to go and teach someplace, in a nicer climate and so forth.
- Well, the Humanists, it's the other way around. I mean we tend to get better up to a certain point. To my knowledge, there was only one Alzheimer case in the Institute – in the School of Historical Studies. It's bound to increase sooner or later, but the fact that I just turned 80, Giles turned 80, Peter Paret¹² is 83, Christian Habicht¹³ is 83 or 84. Irving Lavin is 82. I mean, it's an amazing age.
- Linda Arntzenius:* And all very active.
- Oleg Grabar:* And all very active, yes, in very different ways, and only one is deaf.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Is the Institute unique in that regard – that its Professors Emeriti are very a much a part of –
- Oleg Grabar:* Very much. I think so. The only institution that doesn't kick them out. I mean, well now Princeton, and other institutions, they're trying to be nice to the Emeriti so there it's a little better, but on the whole. Well, when I was chairman at Harvard I had to kick them out – because I needed the space. That will happen here. It has to. If we live so long, we can't then get any new professors we have no place to put them. We have room for one, but we can't put another one unless somebody leaves.
- So that is going to happen, and this is one thing. The other thing, which the school has talked about when I was active – is whether it should, like math, and science, and social science have organized seminars for the

¹² Peter Paret (1924-), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1966-1967; Professor, 1986-1997; Emeritus Professor, 1997 -.

¹³ Christian Habicht (1926-2018), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1972-1973; Professor, 1973-1998; Emeritus Professor, 1998-2018.

whole school – or is the School of Historical Studies a series of totally separate entities? Classicists, medievalists, art historians, Islamists, or now Orientalists, the Far Eastern. I don't know the answer to that. I think once can argue it both ways. When I came here, the whole dream here was you are left alone, you don't have to do anything.

Linda Arntzenius: Well that's interesting. Yes, I think you're right, that's been the sort of ideal of the Institute, but I know that when you came in Marvin Goldberger¹⁴ was at the end of his tenure, and Phillip Griffiths¹⁵ was coming in. I think it was in 1992 not long after Phillip Griffiths became director, he introduced a series of conversations, and you and Peter Paret, Kennan¹⁶, Lavin, and Bowersock spoke about interconnectedness, and –

Oleg Grabar: Yes. He started that, and I don't know why he did. I remember that we were all shocked by the fact that he expected somebody to be here in the summer from each school, because he may want to meet with them through the summer to discuss things. Now, the whole idea was four months nothing happened, nothing happened. But you can't do this if you have administrators. You see administrators have to be occupied 12 months a year, because if they don't administer something they have nothing to do.

So now nobody knows when the semester begins, when it ends, it's totally confusing. And the peculiar result is that very often at lunch time all the Emeriti are there, and none of the actual professors are there, they are all in China or in Europe or wherever it is. The jet airplane has also been very destructive. When I came, and the jets had already existed for quite a while, but when I came we travelled rarely. Right now, I mean, people travel all the time.

And I'll bet you'd be interested to see the amount of money the Institute spends on limousines. It must be bigger than anything else. Because this is the only way to get to the airport here, I suggested to Phillip Griffiths that [we] get a helicopter system that will take us to New York more easily, or to Philadelphia, but I don't think that anybody has yet figured out how expensive it would be to do that.

Linda Arntzenius: Just going back to this idea of interconnectedness, Griffiths at that time said that it was his job to, not to force interdisciplinary exchange of people, but to look for those places within the community where it could be fostered.

¹⁴ Marvin L. Goldberger (1922-2014), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1966-1970, 1976-1977; IAS Director, 1987-1991.

¹⁵ Phillip Griffiths (1938-), Member in the School of Mathematics, 1968-1970; Visitor, 1981-1982; IAS Director, 1991-2003; Professor, 2004-2009; Emeritus Professor, 2009- .

¹⁶ George F. Kennan (1904-2005), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1950-1955; Professor, 1956-1974; Emeritus Professor, 1974-2005.

- Oleg Grabar:* And that was, that is, easier to do with young people than with the old characters he inherited.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Mm-hmm. Is it happening now, do you think?
- Oleg Grabar:* Not between the faculty. I think it is happening between the faculty and the members, but among the faculty – I don't think. It happens a little bit between let's say the Emeriti and the faculty. I mean I'll let you into a state secret, I mean tomorrow Patricia Crone¹⁷ is giving a lecture –
- Linda Arntzenius:* Yes, I'm going to it.
- Oleg Grabar:* – and I told Patricia, “Look. Those lectures are ludicrous most of the time, because you're supposed to ask questions. The lecturing [is] so learned, nobody has a question to answer. So you have to plant a question.” So she has planned, I have to plant a question. planned for –
- Linda Arntzenius:* I will not divulge that.
- Oleg Grabar:* That's right. But the point however is not that. The point is, is it important to have these exchanges? You see Yve-Alain Bois¹⁸ has arranged things with the University, but I don't think it's working very well, because people don't move as easily from the University to here as they used to. I don't know why.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Why?
- Oleg Grabar:* I don't know why.
- Linda Arntzenius:* So what do you think was behind Griffiths' push to find interdisciplinarity?
- Oleg Grabar:* Because he had been chairman of a department, he was, he's, he had a deaconical position, or something like that at Duke, he was involved in a large University, and especially in a University that was very much involved in the humanities. I mean he was there the time when Stanley Fish was at Duke. Also I think he personally was interested in that kind of collaboration, I mean he has a kind of, he liked to do good things – all his work in Africa, for instance. No mathematician has to do that. I mean I can't imagine a single one of our physicists doing anything like that. I mean, they are so vain and so full of themselves that they'll never do anything like this. All they hope is that the Nobel Prize won't forget them, I mean – and how long it will take. Whereas Phillip has the kind of genuine desire to help other people. We failed with Central Asia for instance, and I feel a little responsible for that.
- I was involved directly in that. He managed at some point, I think. to get some money to bring a Central Asian scholar, still in Soviet times, I can't

¹⁷ Patricia Crone (1945-2015), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1997-2014; Emeritus Professor, 2014-2015.

¹⁸ Yve-Alain Bois (1952-), Faculty in the School of Historical Studies, 2005- .

remember exactly, just after. It was a failure because if you take one Central Asian scholar, and take him out of Uzbekistan and bring him here, you have to bring three or four to create a group, or there are other ways of handling [it]. We did not think about it enough. But you see, this is where again age comes in. Had I been 10 years younger, I would've loved to go over Central Asia to look for people. By the time I was close to 70, I didn't feel like it. My own vanity was taking over. I wanted to write my own books. I think that, well I don't know. Somebody like Carolyn Bynum,¹⁹ for instance, and Nicola di Cosmo²⁰ are very interested in group activities, and doing things. I don't think von Staden²¹ [is]. Jonathan Israel²²... I don't know all details with him, but also historical studies is a much more difficult field, because it's many different fields. Somebody who deals with 18th century Europe really has almost nothing to say to a classicist and vice versa. I mean it.

Linda Arntzenius: You think that's true?

Oleg Grabar: Oh, yes, except for general culture. Now, you see the superiority, I'll give you an example of this in a moment, the superiority, the advantages we have over mathematicians and scientists, not the social scientists, is culture, we have a broad culture. Some mathematicians have it. Scientists, I don't think any has it. To give you an example, I receive every month a journal published in Tehran in French called, *Le Journal de Tehran*, which gives me news about Iran activities in Tehran, and about I don't know six months ago, eight months ago there was an article on atomic power, and what to do with atomic power. And I wanted to know whether it was a serious article or not serious article. So I thought, well that's what I have these geniuses here.

Linda Arntzenius: Colleagues.

Oleg Grabar: There was not one person in the whole school of physics who could read French. Neither the faculty, with one except. They had to go to Freeman Dyson,²³ the only one, the oldest one. Nobody else could read French. None of the Members could read French. See, I mean they are narrow, narrow crowd completely.

Linda Arntzenius: Well maybe this is why there is this desire to have sort of interdisciplinary—

¹⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum (1941-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 2003-2011; Emeritus Professor, 2011- .

²⁰ Nicola di Cosmo (1957-), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1999; Professor, 2003- .

²¹ Heinrich von Staden (1939-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1998-2010; Emeritus Professor, 2010- .

²² Jonathan Israel (1946-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 2001-2016; Emeritus Professor, 2016- .

²³ Freeman J. Dyson (1923-), Member in the Schools of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, 1948-1950; Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 1953-1994; Emeritus Professor, 1994- .

- Oleg Grabar:* Oh sure, but this is also why when the director sends gifts, he sends my books. I mean two of my books were sent as gifts to the trustees – because it is they are nice to look at – nothing these jerks write is worth looking at. I mean, maybe it's brilliant, but nothing to look at.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Actually, those conversations that we were talking about were for trustees and friends, they weren't just –
- Oleg Grabar:* Well that's right. But, that has stopped I think.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Really?
- Oleg Grabar:* I don't know it, but these now are the Conversations here –
- Linda Arntzenius:* Yes, that's here.
- Oleg Grabar:* Which apparently has been quite successful, I've gone to a few. It's not a terribly convenient time for me, but I've gone to a few, and they have been interesting. You see, they are run exactly by the one physicist who is badly treated by the school, Piet Hut.²⁴
- Linda Arntzenius:* Oh, they're run by Piet Hut?
- Oleg Grabar:* That's right, I mean he's the one who started it all.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Interesting. Hmm.
- Oleg Grabar:* I mean it is very easy to say that the Institute has done its job. I'm very interested to know whether the biology experiment is going to work. Whether it is possible to really do a successful biology program without labs, I don't know. I mean I hope it is. You see just as in the past history it was dominated by classics. Dominated by classics and excavations and things of that nature, and excavations are easy to do from here, because we don't have other obligations. At Harvard, it was always a problem to go and excavate, because you had to stop teaching and so on. But we don't excavate now, and I don't know what are our activities that are important. I mean what was it, I'm quoting myself, but so often, when I appear on international publicity as I did recently because of that book, I'm always marked Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University, because it, that is the association people make. I don't think we've ever been able to get out from under that.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Yes. Interesting. I want to just backtrack a wee bit. When you came here, and you touched on it, you said you weren't really *au fait* with the financial situation and the administration of the Institute, but was there anything that struck you as unusual or surprising as to the working of the Institute compared to Harvard, say?

²⁴ Piet Hut (1952-), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1981-1984;), Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 1985-2002; Professor in the Program in Interdisciplinary Studies, 2002- .

Oleg Grabar: Oh yes. That it was so easy to get money for what you wanted to do. That you just went to the director or to Rachel or to whoever it was, and you got the money.

Linda Arntzenius: And this would be money for what? For books, for travel?

Oleg Grabar: For books, for help, for assistance. Now, and this is very interesting here, the situation of assistance, learned assistants in our school. For many years it was put in the budget, every professor could have an assistant. I don't know what the state of the budget is from that point of view, and I realized that it was used in two ways. It was used either as a cheapo membership, or it was used indeed when you had a project, which is the way I did. I've had three assistants since I've been here. One when I was full [professor], and twice as an Emeritus, and it was always because I had a concrete project for which I needed help, which was twice, the second assistant was more dubious. She was wonderful, but I did not need help at that time. You see humanities is solo work, you work alone most of the time. Maybe less now than you used to. I think the Institute, I don't know whether the Institute has done many joint research project, but whether it should have long-term research projects associated with the Institute, I don't know that. When I came I used to think it's a good idea that precisely because it has freedom of funds, freedom of support that it should have – it doesn't have to be archaeology, it could be the publication of the inscriptions, I mean I think it influences five people in the world, but still it's important to do. I also suspect that with the computer that all kinds of things can be done which we haven't done yet.

Linda Arntzenius: Right. You think it might come?

Oleg Grabar: It might come, but I don't know what they are, images for instance. Images is certainly something. But then one can say that our job is not images, our job is what you say about those images. That it is the thinking that goes into it, and that requires sitting here rather than meeting ten people. –

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. But on the other hand, you have collaborated like with Glen Bowersock, and Peter Brown, and others.

Oleg Grabar: Yes, I've collaborated, but that was the collaboration of equals. The others collaborated usually with assistants. So there's, I'm the main baboon and then you have all kinds of people –

Linda Arntzenius: You are fostering their careers.

Oleg Grabar: Who help me out. But with the question with Peter Brown, much of that was Glen's idea, actually it was not his idea, I think it was the idea of Harvard Press. They got to him, and then he got to us, and he was right, because he happened to have in Princeton three people who have known each other for many years, who worked in comparable areas, and who get along with each other, because if we didn't it wouldn't have worked.

- Linda Arntzenius:* Mm-hmm. Well one year, well perhaps more than one year, but you served as executive officer of the school.
- Oleg Grabar:* Yeah, twice. I did it twice.
- Linda Arntzenius:* What does that entail?
- Oleg Grabar:* Going and meeting with the director every two weeks, and running, and chairing the meetings.
- Linda Arntzenius:* So that was with Phillip Griffiths?
- Oleg Grabar:* That was all with Phillip Griffiths, that's right. Yes.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Okay. Have you served on other committees?
- Oleg Grabar:* Oh, yes, but I don't know if they do anything. I mean a library committee, mysterious committees, publications committees, I don't know what they do. I'm sure I've served on it, at the last minute somebody says, "We have to meet with the trustees or nobody knows what to talk about."
- Linda Arntzenius:* Well I was going to ask you what your –
- Oleg Grabar:* Because you see, I think that one of the good or bad things about the Institute, the director is in charge, and that's why there were periods where directors got into a lot of trouble. Now we've had two successive directors who are very successful as leaders. They are very different from each other, extremely different from each other, amazingly different, but they are both very successful, and they're both likable. I'm sure some people complain about this, and I was at an occasion once when I was executive officer that Glen Bowersock insisted I come with him to see Phillip, and he banged on the table and yelled at Phillip. He gets angry easily, but it lasts five minutes and then it's gone.
- Linda Arntzenius:* What was the issue?
- Oleg Grabar:* I can't remember.
- Linda Arntzenius:* You can't remember. (*Laughing*)
- Oleg Grabar:* I can't remember. I'm sure it was not very important. It had something to do with Ed Witten²⁵, as I remember, but I can't remember what it was. I'm sure it was secondary and not very important. Nothing is duller than the meetings of the whole faculty. I think it's twice a year, or once a year, I can't remember. I mean you always sit in that room, it's very important to sit on this side so you can look at the landscape while somebody talks instead of looking at your colleagues. When nothing is being said, nothing happens. At least the ones that I attended, occasionally somebody cooks

²⁵ Edward Witten (1950-), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1984; Professor, 1987- .

up something. [This is] because it is very well run, which apparently wasn't true before. With Goldberger and what's his name ...

Linda Arntzenius: Kaysen²⁶?

Oleg Grabar: No it was after Kaysen.

Linda Arntzenius: After Kaysen. Goldberger.

Oleg Grabar: No, no, no, no, no. There was the one –

Linda Arntzenius: Woolf, Woolf, Harry –

Oleg Grabar: Woolf, Harry Woolf.²⁷ That those were not very successful. But I wasn't here, I don't know that. Goldberger I was, but I know the faculty was opposed to him and I don't know why.

Linda Arntzenius: His tenure was short.

Oleg Grabar: Right. Whereas that of Griffiths was renewed, Goddard²⁸ was renewed, we would love to keep Goddard here until he dies, I mean both he and his wife are terrific. But whether they are terrific in making us all happy, whether it also creates great new scholarship, I don't know. That I don't know. I mean it is little bit embarrassing that we haven't won a Nobel Prize in the hard sciences, and our two Nobel Prizes are in economics, which is a kind of debatable science to begin with, and one for work done 40 years ago, and the other one more recent.

But whatever it is, it's dead. In theory you would say that this is the *ideal* place where you have all the time to think and invent great things, but then I don't know about the field. I'm trying to think, in other fields, whether one can say that the people who are here are the tops in their field. I think it's true of me. It's almost true of Patricia Crone, not quite but pretty close. Caroline Bynum, I suppose it's true. Nicola, I think it is true, because he has this very special sub field – but I don't know [if] it's true of Jonathan Israel, for instance, because you can't be the most brilliant person from 1600 to 2000. And we're having terrible trouble with the Kennan Chair.

Linda Arntzenius: The Kennan Chair?

Oleg Grabar: Well I mean the donor of the Kennan Chair is a wonderful donor, but he is, what's his name?

²⁶ Carl Kaysen (1920-2010), IAS Director, 1966-1976.

²⁷ Harry Woolf (1923-2003), IAS Director, 1976-1987; Professor-At-Large, 1987-1994; Emeritus Professor, 1994-2003.

²⁸ Peter Goddard (1945-), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1972-1974; Member in the School of Mathematics, 1988; IAS Director, 2004-2012; Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 2012-2016; Emeritus Professor, 2016- .

- Linda Arntzenius:* Wolfensohn?
- Oleg Grabar:* No, no, no. No, Wolfensohn is not a donor. He is a, no he, oh he's a wonderful guy. He lives in Washington. Von Hoffman.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Yes. Von Hoffman.
- Oleg Grabar:* Ladislaus von Hoffman. And it's very interesting, here is somebody who is impressed by Kennan, and thought they were very good to have at the Institute somebody who would have made his life in the administration of the world, of the country, of the, and then come and mediate on it while here. It worked very well with the first one, Jack Matlock,²⁹ which was just the right kind of a person. It was a total mistake with the second one. Right now, Avishai³⁰ is a wonderful person, but he has never run anything. So he's just an interesting philosopher and thinker. Whether we'll ever find an administrator who has that intelligence, and the culture to think about what he or she has done I don't know. But the idea is an interesting one, and I hope my younger colleagues are already looking for somebody, because I think Avishai has only one more year to go, but I'm not sure.
- Linda Arntzenius:* It's a five-year position I think.
- Oleg Grabar:* Yes, but he's already been here three or four, I don't know. But then one can say, why have one position like that? Maybe there should also be one in social science, and in a way, the new Frenchman³¹ in social science is a little bit like that, he was for 10 years in Doctors Without Borders. I mean, he did practical things in the world. That is a problem for the Institute. I think Arnold Levine³² has this problem: how much do you deal with the real world? Should our physicists be running to Geneva to put little things on that big..., I don't know.
- Linda Arntzenius:* Yes, it is a problem. It has also always been a sort of concern from the earliest founding: the pureness of speculative research as opposed to – you have to have material to work from.
- Oleg Grabar:* Yes. But that's true, but also, I don't think much about [the history of the Institute] but when I have nothing else to do, I think, had there not been the persecution of Jews in Germany, would the Institute have been possible? Even, you see, Einstein, who was important for the Institute as an image, but practically *all* his discoveries were made before he came here. And for von Neumann,³³ I think not. I haven't followed enough the history and people like Herzfeld, Kantorowicz, Panofsky (Herzfeld was

²⁹ Jack Matlock (1929-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1996-2001.

³⁰ Avishai Margalit (1939-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 2006-2011.

³¹ Didier Fassin (1955-), Professor in the School of Social Science, 2009- .

³² Arnold J. Levine (1939-), Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 2003-2011; Emeritus Professor, 2011- .

³³ Heinrich von Staden (1939-), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1998-2010; Emeritus Professor, 2010- .

maybe a little bit different) but the others had jobs elsewhere, but they all troubles. Panofsky had to leave Berkeley because of the oath.

Linda Arntzenius: Because of?

Oleg Grabar: The oath. I mean he refused to sign the oath that he has never been a communist or something like that. And I can't remember whether Panofsky had a full-time job before he came here or not, at the Institute of Fine Arts, well, maybe he did.

Linda Arntzenius: Tell me about Kennan. He said that one of the unique things about the Institute was the care in which it selects its visitors. Is that your experience also?

Oleg Grabar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Have you been involved in that?

Oleg Grabar: Yes. Yes. It's very easy to say that it is a kind of feudal system, at least, when I was there. There were usually six of us. I think there are seven now, and you know you are going to have money for 30 people, or whatever, so you divide 30 by 7. Each one has four people to choose and nobody's going to question their choice. In the early days, I'm told, you really had to justify your choices to your colleagues. Right now, in order to avoid internal fights, we all say, "You have your four people, and I won't bother you. Don't touch mine, I won't touch yours." Now. It certainly is good for the peace of the Institute, of the school. Whether it is good for science, I'm not so sure. I'm not so sure. But it's also more difficult when you get so many younger people.

I mean, this year, we have an unusual number of foreigners, which is another thing, how international should we be? It's more difficult than it used to be, because institutions in Europe and – first of all, international meant European, it did not mean Middle East, it did not mean Indian, did not mean Chinese, Japanese, Russian – it meant European. So it's the same old buddies coming from the old system. That was dangerous.

So and I'm not sure whether it's a good idea or not, whether the other institutions like this, all kinds of people have created comparable institutions now. And one could say that the purpose of this one is to help Americans develop scholarships, the junior Mellons that we have here fulfill that purpose. That's for young American scholars. And those apparently have been very successful for the most part.

Should they be one year or two year? For instance, the sciences have a lot of two-year scholarships. And I don't know the answer. I am always all in favor of the two years, but apparently there are reasons against it.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, let me move to 1993, *Muqarnas*, am I pronouncing it correctly?

Oleg Grabar: Yes, yes, yes.

Linda Arntzenius: The annual journal on Islamic art and architecture published a volume of essays in your honor, written by your students, and the topics – the range of topics is extraordinary.

Oleg Grabar: Well there is another one that appeared now.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh really? I haven't seen that.

Oleg Grabar: Yes. Just appeared. The last issue is my 80th birthday. We had the 60th birthday and the 80th birthday.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, it certainly justifies the description of your reach as being – well, far-reaching and profound. Could you please just talk a little bit about your work with Members here at the Institute?

Oleg Grabar: Let me start with two kind-of failures in a way. There is a lady from Tajikistan who was brought in about 15 years ago, who arrived with husband and two children and none of us realized that she wanted to stay here, and when she was supposed to go back, she disappeared in the United States with her family.

I don't know how they managed it. She lives in Princeton now and has a green card. I haven't asked how she did it, I don't know. She comes to see me once a week now because she tries to get back to work. That was very sweet and nice for her, but it was a failure because she just simply wasn't ready for the kind of atmosphere we have.

The other one is more curious because she has reapplied. She is a French girl who is extremely original. She wants to do things differently. She doesn't want to do things like everybody else and so she can't find a job any place. While she was here, she had an affair with a scientist, ruined his marriage, all part of the sex life of the Institute, which is a very interesting subject, actually. Well, it's much less than you would think an institution with so many young people would have. I mean people really are not very sexed up around here. It is, from my experience of them.

Linda Arntzenius: Has that always been the case?

Oleg Grabar: I don't – I don't know. There were no women before, it was only men. Compared, let's say, to a graduate school where sex is a permanent activity.

I helped her transform her crazy ideas into something that was feasible and worth doing. That was a successful thing. But, I think I have been more successful with the assistants I've had than with Members. The first assistant, who was a Jordanian and his wife - they divorced while here, but that – I don't think I had anything to do with that. But I mean, he really became a major figure and –

Linda Arntzenius: And what's his name?

Oleg Grabar: Mohammad al-Asad,³⁴ he unfortunately has the same name as the president of Syria – for him to come to the United States means a year of investigations nowadays. And even though he has a BA from Illinois, PhD from Harvard, that's right, what that's – I don't want to start on that. But he has been very successful in the computer science and computer and architecture, and architecture.

The second one was, oh, it's –

Linda Arntzenius: It'll come to you.

Oleg Grabar: Alzheimer's at work here. Oh, she's terrific.

Linda Arntzenius: What did she do?

Oleg Grabar: Well, she is a first rate Hispanist and Arabist, and – what the hell is her name? Cynthia Robinson.³⁵ She's now a professor at Cornell. And in a way, it's kind of funny, because I really needed help with a lot of work and I needed somebody to go to Firestone to get books out for me, and I found out that she loved to bicycle. I said terrific, she would bicycle to Firestone. However, she only bicycled on racing bikes that have no bags or anything like that, and she wears such extraordinary shoes, useless unless she was off on her bike. In addition, she was about three inches taller than I am, had very long legs and very short skirts; it was absolutely extraordinary [the] effect here. I mean – but she was terrific, terrific – her personal life is also a whole story in itself. But she has written two books since she was here. And they are very good. I mean she's a first-rate scholar.

And the third one is Mika Natif,³⁶ who now teaches at Holy Cross, who's an Israeli. We also published two articles together. All these people helped me. With Mohammad Assad, one of the books I wrote on Jerusalem, he did all the drawings there and the computer reconstruction. It was one of the first computer reconstructions of the city that was done in the '90s. And Cynthia Robinson, we edited a whole issue of a journal together, and with Mika Natif, we wrote two articles. Mika Natif is the one who helped me edit the four volumes of my collected works.

Linda Arntzenius: Ah. Is that your magnum opus?

Oleg Grabar: Well, obviously the biggest, but it's thick. And it all came out at the same time, so I'm the only professor who had four books coming out in the same year. But the books were not written the same year. *(Laughing)* They were written over 40 years. But she helped me too; I couldn't have

³⁴ Mohammad al-Asad, Research Assistant in the School of Historical Studies, 1991-1993.

³⁵ Cynthia Robinson, Research Assistant in the School of Historical Studies, 1998-1999.

³⁶ Mika Natif, Research Assistant in the School of Historical Studies, 2003-2004; Visitor, 2010.

done it without her. And then we did a couple of articles together, and she's very, very good.

Linda Arntzenius: Some people have talked to me about Flexner³⁷ and the Bambergers, as they had this idea of a sort of a academic utopia that would allow scholars to slough off all their duties and really focus on their [work]. Others have said, "Well, yes, but along with that comes a great deal of stress."

Oleg Grabar: I did not feel the stress here, compared to Harvard. See, at Harvard, practically the whole faculty was living on drugs and alcohol. I mean that was the only way they could survive because there the stress was constant. If your book isn't out when your colleague's book is out, I mean you are – [*Crosstalk*]

Linda Arntzenius: Yes, yes.

Oleg Grabar: It was constantly. Here, on the contrary, I think was a place of enormous peace where there was no obligation and even there was the case of the classical scholar just before my time, came here as a great classical scholar on Aristotle or Plato or whatever it is in the world, and never did anything since he was here, because he decided to start rereading everything and by the time he was through reading, he died. Let me back up a little.

The way in which the Institute operates intellectually is at lunch time, coffee time and so forth, this is where you suddenly get into conversations, you show people things, for instance the book that I'm going to give to the library, now normally I would go round and show it to everybody and one of my new books I have shown to several people and so forth, because that's how in some place it sinks in. But I don't think there has been a collective Institute intellectual activity, at least in history. I mean in the sciences, certainly there has, but in history I don't think there has been.

And I don't think - history, it's too big a field. I mean, something that goes from prehistory, or let's say, classical, ancient Near East, all the way to the contemporary, well there's too much of it. You can't do it.

Linda Arntzenius: Have you seen any casualties among the members or visitors because of stress?

Oleg Grabar: Well, now I don't know but I think there have been cases. I know cases among assistants, because assistants were kind of partially slaves and had to say something to accomplish something. During the time when jobs were particularly difficult, Cynthia Robinson spent a year, she couldn't find a job, and there I wiggled the second year for her. I wiggled it out of the director. Then she got a very good job, and everything worked out.

³⁷ Abraham Flexner (1866-1959), IAS Director, 1930-1939.

But she was stressed at some point – I think, you know, stressing is in the character of people. Some people are going to be stressed whatever happens to them. Other people are not going to be stressed regardless. I don't know, I mean I think that if you look at the faculty here, I can't imagine Glen Bowersock being stressed by anything, or Giles. Von Staden, I can imagine, yes. Bynum I don't know sufficiently well. Patricia Crone is stressed, but then this is probably the most inventively creative person on the faculty here. She's good. I wish she knew how to fully put her act together, but that's another story.

Linda Arntzenius: Oppenheimer³⁸ said that one of the greatest duties that the Institute had to visiting scholars was to deprive them of any excuse for doing anything other than their work.

Oleg Grabar: In that I think the Institute has succeeded, but the rest of the world hasn't. We used to have rules whereby they cannot go away for more than a day every two months or something like that, now they go away all the time. I mean you just look at the Princeton schedule, this week and next week, there is a lecture, a colloquia, or seminar every day.

Linda Arntzenius: Mm-hmm. So you think it's too much? Do you think there are too many distractions? [*Crosstalk*]

Oleg Grabar: It's too much. I mean the whole – it's not the Institute, the Institute does relatively little. But the rest of the world does it. And the University does it. I mean it becomes ludicrous.

Linda Arntzenius: Is it sort of a need to show what's being done? Is it –

Oleg Grabar: I think it's an attempt not to work yourself, because you say you have to prepare a cocktail party for so and so, you have to arrange this, you have to invite 20 people for lunch. I don't know. I think it's make –

Linda Arntzenius: Busywork?

Oleg Grabar: – make busywork. But I maybe mean unnecessary.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, you became Professor Emeritus in 1998, so your tenure was only eight years, and yet you produced a great deal.

Oleg Grabar: Yeah. Well, like the woman who produced eight babies in one, I mean, they were in gestation already.

Linda Arntzenius: (*Laughing*) If you were in the Founders' shoes, going back, would you start an Institute such as this one?

Oleg Grabar: Yes, probably.

Linda Arntzenius: Mm-hmm. Would you put in place any differences? Any –

³⁸ J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967), IAS Director, 1947-1966; Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 1966-1967.

Oleg Grabar: Well, I think that the biggest difference is how you organize the faculties, and I know that the Institute had a lot of problems for years about how to subdivide things. For instance, the fact that the Institute never had the arts here, literature and music, now we have music. But that's quite different. We don't bring people to do music. We bring a musician to amuse us and to entertain us, and we've been very successful with that. T. S. Eliot³⁹ was there and wrote, I think, *The Cocktail Party* when he was here.

Linda Arntzenius: I've heard that. I haven't had confirmation of that, but –

Oleg Grabar: But whatever it is, one can imagine something like this, yes, to have a place of rest for people, but it begins to look like a nursing home. Then you've created a nursing home, and I'm always fascinated [looking out of the window across the lawn toward Fuld Hall]– well, today is not very, very clear.

Linda Arntzenius: I'm depriving you of your tea.

Oleg Grabar: Well I could do without tea, but I have to go exercise in 40 minutes and I have a few things to do before that. But one of the interesting things that happens here around tea time is when the poor spouses with children come to see Papa. And there was always something or other, Papa is discussing profound things with colleagues and here come the little babies. Now, how do you handle that? I mean, one could say that the Institute was meant to be a monastery, was meant to be a place where you come without spouses, without – you think, work and so forth, maybe with assistants to help you, but not with your family. You don't bring your family here.

But if the faculty has their families here, why wouldn't the members? But again, this is something to look at by a sociologist. I have a feeling, but I may completely wrong, that 20 years ago when I first came, most members came without – had no family or came without them. There are several cases of recent divorces, they come here in order to forget about the other spouse.

But whether there is more or fewer spouse or spouse-like people, I would like to know that.

Linda Arntzenius: Interesting question.

Oleg Grabar: That would be interesting, because this year, I think there is only one family with baby. Last year, there were three families with babies. And I could see there were little kids coming regularly at tea time. And the other great thing here, something you might talk to Irving, who is the longest one around, whether there was more social interaction among the faculty than there is now.

³⁹ Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1948.

Among the Emeriti, there is very little, because we're all tired of making dinners for each other. We've done 40, 50 years of our life we had them and it's just too much work. And we reserve our social life to something different. In my case, my wife, it's very, very clear. I mean she doesn't like to deal with all these people, and I think that Nati Seiberg's⁴⁰ wife is the same way. She doesn't want to deal with them.

Now, is that a good thing or is this a bad thing in the setting in which we live? When my brother after he retired, came to visit me here about 10 or 12 years ago, and his remark was that it reminded him of a Thomas Mann novel, that is that this is like a sanatorium here and that everybody is stuck in their beautiful cells and does great things, but that if anybody goes away, little men in white will come and drag them back to their cells. I have a little bit that feeling still now, that one is stuck here.

What I don't know is whether the rustic idea of Princeton – see, you could do something like this compare the Institute with the Radcliffe Institute in Cambridge. I don't know how well it works. I don't know where they put people. I'm sure it's not as comfortable as it is here. But whether it is made more exciting, I simply don't know that.

I just read last night the review in *New York Review of Books*, of Gail Collins' books on women since 1960. It was fascinating. During my lifetime, the situation of women has changed so drastically in America, from the ideal of the suburban wife with a dishwasher, the car and so forth, who picks up the husband at the railroad station, to the working woman; from the families of three children to the family of one child, if that much. I mean there's an enormous change that takes place.

Now, what are the nature of the changes in the intellectual world? What would we need more? Do we need fancier computers? Do we need assistants who do the computer work? I would love to have somebody who would do the shit work on the computer for me regularly. I mean I have something I'm working on now, I have to transfer certain files from one thing to – I always get screwed up on how to do that. But it's a – I don't know what the needs are. I think maybe if one was starting again, I might perhaps prefer to start an Institute that would arrange every – three times a year in every field, two weeks meetings with people, rather than come and move with luggage and everything. That, to me, strikes me often now as – it certainly would have helped people with families. I sort of remember once noticing applications of – in the '90s, there were very few people with families.

Who wants to. You live in Oklahoma, your wife has a job there, you're not going to come here, your spouse or whatever it is, doesn't want to come here. So the sociological structure of the profession has changed so much, especially with the two jobs, that probably one would have to arrange things differently, because here, this is based for bachelors.

⁴⁰ Nathan Seiberg (1951-), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1982-1985, 1987-1989, 1994-1995; Visitor, 1993-1994; Professor, 1997- .

Herzfeld was a bachelor, Kantorowicz was a bachelor, Alföldi⁴¹ was a bachelor, well, he got married eventually, but he got married to an older woman and so on. They were bachelors, so they needed cooks, they needed laundry rooms and things. That would be interesting to figure out a little bit better.

Linda Arntzenius: Are there developments in the school that you would like to see in the future?

Oleg Grabar: I think that it has to move out of the classical and medieval worlds.

Linda Arntzenius: You don't think it has done that already?

Oleg Grabar: Well, it has some. You see, it's wrong to have one person represent the whole history of Europe from 1600 to today. We have somebody for the Islamic world, somebody for the Far East, which is okay, but there's Africa, there is Latin American, there is India, there is all kinds of other worlds, there is Russia, I mean all kinds: the Slavic world, all kinds of other worlds. I think that – and this is the intriguing thing, if you only have seven positions, you can't fill them all, so how you make those choices, and there is something – should we have more? Well, then you need more building, you need more space. So if you are stuck with the same thing – I don't know. I mean I would like the Institute to have more original – I thought at some point that the Institute should develop the rare fields, we should have people who deal with Coptic studies of Egypt, with Syriac, with Armenian, with Georgian, with scripts and things of that nature, and not with Voltaire or Spinoza or Plato, things everybody can read about anyway. That would make it a rather narrow-minded crowd. But I can see the point that this is the place –

Linda Arntzenius: Be like a gene bank –

Oleg Grabar: That's right, but with the rarities of the world.

Another interesting thing is the importance of thinking about the history of science now, that's clearly, I've heard that's how they're going to replace von Staden by a historian of science.

Linda Arntzenius: A historian of science?

Oleg Grabar: But I'm not sure that's true.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, that's interesting. I know we're coming to the end. You've spoken about the moral and ethical considerations of history. Could you perhaps just finish with some thoughts on that? I wondered if you had comments about, for example, the recent cancelation of a talk by someone talking at Princeton University –

Oleg Grabar: Yes. I wrote a whole article in *The New Republic* –

⁴¹ Andreas (Andrew) Alföldi (1895-1981), Professor in the School of Historical Studies, 1955-1965; Emeritus Professor, 1965-1981.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, I didn't see that. .

Oleg Grabar: You haven't seen it?

Linda Arntzenius: No. Speak a little bit about that.

Oleg Grabar: Okay. That is a serious matter. That is a very serious matter, that we live in the moment in a climate of fear where certain topics are avoided and if we avoid them, we'll never be able to deal with them.

And the thing in which I was involved is I happen to have written a long article, a very learned article on pictures of Mohammad, of the Prophet in history. And that was read by five people, but it's good. I read the French version and American English version.

I found out that a Danish sociologist who teaches at Brandeis, has written a book to be published by Yale University Press dealing with the whole business of the Danish cartoons and how they were met and the reactions and so on and so forth, and that she wanted to illustrate them with pictures of the cartoons and of comparable material. And Yale had the last word removed.

: And I protested that. And especially, I had a background, because in a book I wrote for Harvard Press on *Dome of the Rock*, there was a picture of the Prophet being shown Jerusalem, and Harvard Press insisted on removing the portrait of the Prophet, only Jerusalem shown, somehow they thought that in Karachi or some place like that people would start beating up Harvard men because of that.

Now, what I found out is – since I know a lot of people at Yale Press, I've had many books with them - that the decision was taken by the director, but it was taken on the advice not of scholars, but of Yale men who work in internal security right now in Washington, Fareed Zakaria, Negroponte and so forth. And that was by people who are totally incompetent on the subject.

And so, I wrote an article explaining why it was wrong and how – what real portraits of the Prophet are. But what is behind and that is the important point, we live in a world now that cultivates ignorance and with media that are ready to jump on anything to make stories. We invent and propagate falsehoods, and we do it not necessarily because we know they are false, because we have to have a story and it's a good story. Tiger Woods right now is a typical example. I don't know what happened, so he had a fight with his wife? So what? It doesn't make any difference. So he hit a lamp post. Oh, boy, did they – they're going to probably bring his ancestries and everything into it.

Poor Obama must send troops to Afghanistan, because if he didn't, he will become, as he is already in Israel, Hussein Obama, that is a Muslim. And we perpetrate – we perpetuate lies and falsehoods all the time

because nobody wants to learn, nobody wants to study, even come close to the truth. And not only that, but – at Thanksgiving I was at my son's in New York, I mean he's a big fancy international lawyer, and his wife is an architect, I think that they had about 30 people there, they had a book of some artists – the works of some artists, it turned out that this artist, particularly disgusting artist, shows all kinds of people sitting on the toilet, and sometimes I assume a real person sitting on the toilet, but you also had the Queen of England with her panties down. You can do anything in photography now.

You can do anything. There is no limits to what you can show. So, you can be impolite, you can be vulgar, you can be tasteless, and yet, this is not a crime. Whereas, if it becomes – if you are against Islam, it's a crime, or the Swiss Minarets, I mean it's an absolutely appalling idea. So this is what I do feel, and whether the Institute should be for this or should not, I don't know. One can say the Institute should be above such things.

But one can also say that the Institute *has* to be involved, but that you can't have the Institute be a kind of morality supervisor for the whole country or the whole world, and say, "Well, you can't do this, you can't do that, or you can't do this."

And in that article, I suggested that The New Republic write another article on the subject. See, in Europe now, one has legislated anti-Semitism. If you write something against Jews, you can be prosecuted. In the United States, you can't. Freedom of the press. Should we? That is, should we say, anti-Semitism is one thing, but should we say something is tasteless, that it is a crime? If something is ugly, it is a crime?

Everybody agrees, okay, no, because it's – what is pretty to one thing is ugly to another, but that's not true.

Linda Arntzenius: Mm-hmm. There are certain –

Oleg Grabar: There are certain boundaries that nobody's going to –

Linda Arntzenius: – aspects of taste.

Oleg Grabar: Nobody's going to say that the Sistine Chapel stinks, is a disgusting thing. On the other hand, you can start taking the Mona Lisa and undressing her and showing her naked. Now, all kinds of half-naked women were shown in painting and nothing wrong with that. If it is the Mona Lisa, what is this, is just bad taste? Should it be persecuted as a crime, as a fault, not a crime?

Linda Arntzenius: Well, should we have a philosopher onboard at the Institute?

Oleg Grabar: But we used to have, but philosophy is a field that is in trouble, because... I don't know what they worry about, either they are incomprehensible (well we have Avishai as a philosopher), I mean Wittgenstein is

incomprehensible, or they are logicians like Morty White⁴² and that's also terribly boring. No, but – I mean philosophy is an area I would definitely think would make sense for the Institute, is people who develop thoughts about what you should feel, but have you ever listened to lectures by philosophers? I mean Michael Walzer,⁴³ who's a sweetie pie, whom I've known for 40 years, but a lecture by Michael Walzer is just a bore. I mean it's just – I mean he's very nice, but it's just no fun.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, I'm going to wrap it up. I want to ask you two more questions.

Oleg Grabar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: First one is, of all the honors you've received, which one has pleased you most and why?

Oleg Grabar: Well, I haven't received that many honors, have I? I want to get a decoration, which I haven't received yet.

Linda Arntzenius: *(Laughing)* Oh, you're still angling for one?

Oleg Grabar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: The Freer Medal?

Oleg Grabar: Well, the Freer Medal, yes, that was very nice because I've had connections with the Freer for a long time, since Michigan days.

Linda Arntzenius: The other question I had was, is there a question that you expected me to ask you that I haven't asked?

Oleg Grabar: No, not really. You skirted one towards the end there. That if Bamberger was starting it again, whether he should – That is, are we the prisoners of decisions made in the '30s about what should be? The world has changed, and whether we have analyzed or have thought through these changes? I don't think the world has changed that much in the fields being covered. I mean the addition of biology. I would think that maybe in the social sciences and history, we could also develop an equivalent to biology, what is philosophy or something more practical and more general, but I think the more important thing is the sociology of researchers: that they are different people from what they were 30 years ago.

And I would love to have somebody do a study of the ages of members in the '40s, the '50s, the '60s, '70s and so forth. And by school, whether younger/older, male/female?

Linda Arntzenius: They're doing this sort of Decadal Review, don't they do things like that?

⁴² Morton White (1917-2016), Member in the School of Historical Studies, 1953-1954, 1962-1963, 1968; Professor, 1970-1987; Emeritus Professor, 1987-2016.

⁴³ Michael Walzer (1935-), Professor in the School of Social Science, 1980-2007; Emeritus Professor, 2007- .

Oleg Grabar: I don't think they worry about that. For instance, I don't think the Decadal Review ever says, which I'm sure is true, that there are many more women now in history than there were 20 years ago. Now, is that true? And when did it start? Is there a year? Does it correspond with the Pill? That's 1961. The Pill is 1961, that changed the whole history of womanhood in America. It's very, very interesting. I have fascinating stories on that. Is the project we have the right thing? Should we not have a hostel where you have nice apartments rather than these pseudo houses?

But all this depends on who is our public? And has this public changed, not in terms of fields, but in terms of family structure. For instances, when did we start asking people the names of wives *or* significant other? See, at some point we did that. At some point, I suppose, we didn't even ask whether somebody had a spouse or not. Then you start asking spouse. And then it says significant other, and then you start putting male – homosexual of relationships and things of that nature. I don't know when all this began, but they all reflect changes of the culture in which we live.

Linda Arntzenius: Are faculty afforded an opportunity to express ideas –

Oleg Grabar: I don't think they ever are asked. I mean the first time I was – well, no, I thought about some of these things before, but that's the first time that I've kind of expressed that. Because, in fact, I'll go and talk to a director or somebody about that, because I'm particularly interested in this business of making – you know, everybody makes graphs now – graphs of married/unmarried members over the years, male/female. I would imagine that in 1990, when I came, almost all members were men. Right now, it's, I suspect, half-and-half.

Linda Arntzenius: Getting things like this [indicating *A Community of Scholars*], getting this digitized –

Oleg Grabar: That's right.

Linda Arntzenius: – getting all of this material digitized –

Oleg Grabar: But that doesn't – isn't here.

Linda Arntzenius: No, that only goes up to 1980.

Oleg Grabar: No, no, but does it have spouses?

Linda Arntzenius: No.

Oleg Grabar: That's right. And yet, it's a very important – spouses are much more important now than they were 30 years ago. For – I don't know, maybe 40 years. Forty years ago, a spouse was a woman and followed the husband, and even when I moved to Harvard, there was a big discussion, Terry had a very good job in Michigan, and I said no, I'll follow – she had

a hard time finding a job because English was not a field that people wanted, and Harvard was of no help. Now, they'll find jobs. But in those days, no help, just as they were no help finding a house. Now they do.

Those are all the changes in the way you treat people. And I think that it is this – back to this kind of sociology, well, look, the sociology of the housing of the faculty is something very important. I mean, about five years ago, most of the new people, new faculty, lived in a project [meaning Member housing] where they shouldn't be. Right now, three or four still live there, I think.

Sometimes it's temporary until they find something. But that modifies the nature of the project, and the nature of the relationship of the faculty to each other, whereas, where I live, we're all retired. Well, now there is going to be a real professor moving into the house where everybody died. But otherwise, everybody's retired, so our circle is of retired people.

We don't even know all the new colleagues. And that, I think, would be very, very, very interesting to know. I keep thinking about it because I keep looking [out the window toward Fuld Hall] and the little kiddies didn't show up today, I guess it's too cold.

Linda Arntzenius: Ah. Well, it's well past tea time.

Oleg Grabar: Maybe just after Thanksgiving they are still surviving the trip.

Linda Arntzenius: I hope I haven't kept you too long.

Oleg Grabar: Oh, no. But it's been fun.

[End of Audio]