

The Art Newspaper exclusive on the memoir MoMA declined to publish

Shortly before his death in January, William Rubin handed us his manuscript

JASON EDWARD KAUFMAN
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The Museum of Modern Art in New York has declined to publish a memoir by the late William S. Rubin that chronicles his career as chief curator and then director of the museum's Department of Painting and Sculpture from 1967 to 1988. He died in January, aged 78.

Shortly before his death, he invited The Art Newspaper to his East Side apartment and handed us a copy of the 198-page memoir which charts his professional career at MoMA. It explains the strategic art historical thinking behind Rubin's pursuit of works of art for MoMA's collection.

The memoir also describes in detail the activities that go into building a great collection—deaccessioning, market manipulation, political brinksmanship, and shrewd handling of donors.

When asked to comment, MoMA publisher Christopher Hudson said: "The Museum's publishing programme presents books that are mission-related in nature, i.e. with specific art historical or educational content. The Museum therefore does not publish personal memoirs of past or current staff or Trustees, no matter how influential and/or long-standing their relationship with the Museum has been."

However, MoMA has published several texts about its own history, most

recently the series “Studies in Modern Art” (1991-2004), edited by curator John Elderfield, which takes up themes from “The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century” to “Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art”.

o For our exclusive account of William Rubin’s memoir, see pp.33-35

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