



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Carolee
Schneemann, 2009 March 1

Funding for this interview provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally recorded interview with Carolee Schneemann on March 1, 2009. The interview took place at the artist's studio in Springtown, New York, and was conducted by Judith Olch Richards for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for this interview was provided by a grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Carolee Schneemann and Judith Olch Richards have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

JUDITH OLCH RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing Carolee Schneemann on March 1, 2009, in New Paltz, New York.

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN: Actually we're in Springtown, New York.

MS. RICHARDS: In Springtown, New York. For the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc one.

So, Carolee, actually why don't you say - why don't we start with describing where we are.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] We're in a Huguenot stone house outside of New Paltz, New York. It's one of three stone houses built in 1750, with permission of the Lenape original settlers. They gave permission to three brothers to leave the New Paltz compound so they could farm. And at this time the Huguenots in their original settlement, much of which is still downtown New Paltz, were cooperative with the major people. And it was the Lenape who sited these three house positions along the Walkkill [Walkkill River, NY]. And these three houses never flood, although the Walkkill rises, and my stream rises, and the road will be covered. But so far the houses for all these hundreds of years are intact from flooding - if not from generally falling apart.

The Huguenot style was the build one stone level and to anticipate a future second story that might even be a generation or two later. Cows or sheep lived in the basement. There is always, you know, a platform walkway down. So the heat of the animals would be part of the heat coming up through the house. This house originally had a wall-to-wall - a huge fireplace. The foundation stones are in the basement. So many things have happened to it, many changes. And it was in possession of cousins who had stopped farming. In the sixties these houses were being torn down because no one knew how to restore them, or it was too much trouble. And if the stonework isn't holding together, it's really quite daunting. But they're solid as a rock.

I was just out of college with my partner, James Tenney, the musician/composer. We started to live here because the house was going to be auctioned off, and I convinced my relatives that I would do anything to save it. I had no money, I had no job. We didn't know what we were talking about. But I was quite obsessed with this house. And it turns out the house was also obsessed with me. We had some other young people living in the house; we had half of it, they had part of it. And then I began to have the dreams which are important for my work. And dreams of the house told me very exacting things I had to do, such as to take a hammer, walk outside, and the smash the cement that was the structure of the outside wall. And in the dream it showed me a little piece of golden stone. So I said to Jim, "What should I do?" And he throws the *I Ching* again, and it said, "I am not what I seem to be." So we smashed that piece of cement, and there was the golden stone exactly as in the dream. We said, "Oh, of course, it's a stone house, you know! They covered it over with cement, and we forgot. We just weren't thinking it through."

The second dream was probably a little later. It was very exact. It said take a crowbar, stand in the hallway - where you and I just were - and pry up the linoleum, and you will see a chestnut plank. I said, "Jim, what do we do?" He said, "Okay, get the crowbar." We pried up the linoleum, and there's this beautiful chestnut floor. We began gradually chipping away the cement on the outside of the house. Taking up - the linoleum was everywhere. That's what saved these beautiful floors. There was a car seat from the 1920s over that window. We pried that off. That was scary, and now it's a beautiful window. Anyway, the house began to open and breathe. Then I had a dream where it said to take a hammer and to walk so many steps into the living area and to smash the ceiling. And I said, "You know we don't want to do that. We don't know how to repair a ceiling. That's a horrible mess." But the dream showed us this big chestnut beam. [Laughs] So Jim said, "You know I'll do it." And we walked the steps, and we made a hole in the ceiling, and there was the beam. So that's part of the engagement and the embrace of this house for me. *Fuses* [1964-67] was filmed here. *Meat Joy* [1964] was dreamt here. *Mortal Coils* [1994]. You know almost all the developing work is rooted in this particular space.

MS. RICHARDS: Maybe we can connect this with your family and where you were born and when -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Your early years.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. I was born in a semi-rural part of Pennsylvania where it was still farming.

MS. RICHARDS: What's the name of the place you were born?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: And then, you know, the city or the suburbs are going to come and envelope it. But when I was little, I could still go on my bike down rutted to cornfields, you know, full of mystery.

MS. RICHARDS: Did your parents grow up in the same place?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: They grew up near, close by to this part of Pennsylvania. I've gone back, and I can hardly even find sections that I knew well, you know, wooded areas, streams, farmlands.

MS. RICHARDS: And was there also extended family in the vicinity, too?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Uh-huh. [Negative.] No.

MS. RICHARDS: And did you have brothers and sisters?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes. But as I explained earlier, part of my identity is separating what I had to do from what was hoped for, anticipated, and expected of me. So I try not to engage my family. Some of them are understanding and supportive. And others are in their own family configurations where whatever this crazy artist is about it's disturbing, sometimes offensive.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have a big struggle when you were young with family values?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, I had a really big struggle. My father was a GP [general practitioner], a kind of rural physician, who went with a black bag everywhere to see the families and the patients, and I would go with him. That was very important for me, just sitting in the car sometimes for long hours, because I wanted to be where he was. I'm the eldest of three. And I saw very curious things and would concentrate during those hours waiting for my dad to come back from the farmhouse or the house of someone giving birth or someone injured. Something formative about waiting and watching out the window there, and trusting his return, and being influenced by how engaged he was by his work. He always really loved his work. He was exciting and optimistic and, you know, generous. Splendid. Just a great person. Wonderful.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that in contrast with your mother?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, I would have to say that she was the conventionalizing, fearful, confused by the boundaries that would have to develop between a parent and children. But it was also my father who at some point decided that he would not let me go to college, that that was inappropriate. I was already too strange. And that he would send me to typing school.

MS. RICHARDS: Before you got to the end of school, when you were young and in school -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes?

MS. RICHARDS: - were you involved with great art? Were you identified by your teachers as specially talented in that area?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, again, no. You know I do this lecture that I enjoy so much called *Mysteries of the Iconographies*. And I start working with drawings from when I was four years old. And in these drawings I repeated elements and themes that have persisted mysteriously. I wasn't aware of it until relatively recently. And my mother did save all these drawings then, did make little notes on them, and did recognize that they were special. And that's been a treasure trove. I mean kids do thousands of drawings. But there's a little group that survived in a sewing basket. And working with that has really been delightful for me.

I knew when I was - I always say before - I think before I was really understanding language, that I had to make images. And I drew obsessively sequential images on my father's prescription tablets. And they're filmic. It takes about ten pages to develop the image because it starts in fragments like a flip book. You have to perceive. For instance you'll have one page with two lines on it, crude lines. You flip it, and the lines get a little bigger. Keep going, and pretty soon these two hands, crude, crazy banana-like hands on that page. You keep going, and there'll be a body attached. And then there'll be some kind of sequence of events that are always about motion.

Things are always moving. So that's an iconographic oddity. By the time I'm probably 11 or 12, I know that I don't know how to make the images I want to make. I'm very confused. I know they're not okay. We have -

MS. RICHARDS: What do you mean they're not okay?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: There's something I want to understand about - I don't know what an artist is. But I want to be able to draw better or, you know, I go into that horrible stage where it's all little synthetic, stylized figures with skirts and shoes and lipstick. And there are reproduction paintings in my room of [Johannes] Brahms walking in the woods. So you know this is "cultural culture". I've never heard of a woman artist ever. I know men make art. So the story really develops when I take babysitting money, and I go from rural Pennsylvania on the trip to Philadelphia, and I go to the museum [Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania]. And I probably met some other kids in school that know about going to the city.

The museum is incredible. You know it's like the hugest church you've ever been in and all these rooms. You can wander all around, no one bothers you. And I'm looking at paintings. And I'm dazzled, and I feel connected. And then I end up in the basement. I'm following this aroma, and it's oil paint. I'm following this intoxicating smell, and I come to a room where all these people, grownups, are at easels, and they're painting a still-life, a bunch of fruit. And the teacher watches me hanging out at the door. And finally he says, "You want to come in?" And I say, "Yes." And he says, "Well, do you want to draw?" And I say, "Oh, yes, could I?" And he sets me up.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you know the name of that teacher?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. His name is Morris Blackburn, M-O-R-R-I-S Blackburn, and he was called Blackie. Yes. I'll never forget him. So I'm in the basement there, and there's an easel. And he gives me, you know, charcoal, paper. I don't know what.

MS. RICHARDS: And you were about 12?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes. Probably 12. And I'm just thrilled. This is heaven. I don't know what I've done, but this is correct. Then he takes a break with the class. He takes a paper bag, a little brown paper bag, and Blackie tears it all up, and then he drops it on the floor. And he asks the class to look at the torn-up paper bag. And then he says to them, "Well, class, you know, tell me what's happening with this torn-up bag." Everyone looks completely bewildered. And then I pipe up, and I say, "Well, is it because of all the rhythms between the pieces of paper?" And the teacher is so happy. And he says, "Yes! And that's called gestalt." So I learned my first big art word, gestalt. You tear something up, and you watch its configuration. And that all means something; it's all connected. So this is all an ecstatic entry into a completely unknown world. It's sacral, it's religious, it's practical. And every now and then I can go back there. And then I see how you use oil paint. Because I had tried to do oil paint with a set I found, but I didn't know you needed medium. So I was painting a snow scene with a creek and a brook. I knew what I wanted to paint, but it was all coagulated. So I squeezed out the oil paint, and it was all stiff.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there any art teachers at your elementary or secondary schools?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Let me think. Gee, I don't remember any. I had an incredible English teacher. At one point some friends of my parents say, "You know the kid is different. She's exceptional. She should be in a better school." My mother's very upset about this. She wants to buy something for the house. She doesn't want me to go to a special school.

MS. RICHARDS: Which would cost money, you mean?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Which would cost money. But they do it.

MS. RICHARDS: How old were you?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Probably around the same age. Maybe ten, maybe ten or 11. And the school was in the countryside, and there's a delicious bus that smells so good, you know, old oil. And an old man driving it. And where they park the buses there's a big barn full of kittens. So this is a great school. And the older guys, they must be 12, they come and make me pull up my skirt to look at my legs. And they tell everybody, "Legs has arrived." It's all very mysterious. I have my cousin's very nice clothes to wear and this incredible English teacher. I'll tell you her name: Rose Wachter. She's very tall with braids wound around her hair. And we have English four hours a day. Everything else was squeezed around it. And you must write something or read something every day. We sit in a circle like a Quaker school.

MS. RICHARDS: This is a very tiny school?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's small, yes. And you can write about anything. You can write about how a Coke bottle is

formed. But just about every other day you have to read. And then she reads poetry to us. If you don't pay attention, the punishment is you get sent outside to play by yourself. We look out the window at the poor sucker who's all alone out there in the woods. So I get this tremendous pleasure and discipline learning to write and to think in writing and to read. And, you know, to not feel inhibited. It's such a shared process. I'm going to end up at a Quaker high school later, and that's going to intensify the process that began. But it's still not "painting". I'm painting and drawing in my room at the Quaker high school, the Friends High School. My main influence is going to be a sociologist, a brilliant man who sees something about how I'm responsive to the principles he's giving to restless, impatient, 15-year-olds now.

So I'm very lucky in these flukes that keep happening. And the biggest one is that I'm in my Friends School with a fever, and a very handsome man appears who looks like Cary Grant. And he says, "I'm from Bard College [Annandale-on-Hudson, NY], and we'd really - We have your - " I sent - Well, okay, I'll back up a little. Before I left the little private school, Rose Wachter wrote two names on a piece of paper. I had a pinafore. And she said, "Never lose these names. You have to go to college." The names were Bard, Antioch [University, Yellow Springs, OH], maybe Oberlin [College, Oberlin, OH] - I don't remember. And then she mentioned Black Mountain [College, Ashville, NC]. I was much too young for all this. But, you know, I -

MS. RICHARDS: She really understood you.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. She said, "Never lose this piece of paper." So at some point I met other kids and found out where these places were, and I wrote away, and I got applications. And I filled them out and sent them out.

MS. RICHARDS: This is when you're in high school?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. And I remember Black Mountain, it sounded strange and wonderful and far away. And they wrote and said that they would love to have me there, but I was too young. [Laughs] Maybe I was, you know, 14 or 15.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, you mean it was before you were at the age to go to college.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And what did you - ? Did you think that it was possible to leave high school and go to college?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I wasn't sure. The places sounded so special, you know. And then so I'm in high school in the infirmary with another kind of kid cold, and this handsome man is standing there and says, "I'm from Bard College, and we would really like to offer you a scholarship and have you be a student there. But your father won't fill out the financial statement or the forms. Why is that?" I said, "I don't know why. I really don't know."

MS. RICHARDS: Were you a senior then in high school?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Maybe I was a senior then. Yes. Anyway, his name is Buzz Gummere.

MS. RICHARDS: Buzz Gummere.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: G-U-M-M-E-R-E. What was his real first name? We always knew him as Buzz. You know he's been a friend. He just died recently. He lives across the river on - he lived on Station Hill Road where I have very close friends. So subsequently through the years I would always see him.

MS. RICHARDS: That must have been in the early years of Bard.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. The early '60s - well, late '50s, late '50s, yes. It's tiny. I get a full scholarship: room, board, tuition, everything. And I have dozens of jobs. I'm a waiter. I wash dishes.

MS. RICHARDS: In high school?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, this is Bard. I get to Bard.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, so how did you overcome your father's objections?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Bard gave me the full scholarship [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: His objections were only financially based?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, there was nothing he could do now, not really. He said, "You know this place is going to do everything to bring you through college. You know I guess this is what you really need." Yes. And then he would, you know, he would send me bits of money every now and then. But I worked the switchboard. I did

dishes in the kitchen. And modeled for one of the teachers of photography thing. Just - Library, worked in the library.

MS. RICHARDS: Was that because part of the scholarship actually didn't cover all of your expenses?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Or maybe this work trade was part of it.

MS. RICHARDS: Work-study.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Work-study, yes. But what a library! We had this sweetest little library full of [André] Malraux and art books and painting classes. And all the teachers were practicing whatever they taught. So painting was taught by a painter, poetry by poets. And there were all these amazing, crazy kids. Now in the meantime, I also managed to get to Putney School [Putney, VT], before Bard. So I'm reaching out from my dinky little hometown, meeting other -

MS. RICHARDS: You mean you went to visit, or your studied there?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I got - I also got a scholarship for summer that would be extended into the winter, but my parents pulled me out of Putney. That they couldn't handle. That made them crazy.

MS. RICHARDS: It's a very well-known alternative kind of high school in Vermont, right?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes. Outside of Brattleboro [VT]. And that was work-study. It was a work campus. I remember it was a work campus. Wonderful. So I had been doing some rural - helping farmers near where I grew up. And then at Putney I got to really learn how to shovel manure and roll the hay. And we picked strawberries and mountain climbed. It was amazing. It was really good. I had a wonderful painting teacher there named Norman Boothby, who became the director of the Chicago Art Institute [IL] a few years later. And he was supportive. I was painting underwater in the Putney Pond. I was floating tablets, which they'd let you have, of watercolors paper, floating it, and floating the paints. And then I was reaching up from under the water to paint fronds and things that I saw under the water. These are not gorgeous works, but it was an interesting process, and I was not discouraged by Boothby. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Was it memorable, when you went to Putney, that it was the first chance to meet other kids -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: - from different backgrounds?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It was ecstatic. Yes, yes. And, you know, we had morning worship, Quaker prayer. We had square dancing. We had work. It was very purposeful and joyful.

MS. RICHARDS: In your own high school?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: At Putney.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, at Putney.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: At Putney. Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: I thought it was Quaker.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, no, but it was like that. It sort of had that tradition of silent prayer and concentration. And you found your own spiritual dimension - or you didn't.

MS. RICHARDS: And the value of the physical as well as the mental.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes. So you were strong, you were healthy, you were engaged, you were responsible for what the winter session would eat. And they had been responsible for building our bunks and graveling the roads. So this intensive, coherent social organization was unique. And then mountain climbing where you all had to be part of a team. Some of us drank from the wrong stream and got - actually typhoid fever, which was suppressed. They didn't want the whole campus to - I mean it was a little campus. So they didn't want people to know. But we were very, very sick. And people had to go down the mountain and get us out of there. That was a strong, interesting preparation for the disasters of performance and the life of an artist on her own without necessary resources often. And you dog it out. So those were early lessons for that. Yes. What else?

MS. RICHARDS: So going back to Bard then.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: When you needed to declare a major, did you -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, I was a painter. I always knew I was a painter. I never said anything but that. I had a teacher who detested me. It was very sad and disillusioning. My main - I was assigned a teacher who absolutely abhorred me. Oh, look, the kitty wants to sit on you.

MS. RICHARDS: What part of - your attitude? Your artistic orientation?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: [Laughs] I think it was my certitude that I was a painter, whatever that was going to mean. I had a boyfriend I was very overtly involved with. I mean, you know, we were young. It's funny, but we're having an amazing romance. My looks. Everybody was very taken with how I looked. I wasn't, but they were. He wanted to discourage me. He was a German, with his wife; they liked to be in the bathtub screeching and doing things I didn't think old people still did when I waited in the hallway for my conference. So there's an erotic competition going on. It was completely mystifying, you know. I'm 18 years old. I don't know what these people are about quite. I just want him to look at my paintings and help me see better. Anyway, they take me away from him and give me to a great New York sort of second-generation expressionist, Louis Schanker, who's really a -

MS. RICHARDS: Is that S-C-H-?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I think so. He's a skilled printmaker, and he teaches me about Ukiyo-e and etching, printing. And he's a big, tough New York guy who smokes a cigar. He's called Louie. He never hits on me. I go to his studio in New York City, he shows me a printing press and different woodcutting tools that I've never seen. And he teaches me how to oil a salad bowl. [Laughs] Which I never forget. That was so sweet. Then I get kicked out of Bard.

MS. RICHARDS: Wait a second.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: How long were you in Bard?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Three years with one year out for moral turpitude. I mean this is ridiculous. Can you imagine it?

MS. RICHARDS: Well, when you started there and you were in Bard, did you and your classmates go into New York City and go to the museums there? I was wondering what kind of artistic influences were part of your early experiences at Bard - besides the faculty.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh! Yes, yes, we definitely - Yes. Yes, we'd go down on weekends, and we'd stay in people's apartments.

MS. RICHARDS: The parents of friends?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Especially when the parents are away, yes. Most everybody lives on Park Avenue. I don't know that you have to be rich to live on Park Avenue for quite a few years. That doesn't filter down. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember seeing paintings that you hadn't seen going to the Philadelphia Museum like the New York School?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, what I remember, Arthur Carles in Philadelphia becomes -

MS. RICHARDS: Spelled with a "C", Carles?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Carles, yes. He becomes a major influence on me. I don't know why. But he's at the Philadelphia Museum, and I've gone back to look for those paintings, and the paintings from that sort of genre have been - they're back in storage somewhere. I can't find anything that I really wanted to see. I'm certainly influenced by Schanker. Louie Schanker tells me, you know, I go to galleries on the -

MS. RICHARDS: The Tenth Street galleries.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: The Tenth Street, right. Yes. Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You saw [Willem] de Kooning and -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, de Kooning, yes. I go to the Cedar Bar [New York, NY], and I'm this, you know, a very

pretty girl, so I can go anywhere. And we go to the Cedar Bar with some friends. And before we sit down or anything, I look at the booth, and I see a man sitting there, and he has a halo coming out of his head. And I say, "Look, look! You see the man? He has a halo floating over his head. It's all luminous." And they say, "No. But that's de Kooning." [Laughs] So that's when I first saw him.

MS. RICHARDS: Was this 1957, '58?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Fifty-nine, '58, '59.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, around there probably. And Franz Kline buys me drinks. Is it now or later? At some point I get - it's before I'm with Jim - I get to the Artists' Club. And I see that the one woman wears a mask and never speaks. I think this is very important. It's Marisol [Escobar]. I'd like to know what that artist is thinking. And she's gorgeous behind the mask. And I understand that the position of a woman joining these important men will probably be a speechless position. Then I'm snooping around, and I see that all the women who are painting - I go to the Stable Gallery [New York, NY]; that's fabulous. I see my first [Robert] Rauschenbergs. I go to Betty Parsons', and I see that the women are always secondary and constellated with important men, if they're being positioned at all. Also at Bard, my best friend buddies, the boys, are stealing my art books. They take my brushes. They say, "We need this brush more than you." My boyfriend asked me to sew buttons on his decayed, rancid jacket, and I refused. So the exclusionary conventions are very strict in the late fifties. And then I didn't say yet what Schanker says to me. He said, "You're very gifted, but don't set your heart on art. You're only a girl."

I'm paying very close attention to all this because it relates to the ambiguous position of my family not wanting me to do this unexplored, questionable sort of future. So I'm really surrounded by what I will write about a few years later, what I call *The Wall of Men*. And they will let me in as what I will later call the *Cunt Mascot*. Some of them will really value my work. We were kids still. They value what I'm doing, but I can't have an equitable position. So that's why I called it the mascot.

MS. RICHARDS: And there was no other woman painter in the Tenth Street galleries whose work you saw?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes. I thought they were wonderful. But I also saw that they were never central. They were sort of "feminized", which meant on the side. And they always seemed to be supporting the male endeavors. And if you know, you know, reading back the history of Elaine de Kooning and [Lee] Krasner, it's appalling how much energy they devoted to their partners - and at what expense for their own psychic energy. But I'm watching that, and I feel like a spy in the art world. But I have fun also. Dorothea Rockburne - I guess we're in the '60s now - she's been in *Meat Joy* with me, and she's such a serious artist. She works for Rauschenberg almost as a kind of - not a slave, but almost. At a terrible salary. She's raising a daughter. Her work is not understood. But she has a nice coat which I borrow. And I call Sidney Janis, and I put on my funny little voice, and I say I'm somebody else. I'm Careena Huntsford, and I'm very interested in getting a collection of de Kooning drawings. And can they make an appointment for me to see them? Now I'm in there every week. I hang out at Janis, and I snoop around. Not every week, but often with my schoolbooks. I'm in school still. So this must be the - I'm at Bard.

MS. RICHARDS: This was before you were kicked - before you had your year off for moral turpitude?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It could be while I was kicked out. But I go there in this little pink coat of Dorothea's. And Carroll Janis, the son - you know him; he's my friend forever. He and an assistant set up an easel, and they bring out all the de Kooning drawings. It was ridiculous and wonderful and so bizarre. So I'm all dressed up. And I get to see these works intensively. I can concentrate on them one after another. Then I thank them very much and say I'll have my colleague call them. [Laughs] So I do this all the time in New York City. To get into concerts I say I'm the wife or the daughter of the concertmaster because it works. And my jobs then are ridiculous.

MS. RICHARDS: This is still while you're not finished Bard yet.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: When I have a field period at Bard, I work at the MET [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY] and at the Cloisters [The Cloisters Museum and Garden]. And there I have also some feminist revelations. One of my jobs at the Cloisters -

MS. RICHARDS: Sorry. They had a field period?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, work period, during winter.

MS. RICHARDS: So you go into the city.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Or you go somewhere. They help you find a job. And because the college, Bard, was small enough, they had all these viable connections where people went to the city and were probably paid a dollar an hour, if you were lucky, and lived with some older student in their place. Yes, I remember setting the stove on fire with Maxine in her little Eighty-seventh Street - we didn't do those pork chops right.

MS. RICHARDS: [Laughs] What was Maxine's last name?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I don't remember, but we were roommates. [Laughs] So where am I? Help me. Am I kicked out yet?

MS. RICHARDS: No. You had mentioned it. I don't what the moral turpitude is - was.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: [Sighs] Some of the faculty are very upset about something that I will never know what it is or was. Something with my boyfriend. He is not kicked out. I am not given an exact crime description. But some moral propriety has been breached. And I'm to leave campus. But they can't get rid of my scholarship. They extend it to the Columbia School of Painting and Sculpture and the New School [New York, New York]. It's all very bewildering. It still sounds insane. I don't know what was going on. There was a wonderful musician - cellist - also Jewish from Europe. What was his name? I can't quite remember. He was completely for me, and he would say, "I'm sorry about what's happening. This is preposterous. It shouldn't be like this." There was, I don't know, faculty divided. I had to be punished for this not - described impropriety. So Wayne, my sweetheart, is still at school. And I get to live in New York City for a whole year. And at Columbia School of Painting and Sculpture, they have life models for six hours a day, and I can draw.

MS. RICHARDS: Columbia School of Painting and Sculpture?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that part of Columbia University [New York, NY]?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It was. Maybe it still is. But it was also tiny. I had a great teacher. Named André Racz, R-A-C-Z.

MS. RICHARDS: R-E-C-Z?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: R-A-C-Z. He never hits on me.

MS. RICHARDS: That's apparently - when you mention that twice - that was certainly an issue.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS. Yes.

SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Well, for a lot of the young women and at Bard, terrible things happened with young women's advisors. They'd get seduced and confused, abandoned, and sometimes suicidal. And then visiting professors come in, and they're always looking at our bodies and making sexy jokes that are flattering, of course, for these girls. So Racz is great, and he takes me to his studio. He has an amazing studio up at Hundred and - near Columbia. And things like this don't exist anymore. Also [Aristodemis] Kaldis. I go into these spaces that are completely dark with soot and murky, and they're heated by a pot-bellied stove that has coal in it. And they have big tables laid out with beautiful kinds of printing papers. And Racz draws obsessively. He's Hungarian, European, and all exquisite. Not the way I draw, but he's so encouraging. And I get to see how an artist can live. It's so otherworldly. And it relates, you know, back a hundred years because New York City still had these derelict, rough, abandoned spaces.

The old Greek artist, Kaldis, he likes to cook for me. I don't know where I meet him. He's huge and funny. And, you know, I'm curious. So I think, you know, I can wrestle my way out of what I don't like. And he's a gentleman in a tiny, little, horrible, narrow studio with a hotplate. And he cooks something vaguely disagreeable on it, and gives me a lot of retsina. And I get to see how an artist lives. And there's paintings everywhere, and the aroma of old paint is dense. So those are some of the adventures. And then I also get to sleep with older men. I find them at the White Horse Tavern [New York, NY], and I think it's so exciting and marvelous. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: In the West Village?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Yes, I get these lovers. They're completely bewildered by me. But I have a great time, and then I scurry out of bed and get to school. So.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have any women friends, comrades, fellow artists who you - who were also as adventurous as you were?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: The women in my generation - No, I don't - Well, yes, some. There were some Bennington [College, Bennington, VT] girls I knew. They were very adventurous. The Bard women were pretty disturbed. They had just fallen into a degree of freedom that was menaced at all times by sexual predators. They didn't really know what they were doing. And particularly in painting, the painting teachers were brutal, they were cruel. They were just so discouraging. And so the other young women painting students were either very envious of me or angry with me. I'm not sure why, because I was so somehow self-contained. No, my conversation with other women begins with an older friend, a writer. And then, you know, André Racz introduces me to a woman artist who is part time on the faculty. Her first name is Ruth. She's worked in India. He wants me to have a precedent, a model, and I don't like it at all. Because she's just a sidekick. I don't want to hang out with a sidekick. I want to hang out with the men teachers. Then at the New School for Social Research, I get to work with Seymour Lipton, and that's wonderful. That's very influential for me. He's completely encouraging, and I'm doing sculpture. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So then there was a year off, and you went back to Bard?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. To graduate. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Did you do another two years?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, no, no. They gave the credit from the New School. I'm also taking academic classes. I'm working with Heinrich Blücher, who's the husband of Hannah Arendt.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell Blücher.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: B-L-E-U-C-H-E-R [sic]. He's a great inspiration to me and a supporter. He definitely doesn't want me kicked out for moral turpitude. But when I am, I take his courses at the New School, where one is Truth, Faith, and Freedom. [Laughs] Oh, and then I work with these other Germans on - what's his name? Klaus Kuhlmann maybe. They teach ancient Greek pottery. It's fascinating. The red and the black. So I'm entering a world of ancient history.

MS. RICHARDS: And of European intellectuals.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Intellectuals. I mean Heinrich takes me home to meet Hannah. So I'm a very lucky kid. [Laughs] I am.

MS. RICHARDS: So you finished.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: And when I did this year away from Bard, I meet Jim. I meet Jim Tenney. And that will shape and change my life forever. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You met him in New York when you were there.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You went back to Bard, finished your last year. But still cling to your relationship with him.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: He wasn't up at Bard?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, no.

MS. RICHARDS: Was the last year at Bard any better, any less [inaudible]?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It was fine. Still mystifying. Everyone's glad I'm back who's glad I'm back. And, you know, it might have been the painting of Tenney that's in my exhibit at P.P.O.W. ["Painting, What it Became," P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York City, 2009] that so upset them. No, wait, that would've been my senior year that that upset them. They can't kick me out twice. Or it might have been the self-portrait nude with the open legs, which was stolen. That was a very important self-portrait. [Laughs] That might have pushed them over some edge. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Well, so you graduated. Do you know what year it was?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: 'Sixty maybe. And then Jim and I get fellowships to the University of Illinois.

MS. RICHARDS: In Champaign?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Champaign-Urbana.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Graduate school fellowships.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: What's his area?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: His is in music, mine is in painting. But first I'd better go back a little bit because this is - I see this guy in - what's it called, that little restaurant near Columbia? Fairmount, the Fairmount. You walk down three steps. I don't know if it's still there. I'm starved all the time. I'm carrying a big portfolio. If I have enough money for cigarettes, do I have enough money for a bowl of soup? is the question. And way in the back is a guy that looks like a tiger. He's not like any young guy I've ever seen before. He's hunched over his food, and he's eating very intensely. He has a lot of hair. Something about his energy that's so different. So I have my soup. I go back into the Fairmount probably two months later. That guy is there again, hunched over a bowl of something. I really would like to meet him or talk to him, he's so - something about him. But I feel sick, and I think I'm going to throw up. So I grab my portfolio, and I leave. Several months later I'm reading the New York paper. This is still my exile from Bard. And I want to do something remarkable because it's May 19th, and I see there's a concert of -

MS. RICHARDS: What's the significance of May 19th?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I don't remember now. But I had dates that meant, you know, things were interesting or potentially strong.

MS. RICHARDS: Your own personal numerology, not because of someone else?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. No. Mystical. So I see there's a concert of [Johann Sebastian] Bach and [Charles] Ives. I've never heard of Ives. But the Bach should be wonderful. So I scurry up to - I forget - this concert hall. And sit down, and the pianist is just coming out. I think there's going to be two. I think one is [William] Masselos for the Ives, and one is a great -

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell Masselos?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: M-A-S-S-E-L-L-O-S [sic]. And the other, the pianist, is Ruth - I forget. Also a fabled performer. And just when it's about to begin, this skinny guy with all the hair appears and walks from the outside aisle, sits down - doesn't know why he stands up. Walks around and comes down the inner aisle, and he's sitting right across from me. And we're staring at each other.

MS. RICHARDS: Across the aisle.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. And I'm thinking, what's he doing here? As he's looking at me. So then we have this jockeying at intermission, up and down the stairs. I don't know how to go talk to him. He's standing there by a pillar. So I go down the stairs to the bathroom. I think, well, maybe when I come up, he'll say something to me. Anyway, finally I go over, and I say, "Oh, hello. I saw you before." He's there because he's going to the Thaila Movie House to see a film. And he's on the bus going down Broadway from his hovel up near Julliard, and he has a hallucination of this girl's face, and it's huge. And it's floating above the people on the bus. And he's just staring at this face, and he misses his stop. So he doesn't go to the movie. He comes in slightly late to the concert.

When we meet, he says, more or less, "I'm a musician. I'm on a scholarship at Julliard. I'm from Colorado. And I'm working to make time into space." And I say, "Oh, I'm a painter on scholarship at Columbia. And I'm working on making space into time." [Laughs] We had one cup of coffee between us. That's what we could afford. And then he walks the 40 blocks back, and I walk my 40 blocks down. When we become lovers, it's in his little terrible - he lives in something like a closet. It doesn't have a window. He's been practicing intensively for his final project concert with the famed pianist [Eduard] Steuermann. He's one of these Germans from your -

MS. RICHARDS: [Inaudible.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: S-T-E-U-E-R-M-A-N-N, Steuermann.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: So there's - it's a morning in May, it's still May. I feel - Jim gets up out of the tiny bed and puts on his one jacket, his woolly. I feel how woolly it is. And he goes for his final exam. He comes back rather soon, and I say, "How did you do? How was it?" And he says, "It was yesterday." We slept through it. [Laughs] Steuermann is enraged. He won't forgive him. He loses his scholarship. This is an impoverished kid, you know.

There's nobody to send him 25 bucks.

MS. RICHARDS: There's nobody he can go to at the school to appeal?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No. He loses it. He's out. So before we get our fellowships to Illinois, I guess, I get us a dreadful, what do you call it? railroad apartment on York Avenue by pretending with the Greek grocer that I will let the Greek grocer visit me. The apartment is \$38 a month up four flights of stairs. It's really dismal. Jim and I paint it every interesting color that we can. We drag his - an upright piano into one of the little rooms. Morton Feldman comes to visit us and sits on the bathtub.

MS. RICHARDS: How did he - Jim knew Morton?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, Jim - let's see. Has he done the concerts yet? Hmm. No, I think that's after Illinois. But I think - he goes to [Edgard] Varèse to see if he can study with him. Varèse won't take a student, but he gives me a job sorting his files. They're so sweet. So Varèse is called "Goofy" at home. That's his nickname. And his wife is Louise Norton, the translator of [Arthur] Rimbaud and related to Norton Publishing [W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, NY]. And they're just wonderful to us. I think this might even be before Illinois. So among all my part-time jobs I mentioned before, a dog-dryer in a pet shop, and an artist's model, and teaching Sunday School, and being in porno films on Saturdays, I do Varèse's files. And they're just - you would be appalled. All these clippings over what? 50 years, just thrown in a box. But I like this work. I have glue and scissors. And Varèse comes in in the morning and says, "Carolee! Would you like a banana?" [Laughs.]

Anyway, we get fellowships to the University - Oh, now there's a whole part I've forgotten. [To cat] Oh, you need brushing. You're losing all your fur again. Jim and I go to Colorado and meet his family, all his mother and sisters. His mother won't let us sleep together. So he's in a cot. Oh, it's ridiculous. So this is finally 1957 because we get the kitten then. The cat was found on the street.

MS. RICHARDS: Fifty-seven is when you just started Bard.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, I must have started in '55.

MS. RICHARDS: What year were you born?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Thirty-nine.

MS. RICHARDS: If you started at 18, it would be '57.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay. Alright. So then -

MS. RICHARDS: So the year - the earliest painting in the P.P.O.W. exhibitions is dated 1957. Was that done the first year at Bard?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Probably. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So you met Jim two years later then, '59?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Fifty-nine, yes. Then he loses his scholarship. Then we go that summer to Colorado. We get the cat [Kitsch]. And somehow I figured out, probably from Bard, through my girlfriend at Bennington, I know about - or he knows about - the Composers Conference. Jim gets a job finally. We go back East, and he's a copyist at the Composers Conference. And he meets Lionel Nowak, who's going to get him into Bennington. He's going to be one of the first guys to graduate from Bennington. Nowak believes in his work. He's an angel to us. This is when I work on the highway selling cheese on Route 7. And I teach painting and drawing at the YMCA. [To cat] I thought you'd be a lap cat. Does that seem nice? You like that, no? Is that sweet? So we're back in Vermont.

MS. RICHARDS: So you're out visiting Jim's family in Colorado?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: His mother and sisters, yes. The father - there's been an excruciating divorce. The father is in Arizona where Jim was born, and the sisters. The mother comes from a long line of Mormon settlers. And the Tenneys - actually they both come from founding families that go wrong. They go West, and they lose everything, both of their strands of relatives. Constantly losing everything. Even Poncho Villa steals their horses. Meanwhile, the Tenneys back East own most of Cape Ann, but that's another story, which relates to Charles Olson. We find this out later when we visit Olson. He has all the Tenney records on his wall when we get there. Early sixties, we're back East. We're reading everything by Olson, working with Deep Imagery. And for my birthday Jim says, "Maybe let's drive up there if he'll have us." And we send him a very - kind of sweet, humble note. And we get a postcard: "Yes, please come." So what we don't know is that Olson has been researching the history of the Tenney Family because it surrounds him. And we sleep in the Tenney graveyard, and we go to the

Tenney Lane. So when we get to visit Olson, it's really quite odd. You know he's huge.

MS. RICHARDS: Where exactly is this?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: In Gloucester [MA]. He's in an apartment. He doesn't even have his own house. He's huge in this very low-ceiled place. And all his research is pinned up on the walls, lots of maps, diagrams. And Jim and I are so bewildered because there's a whole wall of Tenney maps and family records and settlers' documents. And of course it's part of the Olson aesthetic to research as deeply as possible where you are - and how you came to be there and the transformations of place over time. But that's after Illinois. What happens is that when we're at Bennington, in order for Jim to get his scholarship - there are these evil people and these angels everywhere we go. The evil people say: Tenney cannot have his scholarship here unless he marries that vixen - I mean that artist, that girlfriend. They have to get married.

MS. RICHARDS: This is after you graduated from Bard?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You go and live in Bennington with him while he's going to school.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Right. That's it. And in order for him to get the scholarship, which he lost at Julliard, another form of it, they say we have to get married. Well, that's a whole panic. I've already told him I don't want to get married. I'm a painter. I won't take your name even though it's very nice. If we get any money, we won't share a bank account, and we won't have children. Okay? And we're deeply in love and want to make sure that everything we need is as we believe it should be, not knowing that people change radically. So we have a whole flurry and an emergency, and we get married. And the premise of getting married was also that the evil one in the art department would give me an assistant position so that I could teach drawing. They renege on this. Now we're married. Okay. We don't share a name, and we're not going to have children. We get the fellowships to the University of Illinois - it's a miracle - both of us. We can be in the same place when we -

MS. RICHARDS: So he graduated from Bennington?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: He graduates Bennington.

MS. RICHARDS: They let you say -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. We go to the Midwest. Oh, that's a whole other saga with the cat and the kittens and a U-Haul loaded up with the piano.

MS. RICHARDS: Let's do a whole chapter about cats.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay. And the paintings. And we're going in an ice storm, and the U-Haul flips over on the highway. We will do another chapter on travel. Because the point is that once we're at Illinois and we're each in our graduate departments with our interesting faculty, Jim is working with Lejaren Hiller, who is one of the -

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell that?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: L-E-J-A-R-E-N Hiller. He's one of the what should I say? Founders of electronic music exploration. And he calls us up after we've been there a month or two, and says, "I have very bad news. According to Illinois law, both of you cannot have fellowships at the University of Illinois. It's considered nepotism. No people related by blood or marriage." [Laughs] So, oh, fuck! No! We didn't think this was a good idea to begin with. And so you know who gives up the scholarship, the little lady. So it's terrifying. But I have - is this going along?

MS. RICHARDS: I should - no, no, it's fine.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Because I'm going on and on.

MS. RICHARDS: No, it's terrific. I'm thinking I should change discs because I should do this after an hour or so.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay. I know where -

[END OF CD 1.]

MS. RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards with Carolee Schneemann. This is disc two of session one.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Now we have to have a divorce after the enforced marriage. But we don't have any money. We don't know any attorneys. But wait! There's a friend of mine, a kid from Bard. I remember he's

working in a law office in Chicago. So I wrote him or find him or call him. I say, "There's a real emergency here. Can you get us a phony divorce somehow, just something? Just some papers or something. I need letterhead." He says, "Yes, that should be possible. I'll do something." So he writes up a whole legal thing that says: "Divorce proceedings are underway. They will no longer cohabit." So it goes to the bursar. It's accepted. We remain married in our shack in Sidney, Illinois - not on campus. We have all our classes. We have our fellowships. But we're married. So many years later when we do get divorced, it's a disaster for us. We're so shaken. And no one believes that we were married because we never said we were. Except somehow Jim's mother, while we're still in Illinois, has heard some rumor that we've divorced. [Laughs] And we can't explain that we didn't really divorce. [Laughs] Huh!

MS. RICHARDS: So how long were you in Illinois, and how was that whole experience academically for you?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, it was more of the same. Most of my faculty people say I'm unteachable. But by this time I know it's a crazy system. You have four professors, and each one wants a different style and devotion from you. I'm a landscape painter. I'm outside most of the time. I'm escaping. And doing a lot of prints and printing. I have a great print teacher, Lee Chesney; he's excellent.

MS. RICHARDS: When I remember seeing those paintings at P.P.O.W., they were quite figurative - figurative abstraction.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But those were all from - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Some were at Illinois. [*Three Figures, After*] Pontormo [1957] is before. *Quarry Transposed* [1960] is while I'm at the University.

MS. RICHARDS: Were you painting from a model?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No. Figurative? Well, the figurative ones are earlier. That's Bard. That's Jim, the naked Jim. Which other ones are figurative there?

MS. RICHARDS: I don't remember the names. I thought some of the early ones were.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: At the P.P.O.W.? Now, I think Jim is the only figurative portrait. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So how did you negotiate with all those four teachers?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, I think [inaudible]. I mean I loved it there. It was so creepy. We lived in the only place that had trees within 40 miles.

MS. RICHARDS: This is in Champaign-Urbana.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. You know there are no trees outside of town. It's just cornfields, infinite fields of corn, beans, sorghum. We found a little village that had a stream, a shack, big old trees. It was magical. It also had a very vicious ghost in it, a mean ghost. Something very scary, that Kitch, our cat, would try to move away, to try to get it to go. And our landlord was 80 years old. So this is where my first landscape activations begin when the tornado comes through, and a tree crashes down into the kitchen and breaks the window and the ceiling. And there's a tree in the sink. And there are no windows left on that side of the house, and it's the side that faces the streambed. So that's the story in *More than Meat Joy* [New Paltz, New York: Documentext, 1979]. We were in despair. We didn't know how we were going to handle this. Old McGinnis will take a very long time before anything can be fixed in this - it really is a little shack, but it's sweet. Cold and bitterly warm in the summer. But the cat, Kitch, studies the tree in the sink. And then she sees this as an extended passageway from inside outside. And we watch her walk out the length of the tree back into the fields. And I think, But this is what I really want to do! This is what I want my work to do. I want this fracture between inside and outside. And that's when I do my first activation. I call students and friends from the university and say, "Come out on Sunday. We'll do a cookout. And I want you to do some activations for me." And I give everybody cards.

MS. RICHARDS: You called them activations?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I think so. Or events. I didn't ever use the "P" word 'til very late. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: I saw that you also at some point called them kinetic theater.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But not at that point.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, I didn't know what I was doing, you know? And I should say here - unless I say it later - that all this work is so based on complete doubt and uncertainty. And when I do that first landscape activation, it began an emotional turmoil, almost a breakdown. I was really in despair because I had been cutting through the paintings, slicing, motorizing them. Bringing my paintings to all these extended dimensionalities, am I going to have to leave painting now? Am I going to have to go into real space? Somehow at that age, frame, time, I was distraught. And Jim and I talked about it a lot. I was reading some art magazines. I saw what [Allan] Kaprow had done. Very impressed with his work with the immensity of tires, that formalization of the ordinary. And I write to him. And on spring break I go and meet Allan in New York City. But where were we? We're still in Illinois, right?

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. And how were my teachers? Oh, the good luck was that the wonderful graduate studio old house burnt down. It was shocking and terrible, and we lost a lot of work. But it meant that everything loosened up. You know the teachers couldn't keep finding you right there or demanding this or that. But they put us in a grocery store with kind of partition walls. It was dreadful. So you heard everybody, you saw everything. Plus if you went away for a weekend, they moved your wall closer in so they had a few more inches. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: So a competition among students rather than camaraderie.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It was a very hostile group. Also because Post-Modernism hadn't set in yet. Feminism hadn't set in yet. What were all these girls doing? What was art supposed to be? Realism, Abstraction, Color Field, Linear. So the real breakdown of predictable, formalist that was underway, and people were confused and hostile. You know we pretty much all hated what everyone else was doing. [Laughs] But we had good friends there. Also, this is important, that Lejaren Hiller's wife, Elizabeth Hiller, was an actress. And she gives me [Antonin] Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double* [New York, New York: Grove Press, 1958], and that's going to change my life. It's a gift. "Read this book. Read this book." In the meantime I'm going through the stacks of the wonderful Illinois library where you can still walk down the aisles, and I'm putting my hands up, waiting for books that give me a little electrical charge. And I find Marie Bashkirtseff, her diaries.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell the last name?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: B-A-S-K-R-I-T-S-E-F-F [sic]. And now I'm searching for what I call the "missing precedents." I'm trying to find books that will show art made by women. You know it's 1959-60. This is a desperate search. And the only things I can find are in huge foreign books that are printed in Holland or Germany. They're not in English. And I look at the pictures, and I see there are some names: Rosa Bonheur. Just names. I'm finding names. And then I being to do more research, and see that so much of the women's work has been reattributed to [Frans] Hals, for instance. What's her name? [Judith van Leyster] Her work goes back to Hals, her partner. And what I forgot to say was when I was working at the Cloisters - this is a Bard field period - one of my jobs was to polish the plaques under the paintings at the Metropolitan Museum. They came in a cigar box. And you know I had a cloth and some oil. And I had a rather large one that said, "Marie Joseph Charpentier" in tiny little letters. And in big letters "Attributed to [Jacques-Louis] David." So I took it to the top curator, and I said, "This doesn't make sense." This is a beautiful portrait of the woman painting; it used to be at the top of the MET stairs for years. I said, "What does this mean? Is this by a woman or by David?" And they said, "If it's by Charpentier, it's worthless. It's in the School of David, and it's valuable." So things like that kept happening. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So you were talking about your first action, you brought your friends together.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. And then meeting Kaprow happens a few months later, I think. And it's a story I've told a lot, where he writes a postcard and says, "Sure, I'll meet you. Call when you get to New York." I phone, and he says, "We can meet in the Eighth Street Deli." So that's nice. And I go there, and there's this handsome guy. He's much younger than I imagined. And he says, "Well, kid, are you buying or selling?" Now I've never heard this kind of language before. It remains still today immensely bewildering. I've met [Joseph] Cornell, I've met Olson, [Stanley] Brakhage, Maya Deren. We don't have these words. [Laughs] And I asked him, "Well, I don't know. I don't think I'm buying or selling." And he says, "Well, I'll buy you lunch." So we have this lovely chat, and we come up with this collaborative work. We plan a work that we'll do together, theoretically in the summer, where we're going to get a little motorboat and a barge, and we're going to have invitations to everyone in New York City that might want to come to such an event. Meet us in East Hampton. And all the people from the art world go on the barge, and we drive them out to the middle of the ocean. And then we cut the rope, and we go back to land. We just leave everybody out there, and we think it's such an interesting piece to do.

MS. RICHARDS: Are you saying theoretically this is what you would do or you did it?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It was theoretically what we would do.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. [Laughs] I'm sure we wished we had done it but - Yes. By this time I think - I'm a little confused. I've worked -

MS. RICHARDS: So you left the meeting where that was the conversation.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: With Allan? Yes. And then we're friends forever after that. We stayed very close. I'm close with his wives. He has - there are some events back in New York City, I think, when Tenney and I are here, and also part time in the city. Some kind of -

MS. RICHARDS: So when you came back from Illinois, you moved into - that was when you started living in this house.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: A year later. I come here a year later.

MS. RICHARDS: And when you were in New York, you had a house in New York and an apartment at the same time.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: A loft.

MS. RICHARDS: Where was that?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: The first loft is Twenty-first Street because my friend Jennifer Lurie from Bard, who is the sister of the writer Alison Lurie. She and her boyfriend, who's a sculptor, he's working in a loft on West Twenty-first Street next to the Jewish graveyard.

MS. RICHARDS: Sixth Avenue.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Next door to me is Ruby Burkhardt and Edith Schloss. I meet them because they have a big black dog that comes out on their fire escape.

MS. RICHARDS: Eve Schloss?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Edith, Edith Schloss. And she'll be an important woman artist for me - neighbor. And they're an equitable couple. That's fascinating. And through their dog I meet them, and we become friends. And they're friends with Edwin Denby who lives across the street. And he's close to De Kooning. And the two brothers [Nicholas Krusnick and brother] who are incredible painters have a loft across the street.

MS. RICHARDS: Two brothers - not the [Raphael and Moses] Soyers?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, I worked for them. No, I'm their model. They're ridiculous, they're so sweet. Yes. I think it was - what was that, 98 cents an hour or something terrible. But the Soyer Brothers are so sweet. And also I'm learning - this is probably Bard field period. I'm learning how badly people, professionals, teach. How badly they teach! How badly they read the body. I'm the model, and my mind is just cooking. When I teach, it's not going to be like this. So, yes, they were very darling.

MS. RICHARDS: So when you first came - I'm sorry.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Go ahead.

MS. RICHARDS: When you first came back from Illinois and you got this loft on Twenty-first Street, that was in '61?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Sixty or '61. Jim has the job as composer-in-residence [for computer music] at Bell Telephone Labs [Murray Hill, NJ].

MS. RICHARDS: So you hadn't done the piece called *Glass Environment* [for *Sound and Motion*, 1962]?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Not yet. It's going to come in a minute. That's right. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: That was '62.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Is it? Oh, okay. But in the meantime - I mean we didn't know how we'd ever get out of Illinois. We were in tremendous confusion, despair, and poverty.

MS. RICHARDS: But you both graduated, I'm sure?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: We both graduate.

MS. RICHARDS: So getting out you mean [inaudible]?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Leaving our jobs. We didn't know where to go. We definitely didn't want to stay stuck in Illinois, despite some very sophisticated friends in Chicago; but that's another story. And we're at the tiny, weeny post office, and Jim gets a letter that Bell Telephone Labs is going to hire him. He had gone out for an interview. And he had the flu, and he had a fever, and he ended up lying down on the couch while all these important people tried to talk to him. And he came back, and he said, "You know I blew it. It's lost. It's a disaster." But it wasn't. So we pack up, and we go East. And we find another amazing house built into the side of a mountain in Myersville, New Jersey. A house for - the owner who'd built it had hung himself.

Kitty, honey, what's going on with you? [Referring to Red Shadow, Scheemann's cat.] What would you like? I'm going to give you a treat in a minute. Oh, he's all bones and straggly. I think you should come on this chair. Looks nice? This is for you. Come on, you're taking time from the Archives of American History. Come here, you. Come on, honey. Oh, he doesn't want to go there.

Okay, so there's this remarkable loft. And because Jim is working with Billy Kluver, I meet Billy, and Billy immediately tells me to go to a friend's place on East Second Street or East Third Street, where he's doing something in a storefront. So I go there, and I'm immediately put in this "happening". It's a happening. And it's [Claes] Oldenburg's *Store Days* [1962]. It's incredible magic. It fits with everything that's moving beyond the canvas. I'm living in someone's vision of materiality in motion and suspended in time. I'm given that purple dress from the Salvation Army - it's a beautiful silk dress covered in spangles - and a knife. And I'm told to stand on this little - what to do you call it over a fireplace? What do you call that?

MS. RICHARDS: Mantelpiece?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. A little mantelpiece. And I have vertigo. I'm to walk up and down, back and forth on this mantelpiece. Lucas Samaras is under me doing - on the floor - doing something. Patty [Muschinski] and Claes have dramatic entrances and exits and lots of material things flowing in the air and spilling and fractured texts. The tiny store is full of people lining the walls, and they get covered in powder and dust. And then the other side of the wall are Claes's plaster foods, all the cakes and pies. I write a really strong appreciation of it. I know where I am. So it's filing, it's great. Then a month or so later I have what's called my debutante party in this loft on Twenty-first Street. I invite all the artists I've met.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember the address of that loft? It would be interesting to know.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, 116, 114? It's torn down now. There's a big building there. The whole street is weird.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So they had a debutante party.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, it was wonderful. [Robert] Whitman, [John] Chamberlain -

MS. RICHARDS: What do you mean? Why do you call it a debutante party?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, suddenly I just invited all these people I'd heard of, and they all turn up at the party. And they say: Oh, this is your emergence in New York City.

MS. RICHARDS: Debut.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Debut, yes. And it was very rough. You know there's a bottle of whiskey and seltzer, and I guess people brought this and that to eat. Chamberlain and Neil - what was Neil's last name? Two big handsome guys. They wrestle, they fight. Was his name Williger? Not Williger. Anyway, Neil Welliver, he goes out the window, I'm on the second floor, into the - I mean everyone gets so drunk. We smash Whitman's - anyone who has glasses, we smash them on the floor. And the music is roaring. We're doing the twist. It's lots of fun. And then they break a hole in my wall. And I say, "Don't do that! The rats will come in." And then the artists pick up my paintbrushes, and they write, "Rats! Rats! Rats!" So when I wake up in the morning, there's this immense dishevelment with broken eyeglasses and holes in the wall and the word "rats" everywhere. Oh, a great success. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: I was waiting for the police to be coming. [Laughs]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, eventually they did turn up because it was illegal to be there. But that's because they want sex or something, and you give them some whiskey. All these things one has to learn in those early New York days. But I leave that loft because I think my friends need to expand into it. And I find a more magical,

amazing loft on Twenty-ninth off of Sixth Avenue. It's a furrier's loft.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember the address?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes, 122 West Twenty-ninth.

MS. RICHARDS: And you're living there with Jim?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, actually no.

MS. RICHARDS: Because you're saying I.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, that's right. Jim is still in Myersville. And the next summer we're going to come here and just live here.

MS. RICHARDS: Here in - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Upstate New York, yes, mid-state. And I'm going to share the loft. No, I don't have to share - the first loft I don't have to share it.

MS. RICHARDS: You shared Twenty-first Street?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: With whom?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: With Jimpy's [Jennifer Lurie] partner, Al [Cooke].

MS. RICHARDS: An artist?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: He's a sculptor, yes. He teaches me welding. I have terrible wounds all over my knees from the splattering aluminum. [Laughs] I'll remember.

MS. RICHARDS: So this loft on Twenty-ninth Street was the first place you had alone.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It belongs to two brothers named Calvin and Melvin Lieberman. It's utterly romantic and fantastic. It's the second floor of an old loft building, and it's full of fur, just abandoned fur and these cutting-board tables. There's a derelict who lives in the hallway where the sink and toilet are. I realized after a while that that's where he lives. Somehow he knows how to get in and out. And that's okay with me. I don't need to kick him out. I have three skylights. I have one over a little room that was the office for this fur cutter.

MS. RICHARDS: You're on the top floor?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: How many flights?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Two.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, not a -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's a little loft building, yes. Boy, it's romantic. A heavenly skylight with the snow coming down on it or the rain. And that's where I do *Big Boards* [1963]. I start *Big Boards* there. And a lot of the fur landscapes. The work that was done in Myersville in that old house is brought to the loft. And I give myself my first retrospective, calling it "From 1939 to 1962," Or '63? I'd have to look it up. And Kaprow and [Dick] Higgins and Dick Bellamy and Oldenburg and many wonderful people come, including Jackie Ferrara. Yes, some of the women are beginning to emerge. But we don't have much real contact directly. It's still through the guys and the guys' events. It's going to change radically as we know - or as we have already forgotten. But it's a tremendous change. But I'm working away. I'm inspired. I'm excited. This is a time when garbage is put out in the street. And if I dream of a carton full of blue velvet ribbon, it will be there in the morning.

But at the same time a problem develops with Calvin and Melvin Lieberman, and they're so funny, and they're always upset with me. They're always saying, "What's a nice girl like you - what are you doing up there?" And I say, "Well, I'm making work with fur." "It's going to poison you! You're going to get rashes!" [Laughs] So they get upset because there's some garbage put in front of 122 that looks just like mine but it isn't. It's old *ArtNews*, kitty litter, paint tubes, and they're fined \$50 for this garbage because it has to go to the street corner or somewhere else. I say, "It's not mine. I didn't do it." So I start to hang out looking for the culprit. And at 114 West Twenty-ninth a big guy comes out of the doorway, and he's carrying a brown paper bag, and it looks just like -

and this sounds like Arlo Guthrie - it looks like the same kind of garbage. [Richards laughs.] And I go over, and I catch him, and I say, "I thought I was the only artist on this street. Are you an artist on this street?" He says, "Yes." And I said, "Well, did you put your garbage in front of my door right there." And he says, "Well, perhaps I did." Anyway, we've become very close friends. His name is Blackie Langlois. He's from Maine. Bernard-Blackie-Langlois. He does huge wooden sculptures of bears and clocks, and he shows with Allan Stone [Allan Stone Gallery, New York, New York]. And we are the only two artists on the block. Except in my building now we have - Bob [Robert] Zakanitch moves into my floor. He does beautiful paintings, beautiful paintings. And inspired by Kitch, he gets a cat, and it's a bad cat. And that's another story of, you know, you don't always get that cat thing to work. And then Antonakis - sculptor?

MS. RICHARDS: Antonakis [Christodoulou]?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Antonakis gets the loft downstairs. So a lot of artists are turning up. Because in the meantime people don't know where Twenty-ninth Street is. It's like Atlantis. They know East Tenth Street and Fifty-seventh Street. So I feel like such a pioneer. You know new territory. Vast. Huge space. Sixty-seven dollars a month. So of course we do our own wiring, and we finish the floors. Whatever we can do. Anyway, Blackie at some point says, "I think I'm moving back to Maine. My loft is bigger than yours. I wonder if you'd take it and kind of look after it for me. I might come back, I might not." Another horrible dilemma. I discuss it with Jim. What should we do? I love this little loft. It's magic. And for some reason Jim thinks we should get the bigger one. He has a feeling Blackie won't really come back. We'll just look after the work he's stored there. This is the best decision of my life, by weird garbage coincidence. The little magic building, the wall falls out into the parking lot below. Toxic spray paint people move into what used to be Lieberman's office, and half the street is stinking. Blackie did not come back. After many years in this loft and here at home in the house - I share the loft half the week so a writer or somebody can be there so that I can go back and forth on the bus.

MS. RICHARDS: This is the one on 122 West Twenty-ninth.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, that's the old one; 114.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, sorry.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I moved to 114.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It has a tree branch for a railing. That's what Blackie has improved it - with that. It's still very rough with tin ceilings and torn-up floors. Two skylights at the top. They leak. So I'll jump ahead because maybe we need a break. I don't know.

MS. RICHARDS: If we go 30 more minutes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay. Sure.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Its hard, once I get started it's such fun. So I'm jumping ahead because many different - the loft becomes a site of heartbreak and disaster when Jim and I separate. It's full of absolute anguish and grief. But I overcome that eventually when I come back from London. I'm still working there. But I've been away, and I come back, and there's a brochure in the mailbox - it's just a broken-down old thing that says, "Welcome to the Flower Co-op." So I throw that away. Then that brochure appears again. I think, what the hell is this? And I take it upstairs, and it has my building in it!. My building is attached to a big handsome, solid cement building next door by a boiler. They're going to turn two little buildings, attached to the big one into co-ops. It's a nightmare. I had no money. I couldn't possibly buy a co-op.

I have a friend on the board, I don't realize it. But he's an entrepreneur of videos, someone who founded The Kitchen [New York, New York] originally, who's working also in real estate. I have a lease. They can't kick me out. But everybody is gone. The building is desolate; it's all empty. The big building is empty. They made findings - it's called findings - zippers and little buttons; it was probably seven floors of small manufacturers, and they're all gone. It's very desolate. The heat goes off on weekends. It's a million dollar - zillion dollar - co-op about to happen. And my friend says, "You know you can do some deal. Sell your portion now, and you can still live in it or get someone." There are different ways to invest, and I can't find anyone to do it. About two weeks before my lease is up and they can legally get rid of me and all my work that's been accumulating there for years -

MS. RICHARDS: Do you know what year this is?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: This is '77, I think. I think '77, yes. A friend of mine, Nina Yankowitz, artist, calls and says, "There are these people doing a tax shelter deal by commissioning artists to do a series of silk-screen prints. Would you like to do it?" "Yes, yes." So suddenly I have \$6,000 in advance for this commission. So I call my guy at the co-op, and I say, "Can we do anything with \$6,000?" And he says, "No." He says, "I could work something out for \$11,000, give you the whole floor, and you own it, if you can just get \$11,000." I don't know. I worked it out. I worked it out. So I become an owner of this wretched old loft. And that's why we're sitting here with enough food and the studio out front there. Because at some point before 9/11 one of the voices starts saying, "We've had enough of this. Let's not do this anymore. Let's just stay in the country. Maybe you can sell this." And I can, and I do. And I don't get a fortune because the co-op is trying to block the sale now. They want the building, they want my floor. So every time a real estate agent gets someone that we think will really like the floor and take it, the co-op refuses them. This is the same pattern of we're going to punish you, and then it works out. So I got enough money to finally for the first time in my life take a taxi if I need to, eat out if I need to.

Yes. Take you to the vet if we need to! [Referring to Red Shadow.]

MS. RICHARDS: So that was right before 9/11?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Two thousand, 2001?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. And of course now the property has gone way down. Not only that, they built a high-rise out my beautiful back window that faced these charming rooftops. The back end of that loft felt like an Italian village; it's blocked in. Whew! Another close call. [Laughs] Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Shall we go back to the evolution of your work?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So it's about 1962, I think, and you're just starting I guess to work on the theater, the kinetic theater pieces.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Well, when we come to New York City, there's the collaborative energy that didn't exist at these universities at all. Jim forms Tone Roads Concert Series with Malcolm Goldstein and Philip Corner.

MS. RICHARDS: What is the year that you helped found the Judson Theater [Judson Dance Theater, Judson Memorial Church, New York, NY, 1962-1964]?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I'd have to look it up.

MS. RICHARDS: That's later.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, it's very close to this. It's '60 or '61, I think. I get confused. I have to look at *More than Meat Joy*, but it's right upstairs. We can check it.

MS. RICHARDS: I have some dates. Well, *Eye Body* was '63.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That's right. That's for sure.

MS. RICHARDS: And do you recall if it was before or after that, the Judson?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Hmm.

MS. RICHARDS: Well anyway, at some point you talked about the founding of the Judson Dance Theater.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Enter these friends - I'm taken to a group of dancers who will become the Judson. We were all, you know, like blind with self-determination, that we were going to do something wonderful. And these concerts are extraordinary, with no money; and somehow places are given to these musicians. So that's a big continuing influence. There's Ives, Varèse, Feldman, Earle Brown, [John] Cage; Cage becomes very important to us at this time.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: And through Philip I meet Yvonne-Yvonne Rainer - and the group of dancers who are working independently together. They've been very influenced by Anna Halprin and by James Waring.

Woops! [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: [Referring to Red Shadow]I can't encourage him because I need to write. [Laughs.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Kitty!

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: So I'm doing all these drawings of - Well, I've begun motorizing my works. I'm working with small display motors so that there's an actual active momentum within the painting constructions. And as I'm doing that kind of drawing of the little motors in motion and how that can be integrated with the larger forms, I'm drawing images of bodies in motion and fulfilling certain image configurations, almost sculptural shapes and sizes. So when I hear about this group - that has no name - I'm thrilled to choreograph, to begin doing pieces with them. So one of the first ones is - is *Newspaper Event* [1963] the first one, for the Living Theater?

MS. RICHARDS: I don't know.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: We'll look it up. People misunderstand. We did not work with the Living Theater. They were still doing theater, traditional, verbal, narrative theater. But they offered us the space on a Monday night, a dark night, and Dick Higgins was organizing this. And Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles were among the first artist couples and very important for us as, you know, see that equity, the aesthetic collaboration they had. So Higgins and I evolved the program. LaMonte Young was going to do his sound piece; that was wonderful and disruptive. And then Higgins had a group of events, and I choreographed this - what was it called? [*Glass Environment for Sound and Motion* [1962]].

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm. That was before *Glass Environment*?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, that was it. That's what it was called.

MS. RICHARDS: *Glass Environment for Sound and Motion* [1962].

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That's it, *Glass Environment*. So I had these dangerous shards of broken glass.

MS. RICHARDS: Nineteen sixty-two.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Okay. Yes. And the other artists accepted certain movement parameters that they would evolve during the course of the event. It was fun. And dangerous, moving through these huge pieces of glass that came out of the studio with what I was working on there. And I was drilling a lot of glass and suspending it and letting it be moved by fans. I don't know if I had fans to complicate the directions the dancers - performers - would take within these hunks of glass. I don't remember that. But in the studio definitely small fans, larger fans. So I was increasing the degree to which my materials could become activated while still within the structure.

Then choreographing: As everybody knows, I would consider these highly risky physical actions, such as jumping off a ladder, and have a whole sequence of motions to bring to the dancers of jumping off a ladder with paint buckets in your hand. And as you leapt, the paint would spill and splatter, and that would produce a form of time-factored painting. Well, the dancers wouldn't do this. I didn't understand their concern for their ankles and other parts of their bodies!. And they didn't want a mess. And they never considered the full space as an active element. They were concerned with their own physicality and its propulsive dynamic. So when we were finally in the basement gym at Judson, they were not concerned with the basketball hoops or the radiators. And I felt that they were extremely active elements in this large collage and had to be considered. So that was funny. So there were many discrepancies in what we thought we had to consider.

So *Newspaper Event* was an image of a huge, exploded collage of - you know what? It comes back to Blackburn, doesn't it? [Morris Blackburn. Paul Blackburn, poet is another influence, friend] It's a ton of shredded newspapers so that the whole floor and the walls begin to be malleable and active. And within all this newspaper there are instructions to cover, uncover, make shapes, certain kinds of motions where you can slide and skid and dump things. But it's not as random as it sounds. The crucial problem was that the week before this was to happen there was a huge newspaper strike in New York City. And suddenly you couldn't find piles of newspaper. We were going everywhere. Do you have anything in your backroom, you know? Does anyone have an attic? So this is how we can date the work for sure. No, actually I have the dates upstairs. So there was a strike, and it made it so stressful, so complicated. We went to the [*Village*] *Voice* and took every pile of old newspapers that they didn't need anymore. Still wasn't enough. So *Newspaper Event* is best described by going to the script and the score in *More than Meat Joy*, and of course the photographs in its album upstairs.

I think it was followed by *Chromelodeon* [1963], a more - a differently conceived sequence of actions and physical interchanges. It was very concerned with developing contact improvisation as an erotocizing extension of the contact with sculptural materials. Think of the body in terms of its malleability. And of course this is the

problem with *Eye Body* where in 1963 I include my body as a collage extension of the painting - construction materials; never suspecting that the body's going to dominate the perception of that work. And that's a dilemma that is only just now perhaps beginning to shift after all these years.

MS. RICHARDS: At what point in your work in general in those early years, and with specific pieces, did you decide to film it? And at what point did you decide it would be a film of a performance, or it would be a film?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, I never had that - I never had that economic flexibility to even imagine that I could have a film. It was so difficult. There was such an intense concentration just to get the elements necessary for the kinetic theater to be realized. And I was making film to go in as part of those works. So it's only been - I've only re-mastered these early documents this year - and they're great. I'm happy with them. But I could never tolerate them as documents, and I never let them out. I didn't even want scholars to look at them. They're plodding, they're clumsy.

MS. RICHARDS: What you're talking about are - is - film documentation of the performance?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: *Meat Joy* has been re-mastered. *Fuses* has lost footage integrated that I could never afford, and it has a color correction that I couldn't have afforded before. *Fuses*, *Meat Joy*; *Snows* [1967] is very interesting now. It's a real work. *Carl Ruggles' Christmas Breakfast* [1963]; that was always kind of okay. *Illinois Central* [1968] has been reedited a bit. It's kind of ragged, but there's not much we can do about that. But there are major works now that I'm happy for them to approach my culture. Yes. But that's all through grants. It just happened from EAI [Electronic Arts Intermix, New York, NY] and Anthology Film Archives [New York, NY]. Getting the grants from Preservation Funds at MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY] and Chicago and Warhol Foundation [The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, New York, NY].

MS. RICHARDS: So when you did *Eye Body*, there was or wasn't someone filming it?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes, but that was just for camera, for still camera. That was a work for cameras, made for camera. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay. As opposed to a work made for a public performance.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Right. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And when you were - at that moment when you were doing both, at what point did you decide whether it would be a film, *Meat Joy* or *Fuses* - well, *Fuses* is different - but *Meat Joy* -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: *Snows*.

MS. RICHARDS: *Snows*.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, those are all - I never was able to organize filming. People came and said they'd like to film it. And then I tried to follow up and say, well, can I have a copy of it?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: And then I sat on that for many, many years, until I realized what I really wanted to do. And that the computer technology could accomplish, with a good editor, to do what I needed - it could become what I needed it to become.

MS. RICHARDS: So you had no control over the approach of that film.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Never, never.

MS. RICHARDS: They did it the way that wanted to do it.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And I read at one point that someone videotaped something and withheld it.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes. *Interior Scroll* [1975].

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, Dorothy Beskind of New York City.

MS. RICHARDS: And that's still being withheld?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, along with her wonderful documentation of Eva Hess, Ana Mendieta, Lil Picard, Judith Bernstein.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmmm.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Hmmm.

MS. RICHARDS: How old is she?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Probably 67, 68?

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, that's all. Okay.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Maybe more.

MS. RICHARDS: Alright. Well, why don't we take a break now.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. It's getting cold in here. [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

[END OF CD 2.]

MS. RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards, session two, disc one, with Carolee Schneemann, March 1, 2009, for the Archives of American Art.

Carolee, I think you were at the beginning of your work in performance, but not using that term.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, that's what it's become.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: We use the term.

MS. RICHARDS: And in 1963-'64 when you were at - we could talk about making *Meat Joy*, what led up to that. And I have this question relating to that, and I'll start with it: When I look at all those works, one element that no one can miss is how beautiful you are. And I wondered how that affected your work. Any aspect that you want to start with.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, I never -

MS. RICHARDS: Any eroticism in any of those pieces specifically, if you've addressed that before.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's odd, but I never thought that I was beautiful. I always thought other women were beautiful. But I knew that I was ideal enough that I could use this ideality to disrupt and displace the conventional expectations of what an appealing looks, appealing, arousing body could do or mean in its culture. And as I've often said, I was very disturbed by the depiction of female nudes in Pop Art. And one of my motives - it wasn't programmatic, but a cultural motive - is that I felt was to disrupt those mechanistic, perfected, machine-like depictions of female forms that were so common during Pop Art.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean [Tom] Wesselmann and - Rosenquist?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes. You know I loved all that work, but it was hostile to my sense of lived sensuality and actual experience, the pleasures of the body, the energy of the body, the intelligence of the body. I couldn't find it anywhere as I imagined it might be. I wasn't sure I was going to grasp that. But that was also the motive for *Fuses*. Oh, we're surrounded by cats. Good heavens! [Laughs] [To cat] Yes, you are the most special boy. And he's just being ridiculous. You're not like this usually. Here, you come sit on the nice chair, okay? Whoa, big guy. There you go. You stay there, see?

I did know that if - from seeing, you know, dancers and other women performers - if I was short or fat or had heavy legs, there would be no way that - That that would be such a judgment and distraction, that I wouldn't be able to move within and against the conventionalizations of what was acceptable for females for their physicality; which was basically to sustain pleasure and arousal for the male. And this was my motive for *Fuses*, was that female sexuality in the sixties was depicted only in pornography or medical literature. So what women really experience we whispered to each other, we spoke about it perhaps to our lovers. But it was not in any explicit cultural expression.

MS. RICHARDS: So while you had to deal with the negative - the challenges - of being a woman in the art world

and of being an attractive woman, actually you used that in a positive way for your work.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: But you're absolutely right. It was also used against the seriousness of the work, you know: If she's so sexy and so attractive, the work has got to be kind of stupid; or it can't be as smart as she wants us to imagine it is. And it occurred to me that watching [Louise] Nevelson and other artists who had been exotic or beautiful that so long as male culture felt they wanted to fuck this female, her work was always going to be denigrated and marginalized. And when she got old and they didn't feel that sexual confusion, oh, they might look at the work more clearly. And this has some odd aspect to it: that for the most part, the major appreciation and curatorial commitment has been from gay men. So it's another area to think about, perhaps not today, but -

MS. RICHARDS: I noticed - and I was going to ask you about - that relationship with Dan Cameron.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: And that work that he did, the interview, I think it was in 1980, when he was just a student.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, that was adorable. Yes. Oh, that probably didn't have anything to do with his erotic self. It might have. I think, maybe he was just - well, maybe it did.

MS. RICHARDS: Well, thinking of a gay male interested in your work.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. He was a kid, you know, such a young person: h. He's fun, he's delightful. [Refers to past... later he's a brilliant curator]

MS. RICHARDS: I'm going back to *Fuses*. I know you've spoken about that so often. But that film and the other films were such groundbreaking films in terms of filmmaking; it is, I think, a first even before - in addition to - their part as artworks in the art world. Were you thinking about filmmaking at that time? I know you talked about working with Stan Brakhage.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I didn't work with Stan.

MS. RICHARDS: I guess I misstated that. That he - there was some relationship where you did something for one of his projects?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No. This is an area of endless confusion.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, let's clear that up.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Brakhage and Jim both were from Denver in the same high school. Brakhage was older. But being so isolated as sensitive, intellectuals, potential artists, they became very close. And in Stan's early black-and-white psychodrama films, young Jim Tenney did the music for the first one, a piano piece, and appeared in *Desist* [1954] as a most disturbing aspect of someone I would later cherish and love; because this kid looks disgusting. So when Tenney and I are first together, Brakhage is his best friend and the person with whom we share intensively everything we're thinking about and doing. Brakhage runs away from Dartmouth and his scholarship; his premise was always to live with the artists that he wanted to learn from. And he had lived with [Robert] Duncan and Jess [Collins] in California. He came East and also kind of lived with Maya Deren. So he immediately brought Jim and me to Maya and to Joseph Cornell. And I brought Stan to contemporary painting and to my painting.

It's the influence of my painting that inspired or motivated Stan to leave black-and-white film and begin to look more intensively at nature and natural form, which was an argument that we had whenever we were together: That is, I felt he was in a dead end with the black-and-white psychodramas with his amazing visuality and eye. Tenney brought us to music and to structures of composition. One of the problems with *Fuses* is that it's made with a very rigorous visual score that's influenced by music. And when people stop looking at the genitals or the beautiful woman, they can begin to feel the momentum, the musicality, the form of that film. Partly inspired by *Window Water Baby Moving* [1962], Brakhage's film, I wanted to do a film of the fuck, of that core of heterosexual connection which Brakhage hadn't don't yet. And that was part of our mutual discussion, and he lends me a Bolex early on to work with. This is not a hierarchical relationship. Stan is really in love with Jim, as I am! And before Stan establishes his own sense of sexual self, he's watching us. And so we're in his film *Loving*, which also doesn't have intercourse in it. And *Daybreak* [1957] and *Whiteye* [1957] are in our house in Vermont, where I feel our [domestic] symbols and elements have been usurped.

No, it's always very difficult. It's quite full of contention because Stan, much as he admires and loves me and cares for me, he still inhabits this hierarchical position where I'm the one who should cook and clean and let the guys talk all night and eat everything in the house. And, you know, that configuration. When I get pregnant - and we'll intend to have the first abortion - we call Stan to tell him because he's the best friend. And unexpectedly - I

thought it was unexpectedly - he freaks out and says, "This baby belongs to both of us." To Jim and to Stan. His sense of entitlement. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Well, going on from there, how would you say that you began - you went from your occurrences in Illinois you talked about -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: To deciding to make a very ambitious film? I mean you have the -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I didn't know it would be ambitious. No, I didn't know what it would be. I just wanted to see if it was possible to capture this aspect of lived experience by ourselves with no one else in the room; and as you know, using the cat as the camera eye because Kitch, our cat, had this shameless appreciation of our making love, and would be close to us purring. And then if I would open my eye and look at her and she was looking at us, she would look away very modestly, the way cats can do: "Oh, don't think I'm really here. I'm just purring". [Laughs] And a complicated work because it grew intensively. And it was such a pleasure once I was editing it, it was like thousands of frames in motion I was painting. And of course that tradition of painting on film comes from Stan. But it's a set of mutual interchanges going on there.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: So I don't know what effect *Fuses* is going to have, whether it will look like some kind of weird pornography or - I don't know. And of course I'm absolutely blessed that the work sustains itself, has its own life, its own dynamic, and that it's become a classic heterosexual work. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: After you made that film, can you talk about what that led to next?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Was it *Meat Joy*?

MS. RICHARDS: I think it - I have *Meat Joy* in -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I think that was probably in the middle of it.

MS. RICHARDS: The same date in a way. *Meat Joy*'s 1964. *Fuses*, '64-'65.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And then you went on to *Body Collage* [1967].

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, that's much later. Given that -

MS. RICHARDS: Sixty-seven.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, '67 or '68-'67, I forget the dates. Yes. So there's this - I'm sizzling with erotic energy. I have such a high erotic charge, when I touch things, I can feel they get sizzling; tables, chairs, things pour an energy back to me. And this is the kind of energy that's so coherent with Jim, as lovers and partners in everything. And so that's also the embodied energy field that goes into these works. *Meat Joy* begins as a series of sensesthesia, sensations of - sensory sensations as images in motion. And I begin drawing certain configurations and figurations, and seeing an extension of the body now in the materials of viscera instead of paper or rope or water: the chickens, the fish, sausages. And persistent drawings of interactions between participants. So when I'm invited by [Gudmundur] Erro to go to Paris, it's just an overwhelming surge of potential physicalized imagery. And it's Erro's inviting me to be part of Jean-Jacques Lebel's Festival of Free Expression [Paris, France]. That's 1964, right, in Paris!

MS. RICHARDS: Erro, how is that spelled?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: E-R-R-O. He's the Icelandic painter who - his name was originally Ferro, with an F. But there's, what do you call it? a hair salon in Paris that has that name, and they sue him, a young painter; they make him change his name. So he drops the F. He's a dear, inspiring, devoted friend, and he doesn't have any of the macho qualities of my American male artist friends, the painters particularly. It's different. He comes from a different culture. Women have more equity and authority. So I end up in Paris not speaking French with money from Martinique that my dad had that he thought was French. Miserable. Lebel didn't believe I would ever make it. And he doesn't know what to do with this girl, but it all works out. And he puts me up in La Louisiane, the best hotel, rue de Seine. I hang my microphone out the windows so that I can record all the cries of the fish vendors. It's perfect. I have a dictionary and begin to gather participants for *Meat Joy*.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were thinking about *Meat Joy*, did you plan it, either using storyboards or drawings?

How much of the choreography or the scripting, the scoring, did you do in advance?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, a lot, a lot. And then it's flexible, and I change it, depending on duration, the space, building.

MS. RICHARDS: But you decided in advance how many participants?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And exactly what their motions would be?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Not exactly, no. That has to evolve. What I didn't say earlier was that when I started to work with Judson, I never wanted to perform or participate. I'm a painter. I wanted my solitude and my quiet and my sense of being able to really see what's happening. But I had to start to physically do what my drawings showed me. I had to physically translate that for the participants. So if I wanted ten people to jump off a ladder, I had to jump off the ladder. And I couldn't do that. So I started with very small ladders. And that would, of course, influence the movements and the contact within these works, as I had to train people. And really I had to train them very indirectly. I could never tell two people to grab each other and fall down. I had to build a set of exercises very, very slowly, where they didn't grab each other and fall down; they might exchange some kind of object and pull at it or tear at it. I had to evolve relatively subtle ways to approach physical contact. It couldn't happen head on. And that became fascinating and part of the content of the movement works.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. And while you're thinking of the next thing - and a lot of that was influenced by the way my cats made contact. I built a lot of my exercises on how cats feint and play and jostle and give advantage and take advantage. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Did the people whom you selected have to audition in any way for you? How did you know in advance that they were going to be able to - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I watched them in a bar, in a café. I could see - I would read something about their physicality. And I would say, Yes! That one, that will do. That's perfect. And they often needed convincing because they didn't know what I was doing. It didn't exist as a form. They'd be right off put off. So sometimes they kind of auditioned me! You know they'd come to a rehearsal to see if it was tolerable. It inspired and required really tremendous devotion. I don't know how I did that or how that happened. The people who worked with me really had to want to see this evolve.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm.[Affirmative.] Even early on in your career, you were teaching, visiting, adjunct, lecturing. Right?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you do that for the money only? Did you do that - for what reason?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That's my job. That's the only way I can earn a living. And I usually love doing it. As you were saying about other artists, I don't have other skills. I can't do designing or layouts or typesetting. But I can teach.

MS. RICHARDS: Have you found -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I'm an extraordinary teacher. I'm an amazing teacher, which sounds terrible to say that. But I have such immediate insight as to what the students need for themselves beyond anything that I think should happen. And I can go where they are most frail or vulnerable and offer them a way to find their strength. It's very exciting. It's really - Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: It must be recognized, you have such a long list of teaching engagements in your -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, maybe. But the other part of the story I'd really like to tell is some of the things that happened with the teaching that are amazing and special.

MS. RICHARDS: Things that you got back from it beyond the - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Things that happened to them. Hmmm. The blindfolded, uptight Marine listening to Mozart while I give him watercolors, things like that. [Laughs]

[To pet] Oh, kitty! Don't jump [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: Early - Also as you were working on these early performance pieces, you also started, I think, in the early seventies to make artists' books.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: How did - why did you do that, what was the - ? How did this fit into - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, my first book - I'm trying to remember. All the little German - not cults. Where I grew up we had Bruderhof, we had Amish, we had Mennonites. The Mennonites - the Mennonite printer covers my first book when I was nine or ten. And it's a dreadful thing. I hope it never surfaces. But, you know, it was poems and birds and cats and such. But that was my first book, with a red cover. How did that happen? It was thrilling. So we're looking at history, and that was really history. And what was the first book?

MS. RICHARDS: I think I - 1972, *Parts of a Body House*.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: *Parts of a Body House* book. Oh, I'd been longing to do that. And Felipe Ehrenberg in exile from Mexico ran the Beau Geste Press.

MS. RICHARDS: Felipe Arenberg?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Ehrenberg, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that A-R?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: E-E-H.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, oh, Ehrenberg.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Ehrenberg, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: He ran what press?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: The Beau Geste Press in Cullompton, Devon [United Kingdom], an old farmhouse he found with his -

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell Cullompton?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: C-[U]O-L-L-U-M-P-T-O-N [sic]. Cullompton. It's a wonderful name.

MS. RICHARDS: In Devon.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. He was an exile from the police aggression in Mexico where peaceful protestors, maybe 60, were murdered by the police.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that in 1968, that famous - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I think so, yes. He and his wife and his children had to escape. They sent the children to the poet Margaret Randall. They end up in England. And so there's this remarkable web of exiles, including Cecilia Vicuña, a poet from Chile; she's just come to study, and she can't go back home. So Felipe gathers many of these artists for projects that are mimeograph works with the Gestetner.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: And he's such an inspiring major figure as an artist and as an entrepreneur for artists. So I get to do *Parts of a Body House* book there. Anthony is with us.

MS. RICHARDS: Anthony McCall?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Yes, we're together by then. Kitch is still alive and with us. [To cat] Right? You remember? This was kind of you a thousand years ago, before you were you. Yes? And then when I come back to the States - You know I'm writing all the time. I'm still always writing all the time. It's just a mess of papers everywhere. But I'm writing - all the feminist tracts are gathered into *Parts of a Body House* book. And then coming back to the States, I begin collating other feminist research and texts for *Cézanne, She Was a Great Painter* [Tresspass Press: New York, 1974].

MS. RICHARDS: What were the years that you were away?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Hmmm, '69, '70, '71, '72, '73. I think I come back in '73. I'm confused. We can look it up.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: But Anthony and I are definitely here in the States. We're living back here in this house and in the loft in New York City on Twenty-ninth Street.

MS. RICHARDS: So would you say that was the beginning of your writings? I was going to ask you about your writings, about your work.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No. No, I'm always writing. I'm trying to remember. Well, the letters, you know, the Kristine Stiles book of letters takes letters from the fifties through 'til 2000 probably. And some didactic material is in those letters.

MS. RICHARDS: What was your motivation to write about your work?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Rose, that early teacher that made us write!

MS. RICHARDS: But did you feel that there were certain things you wanted to express or that you could describe and talk about your work better than someone else could? Or is it a feedback into your work?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, no one else was concerned about it. I just needed to, as I say, get it off my chest. So every morning I'd write some, the things that were lurking, dreams, or diatribes, drawings, notes. I'm reading, I'm researching. Through the seventies I do intensive research on ancient cultures, lost feminist principles, goddess cultures. I start way back before the feminist confirmations emerge. So I'm already ready and waiting, and it's a tremendous step culturally, and I'm writing about that. I in fact do a book called *Missing Precedents* [1974]. But I'm nervous. I'm not really a writer. I'm not really a scholar. So I put it all together, and I sit on it. But I suppose it informs everything that I can speak about.

MS. RICHARDS: When you - would you like to talk about *Body Collage*, or do you want to skip ahead to some of your little later film works?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, *Body Collage* is very simple. And it's another work that I don't release until recently, and it's from - what did we say? - '67. I was trying to evolve a flayed, disturbing image that related to the napalm figures running in the documents of our assaults on the local populations of Vietnam, as those images began to emerge. And I had done my film *Viet-Flakes* [1967] on Vietnam atrocities. So *Body Collage* ended up in complete contrast to its original intention. Once I was covering my body with wallpaper paste and the shredded paper, it became so much fun, and the image was so enticing, that it was very far away from my original intention.

MS. RICHARDS: The fact that *Body Collage* became something you didn't intend it to become.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, a friend came to film it. Other friends came to also - I mean there was a 16 mm version of it and 35 mm stills; these different men friends. And the condition was they could use the image, but I could use whatever they got also. So nobody was paid. No one was for hire. It was just a friendly exchange.

MS. RICHARDS: And when we look at that today, it connects so much to your idea of painting.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And being a painter still always.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And the ideas about connecting to images from Vietnam doesn't -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That disappeared in the process, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. You mentioned Artaud, Antonin Artaud, earlier and his influence on you. Did that continue? Or was that kind of played out by this time, or is that - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It becomes absorbed. It's inherent, the way the influence of Simone de Beauvoir is absorbed and remains implicit. And the writings of Wilhelm Reich. I mean those are propulsive influences. And behind them lurk the influences of [Paul] Cézanne, the physicalizations of de Kooning and [Jackson] Pollock. And then another layer of all the women artists who were beginning to emerge.

MS. RICHARDS: Before we continue on your work further, some artists - other artists - have mentioned to me a kind of frustration, even though they've been working for 30 or 40 years, of when they find that their earliest, or some of their earliest work is that which most people think of and which is most in demand. Do you find that to

be the case for yourself, and whether or not, and is that not a problem then? How do you feel about that?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That dreadful *Interior Scroll*.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, I was going to bring that up.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That became a dominator, that odd, unexpected taboo action, which I never wanted to enact anyway. Suddenly all that I want it to mean was of interest to the culture at the expense of all my other work. So I'm sort of struggling against that. It became my fur-lined teacup the way Merritt Oppenheim, who has 40 years of remarkable work, is only known by *The Fur-Lined Teacup*. And my friends would say, "Well, you should be happy that something is part of our history." Okay, but - [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Have you found a way to address that when someone asks to show that, I mean to show the documentation of it?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I really don't know what to do except persist and insist on furthering work and other forms of the work.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. How would you describe the evolution of your later video and performance work? Or maybe you want to talk about a couple that seem to be of most importance, maybe *Up To And Including Her Limits* [1974] or the three autobiographical films; you call them *Autobiography 1, 2, 3*.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, that's *Fuses, Plumb Line* [1968-71], and *Kitch's Last Meal* [1973-76]. Given that title by Scott MacDonald, the wonderful film historian.

MS. RICHARDS: Given which title?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: The *Autobiographical Trilogy* -

MS. RICHARDS: Oh!

MS. SCHNEEMANN: - was how he unified them.

MS. RICHARDS: You didn't do that?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, he did that. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But obviously - but you accept that.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, it's excellent. Yes. It's a very big insight. Sure. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Moving a little further then, could you talk about *Up To And Including Her Limits*? That's another key -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, I'm getting exhausted, too.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, okay. Well -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I have to fill out a huge interview for MoMA tomorrow. They gave me a one-day deadline. Can you believe that? One day? I couldn't believe it. I came home from the two interviews in New York maybe last night, night before, and here's this email.

MS. RICHARDS: Well, why do you have to accept the deadline?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's a book. I need to be in the book. I'm partly in the book. They have ten more questions. The deadline is immediate. Why do people do this all the time? You must get it also, right? "We need it yesterday." It makes me enraged. You know what kind of life do you think we have?

MS. RICHARDS: Maybe the deadline isn't quite that severe.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, I'm not meeting it. Tomorrow was today. They wanted it on Sunday. So with a blizzard and such, maybe they'll have it by Wednesday. But anyway, *Up To And Including Her Limits* was coming out of that breakdown in London. And as I've written ad nauseam, I wanted to do away with all my earlier performance patterns. I didn't want a group. I didn't want to be training, teaching. I didn't want technology, technical complications, a strict schedule, an audience, advertising, a specific place. And I didn't quite know what I did want, but I began hanging from a three-quarter-inch manila rope drawing within the confines of the dimensionality of that rope pulled to its full extent. Well, you know, later I would have a tree surgeon's knot so that I could pull myself up and down and change the extensiveness of the rope, with the crayons always in my

hand drawing. So I really wanted to get back to an aspect of solitude in drawing, automatic drawing, responding with the full body gesture in suspended space to Pollock's use of the body over the floor canvas. That was the motive. And then I would do this action sustaining drawing with the walls having been previously papered in the light of a film projector. And it would be a film projector without film in it. This corresponded to my beginning to think about another diary film that hadn't evolved. I just wanted it to be open light.

MS. RICHARDS: It's a choice between -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Between life and theory.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. Well, anyway. So go on. You were talking about being suspended.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, I think that's about it.

MS. RICHARDS: And where was that premiered?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: First in London at the Film Co-op [London Film-makers' Co-op, LFMC, London, United Kingdom] in one of those creameries that we had, one of these abandoned - where they used to milk cows.

MS. RICHARDS: Did the audience understand the references to Pollock?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I don't know what anybody understood. I think Susan Hiller understood a lot because she said it was a really important work. I didn't know what it meant. It was something I needed to inhabit. And then when we came back to New York, Anthony and I, I did it for Charlotte Moorman's Avant Garde Festival [New York, NY] in an empty train - what do you call it?

MS. RICHARDS: Boxcar?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Boxcar, yes. She had all these boxcars for us. It was fabulous. And Yoshi Wada was in the boxcar next to me blowing into plumbing tubes, making wonderful sounds, subtle sounds. And I hung my rope and had my crayons. It was very cold. And I wanted to just keep drawing. I positioned the papers and just was able to keep drawing. Then I took it to other places. I did it at The Kitchen when my cat Kitch had died, and she was in there as part of it on a plinth. And I moved into the places where I was going to do the sustained drawing. I lived in the Berkeley Museum [Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA] when I did *Up To And Including Her Limits* there. I just could get on and off the rope, and I had a mattress and notebooks for people to write in.

MS. RICHARDS: So the duration of the piece changed, the duration -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, I began to do it as a regular labor time from nine in the morning 'til six or something. When the building opened, I could start. When it closed, I might stop or I might keep going.

MS. RICHARDS: Why did you - why did the piece change, evolve that way?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: For space, thinking about different spaces where it could happen. Oh, my God! Look at that cardinal!

RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Do you see that burst of red? Whoa!

MS. RICHARDS: [Inaudible] my glasses.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: [Laughs] It looks unreal.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I wanted to keep drawing. And then I realized that in order to replace my own physical action on the rope, I wanted to accumulate documentation and see how many sequences of documentation, on how many monitors, could replicate the energy I felt as in the life of it. Also something very strange happens on the rope. When I would be completely suspended - and you're not completely relaxed because you're holding your body; so your back muscles are active. But there's an aspect of suspension where the rope suddenly takes off. It almost pulls muscular energy without my knowing it. And suddenly that rope would start spinning. And it was scary and wonderful. The way Ouija boards just happen or certain other elements of invisible energy come through. So that was *Up To And Including Her Limits*, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You also began around, I guess, the early eighties, late seventies, doing collage work - doing assemblages, I should say, doing assemblages.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, those started in the sixties. They've been going on forever. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And you did a sculptural piece in the early - I just wondered how your work evolved from the pieces we've been talking about to more distinct art objects.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, the art objects never stopped even while I was doing the activations or performances.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I was still doing grids, collage, objects.

MS. RICHARDS: Everything going on simultaneously basically.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Pretty much. Yes, they overlap. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Could you talk about the - ? Your work has been collaborative off and on, strongly, then not, in different ways. How has that interest in collaboration affected your choices of the work to do?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's not very collaborative. What are you thinking of?

MS. RICHARDS: The early performance pieces and then later -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, no. They're not really collaborative. It's my vision, and I hope you will fully participate. And I will incorporate your aspects, your physicality, your eccentricity, your rhythms, your sense of movement. But you agree to participate in a vision of mine.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I collaborated with Tenney. We did some duets that were truly collaborative and great fun and unusual. *Fuses*. No, collaborations didn't usually work because when I felt - particularly with the male artists - when I felt that we were collaborating, they just ran right over whatever it was I thought was to be shared and did what they wanted to, which was an experiment, an adventure. So that happened. I don't think I was very collaborative. No.

MS. RICHARDS: You did, of course, many, many other works in the seventies. Is there a particular piece that you would want to talk about let's say after *Interior Scroll*, which I think was 1975, a direction that you feel important to highlight in your work?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, *Fresh Blood: A Dream Morphology* [1981-87] was a remarkable work, and it's certainly neglected, perhaps because of its very explicit visceral theme. It's a work that comes out of a menstrual dream, and that will lead to intensive reformulations of themes and objects for almost eight or nine years. I keep working with that material. That's so engrossing.

MS. RICHARDS: Can you describe that work?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Do we have time? Is it five-thirty.

MS. RICHARDS: It's four-thirty.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's four-thirty, okay. *Fresh Blood: A Dream Morphology*.

MS. RICHARDS: Since we don't have images with us.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. I woke up in the middle of the night menstruating. So that woke me up. And that also gave me access to two dream images that were right on the surface of the unconscious. And one was a bouquet of dried leaves with little dolls' heads in the bouquet of dried leaves. So it's a V-shape I see; it's a vector shape with a stem. The other dominant object in the dream was a red umbrella with which I accidentally poke a man in his thigh, in a taxi, producing droplets of blood. So the bouquet is shaped in a vector this way; and the umbrella is a vector that way, conversely. And in the morning I begin drawing them, saying, What do they really have in common? There's a stem, there's a handle. There's the reversal of the V-shape. The V-shape is vaginally related formally. Dried leaves with little babies' heads in that, what is that? That's a perfect metaphor for menstruation!. It's the dried things are leaving, and the potential babies are leaving with it. I think this is delightful. I love this bouquet. And then the umbrella, when you turn it around, introduces a question mark. So I have so much fun drawing these two.

And then I begin to build what I call a vocabulary of form. I go through my own drawings. And then the areas of culture that I research, including Busby Berkeley, the bodies all aligned in various free shapes: nature, science,

archaic religions. I get a vocabulary of 26 wonderful related images. I photograph them. It looks like it might be a little essay. Then I project them as a lecture. And then Joe Celli of Real Art Ways says, "Why don't you put yourself in these images?" C-E-L-L-I, I think.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, C-E-?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: C-E-L-L-I, I think that's right. Or C-H. I don't know.

MS. RICHARDS: I'll look it up.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: So then it becomes a performance in which I have a red umbrella. I'm in red pajamas. I have a text describing menstrual taboos and the dream. And it's full projection of vector images, as I move spontaneously within the projections. Then there's a videotape - or two or three - made of these interactions, which I edit. And just as *Up To And Including Her Limits* becomes a major installation with six video monitors holding the action around the big drawing, just as that resolves *Up To And Including Her Limits, Fresh Blood* becomes a sculpture in which there are two monitors embedded a triangular form on which you see the performance of *Fresh Blood - A Dream Morphology*. In this sculpture is a set of concentric "v" shapes, and each panel has four of the vocabulary images printed in black in it. So it's relatively translucent. And the light from the videos is going to come through all the panels. The work is in a circle around six feet around. Once *Fresh Blood - A Dream Morphology* has become a sculpture, its title is *Venus Vectors*.

MS. RICHARDS: Ah! Okay.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: And it sits on a pedestal.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, that's 1986. Where is that piece now, '86, '88?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's almost all in the shed, you know. It's all around here. It's in the studio, in the shed.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you have to recycle parts? Or does it exist entirely?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's folded up. I think I've got most of it. [Laughs] Well, I tried for years even to show *Up To And Including Her Limits* in a museum, as well as *Venus Vectors*. And fortunately *Up To And Including Her Limits* is now in its full proportion at the Reina Sofía [Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain]. They own it. So that's great.

MS. RICHARDS: Excellent.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You did a piece, I guess, around the same time called *Video Rocks* [1987-88]. Could you talk about that?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes. I like that. That's a funny work. That's when my sweetheart was leaving me, and I thought - I was, you know, in this grief of confusion and despair, and I couldn't work. So I said to myself, just make something. Just go up in the studio, just do some thing. So I had a kind of pie plate thing, and I made a rock, a pie-shaped rock, out of various strong materials that I mix together. Then as they coalesce -

MS. RICHARDS: Like paper-mache?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, no. Cement and ashes and urine and other secret ingredients to assemble it. So I made one of those and looked at it, and I thought that's weird. And the next day the voice said, "Why don't you do two or three more? You'll feel better." In the meantime, I had had a dream of these rock-like [Claude] Monet - what do you call them?

MS. RICHARDS: Water lilies?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Water lily-like round shapes, cow-plop shapes. I had dreamt about them. And they floated from, you know, into a far perspective. It was about diminishing perspective. All these round shapes, each one between 12 and 14, 16 inches. So I drew that. I did a whole series of watercolors of how that looked in the dream. And then I was very confused because I thought this was someone else's work that I had seen somewhere and was drawing. So I had to call all my friends and say, "Has anybody done a work of these sort of infinite round rock, cow-plop shapes, just dozens of them? Have you seen that anywhere?" And they all said no.

So I thought maybe it's mine. I continued to make these rocks. After a while there were dozens, and then more dozens.

And then I was in Winnipeg [Manitoba, Canada]. Oh, also my cat had died. Everything was bad. I was in Winnipeg in a village with a project, and they said, "Why don't we all make more of these rocks with you? And you can extend the project as you want to?" And that's great. So we had a whole team of people come. I got my special materials. And it was no good. Absolutely no good. If I didn't have just the final pouring and shaping, the rock didn't have the right magic. So I had to keep doing it. But then as they dried, I realized I could have this community move - that the rocks would go into an infinity of this lake we were facing, and the community could come. I would choreograph motions right on the edge of the rocks as if they were walking - or maybe they were walking - on them. So I lined up people from the community, and they were all to wear odd shoes. And we only photographed [videotaped] their feet on the rocks with the horizon of the great lake in the back. And then I knew I had a good installation if I could have six monitors with the rhythms of the feet going back and forth across the rocks and actual rocks between the viewer and the diminishing perspective of the video sequence. And then I had the dream about the rods of lights coming in on it - those rocks you mentioned.

MS. RICHARDS: You talk about the importance of dreams.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: That's from the very beginning that's been important to you in your creative process.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Not always but often. And they're very - and do you know it's always a male voice?

MS. RICHARDS: No, I didn't.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: He's very hostile and very insistent. So with *Vulva's Morphia* [1995], which is a visual grid with text I'm very fond of, I had accumulated so many photographs relating to depictions of the vulva as sacred, as obscene, as funny. And I didn't know quite what to do with it. And at the same time upstairs I had a pile of research, separated piles - the popes' maledictions against feminism, the rise of [Jacques] Lacan, quotes from [Sigmund] Freud, popular culture, young girls getting kicked off the baseball team for having sex. What else? Clitorodectomy - big pile of research on that. And I had a dream where the hostile male voice says: "You'll never be a functioning artist again until you solve the problem of all that research piled up on your floor." And I said, "Yes, yes. That's right. It's such a terrible problem." And then the voice says, "In order to solve all that material, why don't you let Vulva do the talking?" So in the morning I woke up, grabbed a notebook, ran upstairs, and said, "Okay, Vulva, give me a line." And so I got a statement in regards to Lacan, to Freud, to Masters and Johnson, to Aristotle, to the pope. It was wonderful and funny and succinct and perfect. And I realized how I could organize the text with those images. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: So who is this - what is this voice?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, I have no idea. He also did *Mortal Coils* [1994] for me. I was having so much trouble with the images of the dead friends, the homage to them. I had first envisioned it as almost a Renaissance set of enlarged photographs, a wall of them. And then I had the dream where Hannah Wilke said, "Don't put me next to Paul Sharits." [Laughs] And I said, Oh, boy! This is more difficult than I thought.

MS. RICHARDS: What year was that piece?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I don't know - '98, '88?

MS. RICHARDS: Before *Cycladic Imprints* [1990]? After *Cycladic Imprints*?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: After.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay. So in the nineties.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: The nineties, yes. Maybe '96. Seventeen friends die within a span of three years of each other. And I have snapshots and photographs of all of them. And some of them are public figures, so I get permission from their - the people closest to them are all willing for me to use their image in this work. But I can't solve how to organize it. I have a gallery that has no money, but the space is available. But I have -

MS. RICHARDS: Which gallery was that?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Penine Hart on Broome Street [New York, New York], and I have to bring everything in pretty soon. And then I have a dream with the hostile voice. He shows me a three-quarter-inch manila rope from ceiling to floor, and it's coiled, and he says, "Six rpm."

So, do you want to switch this?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, I can just -

[END OF CD 3.]

MS. RICHARDS: This is disc two, session two, Judith Richards with Carolee Schneemann. I'm sorry. Go on.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, we're tracking the dream, the hostile male instructor voice. So he's just insisted something about 6 rpm with a coiled manila rope as the key to -

MS. RICHARDS: We're talking about *Mortal Coils*?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: *Mortal Coils*.

MS. RICHARDS: That's actually '94.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay, '94, *Mortal Coils*. So I call my friend Jim, the local Jim, and we rig up a rope and a motor at 6 rpm, and it's beautiful. It's just so beautiful. And I realize that each dead friend will have a slowly turning rope, and that their images must be in projection - in motion - which is what I've been doing anyway. And then the piece takes form.

MS. RICHARDS: So was it in fact first shown at Penine Hart?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. And then where was it shown? Oh, I think at the museum - Carnegie, Pittsburgh. No, that was *Cycladic Imprints* [1988]. It's definitely shown in Vienna in the Kunst Museum there [Kunstraum, Vienna, Austria, 1995]. Oh, and at the New Museum [New York, NY].

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, we haven't gotten to that.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you find at that point - we're talking about the nineties and up to that point - a difference between the reception your work gained in U.S. presentations versus European presentations?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, it's the same: Huge appreciation from artists, critics, researchers. No economic support whatsoever. The collectors -

MS. RICHARDS: So in terms of your relationships with galleries, the same thing?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. The galleries are sometimes really devoted to the work. But we never have the response of collectors or investors - almost never.

MS. RICHARDS: If we could take a second to go back to *Cycladic Imprints*.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: A major work.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Could you talk about how that evolved?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That is a collaboration in essence. My friend from the early days, Malcolm Goldstein, the violinist, visits New York from where he lives in Montreal [Quebec, Canada]. And he says, "This is probably not politically correct, but whenever I play my violin, it feels like I'm holding a female form." And I said, "Well, it certainly looks like it with the double curve. And we have the Man Ray precedent of the cello shape. Let's go with it." So we both begin to collect images of double curves. I include the open vulva, my own; I shoot that. Double curve as an originating source. And then the Cycladic sculptures with the beautiful sacral folded arms and the clear shoulder-to-hip curvature. And how mysterious they are, and there's still no real explanation as to how that marble came to the Cyclades Islands, and from where and how it was carved. So I have a vocabulary. What year is this?

MS. RICHARDS: Ninety-one to '93. But then I was a little confused because I saw that there was a performance in 1988.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Of *Cycladic Imprints*?

MS. RICHARDS: I could be mistaken.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Hmmm. It could be. Where is that performance?

MS. RICHARDS: I didn't take down the note. But in another place it says '91 to '93. I think it was done a number of times and possibly evolved over that time?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Between '91 and '93. At one point there were 17 motorized violins.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That's right.

MS. RICHARDS: And another time I think there were fewer.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Initially there's fewer, and I do a performance within the projection of the double curve vocabulary. Malcolm plays the violin. I'm wrapped up in a big red sort of waist wrapping that I've used in another work, a memorial piece. And I'm blindfolded, and I have my own music to dance to. I dance myself out of this long, long red wrapping as the projection is sequenced and Malcolm plays the violin with abstract sounds. You know it's nothing literalizing. So that's for New Music America. That's its first incarnation. And then I go on to build more violins and to refine the projection system. And I'm not in it anymore. And then it goes to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [SFMOMA, San Francisco, California], and it's gorgeous because I build it so it's 20 feet across and 15 feet high. And it's very luscious. The violins look wonderful within the installation.

MS. RICHARDS: So at that point do you consider that the final form of the piece?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That's right. Yes. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: What inspired you to create that piece?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: The vocabulary of the double curve. Let's look at what's primary and taboo. And referencing the richness of this form. Yes. So, you know, in these years that the - how did it go? I think it went from the V - *Fresh Blood, Venus Vectors*. Then it went to the double curve of *Cycladic Imprints*.

MS. RICHARDS: Right. Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: And then -

MS. RICHARDS: *Mortal Coils*?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Maybe *Mortal Coils*. The moving verticality.

MS. RICHARDS: Or the *Video Rocks*, which was also circulating.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: The *Video Rocks*, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And then I guess there's many other works. But we could talk about *Vesper's Pool* [1987-88].

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, that's a wonderful work for me. Yes. So I had these two mystical cats. I mean among many, but Cluny - Cluny is this sensitive, thoughtful, vulnerable, delicate gray-and-white cat, that whenever people see him they say, "Oh, can I have that cat?" He's just so - he's kind of this subtle vibratory, gentle, sweet - He's born here. I have his mother, Wicca, who's a boring cat; she's very boring. And she mates with a big tough guy who turns up - a real gruff, seedy, big gray-and-white cat whom we name Major Gray. And he's pretty feral. You can't get close to him, but he'll eat some food if you leave it out. So my darling little, delicate little - Wicca mates with this bad boy and has exquisite kittens. And one of them is this vulnerable, exquisite little Cluny, who as an infant cat crawls up to my lap, crawls up my shirt, puts his paws on my neck, reaches up his tiny face, and puts his tongue in my mouth in some kind of weird cat kiss! I say, Oh, my gosh! This is strange! Well, this is the kitten I want, though. So I find excellent homes for all - it's a beautiful, beautiful group of kittens - and I keep Cluny.

Cluny travels all over with me wherever I go. Cluny kisses every morning ritualistically. And it's so strange that I get my 35 mm little camera. And this is when I begin what's going to be a 16-year project of shooting these kisses almost every morning. And of course the kisses are so interesting to me because the cat grows, his shape changes, his paws are slightly different positions. I'm wearing different nightgowns. We're in California. The light is completely different. [At home] you begin to see the wallpaper over and over again. Some of them have my sweetheart, the human, in a side frame. And there's always the missing hand in these images. You never see the agency of it [the hand holding the camera.] So he's my precious amazing cat. And when he dies of a rat bite

under his tongue - Bruce leaves me, everything's falling apart again. Is that right? Because then I'm doing the *Rocks* when he leaves me. So I'm a little confused about all this.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm. *Video Rocks* is, I guess, ten years before *Vesper's Pool*. *Video Rocks* was '87.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay. Then Bruce is leaving me when *Vesper* is my cat.

MS. RICHARDS: *Vesper's Pool* is '99, 1999?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Maybe. Anyway, we'll have to do another check. Anyway, Cluny dies on October 6th here in this house on my stomach during a violent ice storm. There's no light, there's no heat. There's nothing. I'm trying to keep him alive with parsley juice. I'm chewing things and hoping he'll swallow it. And he's poisoned by a rat because he took on more than he could absorb. And that's when I think it's Bruce has left. Anyway, my cat dies, and I'm devastated. It's so awful. I adored him.

Next door there's a pregnant cat, and she has kittens. And I go over there to my little tenant's house. All the kittens are playing around on the floor. But one is sitting on a chair, facing the door, with its paws tucked under, you know. Tiny, tiny, tiny. He's five weeks old - four weeks old - and staring at the door. So I come in, I sit down. I play with the kittens. But this one crawls up my knee into my lap, rolls over on his tiny back, and throws its paws in the air. [Laughs] And then he turns around and continues; he crawls all the way up, puts his little paws on my neck, sticks his tiny cat tongue in my mouth. And I start crying. Are you back? He's back. And he's named *Vesper*. He's gray and white. He's slightly tougher and stronger. He knows things, paranormal things about - there's this whole other story about what he knows. It's uncanny.

So he's my next kissing cat, and I take all the photographs, and I'm printing them. By now I have a hundred. They're all color Xerox, and I flip them so they're not just a programmatic record of this. There's the interior rhythms between the image when it's flipped, convexity, concavity, color change. I'm printing. I have a printer I can use in town here. And this cat as *Vesper* - or maybe also as *Cluny* - can speak to you. He puts thoughts in your mind - many. And he looks at these prints as they're all over the floor. He sits on the table all the time, and he says, "This is my best work." Or some days he says, "This is *our* best work." I don't know what he's seeing.

Robert Riley, the curator from the San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art sees a little set of them. And they write me and say, "Send a sample of this *Infinity Kisses* work you're doing." So I send a small sample in their dreadful plastic frames, an eight by 10 Xerox. And I say to the cat: "They'll be back next week. Don't imagine anything." And the cat says, "No! They will want these images." [Laughs.] And sure enough, they write back, and they say, "The Acquisitions Committee has voted to buy the entire series." And there's a huge chunk of money - well, for me, huge. And the cat says, "I told you. This is our best work." So I tell him he can have anything to eat that he wants. And I write the museum and say, "Now that you're going to buy them, I can do them in Ciba chrome. I can reprint them." They write back, "No, no. We want this humble version." So it's there.

MS. RICHARDS: How many make up that group?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, it's probably 74 images. It's eight feet high by five. I go there while they're installing. People are in tears. They're just so moved by it. They don't know how it's going to look until it really goes up. And it's splendid. Ah! So when *Vesper* dies - *Vesper* gets cat leukemia. And when he dies, a whole set of very subtle, odd paranormal things start to happen that exist only on the scale of paying attention: a cat might be able to communicate from outside of its life. The first thing that happens is he bleeds on my only good nightgown; it's the one with sleeves and some lace. I take it to the sink - he's still alive - to wash it out, and the voice says, "Don't touch this! Take it back. Don't touch it." I say, "Okay." So I take it away from the sink, and I put in some tissue and fold it up. It's going to become [inaudible] wrapping: the robe, the first essence of his going to die. [Sighs] I'm feeling everything. He dies. I have beautiful footage of him going way off in the grass to try to disappear. The light turns all purple; everything is incredible. And then I film - Jim is here - and he's gasping, the cat is gasping for breath. And he dies here in my arms. And so now I've lost *Vesper*.

The next thing that happens is I'm in my little woods - there's acres of woods all around. And I'm sort of praying to his spirit. There's a rustling in the trees above me. Rustle rustle rustle. And there's a dove. That's my special bird. There's a dove fluttering up there. And I kind of say, Why are you here? There's this whole woods. And it flutters. And it falls down in front of my feet. It's on its back, and it looks at me. And I say, "I can't save you. You're going to die here." And I cup its body in my hand, and I hold it. It looks at me, closes its eyes, and it dies. And I say, "Well, you must be from *Vesper*." So at some point I take it inside, and I do taxidermy on it and put it in vodka in the freezer. And I'm saving this bird corpse.

Then a week later I saw - a deer dies in my pond. And it's a regular deer except its tail is the color of *Vesper's* tail rather than a white deer tail. My friend comes, and we pull it out. And I cut off the tail for its to be part of I don't know what. Then I'm upstairs sorting slides of all the kisses to keep close to the sense of the cat. What can I do with all this? And lightning strikes right outside my window, a big [Black Locust] tree by the window, and

cracks the tree apart, and the house fills with this aroma of fresh - the freshest wood. Something I've never smelled before. And a branch falls down. Later I go out, and I pick it up, and I say, "Well, this seems to be from you also." So I'm accumulating these odd things.

And then I get a job, a summer job, as a visiting artist teacher in Portland, Maine. And they put me in a rented apartment next - on the corner of Vesper Street. Who ever heard - ? Vesper is a Catholic night ritual, and this is a Congregationalist town. So why do they have a Vesper Street? And I find there's another Vesper Street by the ocean, a little tiny, tiny road. I go there because the town historian lives there, and I ask him: "Tell me what you know about naming streets Vesper here in Portland." The town historian is like a gorgeous cowboy in white tights with a big truck. He's just not what I expected. And while we're standing in his yard talking, a gull flies in from the ocean right over our heads. And I say, "Uh oh, now what?" And the gull is right between us. Symmetrically it circles, it circles, and it drops a great big white feather. And I say to the historian, "That's for me." [Laughs] He doesn't know the answer to the question. I have the white feather. What else!

Anyway, all these artifacts accumulate, including before Vesper died, she sneezes while I'm reading student papers at Bard. He sneezes blood, covers the sentence of this student's writing. She's writing about her son: "I could never forgive myself for the blood coming out of his ears." And this sentence is covered in blood from the cat. I have that. I begin to build a little mystery story of text, the date, where I was. And then find a formation to present each artifact. So there's this wall of artifacts like a mystery story. It's about ten feet long. And as you come around the other side of the wall, you enter a projection system where I have images of the kisses floating vertically. I found an editing system where I can do projections so that the images are floating downward - up and down. And that becomes *Vesper's Pool*. Yes, I loved that work. That was so great.

MS. RICHARDS: Wow. We have about a half hour, I guess. I wanted to ask you - you did a work called *Terminal Velocity* [2001].

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And that was after 9/11.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: You were living here at 9/11?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: How did you - would you describe how you came to make that piece? I mean unless I'm leaving something important out between the two works?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, I can make a connection to my use of the Vietnam atrocity images to try to concretize forbidden, hidden facts about the brutality of that war. And then my complete obsession with the destruction of Palestine culture through the eighties, where I build the sculpture *War Mop* [1983] attacking the monitor, on which there's a continuous pan through a destroyed village.

MS. RICHARDS: There's a piece you did about Beirut?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. That's part of *Souvenir of Lebanon* [1983, final edit 2006], that video. And relates to *War Mop*. And then a booklet that I did of just information on the transgressions and brutalities against the Palestinian communities by the Israelis and people go crazy when they read just the information. They can't stand it. This was exhibited at Max Hutchinson probably in '82. Works disappear. The mailing list never goes out! Very weird things happen around this exhibit.

So with *Terminal Velocity* [2001] it's wanting to get closer to the details of these doomed lives which signify all the others lost in a disaster which some of us believe is - we believe our government is complicit in this disaster. And that's part of my motive, just to get closer to whatever I can see. I only have seven or eight falling bodies that I can use because the video pixel will break up immediately. I can't enlarge it. But with a Ben - day dot I can still put it in a very simple computer program and just reduce the image and blow it up, blow it up so I can get as close as possible. I print these sequences probably what? nine or ten for each image. And they are in vertical grids usually starting with the smallest part of the image of the falling body, and then taking it sequentially down to its largest version. And then collating them, correlating them so there are rhythms between the seven or eight sections, seven or eight units of the bodies falling. One odd thing that happens: As they are enlarged and blown up is that the hostile structure behind them of the World Trade Center beings to establish a vertical, a linear vertical grid that resembles the American flag. Quite unexpected. So then that becomes an homage, and also produces at times very violent reactions, which I have to try to analyze.

MS. RICHARDS: You did a piece called *Devour* around this same time.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: Two thousand three - 2004?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, thank you.

MS. RICHARDS: Can you talk about that piece?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That's a nice tough piece. That's a piece of - it's recent, right?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: When is it?

MS. RICHARDS: Oh-three - 'oh-four.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. I had a grant again, and I wanted to do a work in which I would juxtapose delicacy, ordinary images, normal scenes with images of violence and destruction that had been arriving here serendipitously. I don't know why, but friends sent me violent images from Haiti, people being dispersed and beaten and shot at. I had ferocious material from a collective in former Yugoslavia, the Sarajevo [Film Collective]

MS. RICHARDS: People knew that you were interested in this material?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I'm not even sure how it happened. But it kept on coming. It seemed unexpected. I hadn't told anybody. I had some footage from Guantánamo, a lot from Lebanon, riots here in the United States against the Iraqi War at this point. So again, I was building a vocabulary of images that could only exist in a peaceful, normal time, and then these concussive ones, including a young woman with part of her head blow off in Sarajevo, a young woman going to school - in the context of the footage - with a book bag and a nice blue dress and her boyfriend was beside her. And these are - isn't even a bomb. It was - what do you call it? being shot at directly.

So I'm immersed in all this. And I keep shooting and re-filming. *Devour* is very interesting because it comes from thousands of images, and it's culled down to about maybe 17 so-called harmonious and 17 violent, and they're juxtaposed. And a tremendous amount of work in the computer. There's one section of a cat I had at the time. The rhythm of his kneading on a piece of log, just, you know, very nice. But I had - I worked about 14 hours on that rhythm. Just had to get it - had to get it right. So every image in *Devour* has had invisible alteration, except for one image, and that's a bunch of very plump people walking through a fair towards the hotdog stand. [Laughs] I didn't touch it.

MS. RICHARDS: This is a two-screen projection work.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, it can also be shown as two units on one screen.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It exists in both forms. But it is best as an installation blown up really large, two projectors correlated.

MS. RICHARDS: How did you know when that work was done, that you had enough of each kind of image, both the violence and the calm?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It just felt - Well, you know, it's like a painting. You know it's resolved. These are the weights and balances and the intensities that are proper. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: You just know.

MS. RICHARDS: And did that piece lead to a piece you did called *SNAFU* [*World War II: Situation Normal All Fucked Up*, 2004]? Was there - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes, that's true. That's right. Yes, yes. *SNAFU* is mysterious. It's quite odd. It's all made when I was working in Montreal. It's from a dream of little white - almost baptismal coats that are covered - drenched - in plaster. And they're activated on a - what do you call it? They're wired to a computer. They move up and down. Each one has a bit of a computer program. And they go up and down in space rather slowly. But they have - we've changed the rhythms because the computer has made the motor sensitive so that they're not

ever going to be in the same position at the same time.

MS. RICHARDS: Were you collaborating with a computer programmer to do that?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes. I told her how it should be. So it has its own computer box that activates the motors. Well, the motors are activated by sensors when people walk by. But there's a program for each motor. And most importantly, I knew I had to have a color projection of a horserace projected vertically over these moving coats. And that they would be enveloped by this projection. I had to idea where to find it. I saw a very clearly what it was. At some point I went to Nova Scotia with my camera to record a James Tenney concert. I don't think he was in his last illness yet. But that was so remarkable, I could be in Montreal and go to - Newfoundland. He was in Newfoundland. And he was going to play the *Concord Sonata*, and I didn't want to miss it. And I'm in my little hotel room, and there on the TV is a horserace in color, the colors I want!. I grab the camera and shoot it, I get it. And then I just[edit to]invert it.

MS. RICHARDS: Why is it called *SNAFU*?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, because of the motors and the computer chips and the wiring, it's most likely that something will have to go wrong. But it doesn't really look like a snafu kind of thing. It's subtle, it's luscious, it's bewildering. It's very hypnotic. Did you ever see it?

MS. RICHARDS: No, I'm afraid not.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's really hypnotic with the coats moving and the horse up and down, up and down [testing gravity].

MS. RICHARDS: Going back just a little bit, I wanted to ask you about the retrospective ["Carolee Schneemann - Up To And Including Her Limits"] at the New Museum, which was actually in '96-'97. That must have been a very important moment for you.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: How did you take it? Artists sometimes have trouble with retrospectives.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, no! No, no! Get the work out! My only trouble was that it was Dan Cameron's first museum piece there, his first installation there. And there was a previous commitment that three rooms in the back could not be used, and we needed them desperately. We were crowded, we were cramped. I couldn't get my drawings properly framed; there wasn't budget for that. So it was very important and wonderful. But there were significant problems, formal ones, that would've helped the work being understood better and seen better.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Do you think that was, though, the largest presentation of your work, the most work in one place?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: You know that's a good question, and I'm not sure. I want to think. Hutchinson's previous exhibits. Probably it was. Again, it led to no sales, no commissions. Everything came back home here to the shed, to the waiting raccoons. And if you really want to know how to dissolve epoxy resin, have a mouse pee on it. [Laughs] It's magic. I had mice move into these small constructions.

MS. RICHARDS: So now let's go back again. After *SNAFU* you did a piece called *Caged Cats* [2005].

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Those are prints. I had a residency in northern Quebec. The Canadians do this great thing. You travel five hours through the woods, and you come to kind of an empty town where they've taken the old church and priory and made it the most sophisticated print facility for artists.

MS. RICHARDS: You spent, in fact, a good amount of time in Canada.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: Did you actually move there?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, never.

MS. RICHARDS: Or did you just visit repeatedly?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I've had projects there repeatedly, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: There was an exhibition at a Museum for Canadian Art ["Breaking Borders," Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2007], which I guess is - so they included your work

because you had so many projects you had done in Canada.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I had a big solo exhibit there. That was a terrific exhibit, and it was two years or a year and a half ago, with a major catalogue called - what was it called? "Beyond Borders," something like that.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It was a double exhibit combined with work going to CEPA Gallery [Buffalo, NY]. There's a very good catalog for that from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Toronto. And David Liss was the coordinator for that. Yes, that was a major exhibit. But it was Canada, so everything disappeared. There were really no reviews. Tremendous audiences. The usual - everything came home.

MS. RICHARDS: Since - This is a question about feminism and about your relationship and how it has affected your work, how you have been influential - Well, actually, two separate questions: The first about feminism, the second about influence. You began before anything was happening in that regard.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, really.

MS. RICHARDS: And you went right through and you continued, you might say, past it. How did it impact on your work, and how did your work impact on it? I mean I know it's hard to generalize.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay. I just have to pee. And then we still have ten minutes.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay, okay. Alright. We're taking a brief break here.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: You're getting tired, too? [Laughs] You have great research. Really good. Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: So I don't know. This is such a huge question.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, we'll try to [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: But how does your work and feminism relate to each other, and how did you include it? How did it support - or not - your work?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. Feminist theory supported my work - sometimes powerfully; at other times there was terrible contention, particularly in the early days where a lot of my work was considered heterosexual playing into male fantasies, playing into male traditions. But once my writing became more available through other feminists, I guess the clarification or the complexity of what I was seeing as a heterosexual feminist began to be useful and helpful. And I think it was Moira Roth who first published the image of *Interior Scroll* in - I'm not sure whether it was *Heresies* or *Chrysalis*. But it suddenly was something that could be looked at. *Up To And Including Her Limits* was on the cover of the performance magazine coming out of L.A. [*High Performance* Vol. 2. No. 2. Issue 6. 1979. Pp. 5-16; Cover *Up To And Including Her Limits*]. So the work started to have an enlarged context, and that was wonderful and worth fighting for and fighting about. And the discussion then was enlarged and enriched. It was terrific. Yes. No, feminist principles have always been - of course they're not always helpful - but always pointing to crucial issues, you know; we can look at it together.

MS. RICHARDS: Were you recognized early on as a role model for women artists?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes and no. I was also the devil, you know: Don't do that, using your body. It was mixed, it was mixed. There were some - Well, there was at one point a lesbian contingent at a film festival in New York City where *Plumb Line* was shown. All they did was see the first few seconds of the handsome, traditional face of the man in *Plumb Line*, and they were screaming and hooting. And I crawled out of that auditorium on my hands and knees. I crawled out. I crawled out. I found the elevator, and I left. [Laughs] I couldn't handle it. It was too hostile.

MS. RICHARDS: You literally crawled out on your hands and knees?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Literally.

MS. RICHARDS: So you wouldn't be seen?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I couldn't handle it! They were screaming.

MS. RICHARDS: You felt so attacked.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Was it because you expected something else?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I didn't expect a volatile, immense hostility. I mean at the end I do chop up the man's face symbolically, and they didn't wait to see that. It was only an instant, and they recognized the enemy. [Laughs] But I was bringing that enemy into their film festival. No, I crawled on my hands and knees. I left. And there's been some very angry, volatile -

MS. RICHARDS: So a kind of censorship, do you think?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, no. Whatever it is, it's always the moment, and it couldn't happen again. Things are much more varied and not so strictly symbolized. But there were other theoreticians - I mean there's many theoreticians who can't bear this work. They never see the structure. They think it's a mess. They think it's indulgent, narcissistic, whatever it is. You know we all have our enemies, and I have very strict, closed terrains. I don't even know what some of them are. I know what some of them are, but not all of them.

MS. RICHARDS: What do you mean, closed terrains?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, certain theoretical journals or magazines or places where issues in the art world are addressed, my work would never, ever be mentioned, not even in a footnote. Maybe now, recently as a footnote of something that didn't fulfill their theoretical expectations.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm. Yes. On the other hand, though, your work has been, it seems to be, highly influential.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes. That's true, too.

MS. RICHARDS: Nothing to do with feminism or women's work. It's highly influential broadly.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, there were years there where I would see my work coming and going every minute. As if every young woman seemed to have to do a version of what I had made. It was as if there was a bridge they had to cross. Yes. Do you recognize that?

MS. RICHARDS: And you sound as if you're, in a way, happy that they used that to cross. You don't sound - Do you think they recognized that they were -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - that your work was supporting their - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I'm not so happy about it because usually they sold all their work!.

MS. RICHARDS: Wow.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It was more available suddenly.

MS. RICHARDS: So you've had some relationships with galleries over the years, many different galleries. Has there been - have you had a long-term relationship with one that has beneficial, that you found supportive of your work?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, first of all, every interesting gallery in New York City in the '60s rejected my work unequivocally. They all said it was no good. It was shit, it was crap. "Not my cup of tea". It was so demoralizing that I never asked another gallery to come back for - I never asked another gallery to come back. Mary Beth Edelson was instrumental in having Max Hutchinson Gallery come look at my work, and that's where I had major exhibits and critical regard. And then he closed the gallery, and we were all abandoned. I showed with Emily Harvey [The Emily Harvey Foundation, New York, NY]. That was a great adventure. And there's a lot of stories to tell about Emily and her fierce independence. And I began to also work with Elga Wimmer in New York City.

MS. RICHARDS: But she doesn't have a gallery any - oh, yes, she does.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: She does. It's small, it's fragile. She's a wonderful curator. But she doesn't have money or stability here in New York City. But give her an important project, and she does beautiful work. Now I've been with P.P.O.W. for the past, what, four years, five? Also brought there by friends.

MS. RICHARDS: What has your work - what have you been involved with since the last piece we talked about, which was the cat piece.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, it's not [inaudible] *Devour*? Those are -

MS. RICHARDS: And there was something called *Caged Cats*.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, those are the prints, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Prints. That was in 2005. What projects have - I'm not familiar with what you've been doing since then.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, I finished the book for Duke Press - Duke University Press.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] What book was that?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: And I've been editing video. The book is called *Correspondence Course* [: *An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and Her Circle*. co-edited by Kristine Stiles, 2010]

MS. RICHARDS: Oh.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's those letters I mentioned.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Has it been published?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, it will be. It's coming out, they say, in time for the next CAA [College Art Association] I don't know when that is.

MS. RICHARDS: It just happened. It's in February.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Wow. We have no control over this book. Unlike my MIT book which I was able to design myself with the designer I wanted to work with or *More Than Meat Joy* that I did with Bruce page by page or *ABC - We Print Anything*, which is completely my concept; this one, it's just gone. I have nothing to do with it.

MS. RICHARDS: Who's publishing it?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Duke University Press [Durham, NC]. They just take it and run.

MS. RICHARDS: Just keep your fingers crossed.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, how scary. So I've been editing intensively at EAI. I've been showing in Europe. We have to look on my schedule for this past year; it's been intense, fierce.

MS. RICHARDS: That's gratifying.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes. Yes, and I'm struggling with all kinds of weird health issues. So I can't always do what I expect myself to do. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Are the shows in Europe of different aspects of your work?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Mostly film, video, lectures, performative lectures.

MS. RICHARDS: So the things aren't coming out of the barn.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Only what you saw in New York City, yes. So, no, they're all there.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's a lot more.

MS. RICHARDS: And so now you said you were re-mastering some of the -

MS. SCHNEEMANN: I think I've done most of them. Yes. Well, there's always more. There's a lot of new material.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you have control over all of those pieces?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Over what?

MS. RICHARDS: Control over the presentation of all the videos?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No. No. You can ask, you can request, you can demand, and then it goes away. You don't know what they're doing in Leeds in England or in Zurich [Switzerland].

MS. RICHARDS: Because you've sold the pieces?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: No, they rent it or they buy it, and they do what they want with it.

MS. RICHARDS: So EAI, they can rent it from EAI.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But you have arranged with them.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: That's right.

MS. RICHARDS: So ultimately you're trusting that they will be guarding against something?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, they're very good, solid representatives. And I have income from what they distribute - finally. It's wonderful. Yes, yes. They're assertive and wonderful.

MS. RICHARDS: Is there any other subjects that you'd like to touch on?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, you do it. You've been good at this. I'm lost in all my stuff here. See if you have a leftover something.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay. There are so many things. Is there anything that you can do about people like Dorothy Beskind who won't release the video to date?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, I took her to court. I took her to court. I sued her. This was many years ago. I won a judgment. And it was that either I would have financial judgment against her or the videotape. And I was very broke, and I took the financial judgment, which wasn't huge but helped me for, you know, a good year.

MS. RICHARDS: And so now there's nothing else?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's silly. It's against her own best interest really. We all feel that way. This would be such a lovely thing to bring forward. She would have credit as the filmmaker. And this is also why we did *Interior Scroll - The Cave*, the group version of it, filmed by Maria Beatty.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And that was what year?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Ninety-six maybe?

MS. RICHARDS: Relatively recently.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So you would have that documentation.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, that's fine. That's alive, and you can get it, and it's done.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: It's edited. It's good.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And you continue to lecture and to teach?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: How are you finding the students' response to your work? Has it evolved over the years?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes. And it's completely variable because -

MS. RICHARDS: Shall we - ?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, we need to leave time for the bus.

MS. RICHARDS: Five minutes?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: You think five minutes? What time do you have?

MS. RICHARDS: Five thirty-five.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Oh, okay. Well, I'm fast. Alright. You're right. We have five minutes, yes. Oh, it's a passionate, coherent, interested appreciation when it is. And then there's complete indifference and ignorance

[laughs].

MS. RICHARDS: But they won't come to the talk, those people.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Well, yes, sometimes they've invited me for a major talk. And it's a sad waste of everybody's focus. No, usually it's very successful and exciting, and I'm gratified and very happy with how smart my audiences have become. And there are so many of them. When I turn up, there's just all these people.

MS. RICHARDS: And do you find, if it's an art school, that the male artists are more enthusiastic and interested than they used to be?

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Yes, yes! It's so humbling! It's so touching! Yes, yes. They're smart, they're involved, they're responsive. And I'm always incredulous. Wow! Look what happened in one lifetime. Mmmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: Well, I think we can say goodnight.

MS. SCHNEEMANN: Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

Last updated...January 4, 2011