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Oral history interview with Moira Roth, 2011 April 22-24

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Moira Roth on April 22-24, 2011. The interview took place in Berkeley, Calif., and was conducted by Sue Heinemann for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project, funded by the A G Foundation.

Moira Roth and Sue Heinemann have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

SUE HEINEMANN: This is Sue Heinemann interviewing Moira Roth at her home in Berkeley, California, on April 22, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one.

So Moira, I thought we'd just start with your childhood and early period.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, what I've done in preparation for this is to pull together a number of documents, including my mother's birth certificate, my parents' marriage and my own birth certificate and a couple of photographs about my mother. So let me begin by this: My mother was Scottish-Canadian and was born in Canada, and on her birth certificate she says she's the daughter of Duncan McClellan. And then it says, "Esquire," and in another document it says he's a gentleman.

Their daughter arrives in 1903, and my mother begins quite conventionally as a child. The family is very wealthy. She's sent to a finishing school in Switzerland. Then she goes to Paris. She's a debutante in Montreal. And she's clearly all set for a conventional marriage, et cetera.

Then she decides to shift her way of thinking and living and, I don't think literally, but she metaphorically escapes from Canada and she goes to the left-wing school of the London School of Economics and, there, meets my father. And my father comes from a very different background. He is Irish working class. He's the only person in his family to go to college. He gets a degree and he's teaching at the London School of Economics. And there, he and my mother meet.

And they marry when he is 30 and she is 28, and then they stay married until about six months after I'm born. And then my mother goes off with a lover and my father returns to a childhood sweetheart, so it's a fairly brief marriage. And I am born in London, and, as I said, because my father and mother split up very shortly after my birth, my mother takes me to Cornwall.

And I have what, in retrospect, seems like a very romantic childhood. We live in Mevagissey, which is a very pretty town in Cornwall. And it's near Tintagel, which was the home of King Arthur and his knights. And I have very few memories of it, but the one that I most remember is an episode where there's suddenly a warning that sharks are in the nearby waters, which is unusual, given it's England.

And my mother and I are on a beach and then it turns out the tide is coming up and we won't be able to escape up the cliff. And my mother, very dramatically, leaves me on the beach, swims, thinking there could well be sharks in the water, goes to a nearby beach, gets some help, and someone comes in a boat and I'm rescued. So that is my one concrete memory of my childhood.

My mother was a very shy but basically self-assured person who became more and more interested in theosophy and Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. She ends her life as a Buddhist. And although she comes, as I said, from a very wealthy background, she doesn't behave in a very wealthy way. She behaves in a very well-mannered way.

And I suspect she later on becomes a role model for me—not when I'm a child, but there are many things, in retrospect looking back on my mother, that are inspiring to me. She was very independent. She did what she cared about. She was unconventional but, as I said, well-mannered. And she lived a very full and complicated life, including a short breakdown when I was 20.

So at a certain point, my mother decides that she has to choose a good school for me and so we move in order to live in Letchworth, which is where this school is, called St. Christopher's. But it's not a Catholic school. It was firstly invented in India by a group of theosophists who felt that when they went back to England, they should have a good school for their children. And then later on, Quakers came, so it was an odd mixture of theosophists

and Quakers.

So we arrive in Letchworth before World War II. I was born in 1933, July 24th. We arrive in Letchworth and my mother buys a very beautiful house with a huge garden, which is where we have memorable luncheons when I'm a child. In the meantime, my father has not only gone back to his childhood sweetheart, but he's got a job at the University of Johannesburg. So he has gone out to Africa and I don't see him at all for the first few years.

And then when he comes back, he teaches at Bristol University and, during the war, he's at the Board of Trade in London. So my mother and I arrive at Letchworth and I go to this school that begins with a Montessori experience. And it's quite remarkable for a school of that time. It's an international school so it has children from Africa. At one point, both the head boy and head girl are Africans. It has children from Persia, as it was then called, quite a lot of Jewish refugees from Europe, and then also refugees from London who were escaping the Blitzkrieg.

It's also a vegetarian school. It's very, very progressive. At one point, we have the great pleasure—the children have the great pleasure—of demanding that a rather intemperate French teacher come before us because she kicked someone and we have to decide if she should be expelled from the school. [Laughs.] And the classes are equally experimental.

So it means that, though I am a child of immigrants and have this unconventional class background of Canadian upper class and Irish working class, the whole school is unconventional. So it's a very comfortable school for me to go to. And I live with my mother in Letchworth and go to school each day, but many of the children are boarders.

And then World War II comes along in the fall of 1939. And shortly after that the Germans, as you know, move very, very quickly through Europe and then, at a certain point, decide they will invade England, but firstly, they will bomb London. And so that's what is called the Battle of Britain. And Churchill becomes the savior figure in that moment in English history.

So my father is in London. He and my mother go to court over me because both of them think I should be taken out of England because it's dangerous. And my father takes me to Ireland, where the idea was I would live with his family. My mother demands that I come back and that she will take me to Canada. And there are lawsuits and they're hardly on speaking terms after that, although my father comes to visit me regularly during wartime in Letchworth.

At that point, when there is the Battle of Britain in 1940, it becomes not an option, but anyone living outside London who has a fairly large house is made to have evacuees. And most people simply accept whoever the government sends, but my mother makes—and I'm going to read to you from *Abraham's Daughter*—it's the autobiography of someone who becomes almost my surrogate mother after my mother dies.

Her name is Rose Hacker, and she describes how she is one of the people who comes to live with us. And she, herself—Rose Hacker—is Jewish. She is terrified, as is her husband, when they're living in London and the bombing is about to start. And this will give you a sense of what it's like to be an English Jew waiting for the Germans to invade.

She writes on page 65 of her autobiography: "We really expected Hitler to invade England, probably somewhere along the South or East coast. As Jews, we anticipated the fate of French and Dutch Jews, who had joined their German coreligionists in the concentration camps. Mark"—who is her husband—"Mark tried to persuade me to take the boys to America but I refused until it was too late for ships to travel. Although bombing was heavy in London and his Holborn office building was hit three times, he would never talk about his experience, but constantly discussed safer homes for me and the children."

And then Rose and the two children, Michael and Lawrence, who were almost like brothers for me for a while, move out and they move to a place called Cranleigh. "In Cranleigh neighbors were kind and helpful and a childless couple offered, in the event of a Nazi invasion, to take my children and pretend they were their own. As my boys were fair-skinned with red hair, they could pass for Aryans. It was moving to receive such generosity and heart-warming to realize that our new friends would take such risks for strangers."

And then Mark decided that Rose and the children would be safer in North Wales, and they started to encounter quite a lot of racism and they went looking for a safer place. And then Rose heard from Mark—or maybe she saw it herself—this advertisement, which is my mother asking people to stay with her. And she read the ad that my mother put in the *New Statesman*.

Quote: "Rooms available for family. Any race or religion. Near progressive school. Possible access London." And then Rose writes, "This was Eve Shannon's protest against neighbors who advertised 'No Jews or foreigners.'" And then she goes to visit my mother and Mark says, "There's only one problem with you going to stay with this

woman; you may never want a home of your own."

So Rose is among these people who come to live with us, and my mother really runs the home as what one would now call almost a commune. We always have dinner together and friends of both sides are invited. So this is while I'm going to the progressive school. And among the other people who come to stay with us is a Hungarian Jew, a poet and mathematician, called Paul Dienes, who's quite extraordinary, who was then married to Sari Dienes, the artist. And then his son, Z, comes to stay with us.

So this means, though I'm not Jewish, from the very beginning I feel almost more at home among Jews than among gentiles. And my mother continues this tradition so that after Rose has left and after Paul and Z, his family, have left, we end up, around 1940 or 1941, living with a couple from Germany, Hans Redlich, who was born in Vienna, who was the son of the last Minister of Justice of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

And Hans had gone to Germany, studied musicology, met Liesl, who was a very well-known ballerina in Munich—who was not Jewish—and they had escaped in 1939. So they came to live with us and they never left. After the war, everyone else who'd been billeted would leave from most places, but my mother and Hans and Liesl, by this time, were behaving like a family.

So this meant that my whole childhood was very colored—by what? European culture, Jewish culture, a huge emphasis on music—that Hans was a Monteverdi expert but gradually moved over to late 19th, early 20th-century music so that I would very, very often go to concerts that he organized there.

We had—don't know if you've ever seen one, but *His Master's Voice*, which is—it has a huge horn. And so we would play a lot of music upstairs, like—one of the things I most remember is *The Magic Flute*, the Mozart opera. And he would constantly give me books and immediately after the war, he began to give me existentialist texts by Sartre.

So this meant that, at home in my mother's house, I had, I think, a very unusual experience as a child, that, as I said, I, myself, came from an immigrant background. I was mixed, very mixed, in terms of class. And then there were the European and English refugees staying with us. And then at school, I continued to have a rather unusual training as a child.

SUE HEINEMANN: So in your school years, you were still in school when the war ended, right?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes.

SUE HEINEMANN: So did you continue on at this same school?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. I continued on until my father, when I was 16, had moved—he'd gone back to Bristol and then he had a job in the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. And he was, as far as I know, the second-in-command of the sterling area, which meant despite his working-class background and his being very Irish, he was suddenly in a sort of international diplomatic circle in Washington.

And so he decided, when I had finished school, that he would give me the choice of coming to stay in America with him in Washington. So I finished school at St. Christopher's when I was almost 18. I took the *Queen Elizabeth*, which was a very stately way of traveling, and it was the first time I'd been out of the country, except to the Channel Islands. So I came on the boat and my father picked me up in New York and I had a passport that said I was a family of international aliens, which actually meant that I got off the boat before anyone else.

My father and I went by train to Washington and then I suddenly plunged into this very strange cocktail party circuit, although I wasn't allowed to drink, although I longed to have cocktails. But my father and my stepmother took me to a lot of events in Washington. And they—by the way, when I was a child, they had lived very, very differently from my mother. And immediately after the war, I had begun to visit them. They lived in Bristol.

And they lived in an absolutely working-class Irish way, in terms of taste—food, Irish food. My father was innately generous but trained me to be very careful about money, whereas my mother was very, very extravagant. And my stepmother, whom I grew to love later on, I didn't love very much as a child because I had so sided with my mother. So when I arrived in Washington, D.C., I had to reconcile, as it were, with my stepmother, and I got a job working in a Woodward & Lothrop's.

And then I decided to take off and go around America. And I think this was the first time that I encountered my passion for traveling. And I think it's a very key component of my life. I had met, while I was in Washington, D.C., a young man who had gone to Black Mountain College and therefore knew Cage. And he was in love with me, so that when I decided to begin this travel, the idea was I would go to New York and he would come to New York, too, and he would take me around New York.

And so here I was, in the spring of 1952, and I arrive in New York. And of course now I wish passionately I had kept a diary, but I didn't. And we would go to these evenings, in 1952, of John Cage and David Tudor and all these people. And I, later on, very self-deprecatingly wrote ironically saying it was very boring and I had longed to do something exciting in New York. And here we were, we were always going to these concerts. And it wasn't real music. It wasn't Monteverdi or Schoenberg. So that was my first meeting with John Cage.

And then after that, I decided I would take off and I would go and visit my extremely conservative relatives in Canada—my mother's family. So I went off to Canada and this, you have to know, is all by Greyhound bus. So I had endless talks with whoever was sitting next to me. And I encountered America in the middle of the McCarthy period in a way that I think was very unusual—you know, whoever happened to be sitting next to me.

And even though I was shy, I was very, very curious about this country. So this trip took quite a while. I went up to Canada. I spent some time with Uncle Guy, who was my mother's brother. He had been in a Scottish regiment in World War I. And he talked to me a lot about being Scottish. And I, by the way, as a child used to wear a Scottish kilt—a McClellan kilt.

Then after that I had, while in Washington, met a couple—Bob and Sonia Jacobs. And in Washington, they had said they were about to move to Colorado and if I was going to travel around, I should come and see them. So on my Greyhound bus, endlessly looking out of the window and taking incredible risks—I remember going to, later on, the Grand Canyon at 6:00 in the morning with someone I'd just met on the bus—I arrived in Colorado, and they suggest to me that I attend the University of Colorado and live with them.

I decide that this would be a very good idea, write to my father, who says I'm to come home immediately. So in a willful way, I don't go back to Washington, but I take the Greyhound bus and I come to the West Coast, have lots of adventures in San Francisco; then go to Los Angeles, almost get drowned in L.A. by recklessly going out swimming one day; then head for New Mexico.

Then, in New Mexico, I again have more adventures. My purse is stolen and I have no money except my ticket and a little food. And so I head for Washington and then I arrive in Washington and it turns out that my father is very proud of how independent I am and has been boasting to everyone how I refused to come home from Colorado. And that probably reveals a certain part of my father that I didn't know about. I had very much categorized him as a strict, conservative father.

So out of this early background—I sent you a couple of texts that I wrote in 1999. And one is called "My Mother's Garden" and the other is "My Father's Letters." And they poetically describe both my father and my mother but also the enormous difference between the two of them. And "My Mother's Garden" describes all the rather glamorous Sunday lunches we would have where Hans would invite well-known composers and singers and scholars.

And then "My Father's Letters" describes how he truly tried to charm me when I was a child by writing religiously every week in this beautiful handwriting that I still remember. And in "My Father's Letters," I describe how he, at one point, wrote me a very, very witty account—which again, I think, reveals a sweet part of my father—about how a member of the union, a British workman, came and really did no work because he constantly said the union required that he have a rest or he have tea or something.

And that series of letters ends with, a few years later, when my father has, very admirably, quit his job at the International Monetary Fund because during the McCarthy period, it was very tricky—even if you were in an international group, you were expected by the U.S. government to perhaps report on what was going on.

So my father resigned without any job, which was very morally admirable, and came to England, and this in—probably around 1954—and stayed with me and my husband, Bernard. And he and I had a very sweet reconciliation, and then he died shortly afterwards. So there I am, having spent this adventuresome year in Washington, and then going back to England, now quite restless and not at all deciding I wanted to go to college.

And what happens then is that, during my adolescence, one of the visitors to my mother's house had been a man called Frank Walker, who was a scholar of Hugo Wolf. And he had come quite regularly to the house and then, though in retrospect it seems very unconventional, my mother had allowed me to go up to London, I think when I was 16 and 17. And we used to call Frank "Hugo." "Hugo" would take me to galleries, and I remember once going to where Oscar Wilde had lived.

So when I come back to England and really don't know what to do, "Hugo" decides that if I want to go to school, I will need to know a language and he would be very happy to arrange that I live in the Salzkammergut in a village called Gmunden. And I can stay in an inn and I will be quite close to the illegitimate daughter of Hugo Wolf, who will be able to look after me.

So Hugo/Frank arranges for this and I go off—again, I'm on my own, so to speak—I go off to Austria and I have a

very interesting time in this small village. I live in the inn. I teach the kids English. They're very wicked and they teach me—instead of Hochdeutsch, they teach me total dialect and keep on assuring me that I'm learning High German. [Laughter.]

So I can spell this out later, but I learned things like "Ich habs'gehabt" instead of "Ich habe es gehabt." And I spend lots of the evenings in the village inn and I meet all the villagers. And then the illegitimate daughter of Hugo Wolf comes in regularly in a cart every week and takes me off. And everyone in the village admires her a great deal.

So then I have this connection with the—not only the illegitimate daughter but her sisters. And her sisters live in Vienna and are quite established in Viennese society. So at a certain point, it's decided that I've learnt enough German, especially dialect German—[laughter]—that I should go to Vienna. I suspect I made this decision.

So I go to Vienna and I mix with the Kocherts, who are the family that's connected with the illegitimate daughter of Hugo Wolf. And there's a young man there called Dieter who takes me to a lot of concerts. So I live in Vienna for a number of months. I now learn German through studying Latin at the University of Vienna.

And I thought this would amuse you. This is an image of myself—my card—ID card—for Vienna University. And I live with a seamstress, and I, as I said, go to a lot of concerts and I explore Vienna. And it has a huge impact on me, being in Vienna; the fact that the Cold War is absolutely in progress; Berlin is divided, et cetera, et cetera.

And then I decide to visit my mother. My mother is in a very shaky state. And I come back to England and then, just before my 21st birthday, I marry Bernard Turner, who is an English Jew from a very, very Orthodox family. And he and I live in London. I get on strangely well with my parents-in-law, partly because I have learnt to cook borscht and I only cook Jewish food. And I, for a couple of years, become the editor of *The International Who's Who* at a publishing house, even though I don't have any college experience.

And that's because Bernard put an ad in some [newspaper –MR]—I think it may have been the *New Statesman* saying how wonderful I was and interesting, and I'd been to America and Austria; I knew German. And then I briefly became a receptionist at this publishing house and then just moved rapidly up and became the editor of *The International Who's Who*. And at that point, I decided, with Bernard's encouragement, that I would indeed go to college, and I applied to my family school, so to speak, of the London School of Economics.

SUE HEINEMANN: How did you meet Bernard?

MOIRA ROTH: My mother, at this point, was running, or organizing—with Joshua Bierer, who was a very unorthodox psychiatrist—a psychiatric nursing home. And Bernard had had a very shaky time and he was there in the psychiatric nursing home. And so I met him in that situation. Then my mother was having a breakdown and Bernard left the psychiatric nursing home and he and I supported one another in my escape from it, too.

And then he moved to London, and then—actually, when we first got married, he was doing very ambitious biochemical experiments in our bathroom and he did a lot of original work. And then he got a job, et cetera, et cetera. After we were divorced, he had, I think, a very stable life. But we had met one another at this curious moment in our lives.

SUE HEINEMANN: So anyhow, now you went to the London School of Economics.

MOIRA ROTH: I went to the London School of Economics and I had decided to be a psychiatric social worker. And I loved going to college. It was a very good decision. And the London School of Economics had a very interesting history. You know, it was founded by socialists and it was a very lively place to go to school. There were very lively students.

So I went there briefly and then I decided that I would go to America. And so this is a whole part of my private life, but Bernard and I got divorced. I went to America again and I applied to New York University to finish my degree.

SUE HEINEMANN: In social work?

MOIRA ROTH: No, no—well, in sociology. And then almost whimsically, it turned out, because I had been very interested in art history, that I took a minor in art history. And more to the point, whimsically, I happened to meet H. W. Janson, who was teaching there. And so when I was going to apply to graduate school, I was going to apply to Columbia in sociology and I went to see Janson and he said, "Oh, you're so gifted in kunstgeschichte—in art history—why don't you apply to NYU and I will get you in?"

So I applied to both schools, got into both schools, and went to NYU in art history. So that was my first official encounter with art history. And it was absolutely classic. I mean, NYU, at that time, was filled with European

refugees who, you know, had come over from Europe and were now teaching at NYU. And it was very, very conservative, in many ways, although lovely, and it was in a beautiful building.

And so I went there briefly, dropped out, and then came to the West Coast and, for a number of years, had what I've described, I think, somewhere in material I sent you as a very bohemian life—that I was a receptionist at the Californian Presbyterian Medical Center and I—

SUE HEINEMANN: In Berkeley, or—

MOIRA ROTH: In San Francisco. And I went to lots and lots of poetry readings. I went to a lot of folk singing. I lived in North Beach at one point and went to Vesuvio Cafe and City Lights; met a lot of writers. And it was a time when people didn't say, "What do you do? Do you have a degree?" If they found you interesting, you simply had conversations.

And then at a certain point, I decided that I should, indeed, go back to graduate school. So I reapplied to NYU and got in and then I applied to UC-Berkeley and also got in, and that's when I truly plunged into art history. And Berkeley, as you can imagine, at that point, was just a wild campus with demonstrations—

SUE HEINEMANN: What year was this? Was this 19—

MOIRA ROTH: This was 1964, I think. So there were all these strikes, farm workers, et cetera, et cetera. So I went to school there and did very well and, oddly enough, did an M.A. thesis on Francis Bacon. And then again, which seemed to be a pattern of mine, I was marching along in the Ph.D. program and I got very restless—I found it very difficult to be in the academic world with all the things going on, including the Vietnam War, civil rights.

So I decided to drop out and went to visit the head of the department, Walter Horn. And a very memorable exchange happened, which is that I announced I was dropping out and he very rudely picked up the phone instead of really paying attention to me, and then I heard him say, "I have a very good candidate. I think you'll like her."

So I thought: how rude. It turned out he was speaking about me and this could only be done then. I had now got a job, if I wanted it, teaching at the University of Indiana in Bloomington. So for various reasons, I decided to go to Bloomington, and that was the first time that I taught, except for being a T.A.

And I, at this point—because Duchamp was not at all part of my training at UC-Berkeley and my teachers were not interested in Duchamp—for me, he seemed absolutely wild and almost like a bohemian, not at all in the canon of modernism. So there was going to be an exhibition of surrealism, et cetera, so I plunged into being fascinated with Duchamp and he became a very central figure in my teaching there.

And he had also died that year, and I was always talking about him at parties and people would say, you know: "who is this man who is so wonderful?" And I'd say, "Oh, he's a very famous French artist and he died this year." So I became very interested in Duchamp, and I also reconnected with Cage, whom I had met, in a sullen way on my side, in New York when I was 18. He was having a big concert in Urbana, and I took lots and lots of students there. And it was amazing and he, again, became another hero for me.

And I bumped into him because he was wandering around, seeing what the performance was like from way up on a balcony, and we chatted a little. So the experience in Bloomington was, I think, very pivotal for me because I felt very free to do what I liked in teaching. I was very theatrical as a teacher. And as I said, though I wasn't thinking about a dissertation topic, I was certainly fascinated with Duchamp and Cage.

SUE HEINEMANN: Going to take a pause.

[Audio break.]

SUE HEINEMANN: So we left you in Indiana with Duchamp and Cage.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, if you will forgive me, I will briefly read from the introduction to a collection of my essays called *Difference/Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage*. I have described this experience in my introduction—about being in Bloomington.

I'm very struck by the fact that I would no longer describe Duchamp in this way, but in Bloomington in 1968, I wrote: "Increasingly I saw Duchamp in terms of his multiple personae, the theatrical aspects of the readymades, and the dramatic narrative of *The Large Glass*—as an actor and a scriptwriter who performed at his best in the limelight of New York and on the stage of American modernism."

"In Bloomington, I fell headlong under the spell of Duchamp's seemingly chameleon-like character in life and art. I taught a class on European Dada and surrealism and the works of Cage and Duchamp kept appearing in class

discussions and inspiring event after event." And then I give an example of one class meeting: "In another class meeting, we did readings from Cage's *Silence*, each student chose a passage at random by opening the book."

"One student searched through the text purposefully, however, and began to read 'Lecture on Boredom' in a droning voice. [Laughter.] Silently and ceremoniously, students, one by one, began to leave the room to stand just outside. Finally, I was the only person left. After the reading had finished, the students sauntered back in the room slowly. No one said anything and the class resumed in a normal manner."

So I think that will give you a sense for why I found them so appealing. I, therefore, had still not decided what to do about a dissertation and had gone back from Bloomington, in 1969, back to Berkeley, and then had got a job —the first of my jobs at the University of California campuses. So I went to Irvine, and I was there for two years, from 1970 to 1972.

And given my interest in Duchamp—but a very theatrical interest in Duchamp—at this school, which had a whole lot of very interesting teachers, but also students—Barbara Rose and I did something called the Duchamp Festival. And again, it was the theatrical side of Duchamp. I remember students planting his name in seeds and it slowly grew on a hilltop. So the Duchamp Festival was very, very lively.

Richard Hamilton flew in from England. Quite a lot of distinguished people came from New York. There were lots of presentations, lots of performances. Simone Forti came and danced. And it wasn't that I was preparing for my Ph.D. It was simply, it seemed a wonderful frame to have an event in. And then—

SUE HEINEMANN: And when was the festival held?

MOIRA ROTH: 1971.

SUE HEINEMANN: And where?

MOIRA ROTH: Oh, at UC-Irvine.

SUE HEINEMANN: Oh, it was at UC-Irvine.

MOIRA ROTH: Then Peter Selz, whom I was very fond of, who was my advisor, called and warned me that I had to finish my Ph.D. in seven years and I was getting perilously near that time. So I was quite miffed but realized I had to choose either not to get a Ph.D. or to get a Ph.D. So I came back to the Bay Area. I taught at Mills for one year and then I taught at UC-Santa Cruz.

But by that time, I had decided already, when I was living in Los Angeles and very involved with the women's movement there, that I would do a study of Duchamp's impact on America and that what I would like to do was to do a whole lot of interviews with Americans about this. So luckily enough, while I was at UC-Irvine, John Cage came, and Cunningham, so these were the very first interviews I did—the very first interview was with John Cage, and I was a nervous wreck about whether the tape recorder would work or not.

And I did it with my then-husband, Bill Roth, and he and I had very different points of view, so he would ask a question that would take us in one direction and then I would smile and my question would be another direction. But I interviewed John Cage about Duchamp and then I interviewed Cunningham.

And then, of course, I would name-drop. I would say, "May I interview you—by the way, I've already interviewed John Cage and Cunningham?" So it was very, very easy to find people who would be most willing to be interviewed. And at this point—

SUE HEINEMANN: Who were some of the people you interviewed?

MOIRA ROTH: I'm just about to read you a list. At this point, when Peter Selz had called to say that I really had to finish, I moved very rapidly. And I am just going to rattle off some of the names. I had, as I said, come back to the Bay Area and was teaching at Santa Cruz, Mills, et cetera. And then the second I finished my dissertation in 1974, I began to teach at the University of California at San Diego.

So these are some of the people I interviewed: In 1973, I interviewed Vito Acconci in New York; I interviewed Arman in New York, 1973; I interviewed Jack Burnham, actually in Berkeley. And I then published, in 1973, the interview with John Cage in *Art in America* and that's been reprinted quite a lot.

In New York in '73, I also interviewed Nicolas Calas. I tried to interview Clement Greenberg. I talked to him on the phone but he said he wasn't interested. [Laughter.] Also, in 1973—and again in New York—I interviewed Sidney Janis. I interviewed, in New York while he was still there, Donald Judd. And at this point, I began to encounter artists who did not like Duchamp. They felt he was a European interferer in American modernism. And certainly, Judd was one of them.

I'd already interviewed Allan Kaprow in Pasadena in 1972. And in New York—again, someone who was critical of Duchamp—I interviewed Max Kozloff. In Santa Barbara, in 1973, I interviewed Kenneth Rexroth. Then, in '73 and when I was doing these New York interviews, I had the most wonderful visit with George Segal. And he invited me over to his farm in New Jersey, and it was quite an extraordinary encounter.

Firstly, his talking rather mockingly about Duchamp and saying: of course, he wasn't a dandy—that, you know, he felt Duchamp appealed to the dandies and Segal wasn't. And then after the interview, he took me all over the place. I had already interviewed Peter Selz about Duchamp. And then in [March of 1973 –MR] just before Robert Smithson died, I did an interview with him where he was very, very critical of Duchamp. And that was quite a revelation for me.

So this meant, by '73, I'd done all these, I think, very interesting interviews. And Peter Selz was wonderfully supportive of my doing my dissertation in whatever way I liked. So the dissertation itself was called *Marcel Duchamp and America, 1913 - 1974.* And buried in it was a section about the aesthetic of indifference, which became, later on, an article I published in *Artforum* that was rather well known.

And then, toward the end of my dissertation, there was a whole section called "Duchamp as Liberator and Iconoclast," which is certainly how I had seen him when I was in Bloomington. And that talked about people like Cage. Then another chapter was called "The Cryptic Duchamp," and that had Jack Burnham analyzing Duchamp's being cryptic. And even though, for complicated reasons, I'd never interviewed Jasper Johns, he was certainly a key figure in that.

And then there was "Duchamp the Enemy." And that was the group of people—Smithson, Judd, Sol LeWitt, for instance, whom I didn't tape but I had a long visit with. So I think it's interesting that, by the time I wrote my dissertation, I firstly had mixed feelings about Duchamp because I was so involved with the women's movement, I thought I should have written on at least a woman for example, Hannah Höch, and not Duchamp.

But also, by the mid-1970s, Duchamp was absolutely in the center of the new canons. And so by the time I was concluding my dissertation, I wrote—I think it's revealing that I never got my dissertation published because Yale asked if I was interested and, by that time, I really wanted to work on women artists and on performance art.

By the time I finished the dissertation, 1974, I wrote: "Duchamp's iconoclasm is being co-opted into a modernist tradition. His art is being co-opted into a museum system. Much of his legendary personality is perilously near being dissected by psychoanalytic study. Yet so far he has continued viable on some level or other: new facets are examined at different times. His neutrality, iconoclasm and irony appeal to the 1950s as almost a rationale during the McCarthy period."

And that's something I then picked up when I wrote "The Aesthetic of Indifference." So by the time I had finished my dissertation and was looking for a job, I again, I think because of my promise, as a Duchamp scholar, was quite sought-after. So I had a choice between going to Vassar and working with Linda Nochlin, which, needless to say, would have been really wonderful.

But I wasn't very drawn to where Vassar was, and so I ended up deciding to take a job at the University of California in San Diego. And I went there originally partly to run the new gallery, and then I ended up, between '74 and the mid-1980s, teaching. And I got tenure there and I was chair of the department and things like that.

So I thought I would very, very quickly explain a little about all this unfinished research and thinking on Duchamp, which includes a lot of the interviews that have not been published. I published, in *Art in America*, in 1973, "John Cage on Duchamp," one of the interviews. And as I said, that was republished a lot.

And then I also, in *Artforum*, published the one I had done with Robert Smithson, and that has been republished a lot—including Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, who is a fabulous scholar, who, at one point, wanted to publish all these interviews. And what she did was, she retranscribed them, did an incredible amount of research, and she—for the big Robert Smithson MoMA catalogue—she transformed the Smithson interview that I had done with all her research and she did exactly the same with the John Cage interview.

And it ended up being published in Paris in a journal called *Étant donné* and it was a whole issue on Duchamp and John Cage. So there I was, sitting with all these interviews, not sure what to do, not sure if I should simply go ahead and work on them or if I should—what else should I do? So I did other things, which I will then come to.

The result is that in the '80s, I did very little work on Duchamp, although I would always teach him. And I came across John Cage again, ironically, in Ponape, in the South Seas Islands, where we had gone for a kind of escapade—a whole group of us—arranged by Crown Point Press, which I'll come back to.

Then, at a certain point, I felt that I should speak my mind about Duchamp and Cage, and so I literally did that in

the 1990s, and I did it very theatrically. And I found myself doing something, playing with Duchamp, and then I would apologize either to the audience or friends. So one thing I did was an exchange at a big Duchamp conference in L.A. in the middle of the 1990s with all these Duchamp scholars.

And Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, this wonderful friend and scholar, had asked me to be part of it and I had said I'd really become quite critical of Duchamp. And she said, "Well, then maybe you could do something about that." But there I was with all these people in the audience, including Amelia Jones. And I was staying with Amelia, and I really wondered if it would be rude to do what I planned to do; however, I did. [Laughter.]

And the text has been published several times. What I did was—it was called "Talking Back, an Exchange with Marcel Duchamp," and it was at the Museum of Contemporary Art in L.A., October 28th [15th –MR], 1995. And Naomi had given me a font of Duchamp's handwriting so I forged an exchange between myself and Duchamp. And I wrote to him explaining what I was doing and he wrote, in his own handwriting, saying: how amusing and how modern.

And then he talks about being in heaven but looking down benignly. "What are you going to do?" And then I begin to talk back. So this is my second letter to Duchamp, which is in my handwriting: "You probably don't know bell hooks—she was after your time—but she wrote an essay entitled, 'Talking Back.' It had a great influence on me. hooks writes that 'in the world of the southern black community I grew up in "back-talk" and "talking back" meant speaking as an equal to an authority figure. It meant daring to disagree and sometimes it just meant having an opinion.'"

Then I continue. Duchamp says it's very amusing. And then [he wonders –MR] why I don't write about him as a woman artist, as Rrose Sélavy. And at that point in my increasingly theatrical presentation, I pick up my diary and I write, "The man's too much. He keeps popping up just when you think he's dead. He just has too much influence for my liking and he's taking up too much space and time at the moment when we should be, I believe, moving on."

And then he writes again to me, and then I end up writing about other artists, including Faith Ringgold and Shigeko Kubota. So I did that, and then I did the equivalent of that at a John Cage conference, which, by this time, was at Mills College. And this is in November of 1995. And the conference was called "Here Comes Everybody: The Music, Poetry and Art of John Cage." And again, I warned the organizers that I might do something slightly critical.

So what I did was a theatrical presentation called "Five Stories about St. John," which included my various meetings with him, "Seven Stories about St. Pauline," meaning Pauline Oliveros—[audio break]—who had a lot of connections with Mills College but also was friends with John Cage—and then the title of my presentation went on, "Surely There's Trouble in the John Cage Studies Paradise, and Readings from Today's Headlines of the *New York Times*."

And so it begins off with my various meetings with John Cage and then my various meetings with Pauline Oliveros and then the fact that I think there's trouble, just as in the Duchamp scholarship—there's trouble in the John Cage studies. [I say, –MR] "I find canonization of any artistic persona not only deeply troubling but deeply questionable." And then I go on talking about the fact that Cage, just like Duchamp, has taken over too much.

And then I dramatically finish with a reading from the *New York Times* that includes, "Vatican says the ban on women as priests is 'infallible' doctrine. 'Culture and race still on America's mind.'" And then I close the *New York Times* and sit down. And in both cases, someone in the audience applauded wildly. So they led, sort of, a support of these talking backs. That is basically my involvement with Duchamp and I continue to come and go about him. I love talking about him in teaching. And then I critique him.

SUE HEINEMANN: Did you want to talk a little bit more about "The Aesthetic of Indifference"—the article that you published, or—?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. Okay, so in the 1970s, I'm at—and I'm sure it's because of my Duchamp scholarship—I'm now at UCSD and, as you know, one needs to get tenure with publishing in mainstream things. So in 1977, I had published an article in *Arts magazine* called "Marcel Duchamp in America: A Self Ready-Made."

And then, which I'll come back to later, *Arts* had said, "What else would you like to publish?" And I said, "Oh, I would love to do things on California performance." But in the same year, I had already published in *Artforum* and they said, "What else would I like to publish?" And I decided to pull together material from my dissertation that was around this theme of the aesthetic of indifference.

And I would say that when I wrote it, I kept on coming back to memories of being in Washington in the McCarthy period and how much I would hear about McCarthy because I was in Washington and how my father felt about American politics. So even though I didn't write about that, I think I'd had firsthand experience of it.

And so the McCarthy period was not, as it might have been for someone English, something I had read about what was happening in the U.S. It was something I'd experienced as a young woman. And [the article –MR] has, in the illustrations, a large image of the showdown between the [Army counsel Joseph Welch –MR] and McCarthy, where McCarthy is pointing to a map of the U.S. and the heading is, "Communist Party Organization, U.S.A.—February 9th, 1950," and Welch is about to make that famous remark protesting McCarthy.

And the other images that begin off "The Aesthetic of Indifference" are photographs of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg and Cunningham and Cage. So I begin with quoting from the novel *One Lonely Night*, by Mickey Spillane, from 1951. And then I quote from Holden Caulfield in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

And I say that these two very, very different attitudes—one is bigoted conviction and one is embittered passivity expressed by Spillane's Mike Hammer and Salinger's Holden Caulfield— were in many ways characteristic of America's state of mind during the McCarthy period. And then I talk about the fact that the writings of Cage, the works—the mysterious works—of Johns and Rauschenberg, somehow allowed what I called—and I'm not sure if I would still use this title—"the aesthetic of indifference." They allowed one to draw back from politics.

And I then talk about a language of neutrality developed during the McCarthy period. And then I talk about how Marshall McLuhan's *The Mechanical Bride*, published in 1951, was an early announcement of this tone of indifference. And then I talk about Duchamp, as well as Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg and Johns.

And this article was quite widely read and there was a lot of discussion in it on Jasper Johns. He does the American flag but it's not a political critique; it's something different. And I felt that it had set a model for the '60s. And as I said, just like I'm not sure about this title now, I don't at all think I would so simply feel that the 1960s American art was, for the most part, indifferent. But I did then, and I had various arguments with people.

I gave a lot of lectures on it and met people, particularly in New York, like Rudolf Baranik and May Stevens in, it must be 1978, who argued that, really, there was a great deal of passion in art of the '60s. But anyway, "The Aesthetic of Indifference," which lumped Duchamp with Cage and Cunningham and Johns and things, meant that I could have gone in that direction of writing—or rethinking this period.

But at that point, I had begun to move into performance art more and more and I wanted to work with that. So that I had done this in *Artforum*, 1977, and then by 1980, Ingrid Sischy, who was the new editor of *Artforum*, said, "Why don't you try your hand at looking at what's going on in feminist art history, currently, and feminist criticism?" So *Artforum* contained, you know, several important texts of mine, sort of going from Smithson to "The Aesthetic of Indifference" and then revisiting.

SUE HEINEMANN: Okay, so I think now that you have brought up feminism, we'll go back a little bit and try and backtrack into the early '70s, when you were in L.A. and first encountering—

MOIRA ROTH: Well, let me put it this way: That in the late 1960s, both at Bloomington and at Berkeley, I had been very absorbed in issues around civil rights and the Vietnam War, but had, had relatively little encounters with current feminism. When I moved down to L.A., when I was going to teach at UC-Irvine, Bill Roth and I were living in L.A. and I was commuting to Irvine. I, very early on, met Joyce Kozloff, who, with her husband, Max, had moved from New York and was in L.A., and I plunged into the feminist art movement.

And there was almost a legendary evening when Joyce Kozloff had called up a lot of women artists and critics and historians to see if they would like to meet at her house. An enormous number came. What happened was that Max Kozloff, whom I liked enormously, had to leave the house with their son, and everyone thought that was very funny because it left two spaces in the house for women.

And then we all started to compare notes, and what had totally, totally provoked many of us was this famous cover of an exhibition at the L.A. County Museum, which was actually published in 1971, so this may have been somewhat after that evening, but it shows the kind of mood of things. And already, a lot of people knew about it—it had simply a whole lot of male faces on the cover for the "Art and Technology" exhibition.

So here were all these women who, for the most part, had studios in their kitchens or basements. Everyone was reading a great deal. We were all hearing about what was going on in New York. And we decided that it was time that, firstly, we consolidated the women's movement in L.A. because that was the year when Judy Chicago had set up the Fresno program and then, very soon after that, was to come back to L.A. Womanhouse was to happen.

Miriam Schapiro had moved out. There was so much going on, and a lot of networking began at that evening. For instance, you could sit down and argue with Judy Chicago and sort of get on very well but disagree, and then you'd sort of turn and someone on the other side would be equally interesting and you'd talk with them. So I got involved in this.

Here I was with my beginning interest in Duchamp, and as I mentioned to you while we had the break, I was very embarrassed that I wasn't working on a woman artist. I was working on a male artist and not even an American artist but a European artist. So these early years in L.A., when I was living in L.A. and commuting to UC-Irvine, meant that I got very, very involved—a lot of friendships started that, until this day, continue.

With the "Art and Technology" show and its famous cover coming out, this loose group that I was part of consolidated and we decided that the L.A. County Museum must do something on women artists. And I think the group—I wasn't at all the ringleader of the group—but the group is very responsible for, finally, the famous Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin huge exhibition, *Women Artists, 1550 to 1950*, which was in 19—when was it? I'll need to check the date—1976.

So a lot of us, in all different ways, would examine permanent collections, exhibition records. There were a lot of small women artist exhibitions going on, lots of small publications. So it was a pretty amazing time to live in L.A. And a lot of things that happened were almost casual and then they would consolidate and then they'd be, in a good way, institutionalized. So this famous sort of coming together at Joyce Kozloff's was, I think, very pivotal for that moment.

SUE HEINEMANN: Did it actually lead to demonstrations of any kind, or—?

MOIRA ROTH: I'd say there were less demonstrations and more interferences. And much later, in the middle of the 1990s, Yolanda Lopez and I wrote an essay called "Social Protest, Racism and Sexism" that was in an anthology of writings, *The Power of Feminist Art*, by Broude and Garrard. And I wrote about this. Yolanda and I both wrote briefly about our very different experiences at that time.

"When I arrived in Los Angeles from UC-Berkeley in the fall of 1970, I found the women's art movement was exploding there at an incredible rate. It was an ardent, optimistic time. I remember Joyce Kozloff calling up some 80 women artists out of the blue, inviting them to her house and half of them turned up. I would hear exciting reports about early feminist teaching experiments, filled with fervor and originality, at Fresno State, the California Institute of the Arts, and the Woman's Building. It was a time when many of us formed lifelong friendships and alliances as we exchanged information and planned art actions and events, and took part in consciousness-raising groups." And that was certainly something I did at that time.

"We engaged in many discussions about women's art—contemporary and historical—and how to make it available. Through these encounters and experiences, I became increasingly aware of the historical neglect of women artists while simultaneously reexamining my own art historical training. I began to curate shows of contemporary women artists and write especially on women's performance art."

So that is where I was when in L.A. and, later, when I was teaching at UC-San Diego—and then, I was living near San Diego, north of San Diego, but I went into L.A. a great deal.

SUE HEINEMANN: And what kind of contact did you have with Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro and their whole program?

MOIRA ROTH: Well, I didn't have that much contact with their program, per se, though I certainly knew about it and would go to things. […–MR]

[Audio break.]

MOIRA ROTH: When I came to UC-San Diego in the fall of 1974, as I mentioned, I was the gallery director of the new space. And I decided that among the exhibitions I would do immediately was one on the Southern California performance artist Barbara Smith and then the next year, 1975, one on Miriam Schapiro.

And there was very little money for catalogues so what I did was I worked with friends of mine who ran a poetry press in Northern California, and the exhibition that opened the Mandeville Art Gallery was an exhibition on Barbara Smith, and I did, I think, quite a charming, very, very cheap catalogue, which had a statement by Allan Kaprow.

And then something that I had become more and more interested in—I had switched from all my interviewing skills about Duchamp to interviewing women artists. I interviewed Barbara Smith, actually before I came, because I knew I was going to do this exhibition. I interviewed her in 1973, quite a long interview.

SUE HEINEMANN: So that was about the same time you were doing some of the Duchamp interviews.

MOIRA ROTH: Yes, yes. And I had, as I said, lived in L.A. for two years, so—and Barbara had been a student at UC-Irvine, as had Chris Burden and Nancy Buchanan. So I had already started to meet a lot of women artists in Southern California. And I should say that my experience of performance art was very different from my

experience of performance art in the 1960s at UC-Berkeley—where I had gone to performances, had been very close to a performance artist called Paul Cotton, and I had, while I was in graduate school, actually performed as well as gone to performances.

But it was a very male scene there, even though women, later on, were protesting not being part of it, whereas when I came to L.A., I saw the medium of performance as a wonderful medium for women artists to not only visually show things but talk—literally speak. So I saw it as a very important medium for the feminist movement and I felt very much that I could contribute something, that I could—given my interviewing skills plus my archiving skills—that I could be at the beginning of the women's performance movement in Southern California—I could be there as an art historian.

So I did—I went to lots and lots of performances and I also—a lot of them haven't been published—I also recorded a lot of interviews. And then I figured out fairly cheap ways of publishing these cheap catalogues at UC-San Diego, and then *High Performance*, which was a wonderful magazine, was also a place that I published in.

SUE HEINEMANN: So who were some of the early women performers that you saw, other than Barbara Smith?

[…–MR]

[Audio break.]

MOIRA ROTH: Now I'll talk about early performance by women artists in Southern California. And as I mentioned, *Arts magazine*, after I had done my "Self Ready-Made: Duchamp in America," asked what else I would like to do. So in 1978, I did two long articles that are probably the first nationally published articles on California performance.

One was about the Bay Area and the second one was called "Toward a History of California Performance, Part Two," and it was about Southern California. And it described a very different scene. That, firstly, there were both Europeans and East Coast artists: Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, Nam June Paik—who had come from the East Coast—Steve Paxton, et cetera, Yvonne Rainer.

And then there were the women artists from L.A., and Barbara Smith was certainly one of the figures I found very interesting. And I was also very interested in Nancy Buchanan, and I wrote about her. And then I obviously was interested in Judy Chicago, and she certainly was involved in performance, both as a teacher and as an artist. Vicki Hall was someone from Fresno I found fascinating. She did a work called *Ominous Operation*.

And then Suzanne Lacy was a student of Judy Chicago's. Then at Womanhouse, there were a lot of performances, even though I didn't actually attend Womanhouse. *Ablutions* was done very shortly after that. It was a collaborative performance by Chicago and Suzanne Lacy and Sandra Orgel and Aviva Rahmani.

And then there were, in San Diego or around San Diego, wonderful figures, such as Eleanor Antin. And I became slowly, and then suddenly, very dramatically, quickly, fascinated by Rachel Rosenthal. And there were other artists involved that I would go to—so I would go to both male and female artists. For instance, Pauline Oliveros did a lot of performance and she was a colleague of mine.

So it was a very, very lively scene, and I wrote about it in the *Arts Journal* in 1978 and then I wrote what I think is one of my worst essays, but it has an ambitious title. It's in a book called *Performance Anthology*. I wrote "Autobiography, Theater, Mysticism and Politics: Women's Performance Art in Southern California." And that was published in 1980. And that laid out, again, quite a lot of work by women artists.

And then, in addition, I was doing, as I said, quite a lot of interviews, and some of them were published and some of them weren't. And I was attending events. For instance, I went to the Woman's Building to see—I think it was 1978 [1979 –MR]—an absolutely stunning performance that, at that point, the audience was only women, and it was the—oh, what was it called? I think it was called *An Oral Herstory of Lesbianism* and it involved a whole group of women, quite well-known performers, coming out and declaring they were lesbian.

And then someone would yell, "But are you a vegetarian?" or "What are your politics about civil rights?" And they'd say, "I'm a lesbian," and then that wouldn't be sufficient. And later in the evening, there was a stalking of the great orgasm. And another little vignette I remember from that evening was two women talking and I think the mother was telling her daughter she was a lesbian.

Anyway, they were extraordinary, and they were extraordinary partly because of the audience. I mean, obviously the performances were very striking but it was profoundly bonding to sit together—I don't happen to be a lesbian—but to sit together and hear these exchanges, as it were, on the stage or in front of the audience.

And so I went to a lot of performances. I kept chaotic notes. I, as I said, quite often asked if I could interview. I did an early interview, for instance, with Eleanor Antin that I've never published.

So this took up, very pleasurably, a lot of my time when I was somewhat moving away from Duchamp. And then I had this pretty amazing experience of having Mary Jane Jacob contact me, and Lucy Lippard, and ask if we would be consultants for a show she was planning of women's performance art in New Orleans in 1980. And the setup was that the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment], which had consumed a lot of political energy in the '70s, was now trying to woo state after state for ratification, and Louisiana had not ratified the ERA.

So the College Art Association was planning to meet there in 1980 and women, feminists, couldn't decide if they should boycott the conference or boycott the state and meet in Washington. So I decided that I would go to New Orleans, as I was already very, very involved with this exhibition. And Lucy and I kept on sending Mary Jane Jacob more lists—and this is before the days of computers—and she finally said, "I'm not going to type out the list again. Send me the last names and that's all."

So we came up with, I think it was 37 names. And I, in the meantime, had been on an escapade in the South Seas Islands—a very fancy, very privileged escapade. We were on an island called Ponape, arranged by the Crown Point Press, where a whole lot of performance artists, including John Cage, Marina Abramovic, Chris Burden, et cetera, would do 10-minute performances. And otherwise, we would just gather around the island and drink in the bar.

So I went from the Ponape extravaganza directly to New Orleans. The idea was none of us would stay at the Hilton. We would stay with people. And so I stayed with a lesbian carpenter and truly met every lesbian carpenter in New Orleans because this woman, wonderfully, would give parties for me. And in the meantime, Mary Jane Jacob had set up this extraordinary exhibition of women's performance art.

So here we were—we didn't go to CAA, but we went to the opening. And Suzanne Lacy did a huge performance that was gathering together—had begun with a potluck dinner of, I think, 10 people in New Orleans, and out of that, had slowly grown into a huge event, which was going to combine, for an evening, feminists in New Orleans with feminists from all over the place.

And we sat there at tables, and I remember sitting with a group of black nuns, and we talked and talked and talked, and it was a performance about women in New Orleans and their history, despite the fact that the state hadn't ratified the ERA. And then after that, here we were with this incredible research that everyone—mainly Mary Jane Jacob—had done, and no one knew what to do with it.

And then I offered to put it together as a book and got the press that had put out *High Performance*, called Astro Artz, to publish the book. And I called it *The Amazing Decade: Women in Performance Art in America*. And it came out a couple of years later with a huge amount of help from many, many people. And for the introduction, I edited a text about women artists that I had presented as a lecturer in Berlin at a conference, which was a gathering in Berlin of German women, Mexican women and U.S. women.

And for some reason, there had not been any focus on performance in the collecting of these women, so Gisela Weimann had said: Would I come to Berlin and give a lecture on performance? So I gave it there and then I transcribed and heavily edited my text, and it was put as the introduction.

[Audio break.]

SUE HEINEMANN: This is Sue Heinemann interviewing Moira Roth at her home in Berkeley, California, on April 23rd, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number two. So Moira, let's talk a little bit about your time at San Diego, as that was sort of when you were working on *The Amazing Decade*.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, I thought to be succinct, I would read a little from a handout that I gave when I had been invited, a couple of months ago, to come back to UCSD—actually, March 4th, 2011—to come back to UCSD with Allan Sekula, the artist, and he and I were to reminisce about the '70s—in other words, fairly early on in the history of UC-San Diego. And the whole campus was celebrating its 50th birthday, and so different departments invited people back to speak.

So I did a presentation called "Memories and Musings," and it was totally up to me how I did it. But I wanted to remember people I had talked with, people who had died, and also to talk a little about Allan Kaprow. As part of my presentation and as part of my handout, so to speak, I wrote a list of people who were already teaching at UCSD when I came in 1974. And this will give you some idea of what a heady group it was. It really was, I think—I'm sure still is—an extraordinarily lively department.

By 1974, David and Eleanor Antin were teaching there. David had been teaching there since 1968 and Eleanor since 1973. And they were, as you know, both profoundly interested in performance, writing, connections with

New York, because that was their background. Then, from England, there was the artist Harold Cohen, who had arrived at UCSD in 1968, and then the wonderful film critic and theorist Manny Farber, who'd come in 1970, and wrote and taught at UCSD for a long time and then died in 2007. So part of my presentation was remembering him.

Then Newton Harrison, who had come in 1969?—1967?—and then, later on, actually while I was chair at UCSD, Helen Harrison was brought onboard, too. Then the two photographers, both of whom had arrived in 1972, Fred Lonidier and Phil Steinmetz. And then Jehanne Teilhet-Fisk, who was an art historian and a wonderful member of the community, had come in 1969 and she died in 2002.

And then while I was there, Louis Hock came, Kim MacConnel, Babette Mangolte, Jerome Rothenberg and Italo Scanga And when I did come in the fall of 1974, I came with two companions. We'd come from different worlds but became very close friends. One was Allan Kaprow and the other was Sheldon Nodelman.

So I arrived there and it was quite an extraordinary place for me to teach because it was very nationally and internationally connected. There was a huge interest in performance. Everyone loved or was intrigued by Marcel Duchamp. And it meant that I could be right in the middle of things on the West Coast, in Southern California. And it was easy to drive to L.A., which I did a great deal.

So that's the context in which I worked on performance art history. And I just wanted to very, very quickly reminisce. The place, at that time, was filled with events and dinner parties. I remember such things as, once, going to visit Eleanor Antin and she came to the front door wearing a ballerina costume because she was now playing these different roles of the king, the ballerina and the nurse. And she was very good at standing as a ballerina but actually couldn't dance, so she, during my visit with her, would pose, looking very elegant, and then slightly stumble around and get tea or whatever.

Another thing I remember—another moment I remember of Eleanor Antin—is that she invited a whole group of us for the weekend and we all dressed up in Victorian costumes, and it was for a performance of hers that used silhouettes of Eleanor Nightingale, meaning Eleanor Nightingale of Victorian England. And I remember being quite prettily dressed and being in some sort of hammock and being swung by Sheldon Nodelman.

And then other episodes in this very—I don't know—very playful and imaginative time. It certainly had its frictions but it was an amazing group of people and we were all feeling very inventive and imaginative. I remember at one point that Allan Kaprow arrived late for something and he'd left his lunch there and we immediately ate it all because he was the only one at faculty meetings who had lunches, and he never mentioned it. He came in, saw the empty plate and was just very, very polite—slightly hostile but very polite, as well. [Laughter.]

So there were these sort of performative aspects of UCSD. We had an enormous number of dinner parties. Many of us cooked a lot, and we would bring together both people from within the department and whoever happened to be visiting. I was, for example, very close friends with Jerome and Diane Rothenberg, and they brought in a lot of poets. And at one point, Sheldon Nodelman and I lived quite close to one another and we would both entertain. Again, I would bring in friends from L.A.

So it was a very rich space in which to think. And certainly, a key figure was Allan Kaprow—that he arrived, as I said, the same year that I did and he was moving totally away from big public happenings into these private performances. And I participated in one and it was very, very moving and strange. It was absolutely typical he would invite, maybe, three or four people, and you would perform from a very, very simple text and then you'd have dinner together and you'd talk.

So he was someone that I felt was very much—I don't know if I would call him a mentor but he was very much a colleague and I would be very inspired by him. And then there were funny moments—at one point, I had an office almost next door to him and I came out and he had pulled out a garbage can and he had piled in masses of what are now very, very valuable stuff because he just had had it, including a calendar of performance that he'd done for the Museum of Modern Art. So I said: Did he mind if I went through it? And I rummaged around and got a lot of stuff.

And then later—this is after I'd left—I went back, knowing that he was sick and would probably die fairly soon, and had a very emotional time visiting him in 2005. And he died the next year. He died in April, actually, and then I wrote a whole series of memories about him that I've never published but are memories, generally, of my friendship with him.

SUE HEINEMANN: So during this time, you were also, like, curating the shows at the gallery?

MOIRA ROTH: I was brought in as the director of the Mandeville Art Gallery, which opened under my guidance. And I did it for a couple of years and I loved the actual act of curating. As I said, I did a catalogue of Miriam

Schapiro and Barbara Smith and Jo Hanson. I didn't like all the bureaucratic work—fundraising, negotiating with—I don't know—public safety, that kind of thing. So after a couple of years, I moved into full-time teaching.

And then I did come and go a little. I came to Hayward State for a year [1979-80 –MR] and I taught in Chicago for a semester [1981 –MR]. Then when I came back from Chicago, I was chair of the department. And I was sitting in the department, minding my own business when I got a phone call from Mills College saying there was an endowed chair there and would I be interested in this. And so I said I would and I went on leave from UCSD for a year [in 1983 –MR]. No one expected me to not return.

And then I decided, much as I loved UCSD, I loved the idea of coming back to the Bay Area and living in the Bay Area. So that's when I had tenure, by now, at UCSD. That's when I took a year to decide what to do and irritated both schools, and then I finally decided I would leave UCSD and come to Mills. And Elly Antin gave me a completely memorable party, thinking that somehow, after the party, surely I would not want to leave.

And Carolee Schneemann was there and there were performances, and Elly and David lived in a sort of wonderful spot where they had a lot of property, and it really was amazing and I must say, during the event, I kept on wondering if I had made the right decision. It was a place where I was very, very encouraged, not just to go on writing on Duchamp and do research on performance, but I also was very theatrical in the way I taught and everyone liked it that I would have these big theater events.

SUE HEINEMANN: Could you describe one of those?

MOIRA ROTH: Oh, let's see. I had several—I would do all-day-long events sometimes. So I would be teaching performance history, contemporary art, and students—we would literally leave the classroom and we would meander around the campus. And we would do events about the Dada movement. And that I continued when I came to Mills, and I still do the same kind of teaching.

SUE HEINEMANN: I thought maybe we would backtrack a little bit to talk a little bit more about *The Amazing Decade*, since that was during that UCSD time, and how that evolved from the exhibition into the book.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, I'm holding a copy of *The Amazing Decade*, and I had been invited, as I mentioned earlier, by Mary Jane Jacob—she asked if I and Lucy Lippard would brainstorm on lists of artists. So obviously, Lucy took the East Coast and I took the West Coast and we kept on sending material.

After the exhibition and—let me just turn to some pages—after the exhibition, there was a huge amount of research that had been done for wall labels and chronologies and things like that, but none of us had really thought through if it would be a book or not. And then it seemed to me and it seemed to Mary Jane and everyone really obvious that it was very, very valuable, and particularly as there was simply nothing like it at the time.

The exhibition in New Orleans was called *A Decade of Women's Performance Art*, and then when I decided to edit and add a lot to all the material we'd gathered, I called it *The Amazing Decade: Women in Performance Art in America, 1970 to 1980*, and then the subheading was it was a source book. And we couldn't find a regular press and so we asked Astro Artz, which was the publisher of the wonderful *High Performance* journal, which had started a few years before. And so they published it in 1983 and I edited it and it had contributions by Mary Jane Jacob.

And then Janet Burdick and Alice Dubiel were two artists who were at San Jose State, and they came up, encouraged by Judith Bettelheim—actually, when I was doing research before the exhibition began, and they were so amazing that they and I made more and more ambitious plans for a section called "Chronology." And what we did was we wove together the performance history with all other sorts of history—political history and women's history.

And the book, *The Amazing Decade* has—and again, I mentioned this before—it has a very, very edited version of a talk I gave in West Berlin, which was interesting because I was thinking about American art outside America. And I divided my long presentation and then the text into "Personal Clutter and Persistence of Feelings," which was a phrase that I had drawn from Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll*, where she said in it that she had met a happy man, a structuralist filmmaker.

And he said to Carolee, "We are fond of you. You are charming. But don't ask us to look at your films; we cannot. There are certain films we cannot look at—the personal clutter, the persistence of feelings, the hand-touch sensibility, the diaristic indulgence, the painterly mess, the dense gestalt, the primitive techniques." And I thought that was a great description of what many, many women were doing in the '70s—being caught up in "personal clutter and persistence of feelings."

So I sketched out that section, which had, for example, references to Faith Wilding's *Waiting*, work by Martha

Wilson—and incidentally, I've just written an introduction to a book of Martha Wilson's own writings and writings that she cares about that's going to be published in a month or so. And then I talked about Eleanor Antin—this is all part of the "persistence of clutter"—also Linda Montano.

And then the second section was a section called "Ritual and Myths toward a New Past and Present." And that involved the Great Goddess; it involved the very poetic and sometimes mystical and sometimes outrageous performances by Pauline Oliveros; it had Donna Henes' *The Cocoon Ceremony*, Mary Beth Edelson, the *Woman Rising* piece.

And then the third section was called "Models for Feminist Action," and that was about the collaborations and separate works of Suzanne Lacy, whom I began to write intensely about from 1980 onwards—Suzanne Lacy and her often collaborator, Leslie Labowitz, who had worked in Germany and who had a lot of connections to European performance.

And then the last section was called "New Directions in the 1980s." And that included a work by Leslie Labowitz, and a work that I had seen actually in New Orleans in 1980—the one I mentioned by Suzanne Lacy, which was the potluck dinner, which then spread to about 500 people—*River Meetings: Lives of Women in the Delta*—and then a piece that I have been quite haunted by, Nancy Buchanan, who is an L.A. artist—*If Only I Could Tell You How Much I Really Love You* and *Fallout from the Nuclear Family.* And that is a piece that is about her father, who was all involved in the CIA during the Cold War and McCarthy period.

And then my essay ended with an image I had got from Germany that year, which is in German, saying: "We don't want a European Hiroshima." [The German is: "Wir Wollen Kein Euro Shima." –MR] And then in the rest of the book is the chronology which Alice and Janet and I pulled together, going back and forth between civil rights, the Vietnam War, the rising up of the women's movement—so, for example, in 1968, you would have Robin Morgan waving a bra in Atlantic City demonstrating at the Miss America pageant. And then on the other page, you would have the famous and very sad shooting of a Vietcong suspect in Saigon, and then you would have a demonstration against the Vietnam War and then you'd have women marching in 1970 in New York. So that took us right up to 1980. Do you want me to read a list of the artists?

SUE HEINEMANN: No, I think that you don't need to do that because it's in the book.

MOIRA ROTH: So what Mary Jane Jacob had done was a huge amount of research and pulling together of material and then Alice and Janet and I would add sections. So the artists went back and forth between East and West Coast artists, and then it ends with—again, Alice and Janet and I did this together—quite an ambitious bibliography, and again, something that wasn't around at that time.

So the New Orleans exhibition had been in 1980 and the book, *The Amazing Decade*, came out in 1983, but also in 1980, in November, I had been asked by Ingrid Sischy [at *Artforum* –MR] if I would take a look at the state of women artists and feminist art history. And I was quite dazzled I'd been asked to do this.

And I always remember in the middle of it, I was obsessively theorizing, thinking, talking about it and I was traveling, I think, on an NEA project up in the Northwest. And I had sent by fax a draft and Ingrid Sischy called me and she said, "Let's edit it." And I was sure it was perfect, so I said, "Sure." And then she said, "Well, I think you should take out the first paragraph."

And I remember sitting in some motel outraged and thinking, I'm just going to draw back the whole essay. So we argued over the first paragraph and then I waited for her to demolish the rest of my essay and she said, "That's all. There's a comma missing, you know, on page five and perhaps you might want to rewrite the first sentence of page seven." So, as always with good editors, she was quite right.

This was called "Visions and Re-visions" and there was a section called "Rosa Luxemburg and the Artist's Mother," which relates to May Stevens' work, which I had become very interested in. And then I tried in, for me, a surprisingly organized way, to lay out points as to what had been done early on and what should now be done.

So I felt that "At the beginning of the '70s," and I'm quoting from this, "courageous feminist critics and historians—Lucy Lippard and Linda Nochlin, among others"—who both, by the way, are very close friends of mine—"took on with passion and intelligence three tasks: 1. the discovery and presentation of art by women, past and present; 2. the development of a new language for writing about this art—often polemical and poetic—always anti-formalist; 3. the creation of a history and theories about the forms and meanings of this rapidly growing, astonishing quantity of art by women."

And then I felt now there were new tasks to be added and I wrote, "4. the undertaking of a far more critical mode of writing about this art than was possible or necessary in the last decade." And I did not practice this in the 1980s, but I was often quoted that this was now the next task, for us all to write more critically. And then—[coughs]—excuse me—I also felt, in 1980, that we needed to take on two critical issues.

And one was: "Should we redefine what we mean by 'feminist art'?" And second: "Is it possible to be a feminist artist without making overtly feminist art?" Because in the '70s, almost any woman artist, including Georgia O'Keeffe, who didn't want to be seen that way, would be described as a feminist artist simply because she was a woman. So that kind of laid out what I at least was preaching to others.

And then I talked about May Stevens, and the other artist I was focusing on was Suzanne Lacy. And in "Visions and Re-visions," I have an interview with Suzanne Lacy. And then after that section, Ingrid Sischy, who, by now, of course, I adored, said, "Why didn't I lay out a number of works?" And so I had two pages where I could select whatever I liked to give a range of art from the '70s. So that included Eleanor Antin gesticulating at the waves as the king. It's called *Eleanor Antin as the King Greets the Sea*, from 1974.

And then Faith Ringgold standing in front of quite an extraordinary mural outside the Rikers Island Correctional Institution for Women, and the women prisoners had actually chosen the women to represent that. And another image is Betye Saar, *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*.

And under that is Judy Chicago in a boxing ring, and she has her name on it and her dealer is rather humbly standing behind, looking as if he wishes he wasn't there. And then there's a photograph of Martha Wilson and Jacki Apple playing a young, very wealthy collector called Claudia, who was going around supporting women artists in New York.

And then Barbara Smith totally alone, a shadow falling out for a performance she did called *The Way to Be* [1972 –MR]; and Sheila de Bretteville designing a color poster; and then a work by Maria Lino called *Incarceration Two* [1974 –MR]; and then after that, the "Visions and Re-visions" ends with a conversation with Suzanne Lacy. So that's what I was doing in 1980.

SUE HEINEMANN: So since you ended there with a conversation with Suzanne, do you want to talk a little bit more about your friendship with her and—

MOIRA ROTH: Yes, and if I may, I will get some books so I can turn the pages.

[Audio break.]

MOIRA ROTH: I first met Suzanne Lacy in the 1970s at UCSD, and then I also saw her in L.A., and then I began, very closely, to follow her works and saw most of the main ones. For example, I was in San Francisco when she did this quite extraordinary series of dinner parties around the world in celebration of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party* exhibition.

And what Suzanne did when, already, it was extraordinary to see this huge, triangular *Dinner Party* that Chicago had made, Suzanne was busy putting up telegrams and letters from all over the world of dinners that had been held that time in honor of women. So I did a little review of that for *Art in America*, just describing what it was like.

This is from *Art in America*, April, 1980: "In Ghana, West Africa, a group of women dine together and honor women of their choice. From New Zealand comes news of another such dinner at the same time. The guests of honor in Houston are Käthe Kollwitz and Artemesia Gentileschi; in Cornwall, Ontario, Mary Mack, first Cornwall woman alderman; and in Ohio, Iora Sebrina (1881-1974), quiltmaker. Edinburgh feminists dedicate their dinner to women's struggles in Iran, and women sitting at an Athenian dining table compose a cable to Suzanne Lacy, the organizer of this international dinner party. In Greece, they send this cable and they write, saying, 'In Greece, women write their difficult story stop every day is hard work stop deepest appreciations for your movement stop'." And that's what you saw—all these telegrams being put up.

So that was the first time I wrote on her. Then—and I'm sure if this had happened earlier on, I would have become a journalist, not an art historian—in 1982, the *Village Voice* decided to ask a couple of people to trace the evolution of a work, and they asked me to trace the evolution of *Freeze Frame*, which was this huge piece that Suzanne Lacy was planning to do in San Francisco.

And it was a collection of all different kinds of women, going from prostitutes to old Jewish women, and she slowly built up different groups, working together, and then they all came together in a furniture storeroom. And it had a huge audience because each group had such a different community.

And I had never done this sort of research on the move, and I found it absolutely fascinating. I went to all the different meetings, so I met San Francisco prostitutes; I met militant Chicana activists. And Suzanne and I would go to each meeting, and then I would take notes and there would be photographs. And then, suddenly, the event began.

And there were 17 groups of women and it took place at a place called the Roche-Bobois store, August 13th,

1982. And the women sat in all different clusters and the audience wandered from group to group. But I'd also watched Suzanne navigate organizing. Some groups said, "What would you like us to do?" and other groups said, "Let us tell you, Suzanne, what we are going to do."

And so I was classically a journalist and I kept on hoping that, you know, this could be a new career, but it never was. And it was amazing—I had to write very, very quickly because the text was published in New York a few days after the event, and I loved the fact that, you know, anyone in New York could get hold of it. And I did it literally hour by hour.

I mean, I wrote, let's see, "July 31, 8:00 p.m. The groups are beginning to meet privately for the first time and Suzanne, Julia, and I attend the young black women's meeting..."

"August 1, 11:00 a.m. I watch the first meeting of the elderly Jewish women."

"August 2, 8:00 p.m. At Scarlet Harlot's apartment overlooking the city, a meeting of Sex Workers comes together."

"August 3, evening. I tape separate interviews with Julia and Suzanne." And now, of course, they're worried about whether they can pull it all off."

"August 4, 5:00 p.m. A small dress rehearsal."

"August 4, 7:00 p.m. The Latina group organized by Natalia Rivas meets in her home for the first time. Unlike most of the others, these women already know each other and share a radical political sensibility. During the performance, they plan to move between personal experience and political commentary upon it. This evening, they also told stories of powerful grandmothers who run huge households, serenely like queens."

"August 12, 8:00 p.m. The dress rehearsal."

"August 13, 7:30 p.m. Outside the furniture showroom, the audience of friends and relatives of the performers and art and theater people is waiting. The piece begins. 17 groups sit motionless through the store. As people come in, five at a time, they fall silent when they see the group nearest the entrance: the Elder Black Church Women. After 15 minutes of the silent tableau, Lacy flashes a green card at the Sex Workers and they begin to speak. She goes from group to group, signaling, and then the voices rise to flood the space."

So that was an experience that I felt very, very privileged about because I could watch all these pullings together, meetings, decisions, redecisions. On the night of the last dress rehearsal, the whole group said that they wanted to mix and Suzanne said it will look much better if you all stay in your separate groups, and then people will applaud. And one group after the next said, "I don't want to do that," and so they forced Suzanne to totally change the ending. And so at the ending, someone from one group would wander over to another. It was fascinating.

So after that, I wrote a long article for the *Tulane Drama Review* called "Suzanne Lacy: Social Reformer and Witch," in 1988. Then I did one of these long interviews for the Archives of American Art with Suzanne in 1990, and then I worked with students in a performance class and they worked very intensely, helping Suzanne do a huge project, which was in Oakland, called *Code 33*, where she worked with teenagers and police in Oakland and, through the medium of performance, had them meet in a way they could never have met on the streets.

And the students in my class did a lot of volunteering. And then Suzanne and I did an exchange in 2002 for a UC Press book where we tried to lay out our own relationships to the history of women's performance. And then, last year, I wrote a long introduction for a collection of Suzanne Lacy's writings called *Leaving Art Behind*. So I have worked very intensely with her. She's a very close friend of mine. We've often written together. Sometimes we've stayed in her house or mine and composed things.

And I have had the great privilege of having seen so many of her works, including *Whisper, the Waves, the Wind*, which was on a beach in Southern California and was for women between age 60 and 100. And again, a lot of students at that time from UCSD were involved.

And then I was in Minneapolis, where she worked with the same group of women, meaning women between 60 and 100, but it was now a very different kind of gathering, very different kinds of women, different kinds of history, and it took place in a Philip Johnson building. So I have had this, I think, remarkable experience that has hugely influenced how I think about women's history, of seeing these pieces firsthand.

SUE HEINEMANN: In what way?

MOIRA ROTH: It makes me examine the enormous range of women's history. That Suzanne, as a white performer, was very unusual in, very early on, beginning to work multiculturally, and she's always done that, so

that these big performances always had a huge range, in terms of race but also of class. And I've always found that very inspiring.

The whole idea of listening to women's voices dramatically, whether you heard voices on a loudspeaker from a beach, which were prerecorded, or whether, in a smaller performance, you could actually hear—like in the furniture store place, you could actually hear women talking and you could go from group to group.

So her work inspires me but it also politically influences me, and it simply intellectually and creatively interests me. It's a very amazingly fresh way of making art, and very, very different from these "personal clutter pieces" that were being made, although she certainly, on occasion, has done such work—and she did something very typical last year, 2010, I was honored by a huge project in rural Wisconsin at an art space called the Poor Farm, and I had invited Suzanne to come to it and she said she couldn't come.

And she was very sorry and, you know, she tried to send something. So when I arrived there, there were so many things going on and I simply knew that Suzanne hadn't come, but she hadn't sent anything. Well, it turned out that to the organizer, Annika Marie, Suzanne had sent this incredible collection of 37 photographs of me, going from age three till now, and she had got hold of them because she had presented an award that was given to me some time before. So she had all these photographs, but they were hidden all over the house.

And so I, at the end of this very dramatic day, where there'd been a dinner party, was exhausted and I was walking upstairs and I thought I'd gone mad because I saw a teeny little photograph that was a replica of my ID in Vienna, in Vienna University, when I was 20. And I really did think I'd gone mad and it had all been too much for me. But this went on for days.

I would go to the bathroom and next to the shampoo would be a very glamorous photograph of me from 1970, and then I'd go somewhere else and there would be a photograph of me being rescued off a sinking boat in Asia. And then sometimes people would rush up to me and they'd say, "We think we've found a photograph of you. Would you please come immediately to tell us what it's about?" So this is Suzanne, the friend, the endlessly inventive performer.

SUE HEINEMANN: So I also thought we might talk about, at this point, the other artist that you've been intimately involved with, Faith Ringgold. And I don't know if you want to take a pause.

MOIRA ROTH: I think I'll take a pause, drink a little—

[Audio break.]

SUE HEINEMANN: So Moira, why don't you tell a little bit about how you met Faith and—

MOIRA ROTH: I met Faith when I was pulling together the "Visions and Re-visions" material for *Artforum*. And I called her and she invited me to her house, and we immediately hit it off. And one thing she did, which is very typical of her—but I'm very English and very reserved when I first meet people—when I arrived at her house and came in, she immediately put a mask on my face, one of her masks.

And then—I had come with Suzanne Lacy—and then I came in, feeling very embarrassed, into Faith's living room and I sort of had to perform with this mask, with this wonderful long hair, and things like this. So I thought I would either love her dearly or, really, she would embarrass me endlessly. And I decided to love her dearly.

And we began. Although I was obviously living on the West Coast, I would visit her. And I was totally fascinated by her work, by her activism, by her history. And one of the things we had profoundly in common is that both our mothers had died. We had a very emotional evening talking about what it's like to experience the death of one's mother.

So when the Studio Museum decided to have an exhibition on her work, they asked Faith's daughter, Michelle Wallace, to put together a catalogue, and she asked if I would write for it and also if I would be on a panel at the Studio Museum. So I was very touched, and the exhibition was called *Faith Ringgold: Twenty Years* and it was in, as I said, the Studio Museum in Harlem.

I wrote a text called "Keeping the Feminist Faith." And I should tell you that I was on the panel. It was basically a black audience and black speakers. And Amiri Baraka, LeRoi Jones, was going to be on the panel, too, and I was very nervous about speaking in front of him. And so I asked if I could speak first because he was late, so I spoke and then he came in and he was profusely apologetic to me, missing my talk, and I was so glad he'd missed it.

And he was absolutely charming; there was a party afterwards. But by this time, I was very often in situations where I would be the only white in a group of basically African American audience or artists. So I wrote this, then I wrote another essay on her for an exhibition at the Bernice Steinbaum Gallery in New York—which is where she

was at the time; that was her gallery—called "The Field and the Drawing Room," and then yet another text for the Fine Arts Museum of Long Island catalogue.

I wrote something called "Trojan Horse," where I talked about the fact that her work, on the surface, is very beautiful and fictional and bewitching, and it's like a Trojan horse; it gets right into the heart of the establishment and canonical art history, and then out come the complainers, the exposers of the canon.

And then, continuing, I did—I, by this time, had become very, very involved in both her work but also almost like being an archivist, and I would see the work when I came to New York. I spent an amazing time once in her storage space before she had all her work out, and she would show me her work in her house, and we would talk about it. And then I began to follow, with great fascination, these two series, *The French Collection* and *The American Collection*. And I did, for example, in 1992, an interview about one of *The French Collection* pieces, which was about Gertrude Stein.

And then I traveled with Faith. I went to Tangiers and Morocco with her, and then I went to Morocco and Paris with her. And so I watched her composing these stories. In *The French Collection*, it ends in Morocco, and I literally saw her researching in Morocco, and the same thing when we were in Paris—I saw her researching Josephine Baker. And so I decided, for a big catalogue, very fancily printed, from UC Press and the New Museum in New York—it's called *Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold's French Collection and Other Story Quilts* and it's published in 1998.

I wrote "Of Cotton and Sunflower Fields: The Making of *The French* and *The American Collection*," and I wrote it somewhat chronologically, including some photographs I'd taken of Faith in Paris. I wrote about the experience of seeing it being conceptualized in her New York studios; then going, in 1992, with her to Morocco and Paris; and then seeing her beginning working on *The American Collection*, which is about the heroine of *The French Collection's* daughter coming to America.

And I thought, perhaps a little like I did with tracing the piece of Suzanne's in San Francisco, I thought that I was in a very privileged and rather special position of seeing a work being made. And then I have continued. I am on Faith Ringgold's board—she actually has a foundation. And then, again, I've been tracing a beautiful project of hers called *Jones Road*, which is the name of the road where she lives in New Jersey, and I've been tracing this piece that involves drawings and fabric pieces.

And it's about the fictional history of a woman who escapes from the South. And at that time, New Jersey is the last slave state in the North. And it's a story of this woman coming to New Jersey. She blackmails a white family in New Jersey so no one dares arrest her as an escaped slave, and then it begins a whole history. So I've been following that, and I've also been following, literally, the making of Faith Ringgold's garden in New Jersey, which is almost like a stage set for this piece, the *Jones Road*.

And then I, at a certain point—and I was very touched she asked me—she asked if I would edit her autobiography, which is called *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold*. And this is quite typical, that I didn't realize I was going to get paid by the press, and in fact, I got paid very well. But I just thought I was so touched and honored that she asked me to do it.

Little, Brown and Company published it in 1995. And then it turned out I would get a lot of money for editing this but I had said, of course, I would love to do it. So we began editing it when we were in Paris, and Faith had already done a lot of work on her autobiography so she had masses of archives and drafts and things. So we spent a very, very heady evening at a Parisian restaurant talking about it, and I was quite bossy.

Although I had never edited an autobiography before, I took it very seriously, my role as editor. And so I had this idea and that idea and then the next day, she said I was just like her husband, Burdette, telling her what to do. So then we began an incredible exchange in Paris. We were on a big panel about black art in France and we were involved in the conference, but we were basically editing. And we always went to the same restaurant, and she would tell me story upon story and I would try to take notes.

And then we decided, when we came back to the States, that—as she lived on the East Coast and I, on the West Coast—we would work with faxes and phone calls. So she would send me things—sometimes it would be a package and sometimes it would be a fax. And we got on incredibly well, except one day she asked if I would edit down a chapter and, as I don't have children, I immediately edited out all the pain of childbirth that was very dramatic in this chapter, and I was quite pleased with myself because I'd cut out several pages.

And then she called early in the morning, hysterically laughing, and said: Did I know what I'd cut out? And I said, "Yes, it's a much shorter chapter." She said, "But Moira, you took out all the childbirth." And I said, "Oh." [Laughs.] But those were the kind of things that happened. And so it was quite an amazing experience, quite an amazing experience.

And I thought I would end with this—I go every year to the garden party and I watch the evolution of the *Jones Road* series, and then I watch Faith sweetly and very touchingly mingling with famous artists and historians and also friends from her childhood. And she's a very, very loyal friend and she's quite extraordinary, as a human being. So I have kept very closely in touch with her, and earlier this year she got a huge award from the College Art Association.

There's a new CAA committee [in which –MR] you choose a feminist artist or a feminist historian. Lowery Sims was directing it and I was on the committee. And last year Griselda Pollock, the English art historian, got the award, and this year Faith did. And so I had not told Faith that I was going to come to it because I thought she'd be surprised.

So I arrived very early at the Metropolitan and then she arrived, and we sat and talked for about 20 minutes and all she talked about was how excited she was about the fact that there's going to be a sort of museum school for children named after her. That's all she talked about. She didn't even mention she was there to get the award.

And I thought this was very typical of her, that she could only think of this new project, and she was looking around the Met, seeing how they organized things and how she would use that model in this museum school. Then we come in and the head of the Met is there and there are all these famous people, and Faith is, among others, going to get the award, so I sit, thinking about my long friendship with Faith and how wonderful it is and what it was like 100 years ago, when CAA and the Metropolitan began, for black artists and what it is now.

Then she gets up and Griselda Pollock presents her. And then she says, "There's one person in the audience I want to thank, and if it weren't for her, I wouldn't be here." So I wonder who it is and I think probably it's one of her daughters, so I'm looking around. And then she mentions me. At this point, I burst into tears, hopefully not too loudly, and I was overwhelmed. I didn't think it was true at all—that she obviously would have managed marvelously without anything I did.

But I thought that was very typical of her, that she would so publicly thank someone. And she does this with many, many people. I've seen her do it. So she has had a profound influence on me, I would say on several levels: clearly as a feminist artist; clearly as a dazzling experimenter in all different media; clearly as a beautiful, beautiful writer—I mean, the texts for *The French Collection*, *The American Collection* and the autobiography are extraordinary; and that she's always—she's now 80.

My students and I did a book for her—we've done several presents for her. She is in this vibrant mood about what to do next, and it's very inspiring to have a friend like that. And she's three years older than me so it's reassuring, at 80, that perhaps I will have half her energy. [Laughter.]

SUE HEINEMANN: So Moira, I thought we'd turn now to Rachel Rosenthal, another artist you have written a lot about and worked a lot with.

MOIRA ROTH: And also—just like I had edited Faith Ringgold's autobiography in 1995, I also edited, actually, two years later, a book, which was about Rachel Rosenthal. It was called *Rachel Rosenthal*. And it was in a PAJ series that was published by Johns Hopkins. And I had already followed—again, rather like with Suzanne Lacy—I had seen a lot of Rachel Rosenthal's performances.

And she, of course, is of a totally different genre and sensibility than Suzanne Lacy. She is a woman born in Paris, Jewish, escaped from the Nazis. She and her family wended their way to the U.S. Then she went back and she read Artaud on the theater of the absurd. Then she comes back. She lives in the same circle as Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. And then she makes her way to Los Angeles. She's involved for a while in the Hollywood scene. She teaches young actors and actresses acting.

And then she gets involved with the women's movement and begins to do these dazzling, dazzling, very exquisitely theatrical performances, going back and forth between autobiography and ecology. So I had seen her work and had been very fascinated by it. She was, for example, in *The Amazing Decade*. And in 1989, I had done a very long interview with her for the Archives of American Art. And then, as I said, I was asked to do the editing, and I spent a lot of time in her home looking at archives, finding things that she'd forgotten, just like my assistants find things that I have forgotten.

And I wrote, as an introduction, I think, a rather good account, which was called "Journeying with Rachel Rosenthal," and I began it in 1995. At the very beginning, there had been—and this is horribly reminiscent, given what's happening now—there had been a huge earthquake in Japan that was the worst in 50 years, in 1995. So I was sitting in Rachel's house thinking about Rachel and then we talked about that.

And then I took her life through, from pre- and postwar Paris and then, as I mentioned, this whole life that had an East Coast experience of the New York scene and then a theater she ran for quite a long time, Instant Theater. And finally, she makes sculpture and she encounters feminism and she begins to do her own performances.

And these were performances I'd seen, like *Charm* and *The Head of Olga K*, and then works that dealt with ecology. And I was quite fascinated how it expanded my definition of performance, that I—even though I had placed her in a—

[Audio break.]

MOIRA ROTH:—Southern California scene, the fact is that she was coming out of European theater and still responding to it. Her pieces are scripted. It was very, very different from any other artist I'd been working with. And rehearsed—it could be repeated. She certainly works with an ongoing group. She did a piece about Chernobyl that she worked with her ensemble.

And I'd also seen her—I would go to her studio and I would see her rehearsing. So it very much extended what I'd thought about performance and what, so to speak, qualified as performance. And Bonnie Marranca, who had asked me to do the book, comes out of theater and she's a close friend of mine, and she and I were always arguing over dinner as to whether something was performance or not.

And she would say, "That's not performance, Moira. That's experimental theater." And then she would mention something and I'd say, "Bonnie, that's not experimental theater. It's performance!" And then we'd toast one another with champagne. But working on the book and taking Rachel out of the Southern California context had a huge effect on what I think of as the history of performance, and it expanded very much the way I teach it.

Let me tell you a little about one piece that I saw and was profoundly moved by. There had been that horrible meltdown in Chernobyl, in Russia, and here was Rachel, who, herself, comes from a Russian background. And she did a performance called *Was Black*, and it was done in L.A. And it began where she was there by herself. She's a very, very charismatic performer. She is talking and then she moves into Russian and then, slowly, literally, Chernobyl takes over.

And a couple, or I guess three, of her actors whom she works a lot with are there. So you realize that something horrendous has happened. And then it becomes more and more intense and it ends up that they bind her with what looks like Christmas lights, but it's about nuclear disaster and radiation, and the very end is: they have left the stage and she's there, bound up so she's helpless, with these flickering lights. And they slowly fade and that's the end of the piece.

And it was brilliantly produced—but it had a rawness that some of these other pieces of hers didn't have and a sense that you, yourself, in the audience were now in a state of despair, just like she was, and how the people who had suffered radiation were. So she did that piece and then there were other pieces, which are wildly theatrical—sometimes even funny for a moment—and everything is scripted and costumed and it's clearly been rehearsed over and over again. So her range of working is quite, quite amazing.

And I've several times been there when she and her group are rehearsing, and I would watch them fine-tune—find something and then she would script it. But this piece, although it was very rehearsed, it felt so raw because of the subject matter. And I remember, you know—I remember crying. Yeah. So that is an example of her work.

And she, like Faith Ringgold, is now 80 and is very active. She's moved back into making art—clay pieces. And I have sometimes visited her in L.A., where she doesn't talk about theater but she will show me something she's just made. And I've often stayed there so I've seen how she—literally, how she lives. She'll go out during the night looking for lost dogs and cats. She's very deeply devoted to her own animals but she also helps at an animal shelter.

So she is another person who very much inspires me. But also, I've been very influenced, as I said, by her sense of performance, and where [there's a very murky line between theater and performance –MR].

[Audio break.]

SUE HEINEMANN: Obviously, Moira, you were influenced by a lot of things that you were encountering in the '80s. Do you want to say a little bit more about that?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes, I just found, when I was rummaging around, preparing for our exchange, an interview that Pat Sanders had done with me in 1997. And it was part of—it was an *Artweek* issue that was conversations with different art historians. And she asked me about the 1980s.

So you have to imagine: Here I am. I am at UCSD, which I love. I've chaired the department. I've just published *The Amazing Decade*. I am very ensconced in the L.A. art scene. And then I get this phone call and am tempted back to live in the Bay Area. So Pat Sanders asks me, in terms of the 1980s, she says, "Why did you expand your focus from women artists to artists of color in the 1980s?"

And that, actually, is probably not the right way of putting it, as I worked a lot with artists of color, both women and men, but I also continued with white artists, et cetera, et cetera. But my answer, I think, will explain my shift, perhaps, in interest. I said, "I've always been profoundly influenced by friendships, conversations, and activist alliances—probably more so than by reading."

For instance, I certainly am reasonably well-read in French theory but it's not influenced me very much. I've been infinitely more influenced by activism, talking with artists, dinner parties in which rich conversations occur, than by reading. And then I say, "I'm very drawn to collaborative modes and to innovative styles of presentation."

And I go on to say that, "During the 1980s, my sense of art history changed profoundly, as did my knowledge of contemporary art. I met and worked with a much wider range of artists, both women and men, from all different cultural backgrounds." And then, "Through these contacts, I became increasingly aware, firsthand, of the overt and insidious roles of race, class, money and power in the formation of institutions, including the discipline of art history."

And I, like everyone else, had read Linda Nochlin's wonderful article, "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" So I knew this in theory, but I was now actually examining institutions, be they universities or museums or the very structure of art history, I think, much more probingly. And then I go on to say that I was very influenced by an incredible experience when I came back to the Bay Area of working with Carlos Villa at the San Francisco Art Institute.

He had brought together all different artists, critics, historians and activists, including whites. And we all worked together on a whole series of conferences called "Worlds in Collision," and the idea was that now people of color in the Bay Area were in the majority, so it was no longer the language of the "other" or the Third World; it was now very much the majority.

And I worked very closely with him, and I helped organize and I spoke at these conferences. And this was the same time that Howardena Pindell, who, as you know, is both a remarkable artist and a remarkable activist, had decided, in New York at the INTAR Gallery, to put together—and as far as I know, for the first time—a group exhibition of women of color from all different ethnic backgrounds. And it was called *Autobiography: In Her Own Image*, and it was in 1988. It was at the INTAR Latin American Gallery in New York.

And then, because I wrote in the catalogue, it also came to Mills College. And for me, that was quite extraordinary. So these things happened at the same time. There was all the organizing in the Bay Area of women and men and endless dinner parties and conversations, and then big public events. And then at the same time, in New York, and traveling to [Oakland –MR], was this exhibition.

And it meant that in New York—and I went there—actually, I went with a student who videotaped and we went and deliberately went to visit quite a lot of the artists—it was the first time that I met Emma Amos, Marina Gutierrez, Janet Olivia Henry, Margo Machida, with whom I became very close, Yong Soon Min, Adrian Piper, Alison Saar. Lorna Simpson, I knew already because she had been at UCSD. Also Kay WalkingStick and Pat Ward Williams.

So that—just like "Worlds in Collision"—enormously expanded my sense of contemporary art, and, in this case, it expanded my sense of contemporary women artists. And then added to that, in 1989, Flo Oy Wong and Betty Kano began the Asian American Women Artists Association, AAWAA, in the Bay Area. And I was a founding member of that from the start.

So these all affected me quite profoundly—what was going on in the Bay Area. I was also involved, sort of, with Native Americans on various panels. It was a very, very rich time. There was a lot of mixing, a great deal of mixing. And the same, as I said, was true in this New York exhibition.

And then, to add to it all, I was traveling and thinking about American art and culture in different settings. So I had already been in Berlin for the first time in 1981, and then in 1988, for the first time since I was a child, I went to Ireland and I was part of a feminist conference there. And that was absolutely wild. I mean, it was artists from the north and the south, and normally, they don't mix but because it was a feminist conference, everyone mixed and it was so intense and I felt so Irish for the first time.

So there was that. And then the following year, the same year as Carlos Villa was beginning this project in San Francisco, I went to Cuba. And there was a show of North American art that included the work by Carlos Villa. And I had—and I think I should stress this—I had bought a video camera that year and I obsessively videoed anything.

In Cuba, I was the only person with a video camera and I videoed Manuel Mendive, who's like a Cuban Picasso—no one else had a video camera—and to my horror, I, who was such an amateur, was asked to video it. And

everyone cleared a space for me in the front row and everyone, in Spanish, thanked me profusely. So with trembling hands, I turned it on, remembering that Lynn Hershman had told me not to zoom in and out too much.

And then I did the same thing the next year. I went to Russia with Judy Baca. So all this goes on simultaneously. I'm in the Bay Area. There's all this excitement, endless discussions about conferences, exhibitions, demonstrations, et cetera, and then there's the INTAR Gallery, the *Autobiography: In Her Own Image*, and then there's my traveling to Cuba and Russia and thinking about art in that context.

For example, in Cuba, it was the Havana Biennale. So it meant, for the first time ever, that I saw a lot of non-U.S. and non-European art, contemporary. I saw art from Egypt, art from Korea, art from South America. So my head was quite turned around. And then I had the opportunity, because Howardena Pindell asked me to write in the *Autobiography: In Her Own Image* catalogue, and I wrote an essay called "Diggings and Echoes" that was dedicated to Ana Mendieta and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha.

And as I said, it was there that I met a lot of the artists. So for example, in my essay, one of the images is a work by Pat Ward Williams, whom I then, later on, interviewed and wrote about. It's called *Ghosts that Smell Like Cornbread*. And then I met Emma Amos. I met Adrian Piper, Marina Gutierrez, and then someone who is one of my closest friends now—I met Margo Machida, who, at that time, was an artist working with autobiographical images, self-portraits of moments in her history but, at the same time, was moving more and more into art history.

And she ended up getting a Ph.D. and working on Asian American art history and doing this very famous Asia-America show. And then she asked me, in the middle of the 1990s, to go with her to Hawaii, so I went there and I was a moderator and I also spent a lot of time with artists in Hawaii. So that was another widening of my interests. And in all these situations, I was always very much focused on women artists.

And then as you know, because I've talked to you about this, I had an experience in Morocco that totally, totally changed my way of thinking about feminism. Do you want me to talk about that? Let me get my notes.

[Audio break.]

MOIRA ROTH: So let me sketch out, for a moment, the background. That I had already been to Morocco in 1992. I had gone there with Faith Ringgold, and I had watched her do research in Morocco for *The French Collection* and, for example, we'd found a Delacroix museum and we'd found a hotel where Matisse used to paint, et cetera.

So I had done that already, and then I was going to go back to Morocco in 1996 and the idea was that I would travel with Faith Ringgold, who was having exhibitions, and she asked if I would just like to go along for the ride. And then I could share her room, et cetera, and I would give a lecture.

And then suddenly, for various reasons, she decided that she would not go a couple of days before and I was totally on my own with a nonrefundable ticket. And the USIA decided if I would take over Faith's schedule, that I could, in a way, represent her. So I was very apprehensive and I flew to Casablanca wondering what on earth I was doing. And then—I have written notes about this, and it's called "Morocco, 1996."

So here I was. I was not Faith Ringgold. I was not an artist. I was not African American. But I was going to be in her place. So I was picked up by a government car. I was driven to Casablanca and then to Rabat. And I had a guide who was quite wonderful, and I gave interviews on the radio. I went to tea with a painter who was also a child psychologist living in Saudi Arabia. I would stay up all night talking to Moroccan women.

I was taken shopping by a lovely Moroccan woman who kept on bargaining on my behalf and I was very embarrassed. I met the Egyptian ambassador to Morocco, as well as the American ambassador. But what was extraordinary and totally turned me around was that I was on a couple of panels and, more to the point, I talked more and more and more and became more and more silent listening, hearing what it was like to be a Moroccan feminist.

That they were ardent feminists, but if you were a Moroccan feminist, you might have married your husband in Paris or New York but you would be living in Morocco where, half the day, you would be a feminist—very, very free, open, ardent—but then you might put on a veil if you visited your parents-in-law or there would be certain areas in the city where you might wear your veil.

And the more I heard about how people were living, I was, firstly, incredibly impressed but secondly, I felt I was very naïve about my definition of feminism because it was much easier, in many ways, in the U.S. But it was very, very rich culturally, and a lot of people I met showed me their work. Someone did a huge performance that was for me to watch from a cliff, which I'll talk about in a moment.

So this experience, beginning with two famous roundtable panels—it was at this Rabat festival—most of it was in Arabic. I had a translator who was French and I would speak in English. And the first time I gave a talk, it was very opinionated and it showed U.S. women marching in the streets and feminist performance and things.

But the second one, I arrived late and I came when there was an enormous row going on in Arabic. And a number of men were yelling from the audience and the men—almost all the men—walked out, and then the women laughed, on the panel. And I was waved onto the panel and someone whispered to me, "It's showdown time in Morocco." And then I heard, in Arabic, my name announced and I had to give a talk.

And I was horrified. And luckily, I had written a very poetic text that morning, which was about language—my mother's language, waking up in Rabat to listen to the birds, sound of Arabic and French, thinking of my Irish father and my Scottish mother and my own use of language, and then conversations I'd had. And it went down incredibly well and people applauded wildly and then lots of people talked to me.

And then after that, there were all these conversations, and this is what I'm just going to read to you: "One of the more extraordinary moments was a special performance on a beach created by a dramatic, aging painter who had started doing performances. We were picked up and walked through the medina with its narrow streets and stark, white houses and taken into one of them. Tiny rooms. Walked through the house to the back, which took us onto a steep cliff with a winding path to the beach—lots of shrubbery and clinging fig trees. A long, long wait of a couple of hours—mint tea and talking, and then the artist appeared."

And this was a Moroccan performance that rocked my whole idea of what you could do in theater and performance. "She prepared what was like a 'set', below on a little plateau above the beach—setting out brilliant skeins of purple, yellow and green wool, large bowls and a huge, white paper wall with a gate. Finally, we gathered around—a few of us, including an Egyptian poet—and she (the artist) performed the first part, a breaking through the walled door—clearly a metaphor for the veil, barriers in life, one would think. Then languidly prepared the next image, sitting on a tiny ledge on the cliff—by now watched by a whole audience on the beach below—where a concealed water hose made it look as if she had become a living fountain."

"She sat with the door paper behind her as a frame, a bowl of water with flowers in her lap, and the water spurted out, as a fountain. I thought of the North African deserts, of notions of magic and power." And I certainly thought about women in Morocco. On the whole—I was there for a couple of weeks—I began to feel that I had had this incredibly American and European definition of what it meant to be a woman artist and a feminist. And I felt that I should be silent and think about all this, which I tried to do.

[END OF DISC.]

SUE HEINEMANN: This is Sue Heinemann interviewing Moira Roth at her home in Berkeley, California, on April 23rd, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number three. So Moira, you wanted to talk a little bit more about a project that you did with some of your students that involved a lot of the artists in the Bay Area.

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. Well, I'm returning, as it were, from Morocco in the middle of the 1990s to being ensconced in the Bay Area in the late 1980s. And it seems when I look back on it that I had rather a lot of energy. When I arrived back, I decided I would like to thank both Mills College and the Bay Area with a present.

And I came up with a rather ambitious project with an undergraduate class at Mills, that we would do "connecting conversations," that would be interviews done by students with 28 Bay Area women artists. And to say the least, the students were overwhelmed. And as I usually do with projects, I just plunged without thinking about all the details.

I did, however, have the wisdom to talk to the person who was involved in book arts—Kathy Walkup—and she had a press called Eucalyptus Press. And she said that if I could get all the texts together—you have to understand this is before the days of computer, so it was retyping a lot—that she would do a paperback. And I don't remember that we had any money. But we just decided.

Anyway, the second the students realized that there was going to be a paperback, which cost $15, the standards went up amazingly. People begged to be edited for the fourth time. Artists who'd been a bit iffy about whether they had time to meet students now begged the students to return. And then, of course, as is true with all projects having completed the work by the end of the semester, it took months afterwards with a group of assistant editors.

But what we did was something that simply hadn't existed in the Bay Area before. We put together with short bios of each artist these beautiful, beautiful interviews the students did. And the students asked questions that the artists would then call in and say, "I've never thought of this question before, but so-and-so asked me and now all I can do is to think about it." We had a book signing, the book was reviewed, et cetera.

And as I said, the book covered 28 Bay Area women artists. And they included Judy Chicago, Lynn Hershman, Jay DeFeo, Mildred Howard, Marie Johnson-Calloway, Yolanda Lopez, Linda Montano, Las Mujeres Muralistas, Pauline Olivaros, Bonnie Sherk, Catherine Wagner, et cetera, et cetera. And it was very, very exciting. And I had never done a project of quite this magnitude before.

And it set up in this particular class, which was on contemporary women artists—it set up a very high standard at Mills. And since then we've done—currently in my class, the same one that I taught for *Connecting Conversations,* we've just done one on women artists in the Bay Area in 2011. We've done videotapes, et cetera, et cetera. So I did that. And at the same time, this is all the sort of later 1980s and it took a couple of years to produce *Connecting Conversations: Interviews with 28 Bay Area Women Artists.* I was also involved in the creation of the Asian American Women Artists Association, called AAWAA.

And the circumstances of that was that I had been [...–MR] moderating a panel on Pat Ferrero's *Hearts and Hands* film, which is about American women quilt makers. And I met Flo Oy Wong and she thought it would be very interesting—because I was also on the Women's Caucus board—if there could be a collection of slides by Asian American women artists.

And I thought that was a great idea. And so she and Betty Kano and I and a number of other people met in Betty Kano's house to see the slides they'd got together. And then we met again at a Korean American artist's studio [... - MR] and no one wanted to go home. It was quite obvious this was not just to collect slides but it was to be an organization. And even though I wasn't Asian, I was one of the founding members.

This meant that while Carlos Villa's "Worlds in Collision" was going on, there was this very, very vibrant group of Asian American women artists. And they presented work at Mills and they also got involved with the Art Institute. And at a certain point—and I was literally sitting in the audience of the Art Institute—someone came up while I was scowling because I felt there was so much that had to be done immediately.

And I met Diane Tani, who herself is an artist but also an organizer, and she and I fell into a conversation. The result is that we thought just once, but never again, we would do a little catalogue for Bernice Bing, who was one of the founding members of AAWAA whom I had just met and who I don't think had ever had a catalogue, even though she was well known. And she was going to have an exhibition at SOMArts [South of Market Cultural Center] in San Francisco.

So Diane and I decided we would do this small catalogue. And we came up at the last minute with the title of our press, which in effect was simply the two of us putting together Xeroxed pages and color photographs and we called it Visibility Press. And at this point, we plunged into a sort of format that we would write a preface, there'd be an interview that we would do or I would do with an artist, and then a chronology.

So we did that and then Flo Oy Wong, who is one of the founding members of AAWAA, was going to have an exhibition at Mills and we decided that we would again do a catalogue. And I asked Lucy Lippard, who's a close friend of mine, if she would write one of the introductions. And then we did several more of these catalogues and every time we would meet at my house. So we would be up all night working and working and proofreading.

And we would make jokes after that. And then we would do one more. So it was—we did five in all and it was, I think, a wonderful experience. We hoped that other artists would just do their own but they would say, "Would Visibility Press like to publish a catalogue on me." And then we would say, "Well no, you know, we don't have a board of directors. You can't apply. We just decide."

And in that context of women artists, I had quite some time before met Whitney Chadwick. And she began talking about the book that Thames and Hudson had commissioned which is called *Women, Art, and Society*. And I had got very involved in reading various drafts, looking at chapters, discussing it with her.

And then one day, the first edition was published in 1990. She called me up and she boasted at length about how important the book was going to be, how many copies were going to be published, it's going to be well advertised. And she's not a boastful person. So I didn't know why she was boasting. So I kept on saying, "That's wonderful." And then she said, "So you see, if I dedicate it to you, it will get around."

And of course I was incredibly touched. So the book was dedicated to me and right now there's a fifth edition coming out in about six months. But that too—that book had a huge impact on me. I mean, just reading it—and I'd already read a lot of the earlier, you know, history of women artists. Seeing how it may have conceptualized the chapters, who was in it, what could be found easily, what couldn't, was very interesting in terms of my thinking about the history of women artists.

And so after the first edition came out—we have at Mills a senior seminar for art history majors, and we have helped on various editions. We did research for her on sort of global feminism. And then we've just—she very sweetly came to Mills a couple of months ago and asked the class for advice about what should be in the

introduction. And everyone was very shy because they thought the book was perfect. But nevertheless they made suggestions. So that too widened my information and thinking.

So it was a lot of rethinking feminism in terms of Asian American women artists, what Whitney Chadwick was doing, and then I began to, as it were, address my ignorant—my ignorance more by being asked to work on Shigeko Kubota, who is indeed Asian American. She's Japanese American. But her history is totally, totally different from the Asian American women artists I'd been working with in the Bay Area—that Shigeko Kubota came over from Japan and was involved with Fluxus.

She lived and does live, as far as I know, in New York. So she was working within the context of Fluxus and a lot of earlier Japanese interests in performance and art. And she was fascinated by Duchamp, which is why I think I was asked to write an essay on her by Mary Jane Jacob. And I want you to imagine my meeting her at the Venice Biennale and never having met her before but having done a lot of work on contemporary Japanese art and for the first time really looking at Fluxus.

So again, that was widening my knowledge of performance art, just like later on working with Rachel Rosenthal. It made me think of Asian art. So I went to Venice and we met—actually, we were meant to meet and then we misunderstood the time. So I spent a lot of time by myself seeing her work. And she did outrageous work. She did a work, for instance, of *Nude Descending a Staircase*. But it was all Shigeko's work with just a vague homage to Duchamp.

And so there was a nude literally descending a staircase. And I became fascinated by an artist who could turn Duchamp on his head and was in no way influenced by him but played with him. And I loved that, given my own rather ambivalent attitudes to Duchamp by then. So we met and we had very, very rich exchanges. I visited her in New York while I was doing the research.

She loved it that I would arrive and—though she was married to Nam June Paik—I would always arrive to see Shigeko, and Nam June would say, "Who's there?" and she'd say, "It's Moira. She's come for me." [Laughs.] And he would laugh. And so that was again a very widening experience for me. And the essay that I finally wrote, which was for quite an elegant catalogue for the Museum of the Moving Image in 1991, my essay was called "The Voice of Shigeko Kubota: A Fusion of Art and Life, Asia and America."

And later on, I was to begin traveling to Japan. So then I would think about Shigeko's early years in Japan. But it meant that I was now working with an artist who had a very distinct—as did many Asian American artists—a very distinct earlier life away but who'd come straight into Fluxus, into the mainstream of experimental art. So that was very exciting.

And then another encounter I had around the same time was again taking me into kind of a new direction. It was with Sutapa Biswas, whom I had met in San Francisco, although she was based in England—and we met in one of the many panels and conferences I was going to. It was called "Disputed Identity" and it was held at SF Camerawork.

And I moderated the panel and Sutapa was on the panel. And then I went to England, because by now I was traveling a lot to England because I was visiting Rose Hacker very regularly. And we had the most wonderful long conversation about the British Empire, about what it was like to be Indian, to both love and hate the British, and the kind of work that Sutapa was doing.

And it was unusual for me. I had met other English artists. But it was unusual to have this intense a friendship with an English artist whose background was Indian. And so I was more and more drawn to her work. She works in all different media. She works—I'm just flicking the pages of a very beautiful catalogue that was put out by inIVA.

It was published in 2004 and I wrote an essay called "Sutapa Biswas: Flights of Memory / Rites of Passage / Assertions of Culture—a Five-Part Study." And she's done everything. She works with film. She works with projections. She's done paintings—a wonderful screaming figure—*Housewives with Steak Knives*. And here are more of them.

And she and I worked a lot on her interest in what could you take from the British Empire that was good and what could you discard. And I myself had a very complicated attitude towards the British Empire because of my parents—that also bonded us. [...–MR] I was a witness at her wedding with Andy and she's now one of my closest friends in England.

That again, with Sutapa, had quite an impact on me, of a woman artist who was both English and Indian, just like Shigeko was American and Japanese. So I think it was very fortunate, in the late '80s, early '90s, as to whom I met and in what circumstances. And they all impacted me, these friendships.

SUE HEINEMANN: So Moira, I thought also I'd ask you a little bit more about Judy Baca because you traveled a lot with her.

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. I had met Judy Baca, who's quite legendary in L.A. and America in general, and knew her work and had found it very interesting and had been hearing and seeing *The Great Wall*, which is the relooking, re-examining of the history of Los Angeles. And then she and I were going to both go to a conference—a peace conference in the rather volatile Soviet Union in 1990. As you know, it dissolved two years later, or the next year actually. It was two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

And so we were going to go to the conference in Moscow. And Judy was going there in order to begin meeting artists who would be a part of this new project of hers, which was "A Vision of the Future without Fear," which was going to be, not about the history of L.A., but about the future where there wouldn't be war.

And so she was going to look in Russia and then later on in Finland for artists who would be interested in this. So we went to the conference and I, by the way, was literally called out of the conference in Moscow because there had been an anti-Semitic attack in the union of artists and writers. And because of my name—Roth—people thought I was Jewish.

And so it's the only time I've never told anyone that I'm not Jewish because I knew it would be better for everyone if they thought I was Jewish. So one of the things I did in Moscow was I went from studio to studio and looked at masses of work and kept on saying things like, "Well, of course I'm an American critic." I didn't say, "I'm a Jewish American critic." There were limits to my lies. [Laughs.]

But so that was very intense and in the meantime, Judy was also not attending the conference because she was looking for an artist to be part of this project. And she ended up meeting an artist called Alexei Begov, who was Cossack. And she was describing to him her grand plans for a huge traveling mural installation that would represent a peaceful future without fear. And she was very, very excited about it.

And so I came for the official meeting where she and Alexei talked about what they might do. And because I was, as always at that time, traveling with my video camera, I videoed the whole conversation, crouched on the floor like a professional video artist. And it was—it was so fascinating. He would bring out canvas after canvas and sometimes they'd be very dark and sometimes they'd be interspersed with light, brighter colors.

And one of the works that Judy was most attracted to that he'd done was called *The End of the Twentieth Century*. That was a series of blind men, women, and children. And so she asked him if he would be interested in contributing a panel to this *World Wall.* And she assured him that, "If part of your piece is dark and out of it comes light, or if you paint an Iron Curtain with a tear in it, it's your business."

And we spent several hours together and we ended up in—there was a translator there, and there was Russian being spoken and English and lots of—we toasted with champagne. And so I saw the very, very beginning, just like I'd had this lucky experience of seeing the beginning of Suzanne Lacy's pieces and Rachel Rosenthal's—of seeing Judy literally in operation. And she's a fascinating person as well as a fascinating artist.

And then afterwards, she and I were both invited to go to Finland because Suzanne Lacy was doing a big project there. So we went to Finland in June. It was called "Meeting of the World" at a place called Joensuu which is about 50 miles from the Soviet border. And this is where the *World Wall* was first premiered. And it was premiered so that the conference took place inside it. There were huge murals and they surrounded the conference.

And it had four of her works and then one created by three Finnish artists. And Judy talked about her dream of, you know, this new world. And I then was so interested in this project that I went down to L.A. a couple of times to see it. I do think, as I mentioned before in relation to the *Village Voice*, that I really by temperament have the makings of a journalist. So I did an interview with Judy drawing on my own experiences of having seen her in action in Moscow and in Finland for an *Artweek* November 1991 issue. And let me just find this.

So I described the project. It's actually in two parts. There was another one too. But we analyze actually very carefully the iconography and there's one where there's a shadow of Mahatma Gandhi just walking into the distance. Anyway, it was very, very interesting. And then the Smithsonian was going to show this work and Judy Baca runs an organization called SPARC in L.A. And so they decided to put out a catalogue and the catalogue was called *WORLD WALL: A Vision of the Future Without Fear, A Travelling Mural Installation*.

And there I wrote about the history of the piece. It's called "New Language of the Heart: Five Moments in the Planning and Making of the World Wall." And so there I described the different pieces and I described, for example, this visit to Alexei Begov's studio. And then I described a visit to Judy Baca's studio in L.A. and then actually seeing it installed in L.A.

And, for example, in April 1990 I write that, "During the afternoon I visit the studio. Two new canvases, stretched out on the walls, are in various stages of completion. Baca and Greg Pickens, one of her assistants, are painting the last touches on *Triumph of the Hands*. Baca, directing Pickens every now and then, oversees his work as she slowly and elegantly paints the reflections in the irises of a woman's luminous eyes."

And then I would simply sit there watching and taking notes. And there's a postscript after all this—I love writing on planes. I've written poetry on planes—finished texts that were due like the day after.

This is the postscript: "A Plane from San Francisco to London: June 17th, 1991. It seems oddly fitting that I should finish this essay in a state of geographical flux. In the last year and a half, I've been struck over and over again by the shifting nature in space and time of the *World Wall*, together with the changing, often contrasting nature of the various audiences, from those of Gorky Park [which is in Moscow], Joensuu, to the American ones in East Los Angeles and soon in the future Washington, D.C."

And then I write, "We are living in times that urgently need global and individual consciousness-raising and Baca's work can help us explore how we currently live and what we must do to live differently in the future if we are to survive."

SUE HEINEMANN: So Moira, we've been talking about your travels with Judy Baca and the global feeling that was coming into play. And I just wondered how all that affected your writing.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, I think it affected my thinking profoundly about art and culture. And I was constantly—when I did these travels, I would go from reading little travel books to reading serious history and I'd read literature and things. And so I was really educating myself, I think, a lot globally. But I was writing for the most part in the way I'd often written. And so what I think profoundly affected my writing was the putting together of my earlier writings.

As it were, I took care of it. I invited Jonathan Katz, who was and is a very close friend of mine, because he had both greatly admired "The Aesthetic of Indifference," but he also had a very clear sense of queer history and therefore had read it in terms of Johns and Rauschenberg's love affair, et cetera. And I should tell you how I had met Jonathan—Whitney Chadwick and I went to hear a lecture that he gave at the San Francisco Museum one night.

And he talked about the beginnings of his entering art history and then he said there was an essay that had very much affected him, though he didn't agree with it, but it was profoundly affecting him. And it turned out it was "The Aesthetic of Indifference."

So I went up to introduce myself afterwards. And then shortly after that, we started having dinner. So I thought if I asked him to do the commentary, he would disagree with me, so to speak. And that would make for an interesting book. So Amelia Jones had very kindly arranged it so that I would publish in this series.

This series is called "Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture." I selected the writings, and I put together things like "The Aesthetic of Indifference" and "Marcel Duchamp in America" and some of the interviews I'd done with John Cage, Smithson, and then I added Vito Acconci and George Segel.

But the texts that I chose at the end were much more about my moving away from this particular sort of art history and certainly away from Duchamp. And so part three has a section from "The Voice of Shigeko Kubota" and then "Talking Back," the fictional exchange I have with Duchamp and the faked letters with him that I did in L.A. And then the "Five Stories about St. John," meaning John Cage, and the "Seven Stories about St. Pauline," [meaning Pauline Oliveros –MR].

The idea was that after that, I would write another book that would be a collection of my essays on feminism, which for, I think, very complicated reasons I didn't do. So here I was, in the fall of 1998, I'd published the book and Jonathan had written wonderful commentaries. And we would have intense days.

He would come and stay here and he couldn't use the computer so I would have to type his comments. And sometimes I would say things like, "I don't agree at all," and he'd say, "You have to type it." And then we'd laugh. Then we'd have dinner. So we'd have a wonderful time just talking about art history. It was very inspiring.

So the idea was I would do a second volume of my writings and it would be called—this is a provisional title —*Traveling Companions, Including Myself: Musings on Feminism, Cultural Difference, Memory, and Death*.

And then I—at this point—am thinking about this. I'm traveling to London and New York and prior to that I'd gone to Asia for the first time, to China, Thailand, Japan, and Burma. But nothing was quite coming together. And I was on sabbatical and was concerned that somehow I had planned to do this but I didn't seem to be doing anything.

And then I wrote a lot in a diary and on December of—December 9th, 1998, I wrote, "I feel as if a fever has lifted. Something is now slowly turning toward." And then a couple of days later, with incredible ease and fluency, as if I'd just been writing every day for months, I drafted with a totally different writing style the first paragraphs. I'd been reading a lot of Proust and Joyce. And I began what later on I called *The Traveling Companion* series and it was called *Here and There*.

And then a few days later I wrote—Clinton was just being impeached. I wrote about the reference to an Iranian writer and AIDS in Africa and a conversation with Yolanda Lopez and thoughts of home, and then on Christmas Day I wrote about Robert Desnos in a concentration camp and his thinking.

So I was suddenly not knowing what I was doing, writing all this stuff every day with great ease. And then I went to the College Art Association and I had no idea if I was going to publish it or not or if it was something like a sort of an expanded journal.

And John Farmer, who had already published something in the *Art Journal* that he was editing with Janet Kaplan —said he thought this sounded fascinating and he impulsively said: Did I want to write a series of texts for the *Art Journal*? So suddenly from in December just writing this stream-of-consciousness stuff, I had a place to publish it. So that is going on. As I said, I've just traveled for the first time to Asia. And then I go back to Asia in 1999.

And I travel [to–MR] Thailand and Burma [with a friend –MR] whose name is Boreth Ly. And he is Cambodian-born. He's right now teaching at UC Santa Cruz. And he and I had met at the café that I go to every morning, Nabolom. And we had chatted and I was going to go to China anyway and he said, "Why don't you come from China and visit me in Thailand and then we can go to Burma?" And I had no idea, having never been to Asia, kind of where China was or Thailand or Burma.

So I flew into Thailand and we started on our travels. And we got on incredibly well. We had masses of adventures. So then he invited me the next year to go with him to Cambodia. And he hadn't been in Cambodia since he'd escaped with his family.

So it was a very emotional trip for him. And this was the first time I started—I mean, I'd already started trying my hand in this new way of writing. But when I went to Cambodia, I wrote I think quite a beautiful text that was published in *Performance Research*, which was called "Oan Hon (Lost Souls): Lament for Cambodia, Vietnam, Hiroshima, Kosovo, and East Timor." And at that point I seemed to know how I was going to write.

And I also around this period met Dinh Q. Lê and began—I never met him actually. But we began a correspondence. He was in Vietnam and we wrote a lot and then we did a play. So the late '90s, after I finished *Difference/Indifference*, I never published a second or a third volume of my writings. But I seemed to firstly be experimenting with poetic fragments that clearly responded to my travels.

And then, suddenly equally dramatically, I plunged into what are one might call experimental writings. I came up with the idea of *The Library of Maps* which was an imaginary library and imaginary inhabitants. I've done an ongoing opera with Pauline Oliveros about it called *The Library of Maps: An Opera in Many Parts*.

Then I began weaving in a huge amount of history. I began a narrative that's called *Through the Eyes of Rachel Marker,* which is about a fictional Jew whose life, as I invented it, begins in World War I. She goes to the Cabaret Voltaire and then she witnesses the Verdun battle. And then she comes back to Prague and then shortly after Kafka dies, she decides she has to write to him every day.

So she writes to him about fascism. She writes to him about her own writing, about astrology, astronomy, alchemy, et cetera. So I was doing these projects in conjunction with the *Traveling Companions, Fractured Worlds*. And they overlapped. For instance, Rachel Marker apparently invents or sees the Library of Maps in the sky when she is 17 and those kind of things.

So I'm traveling a lot. I go to Prague. I go to Berlin. In 2002, I think I'm becoming too romantic in *The Library of Maps* and so I write about a character called the Young Astronomer, and he has been studying the history of the making of the atomic bomb, and then I very dramatically fly to Hiroshima in August of 2002 because I feel I need to see Hiroshima and not romanticize about the astronomer.

And then again I go to Prague in the winter of 2002-2003 and I start to write about Rachel Marker's earlier history in Prague. And then I do more traveling. I go to the Venice Biennale in summer of 2003 and then I travel with a friend of mine who's Greek—Lydia Matthews. We go to Greece and then we travel up to the top of Greece, meeting her parents.

And I write more of these *Library of Maps* texts, including the "Unfinished Mappa Mundi and Tiresias." And then I come back to this idea of Japan and Hiroshima, and Mary Sano, who is a dancer, a Japanese American dancer

who lives in San Francisco, she and I produce a play called *Dancing/Dreaming* and then we take it to Tokyo, and after that we decide to go to Hiroshima.

And then I begin a new project called *Amaterasu: The Blind Woman and Hiroshima*. So you can see, having done *Difference/Indifference*, it suddenly—it could have led me in the direction of either writing more in the same way or spending a lot of time doing anthologies. But it actually freed me a lot to write differently and write poetry and plays. And in a way, that is what I've been doing ever since.

SUE HEINEMANN: Well, I thought—I mean, you brought up a whole lot of things there and I want to sort of prod you a little bit more about some of them. And in particular I thought maybe we could start with your relationship with Dinh [Q. Lê –MR].

MOIRA ROTH: Very good.

SUE HEINEMANN: Because I think that your exchanges with him sort of point to a different kind of art writing. One moment.

MOIRA ROTH: Okay.

SUE HEINEMANN: So Moira, let's return to Dinh.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, I met Dinh through Yong Soon Min, who's a mutual friend. And she thought I would find his work interesting, which I did. He was doing at that time these amazing photo weavings. […–MR] This is late 1999. He was about to go back to Vietnam. He'd been in L.A. So for a year instead of my just writing a thank-you note to him saying, "Thank you for your catalogue," and that was it, he wrote a beautiful answer and with no discussion we began to be what when I was a child we would have called pen-pals. And we wrote back and forth, sometimes very intensely but with no purpose.

And it was very different from my habit of doing taped interviews. And also I wasn't planning to publish it. I was simply enjoying the conversation. And then Dinh, who is incredibly polite, was going to have an exhibition in Vietnam. And he asked if I would write a paragraph or two for a catalogue. And then that fell through and we just went on writing.

And then at a certain moment, he has several galleries. He has three galleries in the U.S. He suddenly became more and more well known and he was going to be in the Venice Biennale. And at a certain point, he was in the States again and we finally met. And we met actually dramatically for the first time. We were going to be on a panel in San Francisco. But I didn't even know what he looked like.

And he came in just for the panel and we literally flung ourselves into one another's arms and embraced. And someone whispered, "They've very close friends and they haven't seen one another for a while." And then I turned around and said, "We've never met. This is the first time we've met." So he had dinner shortly after this with me here.

And he started to talk about what he was going to do in the Venice Biennale and how he saw it as a whole lot of different characters speaking about the Vietnam War from different angles. And I said as a joke, "It sounds like a play to me." And he said as a joke, "Will you write it?" And I said, "Yes, if you will perform." And he said, "Well I've never acted." And I said, "Well I've never written a play before." And so we laughed and with no more ado we decided to do it.

And we did it at SF Camerawork. We also did a book signing for the book that had just come out called *From Vietnam to Hollywood*. That was the catalogue that his various galleries had put together. And I wrote the play using quite a lot of the exchanges that we'd done in the emails. But there were characters like The Artist. There was a narrator who sat in the audience. There was a set called the Artist Studio in Saigon.

And it was wildly exciting for me. And already I'd been experimenting with all this emailing going back and forth, which I then edited for the Venice Biennale catalogue. So at that point I began to—I'd done theater productions but I hadn't written a script until this point. I'd done a series of *Library of Maps* projects that I was doing with Pauline Oliveros. I'd begun that and we'd done a production in Suzanne Lacy's studio.

And then at the same time as the *From Vietnam to Hollywood* collaboration with Dinh, I worked with this dancer Mary Sano who was born in Japan but lives in San Francisco. And she and I did a play called *Dancing/Dreaming*: *Izanami and Amaterasu.* Amaterasu is the blind figure in Japanese mythology. And we did it in both San Francisco and Tokyo. Then the next year, in a huge space in Kyoto—it's called the Concert Hall—we did *Amaterasu: The Blind Woman and Hiroshima*. So at that point I had really plunged into playwriting. So I don't think I realized that I was going to. I certainly didn't realize until we were on an island very near Hiroshima that we would go into kind of mainstream spaces, because in Kyoto we did our production in the Concert Hall and it

took about 500 people.

And there was a biwa player and there were actors and actresses and there were balconies on either side. It was real theater, so to speak, rather than doing it at a place like SF Camerawork. And so I quickly learned in addition to writing the scripts, I basically would direct, and I was always politely asking people and it would be translated, "Do you think people should stand on the left or the right?" because I was desperate for help.

So and I'm now planning to do a fairly elaborate production with this wonderful woman—Stephanie Weisman—who is the director of The Marsh, which is an experimental theater that has branches both in San Francisco and Berkeley. [For various reasons this proposed "performance" did not work out at the Marsh theater. –MR]

And she's going to work with me on a Rachel Marker piece that will involve bringing in an actress from Vermont who will be seen wandering around the Bay Area. And I am handwriting letters to Franz Kafka every day. And there are texts I've already written. So I think that was also part of my new writing. It wasn't just this poetic fragmented text. But it's also the scripts.

SUE HEINEMANN: Do you want to talk a little bit more about your experience in Japan creating this piece with Mary? Because I know from previous conversations that it was quite an amazing experience.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, we had performed in Tokyo the previous play. And we were both exhausted. Mary had never been—[coughs]—excuse me—had never been to Hiroshima, although we'd talked a lot about it. And I had been previously.

So we went there and it's an overwhelming experience because there is a museum which is about the bombing and after the bombing there was only one building that was left. And that is there as a fragmented monument. So we went there and almost because it was so emotionally overwhelming, we decided to go to a nearby island. And we went there really for a rest. But we were clearly wanting to begin our next project.

And we worked very, very well together—very collaboratively. And we were staying at a ryokan, which is a traditional Japanese inn. And the woman who ran it said, "Oh I would love to introduce you to a friend of mine who is a theater director and he has a big festival in Kyoto." So we met him, just thinking we'd say hello, but he asked about us at length.

And he was so intrigued that we had done this collaboration in Tokyo that, with seeing no proof that we were any good or not, he said, "Would you like to be part of the Kyoto Theater Festival?" And we said, "Well, yes." [They laugh.] I think we showed him a few photographs of what we'd done in San Francisco and Tokyo. So then we went back to the U.S. and then he flew over to see us. And we had—I think it was three dinners running in San Francisco, night after night. And he wanted me—because he's very interested in Noh theater—he wanted me in effect to write a contemporary Noh text. And I thought I knew nothing at that time about Noh theater. And who was I? I wasn't even Japanese. I had no training in Japanese theater.

So it took me about three dinners to finally say to him, "Perhaps you should do it and I will come and sit in the audience and Mary will perform with you." And he said, "No, no, I want you to do something." So I then sat and brooded in Berkeley and Mary sat and brooded in San Francisco. And I started to read a lot of Noh theater and I discovered one play where there's a brother and sister and the sister goes mad. And it's a very interesting play. [… –MR]

So I decided I could use that as the beginning for what is *Amaterasu: The Blind Woman and Hiroshima*. So what I did, working endlessly rehearsing and playing and talking with Mary, is we did things in San Francisco with a koto player who lives in the area. And the play that I conceived and wrote begins with a brother and sister in the 1930s, before World War II, playing this Noh theater piece which is about a brother and sister.

And then in my version of it, what happens is they both go to Hiroshima and they're so overwhelmed by the experience that the dancer becomes blind and has to learn how to dance again through the other senses. And the brother becomes a mystic and a poet. And they haven't met since then.

So I come with what is a very polished script with Mary to Kyoto. And this wonderful theater director introduces us to people. We start rehearsing. I'm completely overwhelmed because I really don't know Noh theater although I start obsessively to go to it in Kyoto, and I would beg people. I would say, "Could you take me to another Noh theater?" and they'd say, "But you went last night for four hours." And I'd say, "But I want to go again."

SUE HEINEMANN: [Laughs.]

MOIRA ROTH: So we end with probably half a dozen or a dozen more versions of the script. Every night they are sent to Tokyo where they're translated into Japanese. And I of course, because I don't speak Japanese, have no

idea if the translation is good or not. So we're rehearsing in different parts of Kyoto. We're staying in a sort of Japanese building—very traditional building that a friend—Rebecca Jennison—had arranged.

And I am overwhelmed by the mixture of constantly rewriting, not knowing how the play is going to end, driving everyone who's working with me up the wall because everything else is very elegantly planned until the end. And the biwa player is going to come in the day of the opening from Tokyo. And so we're doing all of this, and there are hilarious moments where we're working in Kinko's late at night getting one of the translations. And then the theater director says to me, "It's time that you learned how to do Noh theater."

So I think, "You know, this is the end of hours and hours of rehearsals." So he stands up and he gestures how you walk and run in Noh theater. And then he says—he speaks English a little. He says, "Come on, Moira." So in Kinko's I learned to do Noh theater and all the people sitting at various computers clap. So then we begin to rehearse in the Kyoto Concert Hall and we have a balcony where there are figures. And there are projections. It's very multimedia.

And everyone very politely is waiting for me to figure out the ending. But I don't know what to do at the end. So literally the day before—it's a mixture of experimental theater and very beautifully polished script. And everyone's rehearsing and there's a young Noh actor who is quite wonderful. And at one point I say to him, "What would you do if you had been in Hiroshima?"

And then someone translates and he says, "Well, in Noh theater you would never put Hiroshima in." I said, "No, but you as a human being." And then he said—he liked me a lot—he said, "Tell Moira I'm going to go home and think about it." So the next day he comes and he says something in Japanese and someone says, "He's decided if he had lived through the experience of Hiroshima, this is what he would have done."

So everyone is standing around and he stands far too close to me—you wouldn't normally do that. And he stares at me and then he suddenly leaps like Nijinsky into the air and begins in a Noh theater way to run. And Mary Sano follows.

And we're almost in tears. And then the day before the theater event—and we know that there are going to be 400 or 500 people—I'm forced into figuring out the ending, which is very simple, the end of this play that has taken place on the stage with the narrators on the balcony. I had originally arranged that we were going to get a newspaper from Hiroshima describing the ceremonies of that day. And that's going to be brought in by train just before the performance. But it ends in a very fragmented way with Mary Sano as a sister and the Noh actor as a brother and a young man who's been distributing the newspaper through the audience. They all begin to have fragments of Japanese words about memory and history and they slowly walk towards the stage. And then they stand there and say, "Hiroshima, August 6th, 2004."

And so that is done and we all rehearse it. And then I sit in the front and I have no idea what this audience thinks. I can't sense it. And at the end, everyone stands on the stage and then they bow. And then there's wild applause. I mean, people are clapping like this.

And then I'm gestured and I'm overwhelmed and I walk up to the stage and I very politely as Japanese stand to one side and then I'm pushed in the middle. And then we all bow. And so that was very different from the experience of working with Dinh in SF Camerawork and just doing very, very simple projections.

SUE HEINEMANN: So Moira, we've been talking a lot about your involvement in Asia and I also wanted to return to your connections to Europe and especially your connection with Rose Hacker because I want to also talk more about Rachel Marker. So I think that—let's talk about Rose first.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, I was saying to you while we had the tape turned off that there was a certain point where I no longer—if I was asked—I would say I was English, but I would say I was European, which if you are English, you don't do. You always say, "I am English," and "Those Europeans on the other side of the Channel."

And I think a profound reason for beginning to feel more European is that I had always loved Rose but had totally lost contact with her and then in the '70s when my mother became sick and my mother came to visit me, Rose was incredibly wonderful about facilitating getting my mother out and things like that and then would go and visit my mother.

So then when my mother died in 1978, I felt that Rose was one of my mother's closest friends but also was becoming one of mine. So I would vacillate between Rose as a friend and Rose as a surrogate mother. So after my mother died, without really any discussion, Rose and I became very, very close. And her husband died and—

[END OF DISC.]

MOIRA ROTH: I felt that here I could help. So I invited her out to stay with me. This is when I was in San Diego.

And she was a wild hit with my friends. People would call up and they'd say, "Can Rose come to dinner? Oh, Moira, you can come too and drive her there." This happened endlessly because she was so intriguing to everyone. And we went to Mexico and we finally traveled from Southern California up north.

So she saw me, as it were, in America. But for the most part I visited her in London. And we also traveled. We went to Paris. We had a memorable visit to Vienna, where I hadn't been since I'd been to Vienna when I was 20. And through Rose—just as through Sutapa Biswas, but in a very different way—I began to engage more and more with great pleasure in English history, socialist history.

Rose was fascinated by the suffragettes when she was growing up that she had met—older suffragettes. And she herself became a total role model for me as to how you can live eventually to be 101 and be very active. And so I elaborately followed, you know, what she was doing in the '80s and '90s.

And among everything else, she had—having always been a volunteer in marriage guidance, psychiatric clinics, prisons, et cetera—she was elected in the 1970s to be on the Greater London Council. That's called the GLC. And her election slogan was to bring the countryside to London. And as part of that, she was made, believe it or not, the chair of the GLC's Thames Waterway Board.

And that was the time when this board was choosing the colors of the bridges in London. And so I would drive around London in a cab with Rose and she would say, "What do you think of that blue?" and she'd point to a bridge. And then we'd drive by another bridge and she would say, "I had to really argue for it to be painted green." So she was very, very active in her last years.

Another thing she did was she had begun to very seriously make sculpture. And she was very inspired by a piece that she'd seen in the British Museum. And they actually paired that piece, which was the oldest known sculpture of a human couple making love—they paired that with a work that she did. So she was also in the British Museum. And then at 100 she began to write this column in the newspaper.

And she was also very, very active in the place where she lived. It was an assisted living place called the Mary Fielding Guild. And she introduced Tai Chi into the place for a sort of physical therapy. And she also did lots of belly dancing in her 80s and 90s. And then she had for quite a long time—but I only met her in the 1990s—she had an amazing friendship with a woman called Alice Herz-Sommer, [who –MR] had been born in Prague.

When [Alice –MR] was a child, her family knew Franz Kafka. So she knew Kafka. She was a professional pianist. She and her son were sent to Theresienstadt during World War II and then they were in Israel. And then they came back, both her son and Alice. And so for the last 10 years of Rose's life, I spent quite a lot of time visiting Alice. And I certainly think that Alice and Rose between them in some very elusive way that it's hard for me to pinpoint were very much presences in this fictional character I invented—Rachel Marker. I can't even—and perhaps I don't even quite want to analyze it at the moment. But they certainly were.

Among the other things I did with Rose is I edited her autobiography that was published in 1996, about 500 copies. It was based on hours and hours of interviews that I had done with her about her life. And then in a project—again, I was just describing to you when the tape was turned off—that I had begun in 2002—it's hard for me to know how to describe it. I call it the *Cyber Theater of Mneme and Melete*, who are two of the Muses in Greek mythology.

And the idea was that I would ask someone to think of a text and to work with one other person with a mirror so that the person I had invited would hold up her text and it would be read reverse in the mirror of the other. So I invited—I invited Alice and Rose to be part of this. And this project that I called the *Cyber Theater* had begun with two ex-students of mine. And I sent it to them almost to amuse them. And then everyone I told about it loved it.

So it was produced by a musician performer called Caterina De Re, who did it in Zurich, and then Linda Montano did it in New York. And then Rose and Alice did it in Alice's apartment in London. And this is a description of it. But this is the kind of thing I would do when I visited Alice and Rose, that I would either listen admiringly to both of them or sometimes I would amuse them with projects.

I write, "Rose Hacker, my heart was all light and joy. Alice Sommer apartment. London, December 31st 2002." And there are two photographs of Alice and Rose with the mirror, and I have the mirror over there on a little table.

I invited Rose Hacker, whom I've known since I was 7-years-old to participate in this project. She chose a text about London and invited 99-year-old Alice Sommer, who by the way is now 106—to play—and I played the role of the photographer. With great difficulty, Rose and Alice adjusted their mirrors to see the handwritten text. It was the first time I had actually seen such an exchange so only then did I quite realize how physically difficult it is to align the two mirrors.

For me, the image suggested touchingly the commonalities between these two friends who had inhabited the same space of time for almost a century and who now lived close to one another. Alice surprised me after the event, however, by immediately remarking intensely but matter-of-factly to Rose, 'We can read together but not understand one another. You were born in London and I in Prague.'

She then spoke ardently about difference. There's always difference between people and our ensuing conversation took us to Palestinian and European history, fears of war in Iraq and finally to love, age and death.

And that was the kind of thing that often happened when I met Rose and Alice. And I wrote various poems about both of them. When Rose was sick, I wrote about the last visit that she and I had made to Alice, and the reason we had gone to see Alice was that Rose could not understand why Beethoven had only written one opera. And she felt that Alice might theorize about it. So we arrive in a cab.

By now, Rose is 101. Alice is a few years older. We sit down. Alice makes us tea and then with no chit-chat about the weather or ailments or anything, Rose says, "I've come to talk to you about Beethoven." And Alice looks serious and they lean forward. And then they theorize, I think with no conclusion, about why Beethoven only wrote one opera.

And then the conversation goes all over the place. And this is sort of how they spoke to one another. Or you'd go and visit Alice and she'd be looking exhausted and it would turn out that a journalist from Argentina had just come to find out more about her friendship with Kafka when she was a child. And she just talked herself out.

Or other times you'd go and you would hear the piano and then you'd ring the bell and the piano would stop and she would have been practicing. And she has continued until this day to do that. And there was a lot of stuff on the Internet for her birthday, that she's seen as the last Holocaust survivor. But when you ask her about her life, she uses phrases like "joy." She never talks about tragedy. And she's a very sophisticated person.

This is not someone who didn't know about the Holocaust. She simply feels that it's a miracle she had lived through it all. So I think in some way Alice and Rose have very much affected my creation of the character—the Rachel Marker character. And in one text, it's in *Camerawork,* which is a journal. It begins with—it's called "Through the Eyes of Rachel Marker." It begins with a deliberately blurred image of me, of many years ago. And again, I could perhaps be Rachel Marker or Moira Marker.

And then the next page shows you this photograph that completely haunts me and I have used endlessly, which is a photograph of Rose and her father in Berlin in 1929. So there's that photograph and then there's the very young Alice playing the piano. She became a professional pianist. And then the old Alice—not looking that different.

I have often dedicated texts to Rose. And as I said, when she was dying, I wrote her obsessively and sent her emails—or actually to friends who would read them by her bedside. I wrote one called "In Her Mind's Eye," where I just tell her all the stories I know she would love to hear about her life. And then shortly after her death, I actually went to a performance that Guillermo Gomez-Peña did and I acted the part of Rose.

And there are a lot of photographs of me dressed up in a sort of 1920s outfit with a hat and high-heeled shoes. And then behind is a huge vinyl copy of this. And then, I may have mentioned this before, that at the Poor Farm, which was this celebration of my birthday last year, I did a whole room of Rose and Alice. And I was very touched by how many people came into the room and would sit there looking at the photographs or texts on the wall or reading the autobiography of Rose and there's also this very lovely biography of Alice. So she's very present in my mind, and I do know that she profoundly affected my, as it were, return to England, my feeling European.

[END OF DISC.]

SUE HEINEMANN: This is Sue Heinemann interviewing Moira Roth at her home in Berkeley, California on April 24th, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number 4.

So, Moira, we were going to start off today by talking about your *Library of Maps* and collaboration with Pauline Oliveros.

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. And I wanted to give the context for that, which is that I began very suddenly, in March of 2001, writing the first of this series called *The Library of Maps*. There are 42 texts. But the context is that I had been, for the previous couple of years, writing a very wide range of […–MR] topics under the title *Traveling Companions/Fractured Worlds*.

So, for example, I had written about England. I had written about Cambodia. I had written about Linda Nochlin. I had written about Flo Oy Wong. I had written about the great Library of Alexandria, and on Faith Ringgold. And then, this seemed to me a space where I could—whenever I became engrossed in a subject—I could write under

the title *Traveling Companions/Fractured Worlds.*

And slightly as part of that, I had been asked to write something for an online exhibition. And I had written that, and then absolutely out of the blue I began this series called *The Library of Maps.* And I didn't even know it was a series when I began. I simply wrote the first part. And then I wrote them—and since they're not finished—but I haven't written them for a long time, but I can easily imagine I might suddenly come back to them.

And I would simply send them to a few friends, and one of them was Pauline Oliveros. And she took a liking to it, and out of the blue sent me a sound piece that I used when I did a presentation in Berlin. So, very early on she and I decided we would collaborate on what we called *The Library of Maps: An Opera in Many Parts.* And we have done it whenever we felt like it.

And I continued, with Pauline, doing that. I then have published a number of *The Library of Maps* texts. And then, a couple of years ago, an artist and theater director, Slobodan Dan Paich, and I decided to have a traveling exhibition called *The Library of Maps*. And he and I, at that point, had been collaborating, and he did drawings and they were incorporated into very beautiful broadsheets.

So, that is sort of where I began. And I realized shortly after I had started that it became just like the *Traveling Companions/Fractured Worlds.* It became a space in which I could muse, I could play, I could think about time and space. There are some of *The Library of Maps* texts that go back to the very beginning of time and the very end of time.

Some of them deal with history. At one point I felt it was becoming too romantic, and I went to Hiroshima. There are also parts in *The Library of Maps* that relate to a very wide range of themes, including the Vatican and the idea of astronomy and astrology.

So, there I was with *The Library of Maps* and one character after the next came to me. I invented the Chief Librarian, who would live for about a hundred or so years. And it was always a woman. I invented the Hermit; the Cartographer, who obviously would make maps.

Then there were Thread Collectors. There was a Mute Singer. There was a Blind Child. There were Twins. There was a Sound Maker. And then I dedicated one of my maps about the Sound Maker to Pauline.

There was a Singer. There were Star-Dwellers, because at one point in *The Library of Maps*, one went to the outer reaches of the universe. There was an Astronomer. There were Stone Collectors and Stone Readers. At one point the Library of Maps is destroyed by huge stones and then it slowly is rebuilt. And children come and play in it.

So there were all these themes. And, very early on, I began to link *The Library of Maps* with the Internet. And I would often browse around on the Internet looking for material. For instance, there's a wonderful alchemy site. I've always been interested in alchemy. So I would go there and find strange alchemical figures from the 15th century and weave them into *The Library of Maps*.

And then I was very lucky that a friend of mine, Alison Cornyn, who is an artist and has an amazing website, said she would like to put *The Library of Maps* onto the website. So they went onto the website.

And then she had an assistant who apparently had nothing to do one day, and Alison asked her if there was anything the assistant could do for *The Library of Maps*. And I thought it would be very interesting to have the assistant go through making links between one of the texts and the other—not how I would have done it but how she would have done it.

So, if you go to the website of Alison's, you can go into Number 7 of *The Library of Maps* texts and click on something and a hyperlink will take you to Number 13. And I found it fascinating to have someone else do this, not me.

And, as I said, the exchange with Pauline began very early on, that I had sent her something thinking she likes my writing and she would enjoy it. And I was going to give a lecture in Berlin for a wonderful artist called Gisela Weimann. And Pauline suddenly, totally out of the blue, sent me a piece called—this is in German—*A Klangspiegel*, meaning sound mirror.

And then for the conference that was about Gisela Weimann, which took place in the Amerika Haus in Berlin, I did a quite poetic text that was about both Gisela and sort of about *The Library of Maps*. It was called "The Map and the Magnifying Glass" because those were themes that Gisela was interested in.

And then after that, every now and then, almost whimsically, Pauline and I would decide to do a performance. And Suzanne Lacy, who at that point was living in Oakland, said she would love to provide her studio space so

we could do something there.

And so we did an evening where Pauline was there, and someone called Toyoji Tomita. Ellen Sebastian was there—Ellen Sebastian Chang, who is a theater director and actress. And we did an evening where we had, deliberately, a very small audience. And we had Pauline and the friends of hers playing music. And we had narrations from *The Library of Maps*.

And then after that, almost by accident, the next year, in April of 2002, Pauline started to get involved with a children's school in the place where she was teaching. And I found that I could connect very easily to the children's school that was part of Mills.

And so, what we did is we had the children from both schools, using electronic messaging, connect with one another. And then we did *The Library of Maps: An Experience of Art and Technology, an Exchange between Students of Mills College Children's School and Art Community Charter School in Troy.*

And the children were absolutely bewitched, probably less by *The Library of Maps* and more by the excitement of talking to children on the other side of this country. And it was very lively and very magical, I think, for everyone.

And then, a few days later actually, Pauline arranged at the school where she was teaching and still teaches, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, that she would do a *Library of Maps* evening. And so I flew to New York State, and it was quite an extraordinary evening of people using a lot of computer connections.

There were figures wandering around who were the characters in *The Library of Maps*. And there would be sudden dances, and then there would be sound from the computer. It was very exciting. And so that, in a way, continued the sort of electronic side of it. It wasn't a website, but it was a real evening using technology.

And then after that, in the same year, in December, at Mills College I was asked if I would like to do some sort of theater event. And we did it in the Rare Book Room, which is a very elegant space.

And Mary Sano, who I then began to collaborate with, very kindly came. And she was a dancer. And then there were various people reading; Leonard Pitt, who was a mime. Shoko Hikage played the koto. And we did what was called *The City of Maps Production*.

And then, jumping ahead, when we began this traveling show with *The Library of Maps*, Pauline came, and she and I rather wildly improvised at a place in Berkeley called the Firehouse—in North Berkeley—where I read the texts and Pauline literally stood on a balcony. She had forgotten to bring her accordion, and so she just madly improvised—a scene I remember vividly.

SUE HEINEMANN: With paper cups, right?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. Yes. So, it has many—how should I put it? It has many stages in which it happens.

And then, as part of it, the traveling exhibition of it had begun. And it had a whole lot of drawings by Slobodan. And then it had these big broadsheets. It had stones that were collected, because there's a "Map of Stones."

And after it had traveled to San Francisco and Berkeley, it went to UC Santa Cruz to the Porter College Faculty Gallery. And right now it's sitting quietly, behaving itself at the Poor Farm in Wisconsin.

SUE HEINEMANN: Weren't there also photographs with it?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes, there were photographs of stones.

So it had, as I said, a very flexible and morphing way of behaving. Sometimes I think it's off on its own and I'm simply a medium—sort of almost like a surrealist. I write in a state of trance. Other times I edit these texts absolutely endlessly.

And then it's had a publishing aspect. There's a wonderful journal that comes out of England. It's called *Performance Research*. And they heard about what I was doing and they became very interested in it. And they were going to do an issue in 2001 on maps and mapping.

And the person who was organizing it came up with the fabulous idea of using a handwritten font. So, a number of the maps, like "The Child's Map of Time," and another one called "The Unruly Map of Threads," all appeared in this handwritten font.

And then, I'm not even sure how they got hold of me, but there's a "History of Cartography Project" in the Midwest. It's in the University of Wisconsin. And every year they do a broadsheet, I guess for donors, but they've

stopped doing it.

They had heard about it [*The Library of Maps* –MR], and they asked if they could select one of them, or perhaps I selected one of them. And so, here is the print of "The Two Street Maps," and they asked a Czech artist to do the imagery behind.

So, that, on and off, has consumed a lot of my time. And even though I don't actually write them anymore, I really do mean it that I might easily suddenly begin again. And I'm quite fascinated by cartography, and I love to look at maps and think about the history of maps and the ancient Library of Alexandria, that kind of thing.

SUE HEINEMANN: And also, you had mentioned that *The Library of Maps* sort of took you into the Rachel Marker series in some way.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, it didn't—she tends to appropriate things! It didn't take me into it. I had begun that and then, because of this invitation to go to Berlin where I read a little bit, the Pauline Oliveros [exchange –MR] had begun.

I suddenly—and, again, it was out of the blue—I was in Berlin. I had arranged with this lovely friend of mine, Gisela, that after the conference she would find a place for me to stay. And I thought I would write another *Traveling Companion* piece about Berlin. And if you can hold on just for a moment—

So, here, I am in Berlin, the city that by now I had grown to absolutely love—and this is an account that I was to write in a publication that comes out of L.A. called *X-TRA*. And so, it describes, "A visit to Berlin, June 10-July 15, 2001."

And I write about the fact that my friend Gisela had found this place for me in the Mitte on Schlegelstrasse 9. And it was simply a very high-ceilinged room. It had a loft bed, an incredible window you could see the world from, and it appeared very, very quiet when I came.

But in Berlin, constantly there's a state of upheaval. And I had hardly been there a day or two, but people began to renovate a building. And I would hear Turkish music and I would hear workers laughing. And so, it was a very curious place.

And if you looked out of the window, you could see a cobbled street. And I had no phone, no computer. I had decided that I wouldn't meet anyone while I was doing this. I read only one book of fiction. And I would go for walks. And, as I said, I had planned to write something like a cultural history of Berlin. And then, instead, as I'm wandering around, I go to the Berlin Wall, I go to the Reichstag, et cetera.

I suddenly start writing about Rachel Marker. And I conceive this whole area that I'm living in as almost like a set. And it begins—there's a woman with no memory and a burning city. And here is—I called her G, meaning Gisela. This woman, who turns out to be Rachel Marker, has totally lost her memory and doesn't know why she's there. And then she begins to read the Borges stories. And then she begins to have dreams of a burning city. And then slowly her memory comes back.

[…–MR] I was living quite near Bertolt Brecht's house and grave, which is now a museum. And so, she begins to regain her memory when she's literally standing looking at Brecht's grave.

I wrote this recently. I would sit in this room. I'm sure I hardly slept. I mean, it was very romantic. It was more like being a poet than being a novelist. And then, my story ends that after she—Rachel Marker—has regained her memory, she takes photographs every day of shadows in Berlin, which I did too. So, since that time, 2001, I often take photographs of shadows of myself in different cities.

And the story ends with a postscript that her *Book of Shadows* was published in Berlin several years later. "Artists and scholars were deeply drawn to it. The photographs taken over a number of years had been found on a long wooden table in a room in the Mitte, each carefully marked with a notation, a place and date. Nothing was known of the photographer."

So, that set me up with this character, Rachel Marker, and then, at different times, just like with *The Library of Maps*, I would write about her. And I more and more saw her as a witness of the 20th century, that she witnesses World War I, she witnesses Prague in the '20s and '30s, and she also witnesses what's happening in Germany and in France.

And I did a huge amount of reading of history, but you wouldn't know that. This is a totally unfootnoted text. But I would obsessively read Ernst Toller. I would read a lot about East Europe.

At the beginning of the war, she escapes from Prague, which is basically where she lives, although she visits Berlin and Paris during that time. And she gets to Paris and then the Germans invade Paris. And I would choose,

over the years, places where I was staying. For instance, I wrote a lot when I was staying in Prague. And I was deliberately staying in what's called the Old Town in Prague.

And then my friend Alison, who had so kindly put up *The Library of Maps* [on her website –MR], said that her husband, who is the photographer Gilles Peress—she said, "You know, Gilles says you can stay in his family apartment in Paris if you like." And I thought, well, then Rachel Marker will come with me to Paris.

And so—this is somewhat later. I'm staying in this absolutely extraordinary space, which is literally next door to where Simone de Beauvoir had lived for years. And it's looking out on the Montparnasse cemetery.

And I write—again having done what I've done in Berlin and Prague—as I don't want to see anyone; I simply want to be by myself and write, because I knew something would happen.

Almost immediately I went to the cemetery. And, believe it or not, I went to Baudelaire's grave, and on the grave was a Czech-French dictionary. And I'm very bad at languages. I basically don't speak French. I certainly don't know any Czech. But it seemed to me like a sign that I had found this.

And so, what I did was then to write about Rachel Marker when she's in Paris. And then, at other times—for example, I went to Northern Greece with a friend of mine, Lydia Matthews, and again I thought about both *The Library of Maps* and about Rachel Marker.

So the texts—some of them have been published. I began, at a certain point, to do plays with them. A lot of them haven't [been published –MR]—and I have huge collections like this of simply texts with images inserted into them, and then sporadically I edit them.

And when I first began publishing them, in the *Art Journal*, which I think I mentioned before, saying that John Farmer had been very enthused and had said I could do whatever I like. I turned the very first Rachel Marker piece into *The Traveling Companions.* It was number 10.

And it was called "Rachel Marker and Her Book of Shadows." And in it, as illustrations, I had a whole lot of photographs that I had taken of where I was staying in Berlin. And the headings are "The Woman with No Memory and the Burning City," "The Magnifying Glass and the Binoculars," and a section called "Reading Walter Benjamin in the Chausseestrasse Outdoor Café," because it turns out that Rachel Marker is sitting in a café—and this is a cafe I went to every day when I was staying in Berlin.

And she reads a very famous essay by Walter Benjamin called "The Berlin Chronicle." And there he's saying that in Paris—I guess in the early '30s—he'd been trying to figure out his life. And he saw it as almost a sort of strange map in a labyrinth. And then he lost all his notes.

Then he says that he regains the memory of it but he's thinking about the labyrinth. So then I felt that Rachel Marker in Berlin, sitting there, was beginning to think of a metaphor for her life, which was a labyrinth. And in the theater production, which you saw, in San Francisco at a certain point, she draws labyrinths that are distributed to the audience.

SUE HEINEMANN: Do you want to talk about some of the theater performances a little bit?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes.

And then, this was rather amazing. A little later, 2006, *n.paradoxa*, which is an international feminist journal, was going to have one issue, which was going to be called "Journeys." And it was going to be at *Documenta.* And Katy Deepwell, who is a marvelous editor and an old friend of mine, asked if I would like to do something.

I decided I would like to—in a sense it was very exciting because, even though she lives in England, this was going to be shown in Germany. And to my enormous surprise, she who never designs things in this way—again, just like the beginning with the maps—she thought it would be very interesting to have some of the letters that Rachel Marker writes to Franz Kafka, that they would be there, typed as if they were real.

This was called "Rachel Marker, Franz Kafka and Alice Sommer." And that is obviously referring back to this extraordinary woman, Alice Sommer. And so that came out. As I said, I had had a number of opportunities to do it as a play. And I had been invited to the University of Hawaii to do a residency. And then the friend who had arranged that said, if I was interested, someone would do a production of Rachel Marker.

And so, the very first time there was a Rachel Marker play, it was in Hawaii, and it was done only once, and I knew very little as to how the director was going to deal with it. So I sat absolutely fascinated in the front row. I didn't give any suggestions. He was very polite and said: Would I like to help direct? I said no. It was rather like the experience I'd had online. So I sat there and I was fascinated, as if it had nothing to do with me.

So I did that. And [then I picked up on it in *n.paradoxa* in –MR] "Rachel Marker, Franz Kafka and Alice Sommer." And it took Rachel Marker through her life that, as I mentioned, had begun in World War I in Zurich. She'd gone into Zurich to try to find [Albert –MR] Einstein and he had gone back to Germany. And then, as you know, Rachel writes letters to Franz Kafka every day about what is going on.

After that—which was in 2005—a little later—at the Magnes Museum, the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley, I had met Alla [Efimova –MR], who was the director of it. And she thought it would be interesting to do something there. And so I did. It was called *Through the Eyes of Rachel Marker: A Piece for Two Voices.* And what Alla had done, which was quite fascinating, is she had lined me up with a Russian-trained theater historian critic, a woman called Anna Muza.

And we did this production in the context of an exhibition that was at the Magnes called *The Danube Exodus.* And then, I was invited to do something in Germany at a conference in Potsdam. And so, Anna and I revised the text a little, and we did *Through the Eyes of Rachel Marker: A Piece for Two Voices*. This was the first time I acted in it.

And then, two years later—which you saw—I was asked if I would be interested in being involved in a project at the Right Window Gallery in San Francisco, which is literally a storefront window. It normally has exhibitions, but it was decided briefly that there would be a performance series.

And there I did it in three parts. The first was "Rachel Marker, Franz Kafka and the Golem." And I had introduced the golem as a figure in Jewish mythology who particularly appears at moments of anxiety or despair. And then the second part was called "Rachel Marker and Walter Benjamin: The Café & the Labyrinth, Paris 1936 [1930 –MR] and Berlin 1919 [1990 –MR]."

And then in the third part I introduced a character called Moira Marker. And the third part was called, "Searching for Rachel Marker in Paris, Prague and Berlin, 1968-." And it's only slowly that it becomes revealed that Moira Marker is the daughter of Rachel Marker. And you never find out my own relationship to Moira Marker, although she obviously has my first name.

And right now I have the astonishing experience of being about to start work on a continuation of a theatrical narrative about Rachel Marker, where there is a beautiful experimental theater called The Marsh, which has two buildings, one in San Francisco and one in Berkeley.

And Stephanie, who is the director of it, is very interested in working with me, and also again working with the Magnes and Alla. And the idea is we've just started to work on it, but she knows quite a remarkable actress who lives in Vermont who would like to come out and who would literally wander around in the city.

There will also be a production at The Marsh—in fact several—but one of the things that Deborah will do—the actress—is she will be seen at a cemetery, on boat, sitting by the water. And I have, every day for the last couple of weeks, handwritten one of these letters that Rachel Marker writes every day, and sent one to Deborah in Vermont and one to Stephanie here. [Piece never happening –MR]

So they're now getting handwritten copies of the letters. And I never write my name on the envelope. Alla is going to figure out that when the Magnes opens in the new building, that somehow, on a monitor, you will be able to see clips of Rachel Marker wandering around the city.

And also, I think on Facebook, which is not my favorite medium, but it will be intriguing to use it, that there will be these handwritten letters that will be put up just for one day, so you can see that Rachel Marker moves around.

SUE HEINEMANN: So, what is it like for you to have this character who started as a written character in a sense come alive?

MOIRA ROTH: That's beautifully put. It seems a very organic evolution. When Stephanie mentioned the actress for the first time, I was quite enthralled. This is apparently a woman who has quite a lot of time, so she would like to come up for several weeks. And it suddenly occurred to me I didn't know what the actress looked like.

And so—but only for a flash on the Internet did I look at her. I think it was mainly she sounded right, as an interesting actress. It seems very comfortable. I myself have almost suggested being either Rachel Marker or Moira Marker. And in the production in San Francisco, I literally—I walk out from the storefront window and I walk away from the audience, who's clustered outside, and I just walk down the street and disappear.

And so I sometimes feel that I slightly have embodied Rachel Marker myself. And other times I just watch with great interest as someone else acts her out.

SUE HEINEMANN: Does it change your perception of her to see her performed?

MOIRA ROTH: I think she's such a fluid creature, or creation. I think it mainly makes me curious. I've always loved collaboration. And once you trust your collaborators, then it's much better than if you tried to do it all yourself.

I mean, Stephanie has already come up with a whole lot of brilliant ideas that I would never have thought of. And when we're actually going to do the production at The Marsh, she thought it would be interesting if the audience came in first and they would sit in a part of The Marsh which is like a little jazz club.

And then Rachel Marker will come in, but in a kind of trance, in a 1920s costume. And there might even be a pianist playing 1920s music. And then the audience will go into the theater that I think seats about a hundred. And Rachel Marker will just wander in and go up the stage. And there will be a table and a chair for her. And there will be a quill pen and ink, and she will begin to write.

And Stephanie suggested, at the end of the production, that she could walk through the audience and go upstairs. And on the second floor, there would be a whole lot of little tables and chairs, and if the audience wanted, they could go up and write to Rachel Marker.

Now, that was totally Stephanie's idea, not mine. And she also took me up to the top floor of The Marsh, where there's a telescope and you can look at the whole city of Berkeley. And so we thought that Rachel might also be there. But the whole collaborative experience, and the surprise of having different people act Rachel Marker, means it's unpredictable to me.

SUE HEINEMANN: That's interesting.

The other thought I had—and it was just something that occurred to me this morning when I was looking over what you sent me—was I wondered if you saw any relationship between your storytelling with Rachel Marker and Faith Ringgold's story quilts.

MOIRA ROTH: I don't think so, although—I mean, it's so different. I love what she does.

SUE HEINEMANN: Yeah.

MOIRA ROTH: And I followed it with enormous interest. Every now and then I would help her edit the text in a minor way. I think that my inspiration, if you put it that way, for Rachel Marker comes much more directly out of this childhood experience of mine with East European Jews. Then being in Berlin, being in Prague, becoming deeply interested, in a painful way, as to why fascism rises up between World War I and World War II.

I think those are more of the inspirations, plus reading a lot of Kafka and Borges. And much as I love Faith's work, she does different kinds of writing than mine.

SUE HEINEMANN: So, Moira, you had something else you wanted to say about Rachel Marker.

MOIRA ROTH: Oh, yes, I was going to say that it turns out that Rachel Marker saw, when she was 17, a library in the sky, which turns out to be the Library of Maps*,* and that she, at a certain point, begins to write *The Library of Maps* texts.

And what had happened was she had been in Prague and she'd firstly written a play for a group of mute players. It's called *365 Days of Silent Acts.* And she'd finished that. And then she writes to Franz Kafka, describing this vision of a library.

And then she slowly begins to write the texts of some of *The Library of Maps.* And she tells Franz Kafka about how it's set up. There's a courtyard of "Letters to the Dead," there's a room of mirrors, and there's a whole series of maps within *The Library of Maps.*

And then, July 6, 1926, Prague, "Dear Franz, today totally oblivious to the world. I wrote 'The Map of the Heart' in the café. I dedicate it to you." And then she does the whole "Map of the Heart*,*" that I had written.

SUE HEINEMANN: So, I often wanted to ask you—because at the same time that you're writing the Rachel Marker series and *The Library of Maps,* you write almost every day, Nabolom—in the morning when you go to your favorite café—

MOIRA ROTH: My favorite café, and I'm incredibly devoted to it, is the café a few blocks from here. And it's called Nabolom. It's run by a collective. I discovered it the moment I moved back to Berkeley.

They tell me I'm their favorite customer, and they are certainly my favorite—it is certainly my favorite café. I

have photographs of myself in the café and they appear as illustrations and various things. But I've also written, for example, a series of letters from the café, which I wrote for the online *American Studies Journal*.

So, I go there regularly and I read the *New York Times*, and I have a whole lot of notebooks where I scribble, and sometimes I write. And at the beginning of the Iraq War, I was so overwhelmed by it that I decided almost the only thing that would keep me sane was writing regularly.

So, I wrote on March 20th "Upon Cold Blood and Screams." And then I would literally sit in Nabolom reading. A couple of days after I'd started to write these poems—only for my own sanity, I think—I gave one to a member of the collective, and then the next day they had put it up, and they asked if I would be willing to leave copies there.

And so, this whole series is called *From Far Away.* It's a series I've never published, but from the first few months I would always leave copies, like maybe 30 copies, and they would always go immediately. And I felt that I was representing many other people in Berkeley who were trying to deal with what was happening far away.

And it wasn't only about Iraq. It was about AIDS in Africa and later on about the monks' uprising in Burma. And then I wrote about Rose and Alice.

And a very memorable day early on was that I had written whatever the text was the day before, and then a woman literally ran into the café and said, "Where is the poem for today?" And someone said, "Well, the poet is over there at the window." And she came—and I'd never met her, but she stood in front of me and she said she had just come back from Spain. And then she said, "Ninety percent of Spaniards are against the war."

And then I just had this stream of free association and I wrote—it's called "News from Spain." "I think of Spain in the 1930s / Of the Civil War / The bombing of Guernica / Of Picasso's painting / Of George Orwell's / *Homage to Catalonia.* / And / Of Robert Capa's photograph / *Death of a Loyalist Soldier*.

"The soldier's shadow tumbles / Onto the ground behind him / As if his soul / Were departing / At the moment of death. *Oan Hon* (lost souls) / in Spain / in Hiroshima / in Vietnam / And now in Iraq." And I was just scribbling and then I went home and typed it into my computer.

So this gave me quite a lot of solace, being able to write these. And then, I had given copies of some of them to two artists who had recently moved up to the Bay Area. And they became interested in them and asked if I would like to be part of their work in an exhibition at the Yerba Buena [Center for the Arts –MR] in San Francisco.

The two artists are Ginger Wolfe-Suarez and Primi Suarez-Wolfe. And I gave them some of the poems, [...–MR] and they said they were going to build something right in the middle of the Yerba Buena space. And it would be basically a home for poetry.

I was very touched they wanted to use the poems, but I had no idea how extraordinary it would be to see these poems that I'd been scribbling in Nabolom and distributing—Xeroxing and things—in a huge artist's book.

And the designer of the book was completely extraordinary. Sometimes there are just a couple of lines on one page, all those gleaming silver pages—

SUE HEINEMANN: Mylar?

MOIRA ROTH: Mylar.

SUE HEINEMANN: Yeah.

MOIRA ROTH: Apparently people would stand outside this concrete structure and then they would go in. You could sit there looking at the book, and then opposite you would see yourself in a mirror. And people apparently would be very leisurely.

So this was another example of the total transformation of my work in a collaborative situation, which was a mixture of Ginger and Primi, and then the designer. And it was quite extraordinary. And it's called *Atlas of War and Peace*.

SUE HEINEMANN: And in a different kind of way, wasn't the Poor Farm a different kind of transformation of your work?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. Yes. And it was also, again, very, very collaborative. And what had happened was I have a very close friend, Annika Marie, who at one point was a student at Mills and then went to Columbia, and now lives in Chicago.

And she called up one day and said she would like to do a small birthday event for me. And it turned out she thought I was going to be 80 rather than 77. So when I had broken the news to her that I was three years short of being 80, she said nevertheless she would like to do something. And I could fly out and there could be a weekend.

And she was the archivist for this space called the Poor Farm, which is quite an extraordinary place in—it's run by two artists, Michelle and Brad [Grabner –MR]. And they had just bought the space, having already run the Suburban in Chicago for quite a long time.

Annika was the archivist, and so she had asked Michelle and Brad if it would be okay if they used that space for the weekend. And then I came to Chicago to plan this. And by this time I'd got all these different ideas of what could happen during the weekend.

We sat in the home of Michelle and Brad and they said, "Oh, we like these ideas, so would you like the space for a whole year?" And then they said, "What would you call it?" And I said, "Oh, it's all over the map." And so that is literally why it had that title.

Then I have a wonderful friend who has a chef, and she said that she would like to come out in a private jet, bringing me with the chef, and there would be a rather elaborate birthday dinner. So, Maryellen [Herringer –MR], who is a very distinguished lawyer, said she would do that.

And then things just escalated and escalated. And I asked a large number of friends to send earth or small stones from different parts of the world. So there was a huge collection of earth from Spain, from Vietnam, et cetera, et cetera.

And then Michelle and Brad said they thought I should create a number of shows. So Annika and I together put them on—including bringing out *The Library of Maps* as an exhibition. We put on [shows –MR]—in this strange and wonderful space. [We had –MR] Hung Liu, who had just found photographs that she had taken surreptitiously during the [Cultural Revolution –MR] in China, and Claudia Bernardi, who had done work about victims in El Salvador.

So there were all these small almost like vignettes in rooms and on the walls. And people sent texts—Linda Nochlin wrote a poem called "I'm Sorry I Can't Come to the Poor Farm." And it was about the fact that anyone can suddenly lose their money, their dignity and be an outcast.

The reason that this place was called the Poor Farm is that in the Midwest, until the middle of the 1930s, the structure had been that if you were very poor in a town, you would literally get deported from the town and sent to one of these places, where you would often work yourself to death. And then, with Social Security in the middle of the 1930s, it stopped.

It meant there were all these spaces of quite elegant-looking buildings with a lot of land, and there's always a cemetery. And so, as part of the Poor Farm program, I asked Pauline Oliveros if she would do some sort of piece that would draw attention to the fact there were all these people with names who had been buried in the cemetery.

And she came up—I thought it was one of the most moving parts of the whole event—she came up with a very, very simple structure. So, on my birthday, in the afternoon, […–MR] I simply invited about 15 or 16 people. We all stood and followed Pauline's score. And we each found two rocks, which we clapped, and then we walked in a file through cornfields, which was very beautiful. It was quite romantic.

And we finally got to the cemetery, and there were all these stone slabs. They're not even upright. They're lying in the ground. And they have names, but often the people who ran the Poor Farm didn't know when someone had been born, only when they died. And they would know exactly.

And so, each of us was given a piece of paper and we did a rubbing of one grave. And then we called out the names and then very soberly we returned and put all the rubbings in the basement of the Poor Farm.

And that, I thought, was very moving, not just for us to think about who had been there and the circumstances, but it would mean that anyone who came to the Poor Farm would know about the history because, as it's now an art space, it would be quite easy just to think of it as an eccentric name.

So, that was pretty extraordinary, and that's the space where Suzanne Lacy had all the photographs of myself hidden. But that also was very, very collaborative. I mean, Annika Marie was quite extraordinary in how she conceptualized things, as were Michelle and Brad.

And there would always be things happening. People would arrive and then something—you know, there would

be perhaps some—I don't know—a dinner or someone would arrive and there would be a long conversation.

And I stayed there for a number of weeks, and I'm going to go back, probably in July, to see the packing up, so to speak, of all these small exhibitions.

SUE HEINEMANN: Wasn't there something special in relation to Dinh?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. I had written to Dinh and asked if he would be part of it, thinking he would just send earth. So he did send earth from Vietnam. And then he had wanted actually to come to the Poor Farm. And as he couldn't come, he gave me 500 photographs that he just bought in the flea market in Saigon, in Ho Chi Minh City, and said I could do whatever I liked with them.

So, he had already done this famous piece, which is the hanging of a whole lot of photographs and inscriptions and things. But Maryellen, the one who had brought her chef, came up with this wonderful idea, with Chuck Mobley and a couple of other people, that there would be a hanging which would be really about the Vietnam War, because all the photographs came from that period.

And they put together a hanging. And we hoped—and I have no idea if this has happened—that perhaps if people in Wisconsin who had been Vietnam vets would come, they too could contribute or write.

So there was a lot of that sort of improvising going on. And, again, just as with these other experiences with theater in different parts of the world, it was—it didn't feel my work anymore. It felt that all of us were making an environment or a series of exhibitions. And it had an enormous effect on me. It also had an enormous effect on me simply being in the Midwest. I once taught in Chicago. But it made me think about America very differently.

And one of the things I did while I was in Wisconsin was I began to put together references to the history of the Underground Railroad. And Faith Ringgold very generously sent copies of all her children's books, which are indeed about the history of African Americans. And then I looked into Native American history in Wisconsin.

So I finally ended up with a room that had a lot of references to Native American and Black history in Wisconsin. And, again, just like with the rubbings in the basement, I thought anyone who came could, in some way, maybe rather poetically—certainly not didactically—could sit there and read and think about this very complicated history that is both very right wing and very left wing. It has Joe McCarthy. It also has the Socialist Party.

So that's how I was in Wisconsin.

SUE HEINEMANN: Moira, one of the things that we haven't really talked about too much is teaching and the way that you communicate your ideas about performance and feminism to your students, which I think is pretty fascinating.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, I should say again, as with theater events or with the book with Ginger and Primi for Yerba Buena, that one reason I love teaching and continue to love it, having taught since the late 1960s, is that, again, I feel that at its best it can be profoundly collaborative. So, yes, I do indeed teach a class and get paid for it, but I also learn a great deal.

I'm supportive but quite demanding with students. The more public their research is, the more ambitious they are. And I—as you know, earlier on I talked about *Connecting Conversations*. That set an impossibly high standard, and anyone who took a class with me immediately thought that they too would be involved with the paperback, which did not happen again.

But I taught, for example—and out of it came some really beautiful collaborations—I taught for several times a whole class on Faith Ringgold. And we produced a number of very, very carefully proofread books of texts.

We also had everyone do small squares of quilting. And we made—the first time I taught it, we made a quilt for Faith—and then we also continued the story of her heroine. So we presumptuously added to it. And she very kindly liked that a great deal.

And recently, for her 80th birthday, we did something I was just showing you, which is every student wrote a text on her, and then a woman [...–MR] did this extraordinary job of designing it. So, it's all color and it's very, very elegant.

And these are other examples. This is a whole collection of essays on an artist, Claudia Bernardi, who is a close friend of mine who lives nearby, and is the town artist for a place very near where the massacre took place in El Salvador.

And then, for example, another huge project was that when all these shows like *WACK!* were coming out, I took

the students through the various catalogues, mentioning who I thought perhaps should have been added. And we did that.

Then I went to Spain for a feminist conference and all the students wrote manifestos. And I gave them out to the members of the—

[END OF DISC.]

MOIRA ROTH:—the conference.

SUE HEINEMANN: And the conference was on feminism or—

MOIRA ROTH: The conference was on: What do you now do? And that's why it seemed particularly relevant that young students would tell people like Griselda Pollock and myself what they thought should be done.

And in addition to the students contributing, I also got a number of friends to write statements. And they were called "Letters to a Young Woman Artist of the Future." So I got Margo Machida, Lucy Lippard, the Guerilla Girls Broadband, Lowery Sims, Tina Takemoto, et cetera. Holland Cotter sent something but it was late, so it had to be an insert. And then the students wrote their manifestos.

And in this particular class that had begun with *Connecting Conversations*, which was on contemporary women artists, I've done a huge range. I'll just rattle off a few of them. We did a series of videotapes of five local Asian American women artists, and then we did a videotape of a group of Japanese American quilters. Then we did a Xerox book for Lucy Lippard's 60th birthday, which was called *Got the Message! A 60th Birthday Book for Lucy Lippard.*

And we did a webpage, *Cameo Portraits of 10 Artists,* and then we continued that. And then we did a performance with a lot of texts, which was about quilting and weaving and knitting. And it began with Annie Albers bringing a German Bauhaus interest in weaving to Black Mountain College. And we did a performance with lots and lots of threads all over campus.

So, those are the kind of things I do. And I also very often write a letter, particularly to the performance class that I teach once a year. And every now and then I'm either not there at the beginning or I dash off somewhere.

And probably one of the most elaborate projects I did, out of guilt, was towards the end of a history of performance class I had this marvelous opportunity to take a boat ride from [… - MR] East Asia, and I felt very guilty because it was in the middle of the teaching time.

So, I wrote something that was unpublished but I sent them emails every day, and they loved it. It was called "The Spoken Word Tale." It was in the form of 19 handwritten notes. And then I gave the handwritten notes actually to all members of the performance class, and it was about things I heard every day on the boat. And I would weave it into a tale.

And then there are other projects I've done. Probably one of the most elaborate was before Lenore Tawney died, I had begun to correspond with her assistant. And we were going to do something anyway for Lenore Tawney, and she was almost a hundred when she died.

We decided to do this beautiful, beautiful event, which, again, was profoundly collaborative. We borrowed, actually, a piece by Lenore Tawney that we held up. And then there was a very, very gifted artist in the graduate program, Modesto Covarrubias, and he sat silently in all the different places on campus knitting. And of course Lenore Tawney had basically worked with fabric.

And then we did performances in the library, and in various places [on campus –MR], and we ended up on Lake Mills, and everyone wrote a handwritten note on a leaf and we put candles and the leaves on a four-foot-long boat, and we set them off onto the lake with music. And it was Pauline Oliveros' music.

It was very beautiful. Lenore had just died very shortly before this happened, and the final result was that most of us were crying and thinking about it. And then I was leaving—I was very tired—and I drove by and I saw the woman who had made the boat, which was a huge project. She was there waving. And it turned out, the police had come by. You're not allowed to do things on, you know, Mills Lake.

But the policeman had taken one look at this boat with all the candles and leaves and he said, "That's so beautiful." And the woman said, "Well, we're going to pull it out immediately." And he said, "No, no, just leave it there and I'll look after it." And it was never moved by the police, and it slowly rotted in the water over months. And that somehow—that was very symbolic for me that the police were poetic and realized it was something special that shouldn't go according to the regular rules.

So, this was why I'm very fond of teaching, very fond indeed. And we are doing a big project this semester in this class on contemporary women artists, where we're doing about 15 studies of work that's being done absolutely currently in the Bay Area. And we're again going to do a book. Someone has just designed it.

SUE HEINEMANN: Do you find that sometimes the students inform you about artists you didn't know about?

MOIRA ROTH: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. And they always think I know everything, and so they're very demure at the beginning. And someone says, "Well, I know, Moira, you would have heard of so and so." And I say, "What was that name? How do you spell it?" And this happens quite often.

And, a few years ago, I invited someone to come in to talk about younger feminists in their 20s and 30s. And then the students did presentations. And I sat in the front row scribbling like mad. And the students came up afterwards and they said, "Oh, you're so polite to pretend you don't know everything." I said, "But I don't know everything that was said. This was a revelation to me, all the research you've done."

So, again, I learn a great deal, and things I know get very transformed and totally refreshed by teaching.

SUE HEINEMANN: Do you have a lot of ongoing relationships with your students?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes, I keep in touch with a number of students, Annika Marie, for instance. And then there are always alumni events.

SUE HEINEMANN: Oh, right. Of course.

MOIRA ROTH: There are several students from the last couple of years where they know I love to do handwritten letters. And suddenly—in my mailbox either at home or at school—I'll get a handwritten letter from them, even though I know perfectly well they normally use email.

And I just got one a couple of days ago. So I have those sort of exchanges. And then I keep up with what they're doing.

SUE HEINEMANN: So, Moira, in relation to teaching, I wanted to ask you a little bit about your relation to the College Art Association, because I know you've been very involved with that.

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. Well, I've certainly […–MR] given talks on panels, and sometimes I've moderated a panel. In, I think it was 1977, when I just started at UC San Diego, I was asked to be in charge of all the studio panels. And that was quite interesting.

But it's certainly a place where not only does one learn, but one can also advocate things that one cares about. And so, I began to be, in the 1980s, more and more involved with the CAA. And first I was on a couple of panels like, you know, sort of one-time-only panels. And then I was actually on the board of directors from 1992 to 1996.

And I was very, very involved in cultural diversity. Margo Machida was on at the same time, and various friends of mine. And we did a lot of organizing, both in terms of, you know, who the speakers would be and the subject of the panels. And then we also put together a huge bibliography of cultural diversity and art history.

So, that was something that was very satisfying. It also meant I went quite a lot to New York, which is where the meetings were. But it was—being part of a board that—probably like most boards—wanted to change things. And so, at the time I was on the board, the majority of the board was very concerned with similar politics to myself.

SUE HEINEMANN: And were you also, at the same time, involved with the Women's Caucus [for Art–MR]?

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. Yes. Or, actually, it was earlier on that I was involved with the Women's Caucus, because that started in the '70s. I was at the famous gathering where we were given a small room and then there were far too many women. It was the beginning of the creation of the Women's Caucus.

There were far too many people for the small room, and I think we ended up being in a ballroom. So that was very satisfying. And both the CAA and the WCA have given me lifetime achievement awards.

And I have also presented there—which is very touching—and written texts for—I did one for Faith Ringgold, and I presented one for Yolanda Lopez and one for Margo Machida. And they were really quite beautiful. Everyone cries. And they're very ceremonious.

So, those have been two organizations that I've felt very close to.

SUE HEINEMANN: Have you seen a change in CAA as a result of the Women's Caucus over the years?

MOIRA ROTH: I'm less close to CAA than I was, so it's really hard for me to generalize. I would say that the Women's Caucus has had a huge effect. And it was interesting—this year in New York I was on a panel about Asian American art history. And it was sort of sponsored by AAWAA, the Asian American Women Artists Association in the Bay Area.

And that was very exciting because that was going right into the heart of things. It wasn't in some section called cultural diversity. It was simply a panel there. And it was very intense in a very good way. And AAWAA is planning to do more things. It's now an affiliated group.

So, seeing that was very encouraging, you know, but I think with all organizations, be it a campus or a CAA, you have to keep on monitoring things that you care about. For example I, for years, have refused to be on all-white panels or all-white organizations.

In fact, I was on something with a group of women I liked very much who were old friends with one another. And it was an all-white group, and I gave them an ultimatum: I would be on this board for a year but only if they decided they wanted to expand. And they were very apologetic but didn't, so I got off the board. And I've done the same thing with publications.

So it was very satisfying on the CAA board that many of us had the same feelings, and certainly the WCA is getting better and better and better about whom it gives awards to and, you know, whom it focuses on. So that's very encouraging in these difficult times.

SUE HEINEMANN: So, Moira, you've just been talking a bit about the importance to you of diversity, and I wonder if you could say a little bit more about how you bring that into everything that you do and other places where you go.

MOIRA ROTH: Well, I'm not perfect, so I certainly slip, like all of us. But I was going to tell you about two experiences—one is abroad in Berlin and the other is in San Francisco—that relate to this.

My friend Gisela Weimann, who had first invited me to talk and do that presentation in Berlin, which ended up being the introduction to *The Amazing Decade,* had invited me in 2007 to be part of, I thought, a very interesting project, which was basically without an audience. It was an international group.

And she herself had worked with a group of German artists, Berlin artists whom she'd met in 1968. So she had traced their history and hers. And then she had got a group of German poets, politicians, art historians to ask questions.

So, what had come out of it was a series of questions and answers, and then to add to the complexity, she had invited a group of us from outside Germany. And the project was called "Shared Times," and I decided I wanted, in the spirit of that, to again enlarge the sort of framework.

And so, I began talking about what was going on in Germany and in the U.S., beginning with when I'd first gone there. And then I thought it would be interesting to have statements from a group of people I knew about what they thought were the next steps in feminism.

So, I asked Linda Nochlin, who had just finished working on *Global Feminisms*. I asked Lucy Lippard to make a statement. And she mentioned that in *WACK!,* which she had been very involved in, young women kept asking to be told what to do next: "And I just said, 'Get together and brainstorm. Your issues won't be the same as ours, though I hope equal pay and equal opportunity are still on top of the list.'"

And then I asked Whitney Chadwick, and I asked Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, who was both an artist and the director of a gallery space at UC Davis. And her background is Native American.

She said that her concern would be that everyone starts to believe that the playing field has been leveled and becomes complacent once they've stepped on the field, not looking back to see if they are alone, and the need to recognize that what we all are doing is working towards justice, equality, and perhaps the same words but definitely worlds apart culturally in the end.

And then I asked Praba Pilar, who had come from South America, and Margo Machida. And I ended up with a response from Faith Ringgold. And she said that she herself doesn't have a strong impression of what is happening in the 2000 *Global Feminisms*, although she went to Judy Chicago's opening at the Brooklyn Museum and thought it was quite lovely: "Chicago should be applauded for her perseverance and vision."

"Where this will all go"—Ringgold stressed—"though, and whether the women will in the end extend the realms of feminisms"—meaning the plural—"to a diversity of black women feminists and other women of color, past,

present and future, in a meaningful way is still to be determined. I am looking"—Faith Ringgold says—"but not sure of what I am seeing." And I thought that was a very wise cautionary note from Faith Ringgold, who has gone through so much of the feminist movement and knows its history and knows its pros and cons.

And then an experience much nearer at home but which has had a huge effect on me is that in San Francisco, over the years I've become quite close to the queer cultural community. And Lenore Chinn is a painter, an activist, an organizer—and a group of friends, including myself, felt that it was time that she had a catalogue. She's always helping other people.

And so, we worked together, and out of it came this, I think, very beautiful book on her. It's called *Cultural Confluences: The Art of Lenore Chinn.* And it came out last year and we're going to have a panel about it this summer.

And what she has done for years and years, literally decades, is to do portraits of the queer community, but very wide-ranging. Her own background is Chinese American, but she was brought up in a white neighborhood and has a very diverse group of friends—and not just diverse ethnically but also diverse where they live, what their practice is.

And so, in this book are these photographs of her beautiful, beautiful paintings, portraits. So she, in this day and age, is a major portraitist. There's one of a friend of hers, who is a Sephardic Jew from North Africa. There are oil portraits of figures alone and there are portraits of couples. And it really was a very, very powerful experience to work on it. And I wrote the introduction to it.

And it also includes a portrait of Bernice Bing, who is a very dear friend of many of us. And what I think is significant in Lenore's work is that they are most definitely portraits of particular people. She spends an enormous amount of time going to their houses, figuring out what imagery, what gestures should be used. But in none of the titles are the names of the people.

One is called *Before the Wedding* because it's two women who are going to adopt a child. Another work is called *Departure*, which is about a man staring out of a window because he's leaving. So the titles, with the exception of Bernice Bing, which is called *Bing*, really stand for all, in a very complex way—a whole lot of themes in the queer community.

And it was an incredible pleasure to work on this. It involved dinner parties—endless ones. I invited Lenore several times to talk at Mills. And we felt, as a group, that we had really worked on giving her a lot of recognition for work that is extraordinary.

[END OF DISC.]

SUE HEINEMANN: This is Sue Heinemann interviewing Moira Roth at her home in Berkeley, California, on April 24th, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number 5.

So, Moira, we were going to kind of end by talking about some special friendships that you've had that have been very important, and I thought maybe start talking about Linda Nochlin.

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. And I should stress that when we were preparing for this exchange, that I had a long list of very, very dear friends. So I'm only selecting a very, very few out of this list.

I think particularly because I have really no family, that over the years friends have become my family. And I have some friends, but very few, from my childhood, so that most of my friends are people I've met in my 20s onwards. And, as I said, I wrote a long list and you and I decided I would just talk about a couple of people.

So let me say that Linda Nochlin is a very precious friend of mine. And I met her originally, as I said earlier on, when I had the chance of teaching with her in Vassar in the mid-1970s. And we have stayed absolutely in touch.

I visit her in New York. She has come out here. She's lectured at Mills. We have, in addition to our passions for feminist art history—and I have learned a profound amount from her writings, probably beginning with that famous, famous essay in *ARTnews*, and I have a very tattered copy of it.

We also share a great interest in writing—writing poetry, that we often send one another things. I, for example, for one of her birthdays, sent her a very, very elaborate poem with text for each year of her life. And she—as I mentioned—for the Poor Farm, sent the poem to me about how sorry she was she couldn't come to the Poor Farm.

There's one exchange I thought I would talk a little about, because I think […–MR] it affected both of us very much. She was going to get—I mean, she's a very famous person, and Aruna d'Souza had decided she would organize a conference in honor of Linda, and it would be at NYU. And then out of it would come papers that were

eventually published by Thames and Hudson. And it was called *Self and History: A Tribute to Linda Nochlin*.

And so I did a presentation—a rather theatrical presentation on her in the conference. And then I wrote a series of exchanges called "Of Self and History: Exchanges with Linda Nochlin." And I spent quite a lot of time in her apartment, and we worked in, I think, a very interesting way. I did this after the presentation.

I would say to her, "Do you have any poetry?" And she said, "Oh, let me look." And then she'd scurry around and she'd open a cupboard and she'd say, "Oh, you didn't know I wrote a novel, did you?" And she would produce a novel. And then at other times she simply would give me a pile of photographs, and I would go through them and then I'd ask her questions.

And so, what came out of this was an exchange, reacting to, like, a very, very young Linda in 1941 on a beach, and then a very young Linda in Miami, posed dramatically. And then she grows older and it was Linda the mother, Linda the feminist, Linda rather strangely and almost romantically alone on a volcanic beach in Hawaii. And then I also had photographs of her family and of her father with a cactus tree behind.

And at a certain point in the exchange I talked to her about writing. And she said she wanted to write differently. And I said, "How?" And she said, "More freely." And then we started to talk about her poetry, her interest in writing sometimes abrasive poetry. She and I actually write in very different poetry styles.

But for both of us, it was a very, very rich [exchange –MR]. And then finally she had written a poem in 1973 called "Matisse Swan Self." And then there's a whole section in our exchange about the relationship of the self to history, the personal, the private and the historical context. And we ended with talking about a celebration dinner that was at the end of the symposium in honor of her.

I think for both of us we explored a lot of ideas about where one lives, how one lives in history, and then where one is a particular person with a particular—I wouldn't even call it a career, but a particular trajectory.

I think this had a very profound effect on us, this exchange. Then there was another exchange—and this was at the College Art Association—there was a panel in her honor. And I did a presentation where I invented a love affair between her and Aby Warburg, and she adores Aby Warburg.

And so, I had a photograph that I had taken of Linda looking very wistful, holding up a flower, and a photograph next to it—this was a PowerPoint that someone had done for me—where Aby Warburg is looking quite glamorous and young. I think he had just been to America. And she enjoyed that.

So, we often visit and we usually spend time just by ourselves. We go off and have dinner. And, as I said, we often email one another with things that we're writing, not particularly art history but mainly poetry. Overall it's been a very, very precious and lovely friendship of many decades.

SUE HEINEMANN: So one of the other people we were going to talk about is Lucy Lippard.

MOIRA ROTH: We were both, as you know, consultants for *The Amazing Decade*. And then I first actually met her, as far as I remember, in the home of May Stevens and Rudolph Baranik. And I had decided by that time that I was going to dedicate *The Amazing Decade* to her. So as far as I remember, I brought her a copy. And for some reason no one had ever dedicated a book to her before, and she was amazed, and I was very honored that she accepted the dedication. So, after that we became close friends. She was living in New York and then, at a certain point, moved out to New Mexico. And we would keep in touch in all different ways. And then, for my 60th birthday, she decided that she would give me what ended up being the most magical birthday, and I could invite about 10 people to the family home that she had in Maine.

And we were just—you and I were just looking at this beautiful book that Whitney Chadwick and a very dear friend of mine, Norma Wikler, had organized. And they asked a whole lot of people to send, in effect, small art objects—for the most part collages or letters.

It was really lovely. We were there for days. There was lots of food. We would go out on walks. Sometime you'd walk with someone you hadn't known. Faith Ringgold came up from New York. Or you'd walk with someone you'd wanted to meet for years.

It was, I think, quite special for people to meet one another as well as celebrate my birthday. And we went out on a boat, and we would all reminisce about things.

And a couple of other exchanges or visits I had with Lucy were—I had already mentioned that we made the *Got The Message* book for her birthday. And, unbeknownst to her, I had written to a huge number of her friends and admirers and had got endless small packages and letters. But she didn't know I was doing this.

So, she came to talk at Mills, and I was totally preoccupied with the planning, and so basically didn't listen to her

lecture at all. But the students knew that we were going to have a birthday cake, so immediately at the end of the lecture I said she and I should go off because the students had assignments to work on.

And she said she thought perhaps they would like to ask questions. I said, "Oh, no, they don't have time to ask you questions because they're—you know, they have their assignment to do." And I can't wink but I almost winked at them.

So I dragged her off and I paid no attention to her. And then I said, "I guess we'd better go back and see if the assignment is okay." And we got back and the whole lecture hall was covered with cakes and flowers and music. And then, on the table were all these presents that had been sent from, for the most part, New York. And so that was quite lovely!

And then I also stayed with her so that she and I and friends who were living by this time in Galisteo or nearby, like Harmony Hammond and Nancy Holt and May Stevens, we could celebrate the first day of the year 2000. And that was very special.

And another visit I remember so clearly with her is that Harmony Hammond had arranged that she—Harmony and Lucy and May and a couple of other close friends, and myself—that we would all go to Walter de Maria's [*Lightning Field* –MR] and rent—there's a space there you can rent for the weekend. And that was quite lovely, and we spent hours and hours and hours talking and reminiscing.

The other thing I just wanted to add was that she had, from Bard, an exhibition of her art collection, which was called *Sniper's Nest*. And I wrote a letter of affection to her. And I wrote about the fact that—I kept saying to myself: I always remember your chapter headings from *Mixed Blessings*: *New Art in a Multicultural America.* I love Lucy's writing.

And these were the chapter headings: "Mapping," "Naming," "Telling," "Landing," "Mixing," "Turning Around," and "Dreaming." And then I'd write, "Dreaming. I've always enjoyed the fact that you dream as well as act. Indeed I remember conversations with you in various places—New [York –MR], Maine, Colorado, Texas and California—in which you described your actual dreams. Wonderful, lively dreams, sometimes having to do with flying, always full of strange presences and magical occurrences, and, so often, containing advice for your waking life. You take these dreams of yours seriously, as you should. Indeed I think of your life as guided by left-wing radical politics, New England traditional morality, and mystical dreams."

SUE HEINEMANN: So, do you think—I mean, with Lucy and Linda, because you're, all three of you, writers—that you've had influence on each other?

MOIRA ROTH: I don't think I've influenced either of them. And I think that they have influenced me simply as models of being superb writers. And I think we're very interested in one another's writings, but I think that's different from being influenced by. I'm very often inspired by their writings. And it's a mixture of their actual writings—they're beautiful writers—and their politics.

SUE HEINEMANN: But I was thinking also in terms of ideas, like in terms of an exchange of ideas, because all three of you are really important feminist art writers.

MOIRA ROTH: I think we share a lot of goals and beliefs. I know that Lucy and I, at one point, decided that both of us would not get involved with all-white groups, and we would monitor the various invitations we got and then we would compare notes, including at one point taking on a rather distinguished organization. But we refused to be part of it because it was an all-white group.

But I think it's more that we are very interested in one another's writings and thinking, and that we are indeed also very interested in the act of writing. I always find it fascinating that Linda writes so much poetry, that for the most part hasn't been published. And, as you know, we were talking over dinner yesterday evening about the fact that Lucy wrote a novel. And I find that fascinating, again, and that I myself write, you know, poetry and fiction.

So I think they are friendships that are very sustaining, certainly for me, and I hope for Lucy and Linda.

SUE HEINEMANN: I mean, I was thinking too, you know, in the sense of support for the kind of writing that you do —

MOIRA ROTH: Oh, I think so. For instance, both of them were fascinated when I began to write poetry and to do plays. And we very often, when we meet, we talk about writing, and we certainly ardently talk about, you know, feminist art history. And we tell one another about artists whom we have come across or we're writing on.

So I think it's a very active friendship in terms of, I wouldn't say educating one another, but informing one

another. And this has gone on for, you know, a long time. And those are very precious friendships, when you love someone as a person but also you greatly enjoy them as a colleague.

And I think that's true of a lot of my friendships with artists, that I have this mixture of affection for friends and then I find them very interesting intellectually and psychologically and socially. And I don't see myself as an activist, but I enormously admire artists and critics who are activists. And this is true of both men and women. Like Jonathan Katz is a very dear friend, and he's certainly an activist as well as a writer.

SUE HEINEMANN: Were there other friends that you wanted to talk about here?

MOIRA ROTH: I think it will be so complicated for me to start talking about one friend and not the other, that I think it would feel on the verge of being awkward. I had a long list that I typed out and then I would add other names to it.

SUE HEINEMANN: [...–MR] I was just thinking about friends as writers who might have, you know, pushed you a little bit. [...–MR]

MOIRA ROTH: Yes. Well, Susan Griffin, for example, the poet, is a close friend of mine, and I met her in the early '60s when she and I were living in the same building in North Beach. And I am a great admirer of her writing. And we very often exchange writing, not to critique it but simply will give one another a draft saying, "It's just a draft, you know. Don't start editing it. I've just begun!"

And we actually, one summer, taught a course together at the San Francisco Art Institute, and it became so nostalgic because we both lived in Berkeley and we would drive over there, and then we would go for walks in what was no longer the Beat Generation North Beach scene. [...– MR] And we would reminisce.

So that's been very special, and I certainly know a number of writers and critics. Holland Cotter is a very close friend. And he and I very often talk about writing, and we have long discussions about both a mixture of writing and then what we both write about. And that, I think, has been another very special friendship in terms of two writers.

And then I wanted, because this is so much on my mind—tomorrow Lynn Hershman is going to have a showing at the Pacific Film Archive of this extraordinary film that has taken her 40 years to make. It's called *WAR! Women Art Revolution.* And she's very kindly asked if I would be part of a Q&A with her.

I'm actually in the film briefly, but more to point, I've seen the film in all its different versions. It's quite fascinating to see how she has endlessly—every time resolving never to, you know, edit it once again. She has produced this rich, rich [film –MR]—it's visually rich and it's politically rich.

And you have the Black Panthers suddenly next to Judy Chicago. You have women on the march. Then you have private visits to studios. You see a young Nancy Spero and a very old Nancy Spero. And it's extraordinary how she's woven together and edited and re-edited and re-edited.

And the result is it's a brilliant film, and I've shown it even this semester several times in class. And people of course—students start to cry and they say, "Oh, we wish we had a community like this." And then I do have the grace to say, "Well, there were some tensions as well as all this sort of wonderful work."

But [Lynn –MR] is, again, a friend. I was pulling out of my publications something I wrote where I talk about having first met her in 1973 when she and Eleanor Coppola put up—or they got hold of—a couple of rooms in a very cheap hotel in North Beach, and you had to go there and ask for a key, and then you stumbled into a room, and there was—it was called "Trespassing at the Dante" [in an *Artweek* review; the actual title of the piece is *The Dante Hotel* (1973) –MR]. It was the Dante Hotel. And in Room 47 there were two mannequins, two women locked together, and then you began feeling very voyeuristic. You began to prowl around looking at things that were hidden in the room.

So that was the first time I met her, and I've, several times, written on her and interviewed her. And it will be very interesting to see Lynn as an extraordinarily well-known—in fact, internationally known artist who spent so much time on this film, where suddenly she appears but she's not the dominant voice. In fact, she has a very fine sensibility of where she puts herself in, but that's not why she made the film. The film is made for the women's movement.

And at the same time that there will be the Q&A tomorrow at Pacific Film Archive, we're just finishing, in my class, rereading Whitney Chadwick's book. And I've just been the sort of recipient or the sounding board for the new edition's introduction. So that's interesting with Whitney Chadwick and with Lynn Hershman, seeing in one case a book and in another case a film that has been years and years and years in the making. And I've watched the evolutions with great admiration.

And I admire them so much for pushing themselves to rethink constantly. And that would be also true of, say, these long-term friendships with Linda Nochlin and with Lucy Lippard and with Faith Ringgold, with Margo Machida and Joyce Kozloff. I do feel that we are comrades in arms.

SUE HEINEMANN: Do you feel that you get pushed, you know, in different directions?

MOIRA ROTH: Oh, yes, absolutely. Or sometimes I feel very self-critical of what I'm not doing, and because I'm going to go and visit one of these friends, I pull myself together and I do something that I thought I should do but have been avoiding doing.

So, I think—we don't rebuke one another but we certainly say, "And what are you doing now?" And if you know that question is going to be directed at you, then sometimes you think, "Well, before I go and visit, I should write a poem or a manifesto, or something like that."

SUE HEINEMANN: It's kind of like having a friendship deadline.

MOIRA ROTH: Yes, beautifully put. Beautifully put. And I think one of the reasons I'm so drawn to friendships is that, again, there's a very collaborative aura in friendship so that you help your friend and your friend helps you. And because of the friendship you both do things that you would not have done otherwise.

SUE HEINEMANN: And that gives you a kind of support network, I would think.

MOIRA ROTH: Yes, absolutely. And I have a lot of friends who are—for instance, I have a friend, Viet Lê, who is—he's now here but he was in Cambodia for about a year. And he and I sometimes would write every day just about what we were thinking about.

And the same has been true of quite a lot of my friendships, that there will be a lot of exchange. It's not even sending a PDF of something you've written; it's much more—literally not a handwritten letter as an electronic letter that is laying out fragments of ideas.

And I find that a total delight. That's why I love email, because I love hearing what friends are doing and also being able to tell them what I'm doing. And that's very different from editing one another, although we do do that too.

SUE HEINEMANN: So, I don't know if there's anything more that you would like in terms of maybe what you see in the future.

MOIRA ROTH: I was just about to profoundly thank you for doing this exchange, and say that it has been a rather overwhelming experience to try to go through my writings—like Lucy, I too dream. And I would like to thank you enormously.

And I think I would rather not try to spell out, as it were, goals of the future, although I think about it a great deal. I think about it not only in terms of feminism but also in terms of what is happening now—for example, what is happening in the Middle East, what is happening in Japan, what is happening in this country, which is very fraught with many different political tugs of war. But I will leave it at that.

SUE HEINEMANN: Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]