

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Patty Mucha

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Columbia University

2015

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Patty Mucha conducted by Alessandra Nicifero on August 12, 2015. This interview is part of the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Audio Transcription Center

Session #1

Interviewee: Patty Mucha

Location: St. Johnsbury, Vermont

Interviewer: Alessandra Nicifero

Date: August 12, 2015

Q: My name is Alessandra Nicifero. I'm here with Patty Mucha. It's August 12, 2015. We are in Vermont. Thanks for agreeing to participate in the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project. I would like to start learning a little more about your early life, where you were born, where you grew up.

Mucha: Oh, all right. My childhood. Well, I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1935, June 26. I was just eighty a couple weeks ago. My mother was—well, let's say, as a Polish family, my parents both came from very simple backgrounds. They both lived on farms at one point or another. But then they moved to the big city, which was Milwaukee, at one point. There are five siblings. I'm the second from the youngest. I have two sisters that are still alive. My two older brothers have died recently.

Let's see. My mommy was a good homemaker—she loved that word! She did all these kinds of things, embroidered stuff. So we grew up with a lot of handmade work. All the sheets were embroidered and had crocheting in it. All the couches had lace that she made. She'd make tablecloths that were lace like that, only that's not homemade. Hers were really beautiful. All of our quilts were hand-sewn. So that was perhaps a little artistic influence that we all had. We all learned how to knit. We all knew how to embroider. In the 1940s, there was a thing called zoot suiters and my brothers both followed that style. One brother could knit his own argyle socks.

Now I don't know if you know how difficult it is to knit a pair of socks. I've never been able to do it. And argyles have to do with patterns. So here was this fifteen-year-old kid who made his own socks, which I think was kind of great.

My older brother was a commercial artist. He spent his life being a commercial artist. He had a great deal of influence on me. There's a Layton School of Art and design in Milwaukee, a very fancy place. I would go with him to life classes, which in those days were pretty unusual to have teenagers in the class. Now, of course, they do it everywhere. So he was a big influence in my life.

My little sister, who is now in Tallahassee, runs the costume department in FSU, Florida State University. She is thirteen years younger than me and I'm sure I influenced her because I'd buy paints and we'd be painting at the kitchen table. I think that had a lot to do with it. Yes.

The high school that I went to had a very wonderful art department. The teacher there was also very influential. And I was pretty talented. I got many awards. I have something I can show you later. It was a competition that the *Milwaukee Journal* had for students in high school. I was one of the people that got the top award.

Then I went to college in town, a state college. But it too had an amazing art department. There was great camaraderie between the students and the teachers. In those days you just hung out with them and you had parties with them. I'd babysit for them. And we got to be really good friends. So that was a really good space to learn about art, but at a certain point, I took everything

I could that the college offered in terms of the art, the sculpture, the printmaking, working on the lathe. Of course oil painting was what I specialized in. At a certain point, I just felt I had to go to New York. That was in 1957.

The person that I knew who was in New York was [Claes] Oldenburg. One of his ex-girlfriends was my roommate. She said, “Oh, look up Claes Oldenburg when you go to New York.” I said, “I’m not going to look up anybody,” because I went just fresh, not knowing a soul. That wasn’t my intention to look up anyone, which I did not do. But as fate would have it, I met him accidentally a few months after I was there, in an art store. We were both buying art supplies [laughs]. So that’s how it goes.

Yes. We had both gone to an art colony in Michigan. The director in the college and people in Chicago jointly had this art colony in Michigan on Lake Michigan, which is a beautiful lake, in Saugatuck, Michigan [Ox-Bow School of Art and Artists’ Residency]. Scholarship students from both areas would go there and spend the summer. It was just 24-7 art. It was fabulous. It was very wonderful. It was sort of hippie style in a way. You worked there. You did dishes or whatever, if you were a scholarship student. You’d have critiques, of course, on your work, on Saturday mornings. But Saturday night was always party night.

This woman who ran it was—now that I’m eighty, I think it’s kind of interesting because I thought she was a really old lady—but she was eighty and she was a complete nut. She was wonderful. She would have these events. I swear, I think that a lot of the “happening” of art kind of was instilled at that point because we’d have to do skits, fresh skits. We’d have to design them

just like that. So you'd go into the woods and you'd pick up whatever you could do. I can't even remember what we did, but they were always art-related, parodies of something or another.

Both Oldenburg and I experienced that, except he was there the year before. The whole reason I'm talking about this was that's when I first met him. He came the following year when I was a student and I sort of got to know him, but not really. He was a boyfriend of my close friend. Let's see. I don't know if I'm saying anything else.

Q: What was your idea of New York before arriving in New York?

Mucha: Well the interesting thing was, it's just luck that I went to New York. The last summer before I went to New York, I worked in a factory to make money. I was thinking of going to Paris. Because I thought [laughs] that's where you were supposed to go. Then I realized it was just too far, besides I didn't have enough money. So first, I substituted Paris with Chicago and then I thought, "Well that's not far enough." Then I thought, "Well I'll go to New York." Everything was happening there.

Julie Martin says I'm a real tourist because I was a tourist. When I came there, I did everything that tourists would do in the city. I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Of course I loved that. I went to the Met [Metropolitan Opera]. I saw an opera, which was *Parsifal* [Richard Wagner, 1882]. Not the best opera in the world to start with [laughs]. It was horrible. I also went to Carnegie Hall because before, in Milwaukee, I'd worked in a record store. My boss was very influential in terms of having me learn about classical music. So I went to Carnegie Hall and I

saw [Dame] Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, which was not bad! People liked that. So that was kind of my influence too, to explore that.

After three weeks, my money ran out. I got a job instantly because that's what you could do in those days. You would just go to the ads in *The New York Times*. You got an office job, which is what I did. Got a very small studio apartment for eleven dollars a week, if you can believe that. It was furnished [laughs]. Kitchen and everything. Eleven dollars a week. But those were those days.

Shortly thereafter, I got a job at ASCAP, which is American Society of Composers and Authors [and Publishers] and you're coding various—I'm having a senior moment here. I can't remember the word—their royalties. You have to give them credit for their records and whatever was out. So I was in the classical music department. Olga Adorno was in the popular music department and that's where I met her. She's my oldest friend in New York, Olga. We've been close ever since.

But my feeling about New York was, it's overwhelming. When I ran into Claes and we were just really friends for a few years—we weren't lovers or anything—he would tell me about certain things. We'd go to various art events. He already knew about George Segal and that whole group from Rutgers [University, New Brunswick, New Jersey] and those people coming in. And then our first Happening was [Allan] Kaprow's Happening in 1959, *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* [Reuben Gallery, New York]. So that's how that part started.

I painted for a while, but I must say that I didn't really have a major studio work scene until I moved in with Claes. Then I had my own big room, which he hated. He'd have to walk through my paintings to get to his. It was not easy living that way. After a year, I gave up painting. In one sense, my teachers in Wisconsin were very upset when they heard about that, but my world had changed and it was okay. I was doing other things. It didn't really matter. But they remembered me as making all these big paintings. This is one of my paintings, by the way [*Mel Dipping*, 1990]. That's one of my ducks going into the water.



Patty Mucha
Mel Dipping, 1990
Oil on linen
48 x 48 inches (121.9 x 121.9 cm)

Q: Oh, it's beautiful.

But anyway, I have bunches of paintings in my studios. I took up painting again in 1985, but I don't want to go ahead because we have to be back in New York. Let's see. What else can I say?

Q: So, Bob Rauschenberg. Did you meet Bob Rauschenberg around that time?

Mucha: I'm trying to think of when we met him. I'm sure we met him—

Q: Because he was a participant in Kaprow's Happening.

Mucha: Now was he in Kaprow's things?

Q: I think as a participant, yes.

Mucha: Oh, I don't remember that. See I remember—I fell in love with Lucas [Samaras]. I fell in love with [Robert] Bob Whitman when he came through. He was so handsome. But what I had merged was Lucas's voice—because there were the three rooms and they came in at different times. So I'd hear this wonderful voice, which was Greek. Then Bob Whitman came through and I thought, "Oh, this must be the man," [laughs] but it wasn't. So those two were in it. Gee, I don't know if anyone else was in it. I guess I think I remember seeing George Segal in the audience or something, but that was so close in the beginnings of my world there. If Bob was in that, I don't know.

To me, Rauschenberg and [Jasper] Johns were always kind of a little bit before all these Pop artists. They were that merging between the Abstract Expressionists and Pop, and then somewhere in the world, there was Larry Rivers who was a madman. Claes hated his work, but I

loved Larry. With Larry, you either loved him or hated him, and I loved him. He was a great personality.

Yes, Bob—I couldn't tell you exactly when I met him. But I do know when he lived—not that loft on Lafayette Street, but a different one with Steve Paxton [note: 809 Broadway]. They were connected at that point. They would have a series of parties. I perhaps got to know him then. That had to have been just right in the early sixties.

Q: Yes, he was still working for the Merce Cunningham [Dance] Company as a set designer, but was also collaborating with Judson Dance Theater people.

Mucha: Okay, so the Judson was '59. Yes.

Q: Early sixties, yes.

Mucha: Okay. Yes. My mind—what little I have here—I don't remember. Yes, those are later parties.

Well, Bob and I, we were pals after we got divorced—Claes and I. I don't know if people are talking about his personality. I'm sure they are because he was such an endearing human being. First of all, he was funny. He had this amazing, crazy laugh, which would drive you nuts. You'd be at this big, huge loft and you'd hear this laugh and you'd know it was Bob. But he was so generous and open. All these people kind of hung out with him, all these young—David

Bradshaw and young folks who were his—I wouldn't say interns, but they were protégés of his. They really loved his work and he was very supportive. Brice Marden, he was a protégé of his, if you can believe that.

He drank a lot. We all drank. It was a real drinking party scene. So that was quite important in his world. Too much, I think. It's amazing that he was able to produce all that work. Claes too. He drank a lot, but they both had amazing stamina because Claes could get up at eight o'clock in the morning and just get into the studio and start doing his work, whereas I'd have to sleep until eleven. I'd have a horrible hangover.

I didn't want to say that—yes. I guess, socially, I'm thinking a lot about him. He was so special. Claes used to say—well, at one point in our relationship—towards the end of the sixties, if Bob was having a party, he'd say, "Patty—" Poopy, he called me. "Poopy, be careful. You know what a troublemaker Bob is." Now that's a direct quote. Troublemaker meant he was going to be so much fun because his parties were great fun.

He had this birthday party for [Dame] Margot Fonteyn [de Arias]. [Rudolf] Rudy [Khametovich Nureyev] came. I remember dancing with Rudy Nureyev and I realized he couldn't dance at all because his muscles were so proper. He couldn't loosen up. So that was a wonderful party.

After I was divorced, I went to Mexico about four times. I would travel and be like a hippie and come back. One time via Florida, I stayed at Bob's house in Captiva for a week. Cy Twombly was there at that time. So he was just amazingly generous. I would say that.

When Claes had his retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art [MoMA, New York, *Claes Oldenburg*, 1969], it was very stressful for me. I was with Richard Hell [born Meyers] at the time, so he was helpful in terms of my emotional stability. But nonetheless, it was still very painful because there was Oldenburg with this new broad. At one point after the speeches, Bob got up and gave me a tribute, which I thought was super beautiful. Super beautiful. Because I was close to tears. I'm almost crying now, thinking about it. Who cares? [Laughs] It was so long ago.



Installation view, *Claes Oldenburg*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1969. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Photo: James Mathews

What else can I talk about? I don't know. I was at one of his performances, I think, in California. But I'm not sure if it was Bob's or if it was Alex Hay. They both had this—Debbie was in it, [Deborah] Debbie Hay. Alex and I and Bob, the four of us. It was in a roller-skating rink. We didn't roller-skate. As I recall all we did was crawl on the floor and do—who knows? Did she talk about that? Do you know if Deborah—? [Note: Referring to Alex Hay's *Rio Grande* (1964) performed by Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Mucha, and Rauschenberg on April 20, 1966 as part of Five Choreographers in Three Dance Concerts, Rollerdrome, Culver City, California.]

Q: Deborah didn't mention that.

Mucha: Yes. It was just a smidgen of a performance. That's the only thing I was ever in of his.

Well, one of my favorite things that he did was when his—where was this? You'll be able to find out historically where it was. It was in this theater where several people did things, where he did with the turtles. Did anyone talk about the turtle one?

Q: *Spring Training*, yes. It was in '65.

Mucha: Where the turtles walked in the light and moved toward each other? That was incredible. He was very original. Amazing. What else? Anything else? [Laughs]

Q: What was your collaboration with Claes?

Mucha: With Claes? Oh, good lord. That was a long one. That was a big collaboration.

Well, it started with *The Store* [1961]. He had this store, those plaster pieces. Then we were going to do a series of— Oh no. It was before then. What am I saying? Judson. We did our first Happening at the Judson. If you call that a collaboration, I don't know. It was just the two of us grunting and whipping around. You've seen a tape of that—

Q: I would call that a collaboration.

Mucha: Yes. Well, I don't know if it was a collaboration. Claes made the costume and then I did—he just told me to jump around and say, “Yip, yip. Yip, yip. Yip, yip,” which I did. He was making horrible sounds. But that was a short performance. That was only fifteen minutes or something [*Snapshots from the City*, 1960].



Patty Mucha and Claes Oldenburg performing *Snapshots from the City* (1960), Judson Memorial Church, New York, 1960. Photo: Martha Holmes

The ones in *The Store* were really wonderful. They were really wonderful because there were ten of them. Every week, we'd have new performers with us. Claes and I and Lucas and, at the beginning, Gloria Graves, this artist. We're the four. We were the repertory cast. But he fired her after two sessions because she shouted at him or something. She called him a “sadistic bastard,” actually. That's a direct quote. And threw a bedspring at him. She threw a bedspring at [laughs]—see, you can't do that to the director. Actors have to know their place. So that was too

bad because she was very talented. Later on she became part of the Happenings. In that series, no. But she came to them.

So we had those ten performances. On Monday Claes would take a look at everybody and see who came—because people volunteered—and he'd look at their body types and what they could do and blah, blah, blah. Then he'd figure out props. By Friday, after a few rehearsals, we'd perform. Two on Friday and two on Saturday. Then we did a little bit on Sunday for the movies. They always changed. I loved being in them. They were really fun. It was great to work with Lucas because he's so talented. He was an actor. So we had a great rapport actually.

Q: Did you make any decision about what to do or was it more Claes's—?

Mucha: I was a slave. No. I was not. I'm always happy. All these young art historians tell me I'm a collaborator. Crazy. I was a fucking slave. I'm physical. I'm a doer. Everything you see here, I've done. Painted the walls. I do things, so I did things there too. We had to strip the place between every week, the change. I'd help make the props. I'd paint on the walls. I'd do everything. I'd stuff—he'd keep saying, "Poopy, stop reading stuff," because we'd stuff with newspapers and I'd be reading.

No. I think if it's a collaboration, maybe now it's called a collaboration. But then, I didn't feel like it was a collaboration. Maybe it would've been better if I'd thought it was at that point in my life. I don't know. I loved him so much so it didn't matter. We were having a good time. It was

so much fun. He was so cute. I mean, he was so intelligent. He was so much fun. He had a good sense of humor. At that time he did; I think he still does.

Q: You had a sewing machine and you—

Mucha: I had a sewing machine. That sewing machine was really important. I brought it—where did I bring—well I must have bought it in New York. I bought it in New York because at that point I remember having—I’ll tell you the story of the sewing machine. It was a small little sewing machine. Portable. Singer. But it’s good. It was a Singer sewing machine.

At one point it was stolen. We lived on Fourth Street in this slum between [Avenues] C and D. The building was burglarized four different times. Or we were burglarized four different times. That went the first time. It was terrible because I made all my clothes at that time. Because you couldn’t get tiny—short clothes. They didn’t make petites in those days. So I made all my clothes. The detective came to our apartment. He said, “Well, you could get it now if you pay twenty-five dollars or wait a month and go through the courts.” Because it turned up in a pawn shop. I had had this legal document saying the serial number, proving that it was mine. So we waited. We waited a month because we didn’t have twenty-five dollars for it. I remember how scary it was. I was on the stand like I had murdered somebody. They were really questioning certain details about the sales slip. I was a very shy kind of person, so it was really weird.

But anyway, that sewing machine—we got it back. That’s the one I sewed those big pieces on the Green Gallery [New York] floor [*Claes Oldenburg*, 1962]. Pulling in all that heavy canvas.

You know how the sewing machines are. They have this little space where the cloth can go through. It's completely insane. Those three pieces were made sitting on the floor [*Floor Burger*, *Floor Cake*, and *Floor Cone*]. A lot of the other pieces too.



Installation view, *Claes Oldenburg*, Green Gallery, New York, 1962. Photo: Rudolph Burckhardt

But then when we did vinyl—Claes got involved with vinyl—then we went out and got an industrial sewing machine that sews leather. It's a wonderful machine. It was very powerful. The canvas and vinyl just sailed right through. And we had help doing that as well at one point. Because he'd get inspired for a new idea a week before the show would open. Well it takes a while to sew. It's also tedious. It's tedious work. So I'd always mumble under my breath. (I'm giving you all the best lines from my book). He'd say, "Poopy, if we only had one more week," and I'd say, "One week for you, two for me," because [laughs] that's what I needed. But we managed to pull it off, I guess. Most of those pieces—they were all done in time of course.

Some of them—I saw them recently—they’ve been propped up and redone. The vinyl ones didn’t last as they should have. That makes me real sad to see them because they’re not as beautiful as they were. The telephone was my favorite piece [*Soft Pay-Telephone*, 1963]. That telephone and the typewriter [*Soft Typewriter*, 1963]. Those are some of the early pieces. Very complicated sewing and I did a great job and I just love them. The telephone I saw. It was shown in Mumok [Museum moderner Kunst, Stiftung Ludwig] in Vienna, Austria [*Claes Oldenburg: The Sixties*, 2012]. It wasn’t so—it was feeling tired.



Claes Oldenburg
Soft Pay-Telephone, 1963
Vinyl filled with kapok, mounted on painted wood panel
46 1/2 x 19 x 9 inches (118.2 x 48.3 x 22.8 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Gift, Ruth and Philip Zierler in memory of their dear
departed son, William S. Zierler, 1980

Q: So the colors are fading a little bit?

Mucha: Well, the fabric. Vinyl wasn’t made to last that long. Even on chairs. But the big pieces looked pretty good at MoMA when they—I guess they worked on them. I know they did. Painted them or something.

Q: In the early sixties, there were also all these galleries. They were mostly managed—their curators were women. Do you remember the relationship with the Reuben Gallery for example?

Mucha: The Reuben Gallery?

Q: Yes.

Mucha: Yes. That only existed, I think, for two years.

Q: Only for two years.

Mucha: Anita Rubin ran the gallery. She had all these fabulous people in it. Claes and Lucas and Bob [Whitman] and George Segal. Then she had her sister [Renée E. Rubin]. I think she started the gallery because her sister made paintings. Her sister's paintings look very much like [Martha] Marty Edelheit's paintings. You couldn't tell them apart. That was sort of the joke we had. You're probably going to have to edit that out.

She was very inventive to have done that. But then, I guess, people just took off and left. They did other things. They went to different galleries. [Jim] Jimmy Dine was in it. I was in a couple of Jimmy's performances. I enjoyed—well actually, the first performance was Claes's. That little thing. Then I was in Bob Whitman's, about four different Happenings of his. His were great. I loved his. We had one where he'd throw me up in the day. We rehearsed it thirteen different

times. He'd just pick me up and drop me [Robert Whitman, *Ball*, 1961]. He'd drop me because before that, there were all these tools and soap chips and hammers and saws and stuff. So sometimes I'd fall into this mess. He's interesting because he has that kind of scary element to his work.

Another time, I was on a swing that was chopped down. So then the swing fell and I would fall down too [Robert Whitman, *Small Cannon*, 1960]. But I never hurt myself. [Sarah] Sally Gross is a dancer, so she instructed me how to fall. She said, "Be limp, Patty. Be limp." Which is good advice, but you don't want to be limp when you're falling. You sort of tense up. But if you just relax, you don't hurt yourself. So that was successful.

Jimmy's too. Jimmy gave me a speaking role, which for me was completely nutty speech. It's in that Happenings book [Michael Kirby, *Happenings: An Illustrated Anthology*, 1965]. It didn't make any sense to me at all. Kind of subliminally sexual, but violent too. Because it was called *Car Crash* [1960]. He was the embodiment of the car. He was the car. So that was good because I had to rehearse it and learn it. I did it. I was up there on this ladder. That was a serious Happening, but people still laughed because they didn't know what to expect. The audiences in New York were great.

The audiences were fun. At the beginning *The Store* Happenings could only fit in about thirty people. Not many. Sixty tops. Then most of the people couldn't see because they were in three rooms in *The Store*. If you were in the third room and something was happening in the first

room, forget it. You didn't see it. That was part of it. I think Claes enjoyed that, tormenting the audience a tiny bit. They only paid a dollar to come in after all [laughs].

The audiences changed of course. Because first they were the artists' groups. They were hanging out. They wanted to know things that were going on. Then slowly the uptown people came. They'd hear about it. The collectors and stuff. I don't know if [Robert] Bob Scull ever came to one. Probably not. I'm trying to think. But yes, there were a lot of people who were there. Susan Sontag was there. I know that. She came with Marty Edelheit. The writers, the people. The photographers came. You've seen all those pictures. [Robert Walter] McElroy, yes. I don't know what you—you've interviewed a lot of people.

Q: A few, yes. So the community—you were talking about the audience. Would you go and see performances? Dance performances and art shows?

Mucha: Oh absolutely. The artists and the dancers were very closely connected, I think. I would like to say the writers too. Somewhere in my mind I think I saw Jack Kerouac, but I don't know if I did. Maybe it was just [Francis Russell] Frank O'Hara—getting them confused [laughs]. Because we used to go to Frank's. Frank had a party. Frank and I, I thought, had the same birth date, June 26. But then I read somewhere his was June 27. But later I read in one of my poetry books that in fact he wasn't born in June at all. He was born in March. But his parents being Catholic had June because I guess he was born out of wedlock or something. So crazy.

But I always had a great time with him because for some reason—well he was drinking too—but I could relate to him. He was a person who focused in on you and you were on a one-to-one level. It was very sweet. Because I was kind of in awe of some of those other people. They were a tiny bit older and they were all accomplished writers and stuff. But he wasn't like that. So he was very good. We had a connection with him. And of course John Cage. We would hear all of his concerts.

Of course all the dancers, they would be performing in lofts. Oldenburg would often say, "Oh, Poopy, we're going out." It's seven o'clock. I wouldn't know where we were going. Then we'd go and see Yvonne Rainer or someone throwing mattresses against something [laughs]. The way they danced was [laughs] questionable in my world, but I enjoyed it because they were so mad. They all became friends. We became very close with the dancers I think. The dancers were very much a part of Bob's world. Deborah Hay and Lucinda Childs. Yes and—I'm having a senior moment here. The famous composer. Oh help.

Q: John Cage?

Mucha: No, the other one.

Q: [David E.] Tudor?

Mucha: No, the other one [laughs]. Oh I'll think of it eventually. He's very famous. Anyway.

And then, of course, also, there was Barbara Dilley [Lloyd] who was married to somebody. She was married to [Lewis] Lew Lloyd, I guess his name was at the time. Then she became a big Buddhist. She was in charge of the [Chögyam Trungpa] Rinpoche thing in Colorado in her later years [Naropa University, Boulder]. So that's interesting.

I studied ballet in classes that Aileen Passloff taught for a year. Maybe not a year. Six months. Barbara was in that class with—shit. See? I'm eighty years old and the names leave you. Well Aileen was an important dancer but she was kind of square. She was ballet-trained, so her dances were not as inventive as some of the other people's. But Claes did costumes for one of her performances. So I studied with her because for some reason, I guess after the performances, I was dancing a lot. I thought, "Oh, I should do this." It was very hard but it was interesting also.

Q: Yvonne Rainer probably was taking classes with her at the same time, no?

Mucha: I don't think she was in that class. No. But I know Barbara was. I remember one moment where it was just like a scene in a movie, where we had to move across the stage or the room in a diagonal and do a certain thing. I clumsily did it because she was nice to me. Barbara was one of her top students, and Barbara did it and she said, "Do it again." Barbara did it again. "Do it again." She was really tough. Then Barbara just started to cry and she made her do it again. It was really great! It was that kind of training people do maybe for the ballet, but not in the Happening world. In the Happening world you just sort of do what you do.

Olga was fabulous. Did you—oh, you couldn't interview her. She's a space cadet for—I'm the only one that knows that she is truly a space cadet from day one. But I love her so much. But she's very—

Q: Tell me more.

Mucha: Very talented woman. Very. She could sing so beautifully. She would dance. People would just watch her. She could draw—now she's almost blind. She's almost totally blind. But she and I, we were roommates for a year and half when I first came to New York. One time we were in Brooklyn at the—we went to the Brooklyn [Prospect Park] Zoo I think or something. We ran out of money. We couldn't get back on the subway. Subways were fifteen cents at the time. We didn't have fifteen cents! So we set up our little—we had drawing pads. So we were drawing people for ten cents! We were trying to sell these portraits of people for ten cents so we could get home to Manhattan. But she could really get details in the likeness of the various people she was drawing.

To me Olga is somebody that somehow didn't resolve her amazing talent. I know people say that she's done all this and this and this, but I think she had far more than she even ever explored. She didn't have any courage. She didn't have faith in herself. Puerto Rican. It was the wrong time to be Latina in America. Now she would be a superstar. I mean a real superstar. But then, she had this background that was pulling her down in her own mind. Anyway that's Olga.

She was my witness at our wedding. I was hers actually. Claes and I were both hers. At Billy Klüver's, one of her weddings. She had three husbands, I guess. Yes.

Q: Olga had three husbands?

Mucha: Yes. When I first met her, she was just getting divorced from Peter Shortell who was this handsome Irish guy. Oh he was very handsome. They were only married six months. We lived in this apartment on Forty-ninth Street with the fire escapes. She'd be crawling up the fire escapes on the roof and he'd be coming down. They had a really violent, emotional relationship. He was her first husband. I think he still lives. I don't know. Or she recently had seen him in New York at one point. But yes. So that didn't last very long.

Then she had a whole period for several years before she met Billy. Billy fell in love with her in Washington, D.C. at our Happening [note: Claes Oldenburg, *Stars*, performed at the Pop Art Festival, 1963]. I don't know if anybody told you that, but that's when he saw her. She was Miss Washington. She came down the stairs wearing this big, buffoony dress made out of red plastic bags so it would look like a big— And she would do her little strip. She was so beautiful. Billy was sitting in the front row [laughs]. Completely opposite, totally insanely opposite people. Right brain, left brain [laughs].

But anyway, we're not talking about Rauschenberg. But Rauschenberg would come to those parties. Billy and Olga had these wonderful parties in New Jersey. Those were wonderful parties too. All the dancers were there and the art writers. The writers too.

Q: So you had a big wedding party?

Mucha: Oh no. We had no party at all. Well we had a wonderful—I can show you—I don't know where my wedding pictures are. I have them somewhere, but they're upstairs hidden away. I don't know where that album is. I do know, but I think it's too hard to find. No, there were only four of us. No. Four and five for the party afterward was Lisa [Turnure], [Richard E. "Dicky"] Dick Oldenburg's girlfriend at the time, who he then married.

Because I didn't want to have— His parents were in Boston. My parents were in Wisconsin. They never met each other. They wouldn't have worked out at all. I didn't care. We didn't have any money. Nancy Dine asked me, "What kind of party do you want to have?" To me, that was overwhelming. We just had no money. I found an old journal from that period and it's so nice that I realized—one of the pages said, "I suggested—" I said, "Why don't we just elope?" And Claes was so relieved when I said that. So what we did was, we went to Staten Island and we got married there. Five cents for the ferry boat across and back. Then afterwards his parents paid for a nice meal in a Swedish restaurant in New York City. Then we went to Dicky Oldenburg's apartment with Lisa. There were five of us then. We all got completely drunk and danced and sat in each other's laps and whatever. Came home [laughs]. It was a nice party. The photos are good. It shows how the night disintegrated [laughs].

But we lived together for a year before that. We just went home to Charlie. Charlie was there then at the time.

Q: In what part of the city were you living? Were you already in SoHo?

Mucha: Fourth Street between C and D. Five-floor walkup in a tenement house. It's a scary neighborhood. Then when we had money, when we lived on Fourteenth Street, the loft, Claes was still using— Well I guess it must have been the water Happening [*Washes*] at Al Roon's Health Club [New York, 1965]. We needed some props, so Claes knew of a store that was in that area and asked me to go back and see if I could get some stuff. Truthfully I was a little bit frightened to go back into my own neighborhood [laughs].

But at the time, it's your apartment—it's your neighborhood. It was a nice building. It was an interesting building. [Richard O.] Dick Tyler was the super. He was the friend that Claes knew from Chicago. He's a woodcarver and he lived with his wife who was also an artist. They worked with children in the area. But he was a madman also. He was really a madman. When he would start drinking that cheap wine at night he kind of scared me. I never wanted to be around him alone when he— And he had his studio in the basement of that building with newspaper clippings on the wall and stuff. One of them was this cannibal that came from Wisconsin that I had heard of in Wisconsin. He was a well-known man who had captured people and ate them. It was just like Auschwitz. He made things out of their skin.

So he had this picture of [Edward Theodore] Ed Gein—that was his name—on the wall down in the basement of our building [laughs]. So kind of spooky. Anyway.

Q: You moved out of there—

Mucha: Claes and Tyler had a great time together. They always liked each other and they would sometimes roll and fight at parties and stuff, but he wasn't afraid of him. Maybe. I don't know. I'm just babbling on and getting into nothing that has anything to do with Rauschenberg.

Q: What was the first time you saw his work, Rauschenberg's art?

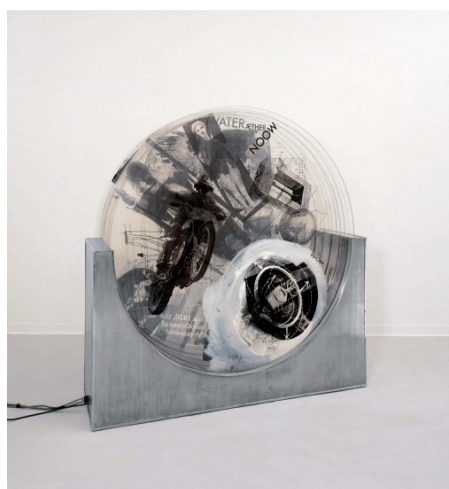
Mucha: His artwork? Good lord. I don't remember. It must have been the Combines, right? I don't remember the first ones. I'll remember certain ones that were strong to me. When I visited him in Florida, he was working on *Tracks* [1976]. He was making the things. There was a time when he was making these silk things that he was going around the world trying to—I don't know—be a world diplomat for peace or something. Did beautiful silk things [*Jammers*, 1975–76]. And the Plexiglas—the ones that turned [*Revolvers*, 1967]. Of course the Combines [1954–64] are beautiful. The goat [*Monogram*, 1955–59]. We saw that in Stockholm [Moderna Museet], I guess.



Robert Rauschenberg
Realm (Tracks), 1976
Cast dirt with resin binder, fiberglass and wet soil patina
36 3/4 x 30 1/4 inches (93.3 x 76.8 cm)
From an edition of 18, produced by Pyramid Arts, Ltd.,
Tampa



Robert Rauschenberg
Snowpool (Jammer), 1976
Sewn fabric and cloth-covered rattan pole
73 x 90 x 1 1/2 inches (185.4 x 228.6 x 3.8 cm)
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation



Robert Rauschenberg
Revolver VI, 1967
Silkscreen ink on five rotating Plexiglas discs in metal
base, with electric motors and control box
78 x 77 x 24 1/2 inches (198.1 x 195.6 x 62.2 cm)
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation



Robert Rauschenberg
Monogram, 1955-59
Combine: oil, paper, fabric, printed paper, printed
reproductions, metal, wood, rubber shoe heel, and
tennis ball on canvas with oil and rubber tire on
Angora goat on wood platform mounted on four
casters
42 x 63 1/4 x 64 1/2 inches (106.7 x 160.7 x 163.8
cm)
Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Purchase 1965 with
contribution from Moderna Museets Vänner/The
Friends of Moderna Museet

When artists made things in their studio— We went to certain people's studios, but not much. We would go to the openings after the work was on the walls. Claes did that intentionally so that he really wouldn't get involved with other people's visions or images while he was making art. He kept himself kind of isolated there. I was with him and so I was in a way isolated too.

I see Bob more as a social guy. Of course, there's art. I loved his art and all that. But I think the closeness that I had with him was because of the social events.

Marion—did you interview Marion Javits? You know who she is?

Q: No.

Mucha: She's the widow of Senator Jacob [K.] Javits. I saw Marion at the—they had the two memorials for Bob. One was at MoMA and one was at the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York]. She was at the MoMA one. They had all these beautiful slides. Marion really loved Bob. I think they must have bought some of his work obviously. They're very wealthy people. But she was kind of a wonderful character, too. She was a very inventive kind of a freethinking wife of a senator. So she hung around the art world. She loved Bob. Maybe she'd have some wonderful tales to tell you if she's— She was alive two years ago. She was a beautiful woman in those days.

Because he was gay, so that put a damper on certain people's love for him. There was no—

Q: In what way?

Mucha: Well, there were people who perhaps would've liked to have been with him. That couldn't have happened. Not for me because I'm totally straight and I had no problem with that. I loved him as a friend only. But certain people I think still wanted—and besides he has a son and had a wife.

Of course you must have talked with Dorothea Rockburne.

Q: Yes. I'm sure that they have.

Mucha: Did you have her interviewed? Yes. She worked with Bob. I was surprised to see that she was also an artist. I never knew she was an artist until I saw her in Paris—Ileana [Sonnabend] had this big show of Dorothea's and that was an eye-opener for me [*Oil Drawings / Group*, Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, Paris, 1971].

Of course when we were in Biennale in Venice in 1964 when Bob made the first—

Q: Oh, so you were there.

Mucha: He won the prize, the first prize [International Grand Prize in Painting].

Q: That was a good coincidence because it was also when the Merce Cunningham Company—

Mucha: That group was there.

Q: —tour was there.

Mucha: Yes.

Q: So Deborah Hay, Alex Hay were part of the company.

Mucha: That's right. They were at Fenice or whatever it's called. The Fenice theater. What's it called? I don't have it right.

Q: [Teatro] La Fenice.

Mucha: Yes. They did a dance performance there. I guess the Italians were very upset that Rauschenberg won the top prize. I don't think they liked [laughs] his work at the time. We'd hear little snippets on the *vaporettos* going through, "Who is this Bob Rauschenberg?"

Q: You were in Venice at that time with Claes?

Mucha: Yes. Italy is my first foreign country when we went. We took a cruise to get to Venice. It took—I want to say fifteen days. I may be wrong. But it took a long time. We made all these various stops, which was fabulous, on the [MS] *Vulcania*. It was a little ship that was going to be

dry-docked after that. Some of the cabins were already closed up. But it was an elegant ship and we were first class. We went first class because we got the tickets so late, that was the only thing—well that was Claes. He said we couldn't get in a cabin because those were all sold already.

But it was fabulous. We had a wonderful time. We stopped in Naples. We stopped in Palermo. We stopped in Dubrovnik [Croatia]. We stopped and let people off at Greece. In Patras, they got on their own little ships. We ended up in Venice. Sort of turned around and there we were. So we were there for two months.

Then we went to France, Paris, for two months. It's hard to believe we were there two months. I can't believe we were in Venice for two— I'll tell you why. Because then we went up to Milan because Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo had bought a lot of Claes's work and one of them needed to be repaired. So we went up there and we went to Palermo and then we traveled around. We saw Giotto's [Giotto di Bondone] and Rome. It was fabulous. It's a beautiful country.

Q: And so you ended up being there when Robert Rauschenberg won—

Mucha: Sure. We went especially for the opening. [Note: Oldenburg was included in the U.S. exhibition *Four Younger Painters* at the Venice Biennale, 1964.] Yes. Oh, it was very exciting. But I can't tell you any details at all about it. I'm sorry. I know [Arnold] Arne Glimcher was there with [Frederic] Freddy Mueller, his associate at the time. Sidney Janis, of course. Sidney's a great dancer.

[INTERRUPTION]

Mucha: We drank so much in those days. I'm an alcoholic so I don't drink anymore. I haven't for many years. But in those days, there was a lot of heavy drinking. So if I can't remember things, I'm sure that's one of the reasons [laughs]. I'm sorry about it. We'll just have to add—

Q: We all have reason to not remember things.

Mucha: No, but that's hard. Certain things are very clear in my mind. Other things aren't of course. When [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy was killed, that's very clear. You have these things that are clear in your mind.

So then after Italy, then Claes had a show at Ileana's at the wonderful—her gallery there [*Claes Oldenburg*, Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, Paris, 1964]. She was married to Michael [Sonnabend] at the time. I loved Michael [laughs]. I think he was great. Did you know Michael? No, you're too young. You wouldn't have known him.

He was a teeny, teeny man. She was this—I thought she was gigantic but she wasn't that big, but by comparison. I can't speak any languages at all. I would sort of babble and try to figure out certain words in French, but his French, I know, had a strong American accent. However, people said that he had impeccable grammar. He really knew the language and he loved France and he loved Paris. So he was always talking it up. He was a sweet man. Yes. Very good.

Claes had a great show there. It was pastry things, but very delicately painted. Very Parisian. No shiny enamel, just very soft. What else? We went over the—

Q: So we are in the mid-sixties and then—

Mucha: That was '64. 1964, yes.

Q: Yes.

Mucha: Now, when they did 9 Evenings[: Theatre & Engineering], that was 1967.

Q: '66, yes.

Mucha: Oh, was it '66? We were in Sweden. So we didn't experience any of that. That year, we were in Sweden for two months and then we were in London for two months. That part of the world. By the time we got back, it was finished. I've only seen some of Julie's videos of that and had heard about it. I would love to have seen Frank Stella, the one with the tennis racquets—

Q: Yes, Bob Rauschenberg.

Mucha: That was Bob Rauschenberg—well, what a brilliant one that was.

Q: Yes. *Open Score* [1966]. Yes.



Mimi Kanarek and Frank Stella on the tennis court in Rauschenberg's *Open Score*, 9 Evenings: Theatre & Engineering, 69th Regiment Armory, New York, October 1966. Still from *9 Evenings: Theatre & Engineering* (1966). 16 mm, black and white, 25 minutes. Produced by Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), New York

Mucha: Yes. See, those guys were very clever, weren't they? Very intellectual. Their art was very intellectual. I liked that.

Claes's work was more simple-minded, I think. Not simple-minded, but— It was pretty. I thought his visuals were so beautiful. The sets were so beautiful. Even with the crap he put around, it was always very beautiful to look at, which made those great photographs. McElroy didn't have to work at—because all the stuff was already there.

In 1969, after Claes and I were separated, I met this young man in an artists' bar named Richard Meyers. Now he's Richard Hell. He's a famous punker or he started punk. So Richie and I had a great relationship for a couple years. He lived with me. We're still friends. I haven't seen him though for—I haven't talked to him for a couple months now. It bothers me. But anyway, I

always see him when I go to New York. He'd come up with all his girlfriends. Now he's got a wonderful wife and so now he's been with her for a while.

So that was that period. Then what happened? Oh, then Clarice [Price] Rivers and I were real good friends. So when she lived uptown—she moved away from our building because they lived above us on Fourteenth Street. We were real pals. She and Niki de Saint Phalle were very close. Niki was doing a movie in France, so Clarice said, “Oh, we need you Patty. So come on over.” I think at that time, Claes just paid my way. I went to France. Why not?

I was in a movie with Niki and Clarice and Jean Tinguely and Rico [Weber], this man who helped him. Clarice's boyfriend at the time was Prince Rainer von Dietz of Hessen [laughs]. He'd set up this camera. He didn't move it around or anything. He just raised two movie cameras on tripods. But the set was very cute. It was Niki's idea. I thought her art was childlike. She made this little mountain out of papier-mâché. It was supposed to be this island of women getting attacked by these men. So we wore funny costumes. I have a photograph. I'll show you later. We wore wonderful garb: fake wigs and cheap jewelry and breasts are loose and whatever. The men wore army helmets. Jean would make all these guns. It's completely silly. I don't think the movie ever happened, which is too bad because some of the stills were wonderful.

Q: You've never seen the footage?

Mucha: No. I never have. I don't even know what happened. I should find out from—Clarice might know. [Note: Mucha participated in this project in 1971; this may be related to the film

Daddy, 1973, directed by Niki de Saint Phalle and Peter Whitehead, which included Clarice Rivers, credited as Clarice Mary, and Rainer von Dietz, credited as Rainer Diez, in its cast.] She might be somebody you want—I don't know if she knew Bob that well, but I think she did. Yes. But she was a wonderful lady. I loved Clarice. She was just a super beautiful and crazy lady.



Patty Mucha and Niki de Saint Phalle in an unidentified film by Saint Phalle, ca. 1971. Image courtesy of Patty Mucha

So then I was in France for about six months. I stayed. I said, “Why not?” So I found myself on Rue Saint-Denis in the heart of the whore district. This American enclave had rented this place. It was called a convent. In the whore district [laughs]. So I lived with these people and never learned French. Hello. That's how it was. Some of the people in the room really did speak French well. So I just hung out.

I met Harry. Then I sort of had an affair with Harry Mathews, this ex-husband of Niki's. Anyway. Blah, blah, blah. But it was a nice event. Then at that point—do you want to know all this bullshit? Because it's bullshit. But it is—you wanted to know—I'll try to get to where I am.

I'm just going real fast. So I had a few affairs with other men. Yes, some artists. Alan Shields, the guy who made things out of strings and stuff. He had a show at Ileana's.

Then I came back to America because I thought I was in love with Kenward Elmslie. I have a picture of him. He's a wonderful poet friend of mine. He now has Alzheimer's, off the wall, which is very, very sad. Brilliant, brilliant man. He and I were real good friends at that point, I guess I'm not sure if that was that summer. Well, anyway. The spring of '72, Jon Hendricks called me up and said he wanted to know if I wanted to work with John [Winston Ono Lennon] and Yoko [Ono] in terms of calling— John Lennon was having trouble legally to come into the country. Wanted a green card or something and he wasn't getting it. They had this whole trumped-up thing about cannabis in Europe.

So it was a big deal. Richie Hell and I were still friends. So Richie and I both worked at Apple [Records] on Madison Avenue, calling up very famous people around the country, asking them if they'd support John and Yoko. Which was fun. It was just complete—the nuttiest stuff. Richie was calling the college professors and presidents, and I was calling famous people like Shelley Winters. Movie stars. I'll think of them in a few minutes. The dancer, you know. [Laughs] The famous dancer Fred Astaire. And writers such as Jerzy Kosiński.

Anyway, there were famous people. Then at one point Jerry Rubin called up Yoko there. I met Jerry Rubin a few times. He's this Yippie [Youth International Party]. He wanted to know if I wanted to work with the Yippies. So then I went down that summer and worked with the Yippies in July and August while—both political conventions were going to happen in Miami Beach,

Democratic and Republican. That was a very wonderful experience, quite frankly, for me. I was politically not very astute. Most of the people were much younger than me and far more active in terms of whatever. But I was useful because I knew people—sort of. I had this big office [laughs] and I had this big desk and stuff. It was fun. It was a great experience.

I met Jay Craven in Miami, who I then lived with for a few years, later in Vermont. Another young guy. I always picked up these young guys. He was very handsome. He's very important now in Vermont. He makes lots of films and movies and stuff. So Jay and I were a couple. I became pregnant.

Q: So the decision to leave New York came around the early seventies? When did you leave New York?

Mucha: Oh, when I came here?

Q: Yes.

Mucha: I came here in '74. Well after Oldenburg went off with Hannah [Wilke]—bye, bye—I flipped out. At one point I thought, “Oh, I can't have a baby in New York. You can't have babies in New York.” Kenward, my friend the poet, had land in Vermont. So we went over to Kenward's—well, no. Then I had a miscarriage. So I thought, “Well, consolation prize. I'll still go to Vermont and buy a house.” So we went to Kenward's house in Calais, not far from Montpelier. Stayed with him for a few weeks and went around and looked at realtors. That's how

I came here. And so we moved in May Day 1975. He's still here. He makes these films. He's getting better [laughs]. Because we're all such film buffs. We grew up with film. I wish he'd be better. But, anyway, he's quite well-known in Vermont now.

He started this organization called Catamount Arts, which is where I worked later, years later, up here. I worked for about eleven years in the gallery and stuff. Running the gallery and bus trips, stuff like that. Local artists, yes. Some of the stuff is local. Some isn't. Some is mine.

Q: So you were the curator for this center?

Mucha: Yes. I ran the gallery. Well, I loved museums. Up here, there's nothing. So I thought, well. We had this great scene where we'd have three bus trips a year. We'd go to Boston, MFA [Museum of Fine Arts]. We'd go to Montreal. Sometimes we'd go to Connecticut. We did do a New York three-day event a month after 9/11 [September 11, 2001]. It was already scheduled in. So that was a very beautiful trip actually. But it's local stuff after a while.

Then I worked for a boozier guy. We made vodka [laughs] out of maple syrup. Yes. We have a lot of fancy beer people in Vermont mainly. Breweries now. Whatever they call them.

Q: So it seems that in the mid-seventies, many people that were part of the community left the city: Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton—

Mucha: Of course and they live up here. That's why I came up here too because I would visit Kenward down here and Mad Brook Farm [East Charleston, Vermont] up there. In fact I bought a lot of my veggies from the Mad Brook Farm. Yes. David [Bradshaw] and Deborah were a couple at that time. They lived up here. Steve still lives up here. Did you talk to him up here?

Q: No, he hasn't been available for this project.

Mucha: Oh. He won't be? He doesn't want to be?

Q: He said no.

Mucha: Oh no. That's too bad. Yes. Because he's—well the thing about Bob and Steve—
Despite the fact that he was so well-known and a wealthy, successful artist, I think he lived like a monk. His own personal life was very simple. His loft was very simple. He wore his little jeans. He cooked. He was a great chef. He did stuff. Steve is like that too. Steve lives up here. He's got a big garden. He's canning and doing all that shit, which I wouldn't do anymore. But you do it when you move up here. So he also lived very simply. Yes. I did see him dance recently. Not recently. Maybe ten years ago. I was overwhelmed by how incredibly he still danced.

Q: Yes. I saw him performing two years ago. He was amazing.

Mucha: Yes. I'm sorry. I'd love to read that. Why doesn't he want to do it? Oh well. Doesn't matter. It's personal with him, I'm sure. I don't know. Did we talk about enough? Probably not.

Q: So once everybody left, you were still in contact with Bob Rauschenberg.

Mucha: In New York? Well I was more—yes. Well we should talk about Andy [Warhol]. I was close to Andy too. I saw Andy more when I came to New York—when I left here—1975, going back to New York, well, then, I did see Bob after I moved here because that's when I was in Mexico and I stopped off at Captiva. So that particular time was so—

But my world changed. I was with this guy. Jay was very political. And boy, when I moved up here, my world changed. Look. This is what you do. I'm very much out of the loop. I was very much out of the loop. Well we'd come to New York. Now, I would come more frequently in a sense. I would go maybe once or twice a year. But before that, I didn't.

I did see his show at the Met when they had that Combine show a couple years ago [*Robert Rauschenberg: Combines, 2005–06*]. But did I see him? No. I think he was dead by then. I don't remember. I never saw him once he got ill.

Q: After the stroke, yes.

Mucha: Yes. I remember, yes. I'm so sorry they're all dead. So many of the people are dead.

Q: Were you in contact? Would you write letters? Would you talk on the phone?

Mucha: Well, I think in my archives, I don't know if there was a letter from him in it. There was one or two. I have the archives at NYU [New York University] and I saved a lot of letters. But I didn't respond a lot. So a lot of these letters are just the ones that came to me. But they're still part there so that's good.

Yes. I should've seen him more, but I didn't. I was doing other things. I became a Sufi. I was into occult. You name it, I did it [laughs]. I'm still doing it. I'm still going on in two different worlds. So I wonder when was the last time I saw him. I couldn't tell you that. I would not be able to know that. When did he die? Do you remember the year?

Q: 2009? 2005?

Mucha: 2005? [Note: Rauschenberg died in 2008]

Q: But all during the eighties and nineties, it was—

Mucha: Right. Oh Julie, where are you? Help me [laughs]. You know what Billy said about her? She's got a mind like a steel trap. She remembers everything.

Q: Yes. She has an incredible memory.

Mucha: Yes, she's great. Oh gosh.

Q: But do you have a thought about how—?

Mucha: I have a print that he gave me but now it's all hidden away. It would be hard for me to bring it out. He gave it to me and it's signed "To Patty with love, Bob." It's a nice one. It has to do with a phrase that—let me see if I can think of it. Words that either John Cage woke up saying or one of those guys. "They did not understand the technology and then, very soon, they almost wrecked the planet," or something, are the words. The words are scrawled across it. It's beautiful. Yes. I think it was John Cage but I'm not sure. It was one of his friends. [Note: Referring to *Dream of William Burroughs*, 1972, with Burroughs's quote, "They did not fully understand the technique. In a very short time they nearly wrecked the planet."]



Robert Rauschenberg
Dream of William Burroughs, 1972
 Offset lithograph
 34 1/2 x 24 inches (87.6 x 61 cm)
 From an edition of 150 co-published by Automation House
 and Experiments in Art and Technology, produced by Local
 One, Amalgamated Lithographers of America, New York

Well, I'm sorry they're all gone. Jasper's still alive. Have you talked to Jasper? No. He won't talk either [laughs]. Those guys! I love Jasper. Oh god.

I had a party at my—when I got divorced, I had that loft and I would have these amazing—can you believe this? In those days you'd call up somebody and say, “Where's the party tonight?” And they'd tell you. Then you'd go to this strange loft and see a lot of strange people. Most of the people had just crashed. They'd have bartenders with booze and stuff. I had those kind of parties too. I know Bob and Jasper were at one of my parties [laughs]. Bob would always say nasty things to Jasper. He'd walk behind him and sort of whisper something to him [laughs]. They still had this love thing, which was sort of cute. I loved it. I don't know why they couldn't have been friends. But I liked them both.

I saw Jasper only with Clarice in that scene with Cage. Jasper knew all about mushrooms. They both knew about food. It's interesting. Southern poor kids. They came out like poor white trash. And they made it. [Laughs] I love it. Because they both came from very simple backgrounds although Jasper, I think, pretends that he didn't. But I think Jill Johnston was a friend of mine too, later on. She's talked about it. She had a hard time with his book. Do you know that book?
[Jill Johnston, *Jasper Johns: Privileged Information*, 1996]

Q: Yes, I know the book. Yes.

Mucha: With the wonderful cover.

Q: It's a wonderful book, yes.

Mucha: Yes, it is a wonderful book.

Q: She's a great writer.

Mucha: Great writer. Yes. She had all those facts. Anyway. Right.

Q: So do you feel that Bob influenced you in some way? Not just in your work but in your life?

Mucha: Did Bob what?

Q: Influence or have an impact in your way of thinking?

Mucha: Well, I think so. I think of his freedom. I just felt that he was really free. When I knew him, I was so involved with Claes. Claes and I didn't separate. For the first seven years we were totally together. Not a moment were we gone from each other. So that was my world. Then when things started falling apart, then I got to know Bob more because Claes simply didn't go to those events, his parties that he had. I had the freedom to go. I didn't give a shit. It was fun to be there.

So yes, I think so. I know that we really liked each other. That's all I know. I don't know if that means influence. It could be. It's hard to know.

Q: Well, the idea of—yes, his freedom being inspiring I think is—

Mucha: Yes. Well, he was so talented. I like reading about certain interviews that I've read about him too, how he didn't know that you could make paintings or something. He went to the museum on the West Coast or something when he first saw his first paintings. He was surprised that people could have paintings in museums or something. Isn't that wonderful? And I knew about art when I was six. I was making art when I was six, going to art classes at the Milwaukee Art Institute and stuff. So to me that's very interesting. I'm trying to think. We saw abstract—I remember seeing a Franz Kline in Milwaukee. They had a show. That blew me away, those black-and-white paintings of Franz Kline. Really blew me away. I'm not sure if [Jackson] Pollock was as strong to me, but that was that.

Now Bob and Jasper, they were kind of in between Abstract Expressionism and Pop. So that was how I saw them, as these conduits between those two groups. Or maybe that's how art historians said they were. I don't know. I never read art history. I couldn't read it. It's hard to read [laughs].

Q: Should we take a break?

Mucha: Yes, should we take a break? Let's have some water.

[END OF INTERVIEW]