

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Deborah Hay

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Columbia University

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## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview Deborah Hay conducted by Alessandra Nicifero July 29, 2014, in East Charleston, Vermont. 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.

Session #1 [audio]

Interviewee: Deborah Hay

Location: East Charleston, Vermont

Interviewer: Alessandra Nicifero

Date: July 29, 2014

Q: Hello, my name is Alessandra Nicifero and I'm here with Deborah Hay on July 29, 2014, to talk about your work, your life, and your relationship with Robert Rauschenberg. I will start by asking the very first question, if you can tell me a little bit about your childhood, where you were born, and I know your mother was a special person to introduce you to the dance world.

Hay: Right, I was born in Brooklyn and I was there for the first nineteen years of my life, in the same apartment with my mother and father. My mother was my first dance teacher. She saw to it that my training advanced through her association with other men and women who she felt were more accomplished than she was, as my training took me further into the field.

Q: She was a teacher? She had a studio?

Hay: She rented a space a few blocks from where I grew up and then she taught in the basement of a yeshiva that was maybe seven blocks from where we lived. She was a wonderful teacher. She had many students who she was devoted to.

Q: What kind of dance classes?

Hay: She taught tap. She taught ballet. She taught musical song and dance, Broadway kind of stuff, yes.

Q: Did you go to Manhattan often to see cultural events?

Hay: My mother would take me, my brother and I, to—we grew up on [George] Balanchine, New York City Ballet. That is what it was called at the time, at the [New York] City Center. Yes, we grew up on Balanchine and Radio City Music Hall. She took us to Radio City to see it because she was in the—she danced in the Roxy Theatre, which preceeded Radio City Music Hall. She performed. She was a member of the ballet corps.

My brother says that there are stories of her dancing with Fred and Adele Astaire—she was apparently in the show *Lady, Be Good* [1924] on Broadway, but she—when she met my father she stopped professionally. I think I was sort of the one to carry on the tradition. So she groomed me for dance at a very young age.

Q: You moved when you were nineteen to New York and what was the scene there?

Hay: Well, I met Alex Hay teaching at the Police Athletic League in Brooklyn. He's eleven or twelve years older than I was, but he was so radically different from any male I had ever encountered, pretty much, before in my middle-class Jewish upbringing, that I was dazzled and married him fairly soon after we met, maybe about—I don't even know, not more than a year.

We got married in 1961. We got married so that I could spend the night with him because at that time that's what happened. So I married him so that I could spend the night with him.

We had an apartment on Sixth Street between First Avenue and Avenue A, 314 East Sixth Street. I was already working with Merce [Cunningham] and doing classes with Merce and became aware pretty quickly of the classes that Robert and Judith [Goldsmith] Dunn were teaching, starting off in Merce's studio. So I went to those choreography workshops and Alex soon joined me. There were a number of artists who were there—and that's how that all began.

Q: Did you meet Robert Rauschenberg during the workshop or was it still too early? He was working as a set designer.

Hay: A set designer for Merce and he soon got involved. I don't know what the dates are, I can't tell you. I have no idea, but he was around the studio a lot. He just became a very good friend very quickly. Alex and myself hung around him a lot. He was sort of the opposite of everything I was, still am, and Alex was, as Bob was very loquacious and a wonderful speaker and kind of an entertainer, flamboyant and generous beyond—he just—invited us into his life.

This summer, this January when I was at the [Robert] Rauschenberg Foundation doing the artist Residency [Captiva, Florida], I remembered his voice. I don't have a very good memory and I don't have a very romantic idea of my past, but I had such a strong memory of his voice on—when he would hear my voice on the telephone, he would feel—he would be, “Debbie!” That's what he would call me. It was the happiness at hearing my voice. It was such a—I don't think

anybody since has ever greeted me [like that]. I'm like you. I hate the telephone, but when I would speak to him I would feel the immediacy of his love and care. It was just—and the laughter and “come on over!”

Q: Everybody talks about his laughter.

Hay: Yes, it was just—he had no boundary to his generosity, thoughtfulness, and feeding. I don't even remember cooking very much. I did a little bit as Alex's wife, but mostly we were over at Bob's and we were fed and we were—it was just beautiful. I just can't—I've never had a friend like that before who spilled out care and love and the other fabulous thing about him—other than playing in one another's work—was I would go out dancing with Bob and Steve [Paxton] and Alex Hay, the four of us. If there was a party, we were the last ones to leave.

We would go out dancing together. We would close down every club. We would. It was so fantastic. I would dance with Bob. I would dance with Steve. I might have a dance or two with Alex. He was the least important in there, but mainly those two and particularly Bob. It was just so—doing dipping and the whole thing. It was so beautiful.

Q: I saw last week a film by Gene Friedman [*Three Dances*, 1964]. It's divided in three parts. There is *Public* and then *Party* and *Private*. *Party* has you, Robert Rauschenberg and Alex Hay, Judith Dunn, and Steve Paxton dancing. It's a beautiful movie, very well-crafted.

Hay: I've never seen it.

Q: The juxtaposition of images in black-and-white and there is the feeling of you guys having fun and being very, very close.

Hay: Yes.

Q: So '64 was also the year when the world tour of the Merce Cunningham [Dance] Company happened. There are many interesting parentheses while being in Venice [Italy]. Do you have any memory of Venice and the prize?

Hay: Yes, I just remember partying. We partied. I saw [Patricia] Patty Oldenburg [Mucha, née Muschinski] last weekend and she was saying that too. It was like we partied constantly. We were always—it was so beautiful, it was playful, dancing. It was just that time.



Deborah Hay and Rauschenberg dancing, ca. November 1967. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

I can remember having dinner in an outdoor restaurant in Venice under a trellis of flowers and that's one memory, and my one other memory is sitting on the Lido with Richard Bellamy, who was a gallery dealer. He had a really, an important—I can't remember the name of the gallery. It might have been the Green Gallery [New York].

He was a very, very important figure in the art world as a gallery dealer, young, not at all scripted, like other gallery dealers. He was an intellectual. I remember sitting on a beach chair with him early in the morning on the Lido, maybe watching the sunrise or something like that. That's my one memory of Venice other than that dinner, but that tour was a gorgeous experience.

Bob needed an assistant and so he invited Alex because we were so close and so it was convenient for me to go along as an understudy because of Alex and I think that happened because of Bob. I think Bob put the money up for me to be able to be there. But then as it turned out someone left the company very early, in London where we started. Shareen Blair [Bryson]. So I got to actually perform in two of the pieces. I can't remember how many pieces were in the repertory, but I got to perform in two of them.

Q: I was reading this article about the company being in Germany, in Cologne, for about a month and Bob was able to be for a week incognito in the city without having people knowing he was there. I wonder besides the rehearsals what else was happening in Cologne. I believe Merce and John [Cage] and Bob met with you all Kurt Jooss and then he invited the whole company to perform, to Essen [Germany].

Hay: Right, we saw the “Green Door” [*The Green Table*, 1932, ballet choreographed by Kurt Jooss], I think in Essen. I remember that, but hardly, yes.

Q: What about Japan? There are some photos and I found this program of the Modern Dance Workshop [Tokyo, November 20, 1964]. This was not part of the Merce Cunningham company performing. Bob apparently had organized it. There is Rauschenberg’s *Tango* [1964] that I believe was a duet with you and you had created *Contract*. What seems interesting is that all of the avant-garde artists from Japan, like [Tatsumi] Hijikata, were performing. Do you have any memory of seeing them?

Hay: I don’t remember seeing them at all. I don’t remember this at all. Oh, well, [Takehisa] Kosugi was a composer. I know that.

Okay, so this was the piece that Bob did in Stockholm at the Moderna Museet [*Elgin Tie*, 1964] and I don’t—this was a piece of Steve’s that I was in [Paxton, *title lost Tokyo*, 1964].



Rauschenberg performing *Elgin Tie* (1964), Five New York Evenings, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, September 1964. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Stig T. Karlsson



Steve Paxton and Deborah Hay performing Paxton's *lost Tokyo* (1964), Sogetsu Art Center, Tokyo, November 1964. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

Q: Also *Contract*, I believe.

Hay: I did this. I think it might have been just a duet with Steve that I was in. I'm sitting at a table with a speaker on my head or something like that. I don't remember much about it. Bob, I don't remember. Alex's piece was something that he had done before, *Prairie* [1963; for Modern Dance Workshop program, titled *Prairie=For*].

I don't know what this was. I think it was a quartet, I mean, here it is a quartet. [Note: referring to photograph of Alex Hay's *Colorado Plateau*, 1964]



Lucinda Childs, Rauschenberg, Alex Hay, and Deborah Hay performing Alex Hay's *Colorado Plateau* (1964), Surplus Dance Theater's sur+ series, Stage 73, New York, 1964. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Hans Namuth

Q: So this seems to be a rehearsal at Bob's studio of *Spring Training* [1965].



Trisha Brown, Rauschenberg, and Deborah Hay rehearsing Rauschenberg's *Spring Training* (1965) in his Broadway studio, New York, 1965. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Ugo Mulas

Hay: Yes, you see I have no idea of the names and the names of the pieces. This was a watermelon that I was stroking, revealing, and covering with a cloth.

Q: But he is not filming? He was taking photos?

Hay: Yes, he is using a slide projector to project the image onto the screen worn above my head here, yes.

Q: What other photos do we have here?

Hay: Oh yes, that's a piece of Steve's. This was from Japan, yes. [Note: referring to Steve Paxton's *title lost Tokyo*]

Q: Here, this is an untitled performance, unidentified performance.

Hay: Yes, it actually has a name. It's a duet of mine. I think it's called *All Day Dance with Two* [1964], and me and Steve.



Deborah Hay and Steve Paxton performing Hay's *All Day Dance with Two* (1964), Surplus Dance Theater, possibly sur+ concert, Stage 73, New York, 1964. Also pictured (chorus): Tony Holder?, Yvonne Rainer, Tom Gormley?, Judith Dunn, Alex Hay, Rauschenberg, and Lucinda Childs. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Hans Namuth

Q: Are they singing?

Hay: They are doing some kind of—yes. That's Yvonne [Rainer], Tom Gormley, Judith Dunn, and there's a guy named Tony Holder and I think this is Lucinda [Childs]. I had many pieces where I would have choruses on stage with directions of some kind. I can't remember what the directions were, but there was—a piece that I did for *Experiments in Art and Technology* is similar.

Q: This is from *Victory 14* [1964], I saw the video recently.



Deborah Hay and Steve Paxton performing Hay's *Victory 14* (1964), Five New York Evenings, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, September 1964. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Hans Malmberg

Hay: Oh yes, we all had—we were all connected to musicians who were—there were eight radios, eight people who dialed radios until they can get the frequency that they wanted. When they heard the music or the sound that they wanted, they would signal the pullers—they had a string—who would pull the string to signal the dancers to lie down on the floor and be pulled back to the radio.

Q: These are some photos from *Afternoon (a forest concert)* [1963] near [Johan Wilhelm] Billy [Klüver]'s house. Do you have any—

Hay: No memory of it.

Q: No memory of it? This is a flyer.

Hay: It could have been the piece, was it Steve? [*Afternoon (a forest concert)*] by Steve Paxton.

Yes, I can kind of remember being out there, but I don't remember much about it.

Q: I also found this description for a program for, it says “for the European market,” of some of you. [Note: The undated document, signed by Billy Klüver, is filed with materials related to the First New York Theater Rally, 1965, in Robert Rauschenberg Foundation clippings files.]

Hay: [Reading aloud] “We tend to hang on to attitudes and opinions which may prevent us from seeing. The work of these artists is for us to see, to experience. Their work is poetic rather than literary.” You know what this is, I think? “The object and the body—” Oh, that's interesting.

Q: Yes, I also like the description of each of you.

Hay: The reason why—I want to just go back to that list. Have you heard about Bastard Dance Theater? Because Steve and Bob and Alex and I set up this idea of Bastard Dance Theater because we weren't included in some program when it happened and so we had Bastard Dance Theater. The idea was that we would travel in Europe as a collaborative thing, as a bastard, but we never got a gig.

[Laughter]

Q: This seems a typical photo that you were describing during the tour, partying, and this could be Venice. I recognize Carolyn Brown.



Steve Paxton, William Davis, Barbara (Dilley) Lloyd, Carolyn Brown, Rauschenberg, Deborah Hay, and others at a party in Japan during Merce Cunningham Dance Company's 1964 world tour. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

Hay: Yes, I think it's Japan for some reason.

Q: That's also Japan.

Hay: I think that could be Japan.

Q: I know that you created a beautiful work inspired by John Cage and John Cage is part of your philosophy of creating art. How much has Robert Rauschenberg influenced you?

Hay: Oh, deeply, deeply. Somehow the irreligiosity, the playfulness. That's also Cage, but I think the artists that were involved in Judson [Dance Theater], like Alex and Bob particularly, but [Robert] Bob Whitman and Robert Morris, they got—with the work that they did, got me

interested in working with non-dancers. I believe that's where that really happened. It was looking at their work and very early on I started casting non-dancers in my work. They were just so much more interesting to me. Really until 1998 that was the basis of my learning and my material, was working with untrained performers.

Q: Once you learn from untrained performers, I am curious how and why did you return to trained dancers?

Hay: Yes, I felt like I could take what I learned from mentoring non-performers and then work to see how that applied to trained performers. So I took all that learning into the realm of working with trained performers and then more and more finely trained performers. It's just my language is getting finer and finer to accommodate working with finer and finer artists.

Q: More precise?

Hay: Yes, more precise, more—I'm working on a new book now, which is really about trying to follow—articulate that evolution of the language in choreography and how my choreographic direction has become subtler and subtler in order to accommodate the subtlety of the artists I'm working with, their range of understanding.

Q: "I learned that by developing simplicity, complexity is birthed."

Hay: Yes.

Q: After reading this sentence I keep “practicing” it. It’s a beautiful sentence you wrote.

Hay: What is the sentence? What is it again?

Q: It’s yours, “I learned that by developing simplicity, complexity is birthed.”

Hay: Oh yes, yes.

Q: It’s from your first book.

Hay: Is it? Yes, *Lamb at the Altar: The Story of a Dance* [1994].

Q: Yes.

Hay: Yes, I like that book a lot.

Q: I want to return to your first impression of Robert Rauschenberg’s work. Did you meet him first and then his artwork, or vice versa, or at the same time?

Hay: I think I saw his art certainly because—one of the things I’m grateful to Alex for, was introducing me to looking at art really. Every weekend, we were at art galleries, starting Thursday night, Friday, and Saturday, there was art galleries. So I’m pretty certain—I’m certain I

saw Bob's work at [Leo] Castelli gallery [New York], paralleling meeting him, the first introduction to him and more and more and being invited to his parties and stuff like that.

Q: I read somewhere that Steve Paxton calls "Bob's device" when performers perform on stage, giving the back to the audience. Trisha Brown created later some of her performances not facing the audience. So I was wondering how this became Bob's device—maybe after Japan?

Hay: Bob's device? His device was having his back—the back to the audience? I wasn't—I'm completely unaware of that.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Of course there is 9 Evenings[: Theatre & Engineering] in 1966, which was an incredible event, in such an experimental environment with people from different backgrounds working together. What do you remember of that experience?

Hay: Oh, the gatherings were fun over the couple of years, but in preparation I felt like it was a complete fiasco in terms of nothing seemed to really work, but everybody was deeply engaged. There's a wonderful quote. I think it's in *Lamb at the Altar*. I think it's Sogyal Rinpoche quoting Albert Einstein and the quote is "Here is when we know everything but nothing works. Practice is when everything works but no one knows why." It felt like nothing worked and it was a fiasco and it was a great, great opportunity for learning.

Q: In the documentary there is a moment in which one of the engineers working next to John Cage noticed that John's pants were on fire. And so he said, "John, your pants are on fire." John turns around and said, "Isn't it wonderful?" And he continued to work. So what did you learn from these masters while working with them?

Hay: Which masters are you talking about? Are you talking about—

Q: I'm talking about the time you spent working with Merce Cunningham and John Cage and Rauschenberg, being all so very different from each other.

Hay: Right, well, Merce didn't have anything to do with 9 Evenings—but John, it was wonderful to really connect with John on that level. He was right in there and David [E.] Tudor, who was so beautiful, so the two of them. We were just getting to know them and work around them more and the learning was more—it was more like this kind of learning. I don't know that I learned anything in terms of intellectually, but it was a social behavior learning. It was how artists worked, being around—I'm sure I learned a lot from that.

I'm sure I learned a lot more maybe from Bob than anybody about how to work. One of my quotes of Bob's that changed my life was when Bob said to me—at one point I was going to work on a piece. I said, "Well, I don't even have any dates yet." I can't quite remember the context and Bob said to me, "Never wait for anything." And that, whoa, that changed my life, right there, "Never wait for anything," four words and what a message. Yes, so I learned how to

work. I think I learned how to work being around Bob. I think I learned what work is. I learned materials to work with, but I learned how to work from him.

Q: There's always this description of him at work, being engaged, often in the company of other people while still extremely focused.

Hay: Yes and he's always working, even in his play he's working.

Q: All of this kind of work, a little obsession is absolutely necessary.

Hay: Yes, yes.

[INTERRUPTION]

Hay: [Looking out of the window] I sit out there in my chair. I don't have to do anything but see what's in front of my nose.

Q: In 1970 you decided to come here, to move to Vermont.

Hay: Yes, yes.

Q: Was the decision a personal one, you thought of leaving New York?

Hay: No, I love New York. Everything was working for me fine in New York. At that time I was in a relationship with David Bradshaw, who is my granddaughter's grandpa, and he knew people who lived up here and he would go. He's somebody who hunts and shoots and stuff like that and so he would come up pretty regularly. He would come up and visit the farm and hang out and I'd—I had four days, five days in the city. I never had any desire to leave.

I have a brother who lived up in Vermont at the time. He was teaching at Goddard [College, Plainfield]. I would go up there, but my idea of coming to the country was going to sleep. Just crawl into bed and sleep for days, but then one weekend I came up here with David and fell in love with it, with the place. It was immediate and what I'd imagined it was, was not what I imagined.

In retrospect I know it was this kind of stillness I had never experienced before in my life. I grew up in Brooklyn. I lived in the city. I never ever—I'm in this house alone hours and hours a day and I don't hear anything. So I believe it's the stillness that attracted me and it was a community and so I had never lived that way before and collectively. I thought I would live off of the land and burned all my papers until that point, which was really, really stupid, and I lived here for six-and-one-half years. My daughter was born here and then I outlived it, but this is home to me.

Q: But you were able to travel back to New York often enough while you were here?

Hay: In my mind I gave up the art world, but to survive I did these circle dances. I did these ten circle dances. I would go and it was mostly museums and art galleries that would invite me and

I'd teach a dance that was performed in a circle. I would spend ten nights in a row in a community and teach whoever showed up, a different dance every night for ten nights, and I loved it and that's where I began to really develop the language that my current language has evolved from—and where I began my work that I'm doing. Being here is where I began my work on the cellular body and attention to the cellular body.

Q: And then you moved to Austin, Texas.

Hay: Austin, Texas, yes.

Q: And was the decision related to the dance work that you were doing?

Hay: No, it was knowing that I was going to leave here, feeling completely unable to decide where I was going to go. I was a single parent by then and I couldn't see moving back to New York with no money and a child. So because I was very much a hippy and probably still have those genes in me, I was going to wait for a message from the universe about where to go and I got Austin and felt very affirmed in that decision for many, many years. It was a great place for my daughter to grow up. At that time it was good and I figured out how to survive there.

I talk about my life as a—I'm not a religious person at all, but the only way that I really identify myself as a Jew is that I love figuring out how to survive and I've done that in many areas of my life and one of them was moving to northern Vermont and the other was moving to Texas in 1976, but I figured it out so—

Q: Were you able to stay in touch with some of the people that were part of the New York community? Were you able to call Bob?

Hay: I was. I stayed in touch with Bob very closely. As a matter of fact Bob would invite David and I and Savannah [Bradshaw] down to Florida for a couple of weeks every winter for many years. Savannah learned how to walk at Bob's place in Florida. We were really tight, very close still, and would go to the city occasionally and see friends, but soon that just became less and less possible and then—well, I will never know what happened, but something happened. I've had lots of point of views given—offered for why Bob really drifted away from my life, which was very painful for me.

Until I went to the Residency this January where I stayed in the house that I—that we stayed in and his portrait was there and I really felt him. I felt him letting me know of his support and I really—and I could say goodbye to him. I was never able to say goodbye to him. I wasn't around him during that time and it was a big loss for me. He was regularly in my dreams. He was the male figure in my dreams, just beautiful, beautiful.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: You were talking about your experience at Captiva Island during the Residency.

Hay: Yes.

Q: You say you were able to say goodbye to Bob.

Hay: Yes, yes.

Q: Because at a certain point there was a disconnection between you?

Hay: Yes, yes, and let him go, let go the wonder of whatever happened that our relationship ended. When Bob had his retrospective and it came to Houston at the Menil Collection, there was a big party. [Note: *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective* traveled to Houston in 1998] He came to that. He was there with his mother and his sister. I knew his mother. She—we used to visit his mother in Louisiana and his sister Janet [Begneaud née Rauschenberg]. At the opening, he was just surrounded by people and it was like—I felt like his whole body was sort of like armored. It was like he had armor around him and there was this—at the Houston—I think it was the Houston Country Club, there was this big dance and the band, Ned Sublette Band was playing and I thought, boy, this is going to be weird. All these people in tuxedos, people in gowns, what kind of dance is this going to be?

Everybody was dancing. It was a fantastic opportunity, but Bob was sitting at the table surrounded by people and then they make the announcements, “This is the last—” I think they said the last two dances and I shot out of my seat and I went over to Bob and I interrupted his conversation and I pointed to him and I went, “You, me, we! Dance!”

He got up and we had the last two dances together and I thought, yeah, he remembered something, that I was—there was something that he could connect with in dancing with me and that was it and I never saw him again. I can't remember what year that was.

Q: What year was that?

Hay: I think it was more like '73 maybe. Not 1973, 2003. So the reason—when Mary [Marshall Clark] asked me about doing this, I really wanted to because I felt so close to him. I never connected with more joy with another person than I did with Bob. The level of fun and closeness, warmth, and caring was just—aside from being included in his dances and he was in all of my pieces—it was just a time of generous human connection, but maybe it's that time in one's life that you have it, that you don't have later on.

Q: He was always described as a problem-solver. I'm thinking of an event for Merce Cunningham where they were about to perform at BAM [Brooklyn Academy of Music] and the stage they had created was not considered safe for the firemen and so they had to change it or they would close down. [Note: referring to a 1957 performance of *Nocturnes*, 1956] The rest of the company left and in a matter of hours he was able to recreate and make all the necessary adjustments to make the stage safe. Trisha Brown, in the eighties, described when the cargo with the set designs for a performance in Naples [Italy] didn't arrive on time. He drove around for a couple of days collecting found objects and eventually he was able to create a beautiful sculpture [note: referring to the emergency set Rauschenberg created for *Lateral Pass*, 1985, at the Teatro

di San Carlo, 1987]. Do you have any of these memories of him creating something at the very last moment?

Hay: Just in cooking. He could always make something combining things that—yes, in terms of his cooking, yes. Costuming, props, sets, yes he was—he loved the challenge of making things from nothing and that’s another thing that I definitely, definitely got from him, creating something from nothing, a big strong influence in my life.

Q: Which makes absolute sense with “never wait for anything.”

Hay: Yes, right, yes, never wait for anything and surviving.

Q: What do you think happened with your relationship, your friendship? Was it related to him becoming increasingly famous and being constantly busy or—?

Hay: No, I don’t think that was it. I can’t, I just don’t know. It feels like there was an interference. Someone interfered, just with the nature of the loss. It wasn’t organic. Something interfered and got in the way and it could be his own alcoholism, I don’t know, it would be hard for me to understand why suddenly the alcoholism would cause that. He was always drinking a whole lot.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Have you stayed in touch with the rest of the group from the Judson Dance Theater?

Hay: I see Yvonne from time to time. I love her, and so I see her from time to time. She's about the only person—even Steve, who lives down the hill here. Steve is walking—is down there.

Q: He is walking distance?

Hay: Oh, yes, he's 500 feet or 400 feet.

Q: Oh, really.

Hay: Yes, yes.

Q: I didn't realize it was so close. I knew that you lived in—

Hay: Yes, yes, I don't see him.

Q: No?

Hay: No, there's something funny there too. So I don't quite understand these—particularly Steve and Bob. Steve and I have talked about that a little bit, but I don't—I can't really quite understand what his issue is, but these two friends who were very close to me, lost to me, big losses and now—I can—it is what it is. It's okay, but it was hard for a long time.

Q: I just watched the video of Steve Paxton receiving the Leone d'Oro [Golden Lion] for his career in Venice [2014]. That's fifty years after the famous Cunningham tour where you all were there and it—

Hay: Right, right. There's a film of it?

Q: There's a video on YouTube.

Hay: Oh, good, I want to look at that.

Q: He seemed very moved by being in Venice after fifty years. It would be interesting to understand what it meant for him, the prize fifty years after Bob got his prize [at the Venice Biennale, 1964].

Hay: Yes, okay, then I'll look it up. Yes, right, yes.

Q: It's very funny that he lives down the street now.

Hay: Yes, it's kind of pathetic.

Q: So this was just accidental that you both ended up in the same—

Hay: Well, I came here first with David Bradshaw, who was an artist. When I connected with David, we were also very close with Bob and so that there was a lot of connection between Bob, David, and myself for a while, and then I came up here because of David and then Steve came up, moved up here—I think maybe about six months after I moved up here and at that time everything was great. For several years, certainly the whole time I was at Mad Brook [Farm, East Charleston, Vermont]—yes, so it wasn't haphazard. I think Steve came up probably because I was up here and he would visit. There were people up here too who he knew. There were some people who lived here, who were cast in pieces of mine, who would come down to New York and perform, and so yes.

Q: [*PLATFORM 2012:*] *Judson Now* was the platform at Judson [Memorial] Church [New York] and the research organized in 2011–12 created this very interesting correspondence between younger choreographers and choreographers of your generation. You were in conversation with Ralph Lemon.

Hay: Oh right, yes.

Q: And Steve was in conversation with Miguel Gutierrez and several others were in this conversation. So did you have then a way to reconnect to them?

Hay: To?

Q: To the much larger group of the Judson Dance Theater?

Hay: No, I think it was done—we weren't together. Right, no, I wasn't a part of that. Living in Austin too, I had this geographic reality, which was I couldn't come to New York that easily. I have no desire to. And now most of the people—when I used to come to New York I had a choice of five or six places to stay. Now, I don't know anybody, pretty much anybody in New York anymore, where I can stay. So for me to come to New York means it's much more complicated.

Q: So Yvonne has moved back?

Hay: Yes, yes, she's living uptown.

Q: In Morningside Heights, uptown.

Hay: Yes.

Q: What was great about those years was also that you all lived in the same smaller neighborhood. So going to have dinner at Bob's, it was much more accessible.

Hay: Yes. I was part of a show in Austin at the Blanton Museum [of Art, University of Texas at Austin, *Perception Unfolds: Looking at Deborah Hay's Dance*, 2014]. It's my first installation. There were several rooms devoted to the work of Sol LeWitt and Eva Hesse and there was my installation, which was separate, but there was a map. A part of the installation was a map of

New York City at that time and the dots to where each of us—all of us lived, like hundreds of dots and who the artists were that lived in within a—

Q: Oh, that's wonderful.

Hay: Yes, it was really beautiful. Although the map was wrong [laughs], it had some of the streets wrong, but it was beautiful to see and just to make them aware of how that area was populated.

Q: Now the exhibit closed in May, I believe.

Hay: It closed in May. Yes, it's going to be at Yale [University, New Haven, Connecticut] this month, sometime in August and it will be up through the end of October. It will go to UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] and I think it will have a good touring life—my part of it, my installation part, that's not the same as Sol and Eva's.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: This [exhibition in Austin] was commissioned by William Forsythe?

Hay: Not in the installation.

Q: Not in the installation.

Hay: No, not in the installation piece, but the installation piece was made up of some film work that was done in Germany as part of the Forsythe commission.

Q: The Forsythe commission was—

Hay: [The exhibition] was for Motion Bank and part of Motion Bank was this trio called *No Time to Fly* [2010]. Oh no, the trio was *As Holy Sites Go* [2012], but the installation was made up of four films of solo adaptations of *No Time to Fly*. So yes.

Q: What does happen when you see Bob's work in a museum? How does Bob the person come back by looking at his work?

Hay: I can't say that it does. I feel like I'm looking at the work of a great artist, period. I feel that way about lots of artists, so I don't think of it personally at all.

Q: Is there any question that I didn't ask you that you would like to—

Hay: Not really, it feels like you did your work, your homework. How is this going to be? How is this going to work, this project, the oral project?

Hay: The project will be available—

Hay: I just want to look at this for a second because I think I have this book. Yes, I have this book. It's such a beautiful catalogue. [*Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, exh. cat., by Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, 1997]

Q: It's a beautiful catalogue.

Hay: Yes. Well, this was in Japan.



Rauschenberg creating *Gold Standard* (1964) during *Twenty Questions to Bob Rauschenberg* performance, Sogetsu Art Center, Tokyo, November 28, 1964. Photo: Courtesy Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Q: —some of the performances.

Hay: Yes, this was in Japan.

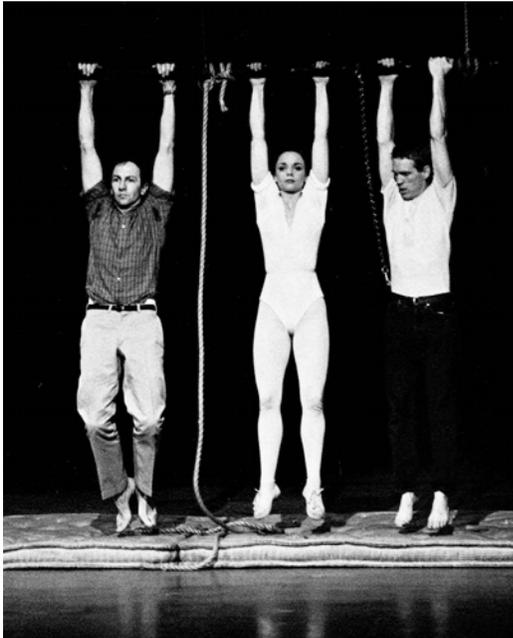
Q: Yes, so probably “Bob’s device” refers to this piece [*Gold Standard*, 1964]—

Hay: Yes.

Q: Where he decided not to answer the questions and instead he painted on stage. [*Twenty Questions to Bob Rauschenberg*, 1964]

Hay: Right and this was that piece.

And this was my piece, but this must have been in Japan too because it was Barbara Dilley [Lloyd], Bob, Alex, and myself. Here it's called *They Will* [1963] so it has a different title, but it's the same piece. [Note: Deborah Hay's work for the Japan program was titled *Contract*]



Rauschenberg, Barbara (Dilley) Lloyd, and Alex Hay in Deborah Hay's *They Will* (1963), First New York Theater Rally, former CBS studio, Broadway and Eighty-first Street, New York, May 1965. Photo: Elisabeth Loewenstein Novick

—I can't remember the story about what happened with him painting *Gold Standard*. He was given that gold leaf screen as a gift.

This was something that I wore as a mask in the piece of his [*Linoleum*, 1966].



Deborah Hay, Alex Hay, and Simone Forti in Rauschenberg's *Linoleum* (1966), NOW Festival, National Arena roller-skating rink, Washington, D.C., April 26, 1966. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Peter Moore © Barbara Moore

Q: You wore a mask?

Hay: Yes, with this.

Q: This is *Spring Training*.



Curtain call for Rauschenberg's *Spring Training* (1965), First New York Theater Rally, former CBS Studio, Broadway and Eighty-first Street, New York, May 1965. Pictured: Barbara (Dilley) Lloyd, Christopher Rauschenberg, Viola Farber, Rauschenberg, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, and Trisha Brown. Photo: Elisabeth Loewenstein Novick

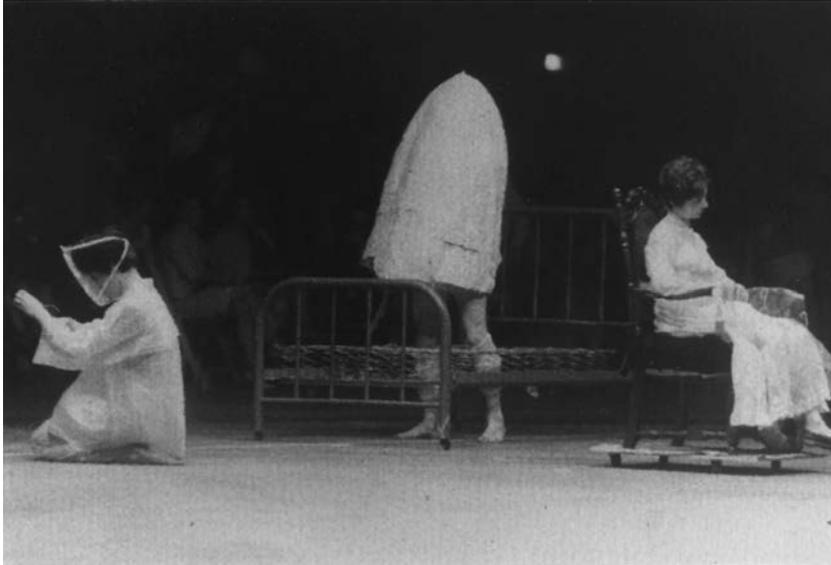
Hay: God. Christopher [Rauschenberg]—

Q: With Christopher in the performance.

So in *Linoleum*, there is this scene where in—the video, I believe, Trisha Brown is sitting, wearing a costume?

Hay: Yes, is it Trisha or Simone [Forti]?

Q: There is, in the photo, Simone, and I believe in it was also performed by Trisha Brown, because in the video it seems it is Trisha Brown, and in the photo you are sitting on the ground.



Deborah Hay, Alex Hay, and Simone Forti in Rauschenberg's *Linoleum* (1966), NOW Festival, National Arena roller-skating rink, Washington, D.C., April 26, 1966. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Steve Schapiro

Hay: As spaghetti, yes, yes.

Q: And it's a marvelous piece. It reminds me of—

Hay: So there's an actual film of that piece?

Q: There is actually a film of that. They have the film at the Foundation, so you can ask to have a copy. I don't think I have the video with me. This is not the one.

Hay: What is that?

Q: This is a documentary. There is a video of *Victory 14* as well.

Hay: Oh, the one with the compilation video of *Victory 14* and Bob's piece and Steve's piece and Alex's piece? Is that a compilation?

Q: There is *Linoleum*, *Victory 14*, and a documentary for the [Solomon R.] Guggenheim [Museum, New York; *Robert Rauschenberg: The Art of Performance*, 1997]. So I can leave this copy.

Hay: Oh, great. Yes, I'd love to see that. Thank you.

Q: So you will be in New Haven?

Hay: I'll come sometime at the end of October. I'll give a talk in New Haven with Alva Noë, who is a philosophy professor from UC [University of California] Berkeley, and the name of the talk is called "Reorganizing Ourselves," and it's how his research in philosophy and my research of the body, how they parallel one another. I give my talk, he gives his talk, and then there's a salon that follows that's moderated by the person who is managing the tour. Her name is Michèle Steinwald, so it's like a three-hour event and it's really good. It's a really good—

Q: It sounds fun too.

Hay: Yes, yes, so we're going to do that in—I'm sure it will happen in New York too, I just don't know when. The touring of it is now coming together. I think it will be in New Haven and

it will also be at Wesleyan [University, Middletown, Connecticut] I think and somewhere in New York. I'm just not sure where.

Q: So we'll end this conversation for now.

Hay: Good.

Q: Maybe we'll keep each other updated.

Hay: Good, great. I'm just realizing my copy of this book is no longer in my condo in Austin and I better get a copy of it because I love this.

[END OF INTERVIEW]