

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Yvonne Rainer

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Columbia University

2015

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of recorded interviews with Yvonne Rainer conducted by Alessandra Nicifero on August 16, 2014 and May 14, 2015. These interviews are 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.

Transcription: Audio Transcription Center

Session #1

Interviewee: Yvonne Rainer

Location: New York, New York

Interviewer: Alessandra Nicifero

Date: August 16, 2014

Q: Okay. My name is Alessandra Nicifero. I'm here with Yvonne Rainer on August 16, 2014 in New York. Thanks for agreeing to be part of the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History project. Why don't we start with your childhood?

Rainer: Really? This is about me? I thought it was about Bob.

Q: Well, it will be about you and Bob. Just to have a sense of where you came from. You were born in San Francisco?

Rainer: In 1934. I came to New York in 1956 to study acting and stumbled into a dance class.

Q: Did you study dance or theater before coming to New York?

Rainer: Before coming to New York I was involved with a little theater group and took some acting classes, which weren't very promising. And then I came to New York and enrolled at the Herbert Berghof school [Herbert Berghof Studio] and studied with Lee Grant briefly who said "I'm not convinced. I see you thinking." It was all very Stanislavski-method, which I didn't take to. To this day, even though I've dealt with actors, it's a mystery to me, what they do—

[Laughter]

Rainer: —what that process is. But dancing I took to immediately. My first classes were with Edith Stephen who was an eclectic modern dancer. She may have danced with [José] Limón, studied African dancing. I danced with her very briefly. She had a short-lived company; she took me in, though I was a total novice. But I was launched as a serious dancer.

Q: And you mentioned that some work that you saw in the city in those years was somehow revelatory and what was that, particularly—

Rainer: Yes. I saw a piece by [Frederick] Erick Hawkins, who had danced with, been married to, Martha Graham and it was called *Here and Now with Watchers* [1957] and in the middle of the dance, someone walked from the wings and placed an object downstage. And that's what grabbed me, which folds right into, prematurely, my interest in Rauschenberg's work, and the gap between art and life, right? So that was one influence. And then by 1959 I was studying with Merce Cunningham. I think even before that I had gone up to the Connecticut College [New London] summer dance festival [American Dance Festival] and hung around with Rauschenberg and the company members. Maybe that was '59 because it was after the Cunningham June course, so it would have been July of '59. But it was in the June course that I first met Rauschenberg.

Q: In the Merce Cunningham studio?

Rainer: Yes. When he was—

Q: Working as set designer?

Rainer: Yes.

Q: Did you see *Monogram* [1955–59] before or after you met Rauschenberg?



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

Rainer: Oh, the goat? No, strangely enough, it may have been in Edith Stephen's studio—in '57, '58 the Cunningham Company had no home and stored some of Bob's Combines and décor in a corner of Edith's studio. I don't remember the name of the piece or what it was used for. It was a collage, a standing collage, of Rauschenberg's [note: *Minutiae*, 1954]. And also I used to go early to class; the studio was curtained off and I would peek through the curtains and watch Merce wheeling around in there, rehearsing. He used it as a rehearsal studio.

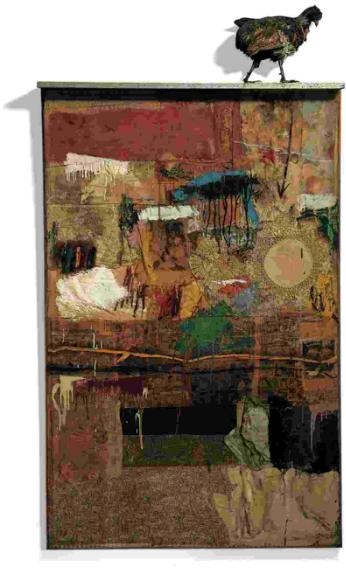


Merce Cunningham performing *Minutiae* (1954) with set design by Rauschenberg, ca. 1954. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: attributed to Danny Livingstone



Robert Rauschenberg
Minutiae, 1954
 Combine: oil, paper, fabric, newspaper, wood, metal, and plastic with mirror on braided wire on wood structure
 84 1/2 x 81 x 30 1/2 inches (214.6 x 205.7 x 77.5 cm)
 Private collection

I first saw Rauschenberg's work at the [Leo] Castelli Gallery [New York] in 1957 or '58, [Robert Rauschenberg, 1958]. And that's when the full impact of his work hit me. I thought it was hilarious. I had come from being steeped in Abstract Expressionism because I lived with Al Held, who was an Abstract Expressionist painter. Everything I knew about painting and art I had learned from him. I was very young and I had met him in San Francisco. So it was such a change and a shock, and a welcome one, to be exposed to Rauschenberg. I was ready for that impact of not only *Monogram* but the other collages, like the paint spattered quilt [*Bed*, 1955] and the chicken walking on a shelf at the top of the painting [*Satellite*, 1955].



Robert Rauschenberg

Satellite, 1955

Combine: oil, fabric, paper, and wood on canvas with
stuffed pheasant

79 3/8 x 43 1/4 x 5 5/8 inches

(201.6 x 109.9 x 14.3 cm)

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Gift of Claire B. Zeisler and purchase with funds from
the Mrs. Percy Uris Purchase Fund

Q: And probably the whole process of working, of Rauschenberg's. Were you often part of that process—of working together? It seems that in his studio he often worked and had people around and was extremely focused.

Rainer: I was never around while he was working. By the sixties when I was really studying with Cunningham and taking Robert [E. "Bob"] Dunn's composition class, I'd begun to go to some parties at the Lafayette Street house [381 Lafayette Street] and became part of a kind of entourage, along with Deborah Hay and Steve Paxton, Lucinda ["Cindy"] Childs, especially after the 1962 Judson Church Concert of Dance [A Concert of Dance #1, Judson Memorial Church, New York].

Q: So the first collaboration with Rauschenberg started much earlier because I believe he bought the building at Lafayette in '65.

Rainer: In 1963 he designed the lighting for an evening-length dance called *Terrain* [Judson Dance Theater, An Evening of Dance, Judson Memorial Church, 1963]. So we were friends and I was around the Cunningham Studio a lot and would run into him.

Q: Because back then he was working as a set designer for the company?

Rainer: Yes.

Q: And he traveled for the [Merce Cunningham Dance Company] world tour in '64.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: I believe there was an overlap with you traveling also to Europe?

Rainer: Not to Europe, but at first to Ann Arbor [Michigan].

Q: Yes?

Rainer: The Ann Arbor festival of music and film [note: ONCE Festival]. Bob and Steve and Lucinda and Deborah Hay and Alex Hay and I presented programs there as part of that festival. That would have been when, '65, '64? [Note: 1964]

Q: I believe it was before the Merce Cunningham Company had the world tour.

Rainer: Before the world tour, yes, which began in Stockholm.

Q: Right. That's what I remember.

Rainer: [Robert] Bob Morris and I were also invited to this festival that—what's the name of the curator, the famous Swedish curator who organized it? [Note: Pontus Hultén]

Q: Yes, I can't remember the—

Rainer: Yes. At the Moderna Museet [Stockholm, Five New York Evenings, 1964]. Paxton, the Hays, and Lucinda Childs were also involved.

Q: Yes. And for some reason I thought you were also in Düsseldorf.

Rainer: That would have been after the Stockholm festival in '64. Bob Morris and I went from Stockholm to Düsseldorf, where he was having his first one-man show at the Galerie Schmela [1964].

Q: So what do you remember of those years? And what do you remember about Rauschenberg being around and creating—

Rainer: Well, I remember these raucous parties. I guess that was all before the world tour. Oh yes, there were also parties in his Broadway studio, before Lafayette Street. Huge studio. So '65, yes, I had begun working on what's become my signature dance, *Trio A* [1966]. I presented it, I think, for the first time before a small audience of dancers in the Broadway studio. I remember Leo Castelli was there, also Judith Dunn and [Johan Wilhelm] Billy Klüver, and Steve did something, I showed *Trio A*. And yes, there were big parties in this loft and a lot of music. The Beatles, [the Rolling] Stones. And Bob, let's call a spade a spade, was an alcoholic.

Q: Already early on?

Rainer: Very early on, yes. So there was always a lot of alcohol. He had begun to make his theater pieces by that time. I remember I was not always very respectful of him.

Q: Yes?

Rainer: I remember calling him a “Sunday dancer” or something like that. I didn’t quite take him seriously, which was pretty disrespectful. I guess I was just very competitive. I felt like I was riding the tail of his comet or something. But he was a force, no doubt about it, for everyone who came within his aura.

Q: [Calvin] Tomkins wrote that Bob Rauschenberg once said that you were both loved and feared because around you, he felt always weak—

Rainer: Really?

Q: —because you had such a strong personality.

Rainer: Oh! That's the first I've heard of that. But Calvin Tomkins quoted him in a profile, a *New Yorker* profile or in his book. He wrote that Bob had said I was the most ferocious woman he ever met! I was outspoken, I was not always nice, I guess. I hope I've mellowed over the years. But yes, I was furiously ambitious. But also ambivalent as well. I couldn't acknowledge it to myself even. I was very conflicted, I think, about what I wanted. I wanted to knock people's socks off as he had knocked mine off. So yes, it was a strange time.

Q: Was he ever part of the Bob Dunn workshop? It was at the Merce Cunningham Studio, so he was probably around. But did he ever take part?

Rainer: At the end of the first session, we gave a little recital. He must have been in the small studio audience. I remember him mostly at openings or at parties, in his loft, and later on Lafayette Street. I went my own way from the late sixties.

Q: But during the night when there was the dance concert at the Judson Church, when Rauschenberg presented *Spring Training* [Judson Dance Theater, Dance Concert II, 1965]—

Rainer: Was it at Judson, or was it at Stage 73, the little theater where Steve had produced the Surplus Dance Theater?

Q: I thought it was at the—

Rainer: Then in '66 there was 9 Evenings[: Theatre & Engineering, 1966]

Q: Well, that was in '66 and that was a larger project—

Rainer: '66 is a whole other story with 9 Evenings because my first evening, which I shared with John Cage, was a personal and technical fiasco.

I got deathly ill. And for the next eight months, on and off, I was seriously ill.

Q: I read that.

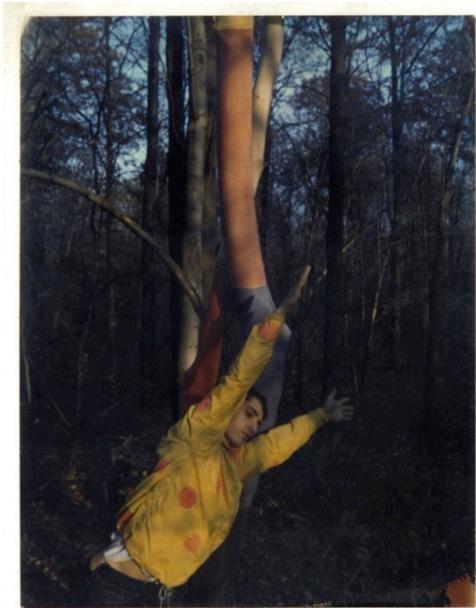
Rainer: Bob was incredibly generous. However he feared me, he certainly took care of me when I needed being taken care of. I had collapsed in Aspen, Colorado and was in a hospital there for a month. And he came out to see me in the hospital. I remember when he visited he had a very bad cold; he kept his distance. But when he himself was not feeling well, to get on a plane and to come just to visit, it was quite amazing. He was an incredible person, as an artist and as a bon vivant, and a generous, caring person. When I finally came home, I was still convalescent, and I went into New York Hospital. They didn't know what was wrong with me; I wasn't recovering. It turned out I had hepatitis from a blood transfusion in Denver. At that time Robert Morris was making sculptures with very toxic materials and fiberglass and our loft was full of fumes, even

though he had a ventilation system. And Bob offered a room in his Lafayette Street house for my recovery. Deborah Hay was my nurse; I lay around there for a few weeks and the doctors finally figured out what was wrong with me. So yes, that was another episode in my relationship with Bob.

Q: I was thinking of *Spring Training*, that's the title, where also Christopher Rauschenberg performed.

Rainer: I don't remember that. I do remember Steve Paxton's '67 Surplus Dance Theater series, a whole week of events at Stage 73 [note: 1964].

Q: Yes, I believe. Well, this is a photo from *Afternoon [(a forest concert)]*, 1963, which had been earlier in '63.



Steve Paxton's *Afternoon (a forest concert)* (1963), performed in the woods near Billy Klüver's house, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, October 6, 1963. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

Rainer: Right.

Q: That was in a forest.

Rainer: Yes, with Steve.

Q: I'm not sure what's happening here.

Rainer: I'm there but I don't—

Q: Singing?

Rainer: Yes.

Q: Or reading?

Rainer: That's Tony Holder, there's Judith Dunn [née Goldsmith], Alex Hay, Bob. Who is this? I don't know.

Q: Lucinda Childs, I think, it looks like her.

Rainer: But I don't know who this is. Gordon Mumma, maybe.

Q: Hmm.

Rainer: We were either singing or reading, I don't know. [referring to photograph below]



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 or Gordon Mumma?, Judith Dunn, Alex Hay, Rauschenberg, and Lucinda Childs. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Hans Namuth

Q: Reading.

Rainer: [Laughs] I don't remember. But I do remember some of Bob's work from that series. I remember a wire mesh chicken coop with chickens in it and someone crawling through, I don't know—

Q: That's *Linoleum* [1966].

Rainer: *Linoleum*. Yes.

Q: With Steve Paxton inside it, the chicken wire.

Rainer: Yes.



Steve Paxton 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: Rowland Scherman

Q: And Simone Forti was sitting on a throne wearing some—

Rainer: Yes.

Q: So you were not part of *Linoleum* but you remember, do you have images of that event?

Rainer: No.

Oh and then, of course, Bob was in my work. I must talk about that. Bob was in this big piece I did called *Parts of Some Sextets* [1965]. We rehearsed for about six weeks, a few times a week. It was pretty grueling. Very exacting in terms of the options and the sequence of events. It was

for ten people. All of the same people who had been in Bob's work and Steve's work, Tony Holder, and Lucinda, Bob Morris, Judith Dunn, Alex Hay.

Q: Was Trisha Brown also there?

Rainer: No. She would have been, but she was having a baby. But she had been in my work earlier, in '63, *Terrain*. The Wadsworth Atheneum show in '65 was organized by [Samuel J.] Sam Wagstaff [Two Evenings of Modern Dance by Yvonne Rainer]. I did an abbreviated running dance [*We Shall Run*, 1963]. And Bob Rauschenberg was in that. He was a polymath, a performer and a choreographer, painter, sculptor.

Q: Was he disciplined enough as a dancer?

Rainer: A lot of that work, my early work, you'd describe it as task-oriented, so it was about picking up and carrying things and doing things that non-dancers can do—[Joseph] Joe Schlichter, Trisha's husband, was in that piece. *Parts of Some Sextets* had twelve mattresses and ten performers. There was a lot of hauling of the mattresses around, reconfiguring them on the stage, in the performance space. And Bob was up for that kind of thing.



Yvonne Rainer's *Parts of Some Sextets* (1965), performed at Avery Theater, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, March 7, 1965. Pictured: Robert Morris, Steve Paxton, Rainer, Deborah Hay, Tony Holder, Sally Gross, Judith Dunn, Rauschenberg and Joseph Schlichter. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Peter Moore © Barbara Moore

Q: So in your choreography, there were different tasks for dancers and non-dancers?

Rainer: Yes.

Q: And were the tasks completely different?

Rainer: Well, the dancers also hauled mattresses around. But the untrained people didn't dance as such.

Q: Do you remember a time when the relationship ended? It was switching to something else or you stopped seeing—

Rainer: That's blurry in my memory. After I recovered from those illnesses, I made *The Mind Is a Muscle* [1966–68]. I guess by then I had pretty much cut loose from being a part of Bob's entourage. In '69 I did a West Coast tour, then started making a new dance that became *Continuous Project-Altered Daily*. By then I didn't see very much of Bob anymore. He had started serious collaborations with Trisha by the early seventies. And by then I was moving into film. That was pretty much the end of the first phase of my dance career.

Q: Trisha was in your movie, as a voiceover in *The Man Who Envied Women* [1985]?

Rainer: Yes. She plays, in voiceover, the estranged wife of the main character. And I used Babette Mangolte's film of her [*Water Motor*, 1978] briefly.

Q: So your interest, your medium changed, you became more and more directed toward film, and there was a brief period of time, of overlapping, of dance performances and film.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: And then you worked mostly in film until the mid-1990s.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: There have been a few occasions in the last decade to revisit some of the work of the Judson Dance Theater and you did it. Were you in contact with the people of the original group of the Judson Dance in all those years?

Rainer: There were some reconstructions that were organized by Wendy Perron, 1980, '81?

Q: Yes—

Rainer: I never lost contact with Trisha— She's one of my oldest friends. Also Deborah Hay and Steve Paxton. I see them occasionally. I've visited Steve up in Vermont.

Q: There's the White Oak Dance Project, also—

Rainer: Oh and then the White Oak [Dance] Project, of course [Past Forward]. Thank you. But Bob was not involved with that. Not at all. I taught *Trio A* to some of those dancers. [Mikhail Nikolayevich “Misha”] Baryshnikov commissioned a new work, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* [2000]. And three of those White Oak people danced with me subsequently after 2000— Keith Sabado, Emanuèle Phuon, and Emily Coates. So that was very fortuitous for me.

Q: So your need to move from dance to film was also a need to use text in a more—I wouldn't say articulate, because there was text before, even in your previous work.

Rainer: Yes, there was speaking in my early work. But on turning to film I wanted to deal with more specific political and social issues and language. Film seemed a more appropriate medium for combining image and text in various forms; whether voiceovers, sync sound, titles, etc.

Q: Yes. The theme of gentrification for example—was very strong and must have been a part of what the dancers were going through in those years.

Rainer: Yes, and what New Yorkers were going through. But the film before that was about oil pollution and before that, it was more or less feminist issues. *Privilege* [1990] is about aging and menopause, also racism.

Q: I think every woman should see it in their twenties.

Rainer: Hmm?

Q: It should be a required movie for every woman to see in their twenties. But going back to the dance world and the years when you met Simone Forti and there were some leading characters in the dance world who were highly influential for you, like Anna Halprin—that's probably when you met Trisha—

Rainer: I met Trisha in 1960 at a summer workshop run by Anna Halprin.

Q: And that was in San Francisco during the summer?

Rainer: Yes. In Marin County. I had heard about Halprin through Simone, who was taking a June course at the [Martha] Graham School [of Contemporary Dance, New York]. That's where I met her. We had a mutual friend, Nancy Meehan, who had worked with Welland Lathrop in San Francisco. This is in my memoir, right?

Q: Yes.

Rainer: I should refer to it! That's the thing about publishing a memoir. It replaces memory!

Halprin-Lathrop had a partnership in a dance school. Simone was taking classes there and I think Nancy Meehan was in the Lathrop company. And then they split and Simone went with Anna. Nancy had grown up ten blocks from where I grew up in San Francisco. We never met. She went to a Catholic school, I went to a public school. We came to New York the same month and year, 1956. She was already an accomplished dancer. She wanted to join the Graham Company and she started studying there in the advanced class while I was in a beginner's class. And somehow I'm trying to remember which one of them I met first. Anyway, one or the other introduced me to the other and the three of us met to improvise and fool around that summer, probably in July. Simone was going back to San Francisco to take Anna's summer course and told me about it. She and Bob Morris and I drove across the country and I stayed with my brother and took that course. Then I learned about Robert Dunn's workshop that was going to happen in the fall of '60 in the Cunningham Studio and Simone decided to come back to New York. I don't know when she decided. Bob Morris had given up Abstract Expressionist painting and thought he would

study film at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles]; he went down there and decided not to and then all three of us ended up back in New York. Simone and I took that first session with Robert Dunn. And that really launched my choreographic career. I made my first solo in that class. It was a great class. There were only five of us. Steve was in it and a ballet-jazz trained gal named Marni Mahaffey. Also a Graham-trained dancer named [Paulus] Paul Berensohn.

Q: And then much later you traveled to India in 1971.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: And Bob Rauschenberg had been to India earlier.

Rainer: Well, the India ventures for a number of artists were organized by E.A.T. [Experiments in Art and Technology], Billy Klüver's project. Various visual artists went over and made things in various sites. All I could offer was to keep a diary—I visited some dance studios in Madras and attended a few concerts. The diary was eventually published. It was in Kerala that I had the most immersive experience. There I traveled around to these festivals of the Kathakali, open-air festivals in hollowed-out amphitheaters that went all night. They were carnivalesque. The performers would come into the audience to dance around fires and there would be rows of booths along the road selling food and beads and all kinds of stuff. And an elephant in a paddock. Everything paid for by the local maharaja. It was pretty amazing.

Q: Was there ever a conversation about, with Bob or the other artists, of being—

Rainer: I never met any of them there. I was there by myself although I met quite a few Americans along the way.

Q: Yes. But back in the city, was there a conversation about the experience? That must have been quite transformative.

Rainer: I never exchanged experiences with any of them—you know, that's odd. I came back in a state of culture shock, to use the cliché. I was kind of adrift for a while. This was '71, '72, until I made a dance, *Grand Union Dreams* [1971]. There were all kinds of things happening then—protests, demonstrations against the Vietnam War—I organized some street actions against the war. I worked on *Grand Union Dreams* and *Continuous Project—Altered Daily*, which ultimately became the Grand Union [GU] with David Gordon, Trisha, Steve, Nancy Green, Douglas Dunn. So there was a lot happening in those years. I was smoking a lot of pot, I remember, to get through the days *and* the GU performances, which were entirely improvisatory. In fact I didn't last very long in the Grand Union; I had about two years; they went on for another four.

Q: There was also the time that *Trio A* was done, performed naked with a flag.

Rainer: *Trio A with Flags* was '71 [note: 1970]. It was at Judson in an exhibition organized by Jon Hendricks [*People's Flag Show*]. It was to protest the prosecution of a gallerist [Stephen Radich] who was showing the work of a sculptor who used the American flag. The gallerist was

prosecuted for showing work that “desecrated,” quote-unquote, the flag [note: the artist was Marc Morrel]. It was a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court and was thrown out. So that was a very heady time. So Hendricks along with Faith Ringgold and her daughter [Michele Faith Wallace], there were three of them, god, the names—anyway, ’71 [note: Jean Toche was the third organizer of exhibition]. So in the *People’s Flag Show*, anyone who made anything that incorporated the flag was invited to show work. Everyone from Jasper Johns to Kate Millett and all kinds of people. At the opening five or six of us performed *Trio A*. We took off our clothes, tied five-foot flags around our necks like bibs and performed. Even before that, in ’69 or ’70, I had been invited to perform at the Smithsonian [National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.]. There Steve was to perform *Trio A* nude with a flag in front of that huge flag in the Smithsonian from the Revolutionary War. He was stopped. I remember him at a distance with the curator, standing nude with the flag draped over his arm and negotiating with her! He said, “Okay, I won’t dance it nude, but we’ll have a discussion after the performance about censorship,” which happened.

So, yes, these were heady times.

Q: And Rauschenberg was also continuously involved, being an activist and being a public voice during those years. Do you remember any of—

Rainer: No.

Q: —his presence and—no?

Rainer: I don't remember being involved in any actions that involved him. I'm sure he was, but I didn't run into him. There were other things I was part of.

Q: So your friendship with Bob Rauschenberg was limited to the period of the collaboration—while he was engaged in the choreographic works?

Rainer: I would see him at Trisha's studio and concerts. There would be various events, fundraisers, or she'd show a work in progress and he would be there. I remember two times I saw him, shortly before his death, but much earlier when he was on the wagon and he'd lost a lot of weight. He looked great. And he said to me, "I drink water now the way I used to drink Jack Daniel's." He also said, perhaps at that time, that he had lost a lot of his friends. And he was very rueful about this—I don't know what other people's stories were, but I was very sensitive to his alcoholism. When I was eighteen I had run away with an alcoholic for six months. Since then I've never been able to be around drunks. I think at some point, one of the few times I ran into him, he was acknowledging his difficulties—the breakups, the loss of friendship. He didn't ascribe it to anything in particular and he wasn't talking about me. But yes, it was a reference. Then the last time I saw him was at his show in Chelsea. He was in a wheelchair and it was after his stroke. He had a deformed and paralyzed right arm. And that was very sad. But he was still chipper and funny.

Q: Once he moved to Captiva Island [Florida], probably he would come back for some collaboration. He was still creating sets for Trisha Brown. But he was based there and he would work there.

Rainer: I was never there.

Q: Talking to Deborah Hay, she had a residency on Captiva Island.

Rainer: Do artists still go there for residencies?

Q: Yes—

Rainer: And the Foundation?

Q: The Foundation, yes. Douglas Dunn, I believe, was there last year or two years ago [note: Dunn had a residency at Captiva in 2013] and Deborah was in fact saying that it was moving to be there. It was a way to reconnect and say goodbye to Bob.

Rainer: Because she was there when he was still alive.

Q: She'd been there, yes, often, while he was there. But also the relationship seems to have, at a certain point, faded for whatever reason.

Rainer: Alex Hay had been a very close friend; I don't know what happened there. I don't know.

Q: What about Bob's relationship with—I guess the relationship with Jasper Johns was later on, where his partner involved in the work, in the process of creating—

Rainer: Jasper? I knew Jasper and would run into him now and then, but it was long after their breakup.

Q: And how much do you think his work has filtered or influenced your work and your way of thinking?

Rainer: Well, Merce used to say, at some point—I don't remember the occasion—he said "we"—meaning all the Judson people, we were John's children, not his. He was right in a way. I think we were Cage's and Rauschenberg's children. The two of them had a permanent influence on a number of us. In a dance I just finished that influence is reflected in the small everyday things that I catch and insert, like reading "I dreamed of having dinner with John Cage. He was laughing. I was crying." I don't really dance anymore. I carry a sheaf of texts around, read and sometimes crawl or run or hold up a piece of paper in front of a dancer in the middle of what she or he is doing. Okay, read that.

Q: I've seen you performing recently at least twice—well, one was accidental, during the Boris Charmatz events at MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, New York].

Rainer: Oh. Yes.

Q: You were holding hands. I have a photo of you.

Rainer: Yes?

Q: Holding hands with David Thomson.

Rainer: Right. Yes. That was hard! I was out of breath! I was not in shape for that kind of movement!

Q: Well, it was pretty challenging.

Rainer: By the way, David Thomson now dances with me.

Q: The younger people were also running out of breath.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: Then I saw you in Beacon [Dia: Beacon, New York] where *Trio A* was performed recently [2011 and 2012].

Rainer: Yes.

Q: Douglas Crimp has mentioned a certain quality in your work as “vaudevillian” that has been—probably influenced by Rauschenberg’s sense of humor.

Rainer: Well the sense of the absurd, yes. Sure. I give him total credit, yes.

Q: How important was it to see, again, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Rauschenberg interacting together? It must have been probably powerful.

Rainer: Well, they made some great work together. *Antic Meet* [1958] of course is one of my favorites.

Q: *9 Evenings* is described by everybody as a failure from a technical point of view.

Rainer: There were some horrendous snafus leading up to the first performance, like a heavy platform running over and cutting John’s cables. We were all set to work splicing cables for the next couple of days.

Q: And you unfortunately got food poisoning after the first night?

Rainer: Well I don’t know whether it was food poisoning—I was laid low three or four times in the next eight months. But the technological problems in that huge space in the [69th Regiment] Armory [New York] taxed everyone. It took all these extra people to lay cables and climb up 50

feet into the ceiling to install things. I had things fluttering down from the ceiling. Everything was electronically programmed. I was assigned one of the New Jersey Bell Laboratories scientists. I was essentially his go-getter. I would go down to Lafayette Street and get a transformer or something and he'd give me lists of things to get and I'd haul them back. I wasn't sleeping for a week or just a couple of hours a night. We each had two evenings and I shared mine with Cage my first night. And nothing in my program was working. And Bob Rauschenberg came up to this balcony where I was seated giving instructions to my performers via walkie talkie. Bob came up and says, "It's not working." The walkie talkies weren't working and all the things that were supposed to fly and flutter and the film projections, it all had been programmed backwards or something. It was a disaster. Bob Morris took over my second performance and Per Biorn, who was my scientist collaborator, fixed everything and I was told it went very well. But what an experience! Boy!

Q: So were you able to return to other evenings to see any—

Rainer: No, I didn't see anything. I've since seen videos. And I saw rehearsals of course. I remember the tennis match, Bob's—

Q: *Open Score* [1966], yes.

Rainer: And Deborah Hay and all these women on these—

Q: White platforms, yes.

Rainer: Yes. Moving platforms. The whole thing was billed as one of the wonders of the world but it was very minimal. All the ideas were quite minimal, like the tennis match that went nowhere. Lucinda Childs [*Vehicle*, 1966], the barrel of light in this vast space and the audience way far away, what's going on here? I remember during my fiasco, the audience started clapping. They wanted entertainment and nothing was happening. Yes, it was a mess. Yes. But it was very ambitious and challenging.

Q: Well, the idea was pretty advanced then—

Rainer: Absolutely.

Q: Now probably the use of the technology in performances is taken more for granted. So Billy Klüver was always around at that time, involved with Rauschenberg, and the other choreographers.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: This is Rauschenberg's last performance: *Urban Round* [1967] at the Whitney [note: rather School of Visual Arts, New York]. You were also there with Deborah Hay. Steve Paxton—

Rainer: Where is this? *Urban Round*. Oh my god. Yes! What are we doing? I don't remember this at all!

[Laughter]

Q: I believe this is the only image that exists.

Rainer: Yes. There's Steve and I don't know where I am. But that's amazing. I don't remember any of this!



Rauschenberg's *Urban Round* (1967), Fall Gallery Concerts, School of Visual Arts, New York, November 1967. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, New York

Q: Oh, this must be Deborah Hay?

Rainer: No, she's too tall. That's Brice Marden, Dorothea Rockburne.

Q: Well. So you definitely, you felt you were part of a community?

Rainer: Yes. Oh, yes.

Q: Seemed so much smaller than what it is now, where everybody was collaborating, living around the same neighborhood.

Rainer: Well throughout the sixties, the art world was so much smaller. You'd go to things and you'd see the same people in the audience, artists, musicians. And you'd go to dance concerts, music concerts, lectures by Cage, Happenings. The Judson audiences I'm sure consisted of people who lived in the village but also artists. And supposedly [Andy] Warhol came to Judson. I've heard, I don't remember. Bob loved dancers.

Q: Yes.

Rainer: He adored them.

Q: He loved dancing too.

Rainer: He loved dancing and dancers. Yes.

Q: Your next project is a dance project, you said?

Rainer: It's almost finished. Yes, we're going to do it as a work in progress at the Getty Research Institute [Los Angeles] in October [*The Concept of Dust, or How do you look when there's nothing left to move?* 2014]. And I'm looking for a venue in New York.

Q: There was an exhibit. It is probably still going on at the Getty [*Yvonne Rainer: Dances and Films*, 2014].

Rainer: Yes, it's still going on. I just came back from London, where a gallery called Raven Row has a small performance space. My assistant Pat Catterson and I taught a dozen dancers early work of mine. They performed four times a day for a month. There was space for only twenty or thirty spectators at a time and it was filled up at every performance, which I was surprised at.

Q: And the return from filmmaking to dancing was for a practical reason or—

Rainer: More like serendipitous with Misha inviting me, launching the next phase of my dancing. It felt like coming home. I had had it working in film. I was never comfortable with the technology involved in filmmaking so I always felt like the dog wagged by its tail. Yes. I love working with dancers.

Q: And is there not a notebook where you're writing down notes for a next script?

Rainer: No. I collect different texts, some of my own writing from notebooks, but it's not for a film script—I don't envision making another feature film. Maybe another short video. I supplied material for *Rainer Variations* edited by [Charles] Charlie Atlas in 2002 and made another—*After Many a Summer Dies the Swan: Hybrid* [2002].

Q: Yes, it's the one produced around the White Oak Project.

Rainer: I used the video footage of White Oak rehearsals.

Q: And the *Trio A* variation is the one by Charles Atlas?

Rainer: *Rainer Variations* it's called. It's not *Trio A* as such, it consists of interviews, but other people playing me and reading my words from an actual interview.

Q: Yes, there is Gregg Bordowitz—

Rainer: —who was the original interviewer. Charlie intercut the real interview and the one that was enacted by Kathleen Chalfant and Richard Move.

Q: And there is also the brilliant moment when you as Yvonne are teaching—"Martha."

Rainer: Teaching *Trio A* to Richard Move's impersonation of Martha Graham. That was worked out very carefully because he doesn't improvise— It was a collaboration. Yes. A very reluctant Martha! That was fun.

Q: And you were a reluctant student of dance classes when you were a child.

Rainer: Oh yes. My mother sent me to tap and acrobatic, as they were called. I was the most untalented unlimber kid in the class. I begged her to let me stop, I didn't like it. But it's funny, I knew I was no good. Limberness in the hips and turnout are *the* classic standards of ability and natural talent. As a young adult I knew I didn't have that, but somehow I loved everything else about dancing. I was very strong, had tremendously strong thigh muscles and could jump and leap. Pretty early on I realized I wouldn't be able to get into any modern dance company and I knew I would have to make my own work. It's funny. Since then, every dance I make, I think, "Oh, I've run out of ideas." But then, with this last dance, I went in with fewer ideas than I ever had. And something comes out of it. Even when making film, I would send Trisha notes, very facetiously, ideas for movement, which she never took up or used. But I always had fantasies of movement and continue to. I have dreams of movement. Me moving in ways I can't possibly achieve.

Q: And Trisha was always closer to Bob, just because she was collaborating—

Rainer: Yes.

Q: —and was creating, set designing. So they were friends.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: And they would see each other much more often.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: And travel together.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: I remember reading in one book on Trisha that at a certain point in the eighties, they were in Naples and of all the boxes, the set design boxes didn't arrive from abroad. So Bob drove around in the city for two days, collecting objects, and eventually created a new set design. [Note: substitute set, costumes, and lighting provided by Rauschenberg for *Lateral Pass* (1985), Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, 1987]

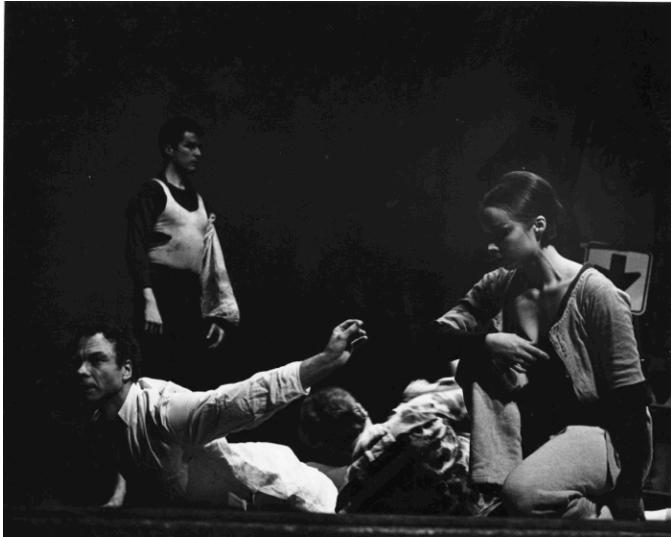


Set designed by Rauschenberg for Trisha Brown Dance Company's *Lateral Pass* (1985), Napoli Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, January 1987. Photo: Luciano Romano

Rainer: Came up with something. I remember driving around with him and Steve in 1963, scavenging for a street barricade for my *Terrain*.

Q: Yes. So there is always this sense that he was an improviser in terms of creation and as a problem solver—that he would always use what was available.

Rainer: Yes. There was this Cunningham dance called *Story* [1963] during which the dancers could go off and change costumes from a box of stuff. And Alex and Bob entered with an ironing board—I didn't see this, I heard about it—and started to iron shirts during the performance! I don't think that went down too well. I mean, there were limits for John and Merce.



Merce Cunningham's *Story* (1963), with set, costumes, and lighting by Rauschenberg, performed at Connecticut College, New London, 1963. Pictured: Barbara (Dilley) Lloyd, Cunningham, unidentified, and William Davis. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Fannie Helen Melcer

[Laughter]

Rainer: Yes. And Barbara [Dilley] Lloyd came in nude. Oh she was one of my main prodders. We were touring with *Continuous Project–Altered Daily* and it was her idea, maybe they could introduce their own work. I very hesitantly began to make rules and limits about how this might be done. And Barbara was always at the forefront pushing the limits, until it exploded and there was no more boss. You should interview her about Rauschenberg.

Q: Who?

Rainer: Barbara Dilley. Yes. She's in Naropa [University] in Boulder.

Q: In Boulder, Colorado.

Rainer: Yes. She would have stories about that tour.

Q: Yes.

Rainer: And Steve, of course.

Q: Yes. I think Steve had decided not to participate.

Rainer: Really?

Q: I'm not sure why. I believe he said that he has said everything he had to say about Rauschenberg.

Rainer: Well, of course, he was the one most intimately involved with him.

Q: Steve just won the Leone d'oro [Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement] in Venice for his career [Dance Biennale, 2014]— I saw the video and the conversation after.

Rainer: Great.

Q: And he seemed very moved because again, it happened fifty years after the world tour, exactly fifty years.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: And when Bob won the—

Rainer: Did he win the Golden Lion too? Bob?

Q: Steve Paxton this year. No, Bob won the prize fifty years earlier [note: International Grand Prize in Painting, Venice Biennale, 1964].

Rainer: The same prize? Or a different one?

Q: Well, it was a different one. It was for the visual art biennale. I was very curious to talk to Deborah Hay because she was also on that tour. Because it seems that many incredible events happened and they were in Japan performing with Tatsumi Hijikata and some of the Japanese performers of the avant-garde. But there were not many memories there. Probably there was not much interaction between—

Q: There is another concept that is being—I believe Steve Paxton talked about Bob's device meaning—

Rainer: About Bob's—?

Q: Bob's device.

Rainer: Device?

Q: Device. Which was performing with the shoulders, the back to the audience; which again happened while they were touring in Japan. There was the famous event where Bob Rauschenberg was painting *Twenty Questions* [to Bob Rauschenberg, 1964]. This so-called device was also used later on by Trisha Brown and—

Rainer: Yes where there's a stand-in figure with his back to the audience for the whole time.

Q: Right.

Rainer: Yes. I didn't know Bob did that in a performance? Which piece? In Cunningham?

Q: No, Bob Rauschenberg did it in Tokyo [Sogetsu Art Center] while they were doing the world tour, but he was invited as a visual artist to give a lecture. It's called the *Twenty Questions*. But instead of interacting with the audience, he painted.

Rainer: Oh, right. There's a video or a film—

Q: There are photos. I haven't seen video.

I always end asking if there are questions that I haven't asked you and you would have liked to have been asked.

Rainer: I think we pretty much covered the ballpark.

Q: Everybody talks about Bob's generosity.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: And being so cheerful all the time and supportive.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: Of colleagues and artists.

Rainer: Yes, those parties at Lafayette Street, the last one I attended, where there was a lot of pot going around that night. I got stoned out of my brain. [Rudolf Kametovich] Nureyev was at that party.

Q: Oh! Wow.

Rainer: There were all kinds of luminaries who came to these parties. Nureyev was wearing a matching short jacket and pants with zippers all over the pants. I went up to him and I started to

unzip all the zippers while chanting, “Buttons and zippers, buttons and zippers—” I was just totally zonked. Poor man, he was very embarrassed. Bob was out of his brain too, he was feeding me this stuff.

Q: Because he was also a very good cook.

Rainer: He was feeding me hash!

Q: And the stove in Lafayette is still there. And who else did you see at these parties in Lafayette, besides Nureyev?

Rainer: All kinds of artists, I don’t remember exactly. I was too stoned to remember.

Q: And you were not in contact with him via phone or while he was away, to continue?

Rainer: No. I’m just thinking how for those of us who were active in the sixties in New York, it’s hard for me to assess how much was just my own excitement and bravado and ambition and arrogance and rebelliousness. But it seems there were a lot of other people in the same boat. I just wonder—well, the seventies belonged to the feminists and there must be young people in the seventies or another generation, another decade from me, who were equally excited by possibilities and breaking the status quo. Each decade has its own rules to break. God knows what they are now.

Q: So I promised not to talk about the *No Manifesto* [1965], the barking dog of your *No Manifesto*.

Rainer: Oh, that. Let's see, that was '65, I guess. Yes. Well, yes, is anyone writing manifestos now?

Q: Yes. There are many manifestos. Well, going back to Boris Charmatz, he wrote a manifesto about the dancing museum [*Manifesto for a Dancing Museum*, 2009].

Rainer: Oh. Yes?

Q: But I even read, unfortunately I don't remember who, a female young choreographer who wrote a *Yes Manifesto* [2004].

Rainer: Oh, yes, who was that? [Note: Mette Ingvartsen]

Q: It was recently, it seemed almost in response to your *No Manifesto*.

Rainer: Yes. But I have also written because I'm approached about this all the time—In fact hardly anyone can write about me without bringing that up—so I wrote *A Manifesto Reconsidered* [2008] where I said, in effect, I don't know what this is about. Or a little bit of this goes a long way. For my own purposes, I still don't believe in spectacle, except the circus of course. Or no to camp, a little bit goes a long way. So it's a kind of a facetious response to my

own strictures from so long ago. It's in the very nature of the manifesto to speak to a particular historical moment and then it's over. But mine, which was really an afterthought in an essay on *Parts of Some Sextets*, is still being pinned on me, is still dogging my heels. As though I continue to abide by its imperatives.

Q: Okay. So maybe we'll end our conversation.

Rainer: Yes. We don't have to have another session. Yes.

Q: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Transcription: Audio Transcription Center

Session #2 (video)

Interviewee: Yvonne Rainer

Location: New York, New York

Interviewer: Alessandra Nicifero

Date: May 14, 2015

Q: My name is Alessandra Nicifero. I'm here with Yvonne Rainer. It is May 14, 2015. Thanks for being here. I will start with a simple question. What is one of your first memories of dancing?

Rainer: Of dancing, period? Of dancing professionally or dancing modern dance? What kind of dance?

Q: Dancing. What's your first association with dancing?

Rainer: As an audience member or myself dancing? I was born in San Francisco and when I was sixteen I went to the Curran Theatre, I think, on Geary Street, and I saw a piece by Roland Petit. I was all by myself. I don't know what got me there, but I remember [Zizi] Jeanmaire, his main ballerina. She was all dressed in yellow and she had flat ballet slippers on and she promenaded in a flat-out arabesque in a full circle.

My first experience of dancing was in Edith Stephen's dance class, she was a very eclectic modern dancer. She had danced with José Limón and various people, and choreographed her own work. I was studying acting and a friend of mine persuaded me to take a class and I loved it. I wasn't talented. As Edith said, "You're not very turned out, but you're very strong."

Q: So at that point you had moved already from San Francisco to New York?

Rainer: Yes. I came to New York when I was twenty-one.

Q: Can you talk about the experience of being in New York?

Rainer: It was completely exhilarating. I fell in love with New York and its possibilities. It was probably a lot of fantasy. I was here with a painter, Al Held, whom I eventually married and then separated from. Everything was new. I went everywhere, to music, to plays, to dance concerts, and began to study seriously several years later. I took three classes a day, two at the Graham School, a ballet class in between, and went to all the films at the Museum of Modern Art. My mother was helping me out. It was very cheap to live then. This is the late fifties, early sixties.

Q: What was your experience of traveling with Held and seeing art galleries and art exhibits?

Rainer: I knew very little about postwar American art. Al introduced me to the Cedar Bar [Cedar Tavern, New York] and his friends and I went to openings. I studied his paintings. He was an Abstract Expressionist and I had the experience about ten or twelve years later of going to a retrospective of his at the Whitney Museum [of American Art, New York]. We had long been separated and I walked into a room and saw some of the paintings he made in the late fifties and they were as familiar to me as my own hands. I'd studied those paintings, every stroke, so closely. I was absorbing everything. I was like a sponge.

Q: And probably around the late fifties is when you encountered Bob Rauschenberg's work?

Rainer: Yes. I went to what must have been his first show at the Castelli Gallery on East Seventy-seventh Street. I saw the goat [*Monogram*] and the chicken on the shelf [*Satellite*]. I always say I nearly rolled on the ground with laughter. It was so refreshing after Abstract Expressionism. He was still an expressionist using paint in that way, but so irreverent. I think my own sense of humor and irreverence began when I saw that show, and it opened up a whole new set of possibilities. When was that show? It was '57.

Q: '58, the show at Castelli. He had a show in '57 at the Jewish Museum.

Rainer: I didn't see that. It was '58 then.

Q: So we are talking about the late fifties, early sixties. This was also the time of the Happenings all over New York, at the Reuben Gallery. Do you remember any of those events?

Rainer: Yes, very well. I didn't see Happenings until the fall of 1960 when the Reuben Gallery opened. [Note: Reuben Gallery opened in 1959] There was a Christmas show and they had invited Simone Forti to participate with Jim Dine. I think she shared the evening with Jim Dine. At that time she was married to Robert Morris and she asked Morris and me to be in her *See-Saw* [1960].

But we're skipping over another experience I had with Bob Rauschenberg. I really first met him in '59 when I went to the Connecticut College dance festival. That was the first time I saw Cunningham and Rauschenberg was there. I guess already he was collaborating, doing costumes.

Q: Set designing also, yes.

Rainer: By that time, '59, '60, I was studying with Merce. I mostly remember his boozy, very friendly presence, sitting around at intermission during that dance performance.

Q: Who else was dancing with Merce? Was Steve Paxton already in the company?

Rainer: I don't know that Steve Paxton was in the company at that point. I think it was '61, maybe '62, when he joined [note: Paxton joined the company in 1961]. I used to see Bob Rauschenberg around the studio, which was above the Living Theatre on Fourteenth Street and Sixth Avenue. It was really in those years, '59, '60, '61, and '62, that I was going to Happenings.

Q: So you did *See-Saw* for Simone Forti with Bob Morris.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: Those were also the years of the Robert Dunn workshop at the Merce Cunningham Studio.

Rainer: Yes, the fall of 1960. In the spring or summer of 1960, I met Simone. She was taking a beginner's class at the Graham School. I was introduced to her by a mutual friend, Nancy Meehan, who was also born and raised in San Francisco, ten blocks from where I grew up. I had never met her before. The three of us had some improvisation sessions during the early summer and Simone persuaded me to go back to San Francisco and take Anna Halprin's workshop with her. At the end of the summer we both ended up back in New York taking Robert Dunn's composition class, which took place in the Merce Cunningham Studio.

Q: And you had also met Trisha Brown in San Francisco, at Anna Halprin [San Francisco Dancers' Workshop]?

Rainer: I met Trisha Brown at the Halprin workshop of 1960.

Q: Was Trisha also living in New York or she moved afterwards?

Rainer: I think she moved that year. In '61 she was back in New York.

Q: What was the experience of being in Robert Dunn's workshop? He was a composer. You were all dancers. Were visual artists also taking the workshop?

Rainer: Those first sessions of the workshop with Dunn, there were only five of us. We were all dancers of one kind or another. There was Simone and me and Steve Paxton and I always forget his name, a former Graham dancer [note: Paulus Berensohn], and Marni Mahaffey, who was

trained in ballet. Very odd bedfellows you might say. Bob Dunn mainly was explicating John Cage's score for *Fontana Mix* [1958] and suggesting ways we might adapt it to our own interest in movement. I immediately began to use chance procedures. I threw dice to deal with movement that I was already making in my studio. I was sharing a studio with Simone and Bob Morris.

Very odd things kept happening in that workshop. I remember Steve eating a sandwich and Simone describing the movement of an onion that, as it sprouted, eventually toppled over. Everything was dance. Anything you could think of that involved some kind of movement was dance and of course that was all very revelatory to all of us. Bob Dunn was totally appreciative and encouraging of anything that happened in the class.

Q: Would he suggest some kind of exercise?

Rainer: No. It was up to us. We were all already fairly experienced in technique. We'd taken ballet and other forms of dance and all were studying with Merce of course. Except I don't think Simone was. She'd given up on technique classes and was going her own way.

Q: So she was the one who was most highly influenced by Anna Halprin?

Rainer: Yes.

Q: So when did you decide to finally show your work?

Rainer: There was an informal recital at the end of that fall session. I don't remember exactly when it occurred. It might have been in February of '61. We all showed things and I showed the solo that I had made using [Erik] Satie's *Gymnopédies* [1888] and chance procedures. I also made something for a trio for some of us. More people came in in the beginning of the year so it was a larger group. I remember Ruth [Emerson]. There was a small audience of people. Jill Johnston was there, who was a champion of the early Judson work, the Judson Church concerts.

Q: Right. Someone who was able to better understand what you were doing as opposed to other critics from mainstream media.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: Was the audience different from the Judson Dance Theater and the Happenings?

Rainer: The audience for those studio showings was much smaller, of course, but at that time the art world was much smaller, more condensed. You went to music concerts and dance concerts and Happenings. You saw all the same people. We all followed each other's work. That year Yoko Ono rented a huge loft on Chambers Street and opened it up for music concerts and dance and performance events. La Monte Young was involved there, as were other avant-garde composers.

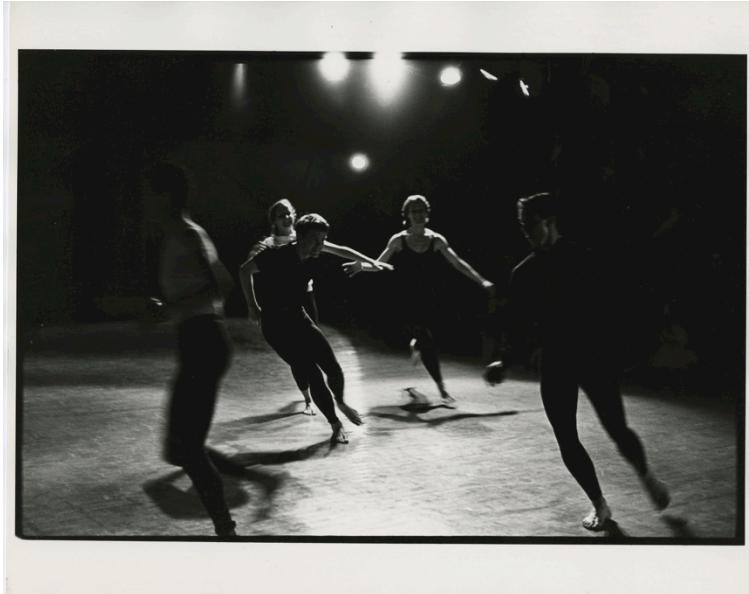
Q: Was Bob Rauschenberg already in the group as a friend or as a collaborator? How did that transition happen?

Rainer: Yes. In '62 those of us who had taken Bob Dunn's workshop realized we had a body of work that we wanted to show to a larger audience. Some of us had already auditioned for young choreographers up at the annual 92nd Street Y dance recital and we'd all been rejected. It was Ruth Emerson, Cindy Childs, Trisha, me, Steve Paxton; we were all turned down. So we went to the church and [Reverend Alvin Allison] Al Carmines [Jr.] saw a few of us and he invited us in. Steve was there, I remember. I showed my [*Three Satie Spoons*] [1961] as I called it. I can't remember what Steve did. Al Carmines, the cultural minister of the church, years later said, "I didn't quite know what I was looking at, but I sensed that it was important." So we got his backing. July of 1962 was the first Judson concert.

Rauschenberg was involved in that. He was in Steve's early dance. It opened with Jennifer Tipton, who became a famous lighting designer, carrying an aluminum pan, a bucket or a dishpan, out into the space. She got into it and Steve came out and promenaded her, seemingly effortlessly. It seems there were ball bearings at the bottom of this vessel. This may have opened the piece. He then taped a square downstage right and I came out, stood in it, and ate a pear. That's all I did. I didn't speak. I ate it as you would eat it at home. Then there was a trio with Rauschenberg and Lucinda Childs and Trisha. I've seen photos of it, so I know it happened, as a third part of that dance. The title of that dance has totally fled my memory [note: *Proxy*, 1962].

Then my next professional interaction with Bob was in 1963 when he did the lighting for an evening-length dance of mine called *Terrain*. He had stanchions placed mid-vertically from upstage to downstage, supporting a bar on which he hung lights. He ran the lights during the

show. No one got paid in those days. It was so cheap to live. You didn't talk about money. You talked about art. You talked about dance. There was no talk of real estate. You didn't know how people made a living. It was a totally different atmosphere than what is going on in the arts and among dancers today.



Yvonne Rainer's *Terrain* (1963), with lighting by Rauschenberg, performed at Judson Dance Theater, An Evening of Dance, Judson Memorial Church, New York, April 1963. Pictured: William Davis, Albert Reid, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, and Steve Paxton. Photo: Al Giese

Q: It probably changed toward the end of the seventies.

Rainer: By the end of the seventies everything had changed, yes.

Q: So were you all living downtown?

Rainer: In '63 I was living in a small apartment on East Twenty-fifth Street. Some of us were living in lofts downtown. By '75 I was living in a loft. I had hooked up with Robert Morris. Simone and he had split up, and I was with him on and off for the next seven, eight years. 9

Evenings was in '66, so I've skipped from '63 to '66. After '63, '64, Judson began to splinter. People were going their own ways. I think Rauschenberg's influence was that he drew certain people around him and others were marginalized. We were like an entourage. I was ambivalent about it, but his access to the art world was very seductive and he was very generous. So what I'm getting at is that *9 Evenings* was a disaster for me because everyone was working so hard, not sleeping, and the night of my performance, which I shared with John Cage, I got deathly ill after the performance. I had massive intestinal obstructions and nearly died. It was touch and go. For the next year—this was October '66—there were two more incidents involving the same problem with adhesions. I was in Aspen, Colorado when the third catastrophe struck with my gut and I was flown to Denver, spent a month in the hospital, and then came back to New York. By that time Robert Morris was dealing with toxic fumes making fiberglass sculptures so our loft was not very pleasant to be in. Bob offered me a room with a bed in his building. Deborah Hay came and nursed me. He was incredibly generous to those whose work he admired and friendship he valued.

Q: So we skipped a few performances. *Pelican*, for example, in 1963.

Rainer: Oh, '63 was when we went to Washington [D.C.], yes.

Q: Right, for the Pop [Art] Festival [Judson Dance Theater, Concert of Dance Number Five, National Arena roller-skating rink].

Rainer: That's where Bob did that fantastic trio, *Pelican*, on roller skates with Alex Hay and Carolyn Brown [née Rice]. Yes. I performed a version of another evening-length piece called *The Mind Is a Muscle*. I remember Bob and Steve did most of the labor, mounting lights and organizing that event, another big epic effort.



Rauschenberg, Carolyn Brown, and Alex Hay performing Rauschenberg's *Pelican* (1963), First New York Theater Rally, former CBS studio, Broadway and Eighty-first Street, New York, May 1965. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Elisabeth Loewenstein Novick

Q: What is amazing about the Judson Theater is that it was such a collective, a very pluralistic group coming from different backgrounds, and I am always amazed that so many different visual artists compared to Bob Rauschenberg were all working together.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: What kinds of conversations were there? How did you share your ideas?

Rainer: It was unusual in that dancers, visual artists, and sculptors collaborated as performers. They didn't keep the traditional separate roles of décor, designer, and performer. I remember Judith Dunn, who was a member of the Cunningham Company, made a duet with Robert Morris

where they bound each other with ropes. I collaborated with Robert Morris and made movement for him. He was a good mover and I made things that he could do and that we could do together. Alex Hay was a very elfin-like presence. I remember a piece he did.

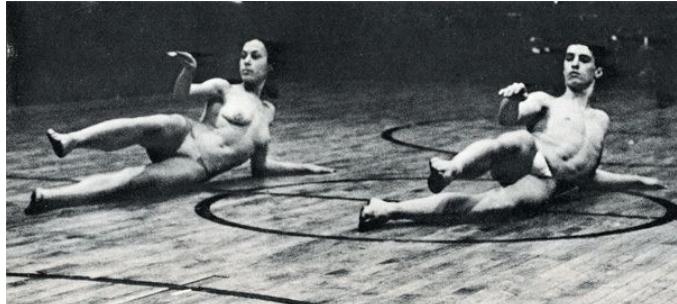
I'll go back to 1962. After that first concert, we decided to have weekly workshops in the gym of the church, which was open to us for that. Whoever came to the workshop and presented work could be in the next concert. There was a committee of three people each time to organize it. A sculptor came to us with an idea. Charles Ross. He would make these big sculptural environments and we could do whatever we wanted with them. One was a trapezoidal aluminum pipe frame, something like a children's swing set, but much bigger and without the swings. Another was a wooden platform, supported by aluminum pipes. There was a whole evening involving these big structures [Judson Dance Theater, Concert of Dance #13, Judson Memorial Church, 1963]. One was especially vivid in my memory, because it was all women [Carla Blank's *Turnover*, 1963]. Six or eight women collaborated in turning this big trapezoid over and rolling it around. You'd pick up a bottom bar, it would be received by people on the other side and you'd be suspended in the air while the other group would roll it over and you would descend to the ground. It felt wonderful because it was women doing real labor and it was slightly dangerous. There were a lot of interesting things that happened. This close association and interaction of visual artists and dancers was very unusual and unique, and I don't know that it's happened in a comparable way since then.

Q: Were they still producing their own artwork in their studios?

Rainer: Yes.

Q: So can we talk a little bit about the role the Judson Church had in those years and the Reverend [Howard R.] Moody?

Rainer: Moody was a wonderful guy, an ex-Marine, a radical and an activist. They had all kinds of programs, like counseling draft resisters. It was the early days of the draft and the Vietnam War. They counseled the prostitutes. They had all kinds of programs for the community. He was totally supportive of everything that went on. Paxton and I did an almost nude dance in the fall of '63, a concert in the gym, and there was no problem. They had no problem with that.



Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton performing their *Word Words* (1963), Judson Memorial Church, New York, January 1963.
Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo:
Henry Genn

Q: It was quite revolutionary. He saw modern artists as spiritual guides.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: So he was very open.

Rainer: Yes, he was a very progressive person.

Q: You actually have memories of interacting with him? He was around?

Rainer: I regret not going to any of his sermons. We were very autonomous. Years later when he was working on his autobiography, we had conversations. I was very self-involved, involved with dance. What is interesting is that members of that congregation, I run into them now and then. “Oh, I saw you back then.” They came to all the concerts, the congregation. Carmines was mounting his own events—musicals—writing musicals and playing the piano. I was in a Gertrude Stein piece called *What Happened[: A Play in Five Acts, 1913]* that he adapted for the stage and I couldn’t sing worth a damn. Lucinda Childs was in it and we each had a solo and we all sang around the piano and rolled the piano around. I don’t know where God was in all this. For them God was everywhere. They didn’t make these distinctions.

Q: Yes. According to Moody, it was He or She so he didn’t even have a gender.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: What was the relationship with the critics? What were they writing about you or Judson Dance Theater? Besides Johnston, was the work understood?

Rainer: The very first concert was reviewed by a music critic named Allen Hughes and it was very positive. Jill Johnston came in later and wrote for the *Village Voice*. The Hughes review was in the *New York Times* and Johnston wrote for the *Voice*. She came to and covered

everything that happened at the church as well as writing about Happenings and other art events. I myself later encountered negative reviews, like, “The avant-garde is at it again.” This was in the later sixties, '68. Then the audiences splintered. That first concert, there must have been two or three hundred people. It was a sweltering night.

Q: It was in the summer.

Rainer: Yes. Everyone stayed. Later, people would walk out. Some of the work was pretty hard to look at. I think Steve was the most intransigent, you might say, of all of us. Refusing his technique, refusing his talents. I was always incorporating everything I knew, and Trisha and Steve were throwing out their training. But they were such natural dancers. I always had very limited abilities in a conventional sense. I'm not limber and the proportions of my body were not traditional. [Laughs] A long spine, short legs.

Q: Simone was really never interested in technique.

Rainer: No. By that time she was living with and involved with Robert [“Bob”] Whitman and very involved in his work and not really doing her own work. Somehow I don't think she even attended any Judson concert. Dance in any form was not something she was interested in at that time. Interesting.

Q: Because for the 9 Evenings, she was one of the organizers. Apparently she found the place, the Armory, for the event. But she was not—

Rainer: She didn't do anything for that.

Q: Right.

Rainer: Do you know why?

Q: I don't know. Probably for the reason that you were explaining before, she was involved in Bob Whitman's Happenings and events.

Rainer: Yes. Right.

Q: She'd been, earlier on, in [Whitman's] *American Moon* [1960] and *Flower* [1963].

Rainer: Yes.

Q: So what happens? There is then the Grand Union.

Rainer: The Grand Union evolved out of a dance I made called *Continuous Project-Altered Daily*, which was performed at the Whitney Museum in 1971.

Q: That is the one that was filmed and is showing at the Whitney Museum.

Rainer: Right. There's a ten-minute excerpt from it. It had a very loose structure and I gradually let it go by allowing people to bring in their own material and then we brought in more people. Trisha came in and Nancy—she had two names—Lewis [Green] came in. I was working with very talented people and I felt I couldn't turn out work fast enough. So I let it go and within a year it had totally transformed itself. It was a group of very ambitious people, in their own rights, individuals, and we didn't like to rehearse with each other, and so we'd bring our props and our music and costumes and whatever to a given venue and let it happen. So you never knew what to expect, the audience or the performers. After a couple of years, the pressure was too much for me. I couldn't perform without getting stoned and I think a couple of other people also in the group got stoned. I was moving on into film. But they went on until '76.

Q: I found it interesting that also Bob Rauschenberg stopped creating performances around the same time, the early seventies.

Rainer: The early seventies, yes.

Q: You've talked about, in the past, a need to address more straightforward social issues that became easier for you with film than with dance performances. I wonder why dance performance was no longer effective?

Rainer: Well, my easing out of dance had to do with aging, with the illnesses that had curtailed a lot of my energies. I didn't make a kind of dance that was referential in terms of narrative or politics or social issues. I didn't want to go into playwriting and I'd always followed

experimental film. So the possibilities of combining experimental film techniques, non-narrative with language and particular social issues, feminism, race, real estate, whatever; film beckoned with all these possibilities for intertitles, subtitles, voiceover, sync sound [synchronized sound recording], and movement. In most of my films, very often the characters are performers of one kind or another so I could still deal with movement, but also deal with everything that film offered in terms of framing and discontinuities and changing the image in 1/24 of a second. All of that attracted me to film.

Q: What was the atmosphere in those years? The Vietnam War, a number of protests organized. Some of your performances were dealing with that.

Rainer: There was this period in '70, '71, when the U.S. invaded Cambodia. They were supposed to pull out of Vietnam and then the war under [Richard M.] Nixon was suddenly expanded. There was this group called the Art Workers' Coalition that picketed the museums to close down for a day to protest the war. We sat on the steps of the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York]. We invaded the [Solomon R.] Guggenheim [Museum, New York]. There was a Hans Haacke show at the Guggenheim that was being censored because it was all about the involvement of collectors who owned slums and we made an event, a whole group of us spontaneously began to do a conga line down the ramps. I did a street action with people who had been studying with me. I was teaching at the School of Visual Arts [New York] and we snaked around SoHo in a funereal movement in the street with black armbands. Yes, during that period everyone was involved in some kind of action.



Yvonne Rainer's *Street Action (M-Walk)* (1970), with Rainer, Douglas Dunn, and Sarah Rudner in front, New York, 1970. Photo © The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

Q: Yes. Your piece, *War* [1970], was also choreographed with a large group.

Rainer: Yes, I did a piece for forty people called *War* and it was performed at what was then the Loeb Student Center, which has since been torn down, at NYU [New York University], in the Village. On one floor the Grand Union was doing their thing, on another was this piece called *War*.

Q: That was also around the same time the *Trio A* was performed naked with the flag.

Rainer: Jon Hendricks and Michele Wallace and Michele's mother [Faith Ringgold], who's an artist, organized a protest at Judson Church. A gallerist named Steve Radich had showed the work of a sculptor that involved an American flag draped over a figure of some kind and he was pulled into court for desecrating the flag. I don't know who initiated this, but it was a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court and was thrown out. Meanwhile Jon Hendricks and

company organized a show at the church where anyone who did anything involving the American flag was invited in. There was a Jasper Johns flag and a Kate Millett piece with a toilet with a flag draped over it [*The American Dream Goes to Pot*, 1970]. He invited me to do something and there were five of us who knew *Trio A*, which had become my signature dance. We took off our clothes and we tied American flags around our necks and performed the dance at the opening of this show. Footage of that has been shown here and there.

Q: What was happening socially? Was Rauschenberg around? Were you in touch, seeing what he was producing, what kind of work he was doing?

Rainer: By that time, in the early seventies, I had lost touch, I think.

Q: Do you remember why, what happened?

Rainer: Well, you don't have to include this. His alcoholism really turned me off. I think his entourage splintered. I would see him at parties or openings now and then. I remember once seeing him and he complained that he'd lost his friends. It was a period when things changed and people went their own ways.

Q: In fact several people left New York. I'm thinking of Deborah Hay and Alex Hay, they all left. So there was at a certain point a turning moment for this small community.

Rainer: Judson was over. The Happenings were over by the early seventies.

Q: But some of the initial group, like Lucinda Childs or Trisha Brown, they continued to create—

Rainer: They went their own professional ways, yes. I went into film. Steve left the Cunningham and Rauschenberg left the Cunningham Company too.

Q: Yes. That was '64.

Rainer: That had been a core of social cohesion.

Q: What was the reason why they both left the Merce Cunningham Company?

Rainer: I think it was the world tour. A year on the road is very trying and stressful and I think people had had enough by the time they came back. Merce was aware of it also.

Q: So what brought you back to dance?

Rainer: Dance? It's funny, I thought this was going to be all about Rauschenberg, but it seems to be about me. [Laughs] I made seven feature-length films. I got a MacArthur [Fellows Program award, 1990], I got every grant that was around. I saw the handwriting on the wall. It would be harder to finance films. Each film cost double or triple what its predecessor had cost. Also I didn't like film production. I liked writing the script, I liked editing, but I didn't like film

production with this hierarchy of workers and unpaid production assistants and the director at the top of the heap. I'm also a techno dummy. I never really mastered or could understand all the technicalities so there was always this waiting around for the lights, for the this, for the that. By 1996, toward the end, making *MURDER and murder* [1996] was very stressful in terms of production. I realized I didn't want to do this anymore. So for the next few years I wrote poetry.

In 1999 Baryshnikov approached me and invited me to make a dance for his company. It was an offer I couldn't refuse. I hadn't choreographed for twenty-five years. So with the help of Pat Catterson, who was still dancing with me and had studied with me in '69, I went into my notebooks and memories and I made a mélange, a half-hour dance called *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* for his company of six people including him.

Q: What do you think was the attraction to the Judson Theater work, for Baryshnikov?

Rainer: From what I understand, Misha, from the moment he defected, was going downtown to see what was going on. Traditional ballet was not his only interest. Especially as he aged out of dancing and ballet companies, he wanted to keep moving, and he formed this company of older dancers—forty-, forty-five-year-olds—and commissioned work by modern and post-modern choreographers. He produced this neo-Judson or revival of Judson work with seven of the original Judson choreographers in 2002. He was quite a unique, amazing person in that way and he launched my new career in choreography. It was like coming home for me. I love working with dancers and never really understood what actors do or the technology of cinema.

Choreography is very immediate and real. You don't have to deal with laboratories and all of that.

Q: There is a quote that I want to find of Bob Rauschenberg about dancers and why he was so attracted to dancers. He said, in a conversation with Tomkins, "I felt more at home with the discipline and the dedication of those dancers than I did in painting [. . .] I was so envious of the fact that it was such a total medium [. . .] The idea of having your own body and its activity be the material—that was really tempting." [Note: Tomkins, *Off the Wall: A Portrait of Robert Rauschenberg*, 2005]

Rainer: Yes.

Q: So what do you think Bob Rauschenberg took from the activities of the dancers that he brought, in a way, to his artwork and his way of creating art?

Rainer: Well, the materiality. The substance of the body, you see it in his collages, even in the later work, what he chose to photograph, the everyday. Of course, that comes from Cage, who I believe was a big influence on him, and on all of us, of course. It was that realness of the body—bringing a real stuffed chicken to sit on a shelf and a quilt to paint over. From the very beginning, this materiality of possibility was what he dealt with and I think that quote reveals that. His relation to dancers was a continuation of that interest.

Q: Yes. Well, it's also been written about his theatrical sensibility, so the element of temporality, for example, in his artwork is very present.

Rainer: Well, the theatricality was something that he and Cage and Merce, in his own way, and all of us post-Cunningham people were challenged to expand. The illusion of the theatrical was something that was constantly being challenged, from Cage's piping in sounds from the street, to Rauschenberg's use of objects as décor, or use of everyday. I saw this in Cunningham's *Story*. During one performance on the world tour Bob brought an ironing board onto the stage and started to iron shirts. This does not mesh with traditional theatricality and the fourth wall and a simulation. Something else was happening in the art world also. His contemporaries, [Claes] Oldenburg and Pop art, Warhol, of course, were dealing with some of the same ideas.

Q: How did the relationship with Rauschenberg evolve? So it sort of slowly dissipated? But were you able to see him later on, toward the end of his career, his life?

Rainer: The last time I saw Bob was after his stroke at an opening of his latest work at Pace Gallery [New York]. He was in a wheelchair. It was sad. I don't know how long after that he died. He was paralyzed in one hand, one arm. But he had a long career and he influenced a lot of people. I owe him.

Q: Do you see any of the influence in his peers of visual artists, the people that he was in relationship with that might not be visible for someone who wasn't there?

Rainer: I think everything that went on at that time, Cage and Rauschenberg and the Judson people and Simone and the Happenings people, have influenced everything that came later and everything that is going on now. Yes. The kinds of questions that still are being asked of art in terms of value and standards and ambiguities.

Q: So the art market also changed in the seventies, in the late seventies, with this disappearance of the artist community in the lower side of Manhattan. Has that situation recovered, been recreated in other parts of the city or differently? Are you in contact with new generations of choreographers and artists?

Rainer: Somewhat. Well, the people who work with me are all younger and doing their own work. I try to keep up to a certain extent with the younger choreographers. I can't go to everything.

Q: So let's return briefly to 9 Evenings and what happened in 1966. What was behind the idea and what were the conversations like, how was the event organized?

Rainer: As far as I remember, the predecessor to 9 Evenings was Steve Paxton's Stage 73 series, a series of dance and dance-like events. I had a solo called *At My Body's House* and Billy Klüver was on the scene. I had known him for a couple of years through Rauschenberg, met him at parties and here and there. I wanted a contact microphone somehow attached so that it would amplify my heartbeat and my breathing. It was very crudely done. I only know this from a photo because I barely remember the dance. The mic was taped to my throat and I think my breathing

was amplified. Years later I was told—I never saw the dance—Baryshnikov did a solo where his heartbeat was amplified.

This was '64, so for the next couple of years these ideas were batted about, about how Bell Laboratories scientists could collaborate with dancers and artists. I got involved. My proposed piece was very elaborate, where there would be minimalist actions on the ground and in the air would be remotely-programmed events, like big plastic balls traveling across the space. From a 50-foot ceiling these spidery slats would descend at a certain point. I remember Rauschenberg's event was a tennis match between two people and every time the ball was hit a light would go off until it was dark. Deborah Hay had people on moving platforms [*Solo*, 1966]. Each of us was assigned our own scientist technician to work with. I forgot the name of my scientist [note: Per Biorn] but he had me running down to Lafayette Street and getting all kinds of apparatus, technical things that he needed to program my events.

There were a lot of mishaps in some of these collaborations. Cage had all this equipment and we were all splicing wires for him for a week. This big platform ran over and cut some of these wires and it all had to happen again. The first night of my performance—I shared the evening with Cage—none of my events happened. They had been programmed backwards or something. Nothing was working and I remember I was up on a balcony, and Bob crawled on all fours and said, "Nothing is happening. What shall we do?" I don't know. Then I was supposed to be giving directions to my performers. I said, "Well, let them do whatever they want," moving all these objects around, from a piece of paper to a mattress to free weights. It was a landscape of objects.

Q: And Bob Rauschenberg was one of the performers for your—

Rainer: No. He wasn't. I had about ten or twelve performers. But he was there every night, like a troubleshooter or assistant, doing whatever needed to be done. I remember that first night, the events had been advertised as the eighth wonder of the world and what did the audience see? A tennis match where the lights kept going out, or my event where people, my performers, were standing around waiting for instructions [laughs], which didn't happen, and they started to applaud with displeasure. It was a disaster, and as I said earlier, I got catastrophically ill after it. So that was my experience of 9 Evenings.

Q: Have you seen recently the footage?

Rainer: Yes. Then Robert Morris took over my piece and all the technical things were corrected the second night. I've seen the footage of that. But most of it was very minimal. It seemed a lot of labor for very small results.

Q: But it probably started collaborations between engineers and artists that continued and produced maybe better results in the future.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: Some of the dances that were created in those years have been reconstructed for several occasions, yours and Simone's, but Bob Rauschenberg always refused. At a certain point he said

that that was really related to that specific period and didn't want to have reconstructions of those pieces. What do you think was the idea behind that decision?

Rainer: I don't know. I was not in touch with him about this. My piece was never reconstructed.

Q: What about your decision to have some of your work reconstructed? What is the experience of seeing your work?

Rainer: Reconstruction. I'm constantly raiding my own iceboxes, as Merce did with his events, taking from one piece and another to reorganize. Very little of my sixties work can be reconstructed. There was no documentation of it. We didn't film. It was too expensive and video didn't exist, so it's only fragments. *Trio A* has survived because it's one of the few intact pieces of complicated choreography that has survived through my performing it for camera in 1978, which was twelve years after it was made. There are other pieces, fragments from larger works that have been notated in my notebooks or are so simple in their structure that they can be reconstructed.

Q: Well, for dance, of course, it's more common to restage previous work. It's part of a way of keeping the art alive, to restage it.

Rainer: Yes.

Q: But obviously the period of performances for Robert Rauschenberg was really temporal.

Rainer: Ephemeral. Yes. He had lost interest. I can understand that.

Q: In recent years there has been a lot of interest for the museums to bring performances within the walls and restage some of the work from that period. There have been retrospectives. What do you think is the motor that drives this, getting the museums interested?

Rainer: Well, one, there's so much mythology around the decade of the sixties, which was so full of turmoil and challenge in the arts. The institutions are very interested in that period. Now, the museum's relation to dance has certainly changed for a lot of reasons. The Whitney invited dancers back in the late sixties or early seventies and I had two evenings there, on two consecutive years, '70, '71. I don't remember what we were paid or what I asked for. It was simply a space that was available and I probably had some kind of grant that allowed me to pay. I always paid my dancers. The Whitney had a whole series of music and dance. Trisha, Lucinda Childs, Deborah Hay, [Philip] Phil Glass, Steve Reich, we all performed there. At MoMA also, in the garden. I never performed at MoMA, but I remember various Judson people did in various spaces. Then I got into film and I lost track of museums and dance. I would follow my peers' work, but not so much in museums. It was in theaters, at the Brooklyn Academy [of Music], or various places.

Now in the last five, ten years something has changed. They have a special interest in dance. It's like they are constantly being pushed to expand and to accommodate dance, or pushed to raise more money for it, and choreographers are beginning to make demands, myself included. We

didn't think about sprung floors back then. We're older now. We didn't think about dressing rooms or showers, or even now, I am performing next month at MoMA and the so-called dressing rooms are a quarter of a mile away in some part of the structure. I still don't know. It's very inconvenient. You warm up in certain clothes, you have to go traipsing through the museum to put on your performance clothes. There are all these frustrations that constantly have to be renegotiated to perform in the museum.

A former student of mine from California is making a career of articulating these demands, writing about it and interviewing people and raising consciousness that dancers and choreographers should not feel flattered by the institutions when they are invited. They should make their demands both in terms of physical space and especially economically, in relation to what the art world economy is all about. It will continue to be a matter that has to be thought about and dealt with.

Q: Would Robert Rauschenberg be seduced by the museums now or convinced by the museums now to perform *Pelican* for example? That's an answer that we won't have.

Rainer: Well, there's no space big enough in a museum. If they removed the walls, yes. *Pelican* could be reconstructed from the film. Would the Rauschenberg Foundation allow that?

Q: What's your experience of seeing Robert Rauschenberg's work in museums now? What kind of memory does it bring back?

Rainer: I haven't seen a Rauschenberg show for quite some time. My fondest memories are of the early work and the Combines and the collages. I look forward to whatever is going to happen in the near future.

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

Rainer: About him? I remember the raucous parties in his building on Lafayette Street.

Q: He was a great entertainer.

Rainer: He was a great charmer. Yes.

Q: And a social dancer as well.

Rainer: Yes. Oh, I didn't mention. He performed in a forty-five-minute work of mine in 1965 called *Parts of Some Sextets* with twelve mattresses and ten performers. He was one of the performers. He came to all the rehearsals, which were twice a week for a month or two. He was gung ho to be involved and was not at all a prima donna or anything like that.

Q: He's always described as a hard worker and always very engaged in what he was doing.

Rainer: Yes, when he committed himself, he worked. [Pauses] He was a very handsome young man. On that note—

[Laughter]

Q: Okay. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]