

Conversation with Joan Jonas

Ingrid Schaffner

BELLS
MASKS
STONES
STICKS
DOGS
TOYS
HOOPS
CONES
COSTUMES
MIRRORS
WATER
WIND

I propose the list to the left, of elements Joan Jonas often uses in her work, as a place to begin.

In 2001, Jonas was one of twelve artists to accept my invitation to make a new work in response to an old American Impressionist painting in the collection of the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, New York. When I tried to find out what she was doing, she rebuffed my attempts so cordially and firmly that I resigned myself to the possibility that she might not be doing anything at all. But of course, Jonas delivered. An assortment of objects and video equipment arrived at the museum. Next came Jonas and an assistant, who, absorbed in composition, spent all morning in the gallery, as if it were the studio.

The finished installation was a small setup: a giant metal hoop, a child's desk, an easel holding a chalkboard on which rough shapes had been dryly drawn, and a video monitor. In the video, a white dog jumped through a hoop that was held by the assistant. The timing had been jiggered to make the dog appear to fly, to float, to leap forward then soar backward before touching the ground: to stick in space. It was dreamy, looping endlessly, accompanied by the sound of a musical saw that seemed to drift from some otherworldly dimension or, perhaps, from the circus.

Some stage magic had definitely taken place, because the project's august premise—William Merritt Chase's painting of scrubby dunes on a sunny day, three girls in white frocks industriously picking bayberries, and, looming small in the distance, the giant Victorian cottage whence the girls presumably came—seemed to have completely disappeared. And yet, an even stronger sense of the picture remained. In the scale of the desk, the old-fashioned props, and the charming film, and in all the mysterious emptiness in between, the painting flickered like a memory briefly entertained, then abandoned, in favor of this wonderfully perplexing new image.

Since the 1960s, Jonas's essentially improvisational art has been a discipline of assembling not only the provisions—the ideas, the images, the props, the performers—she needs but also the requisite pressure. Jonas pushes herself and her collaborators, curators and institutions alike, to keep a situation open for as long as possible in order to make the urgency and exhilaration of realizing the work fully a part of her art's potential and experience. Building suspense is a critical part of the process. Although the United States Pavilion in Venice will be one of her most important commissions, with an anticipated 440,000 viewers, Jonas is no less committed to her art's brinksmanship. Hence, the list on the opposite page of things one might expect to find in the work of Joan Jonas primes a discussion of the still-fluid ideas and images she is now preparing to use in Venice to stage her art.

JOAN JONAS: I looked at your list and I made word associations because there are relationships. BELLS, STONES, STICKS, TOYS, CONES, WATER, and WIND all make different kinds of sounds. But that's not why I chose each one. Bells ring. Stones, I used them to click together and to define space by the way they echoed. And I collect stones. I collect bells. Sticks, the same.

INGRID SCHAFFNER: Lists have a rhythm.

JJ: Yes, I like lists. There is also the visual aspect. Each toy suggests a little world of its own that adds something to my content. There is also something grotesque about toys for adults—I mean children's toys—and I like that double aspect.

The HOOP I chose for different reasons. One was that when I first began to do performances with drawings, I drew circles and lines because they're the basic elements of depiction. And then I was inspired by Houdini to have a hoop made. It was six feet in diameter and, for a performance in 1970, I had myself rolled around the block. That particular hoop has been a major element in my work over the years.

Later I collected wooden hoops, sports hoops, in Italy, actually. The cone is another object I use because of its relation to form.



Joan Jonas, *Jones Beach Piece*, performance at Jones Beach, NY, 1970. Photograph © Richard Landry

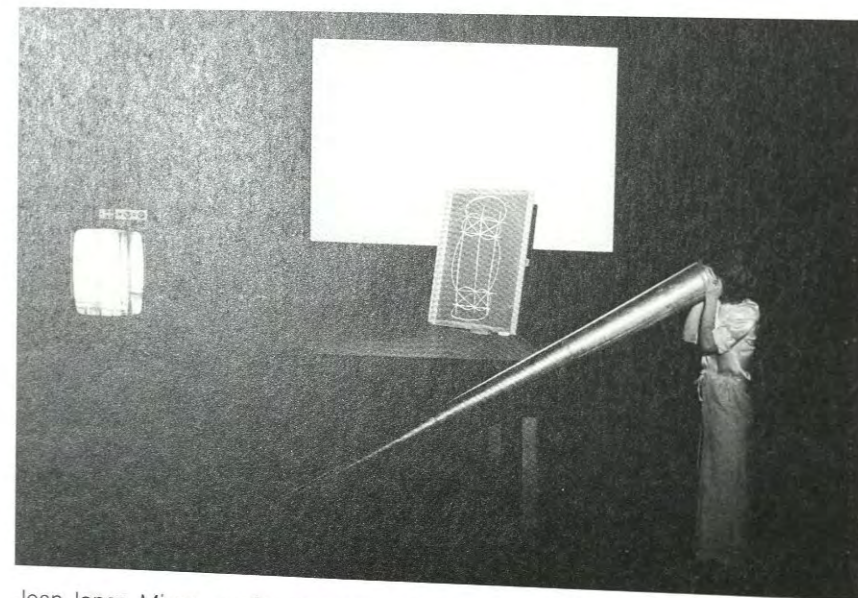
IS: Right, the magician waves a hoop around the levitated woman to prove his trick is real. What about metaphors and models of perception? There is the cone of vision, of hearing. The cone of silence?

JJ: I've used the cone for all of those things. In *Mirage*, there are tin cones that I look through, listen through, then use to direct sound around the room. It's a beautiful form, and it's also functional.

WATER is everywhere and it's a medium. WIND is a character—mysterious and frightening—and a very strong element in my work. My very first film is called *Wind* [1968].

IS: In the film, a line of performers is trying to put on and take off their coats while being battered by the wind; it's like a silent comedy.

JJ: Well, I like comedy.



Joan Jonas, *Mirage*, performance at Anthology Film Archives, New York, 1976. Copyright © 1976 Babette Mangolte, all rights of reproduction reserved

IS: It's good to get that straight.

JJ: MIRRORS create a space. They also change the space. And they can break. It always makes people a little bit uncomfortable to see a mirror, to perceive themselves. The first prop I used was a mirror.

IS: In *Mirror Check* [1970], one of your most iconic works, you are inspecting your naked body with a small hand mirror in front of an audience who cannot see your mirror image, but only how you respond to it. So, what about dogs and masks?

JJ: DOGS and MASKS are two of the most important. When I started working on *Organic Honey* [1972], my first video piece, I worked with what was around me—what was nearby. My dog Sappho was there. I excuse my use of the dog by saying it's an animal helper, like in a myth or fairytale. They call it a "familiar."



Joan Jonas, film still from *Wind*, 1968. Photograph courtesy of the artist



Joan Jonas, *Mirror Check*, 1970, performance at Ace Gallery, Los Angeles, 1972, with *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*. Photograph by Roberta Neiman



Joan Jonas, *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, performance at Ace Gallery, Los Angeles, 1972. Photograph by Roberta Neiman



Joan Jonas, video still from *Lines in the Sand*, 2002. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

IS: Usually the helper is a black cat, but you always had a white dog.

JJ: Not always. My dog is beige now. There were two dogs in a row that were white: Sappho, then Zina. In the mid-eighties, Sappho chewed up a lot of my costumes and props. It was quite liberating, actually, to be freed to think about new images.

IS: That was helpful of Sappho. Your current familiar is named?

JJ: Ozu, after the Japanese film director [Yasujirō Ozu, 1903–1963]; I love his use of everyday objects and moments. When I traveled to Japan for the first time in 1970 with Richard Serra, we went to the Noh theater. I was deeply affected and started working with masks immediately after that. Masks were, for me, perfect, because they hid my face. I was not

a performer when I began in 1968; I didn't want to be Joan Jonas. The mask gave me another identity. COSTUMES also transform.

IS: You are widely regarded for bringing together performance, video, and installation in ways that we now take for granted in contemporary art. Let's expand the list with the various modes and mediums of your work, starting with MOVEMENT and DANCE.

JJ: I trained as a sculptor. My work, which I mostly destroyed a long time ago, was influenced by Giacometti. It was the early sixties; I was living uptown, married to a writer, Gerry Jonas, when I started going downtown, where I experienced the work of La Monte Young, Claes Oldenburg, Simone Forti, among others, for the first time.

IS: Just by crossing Fifty-Seventh Street, then, you went from museums and modernism into an emerging art world of Minimalism, performance, happenings, music, and dance.

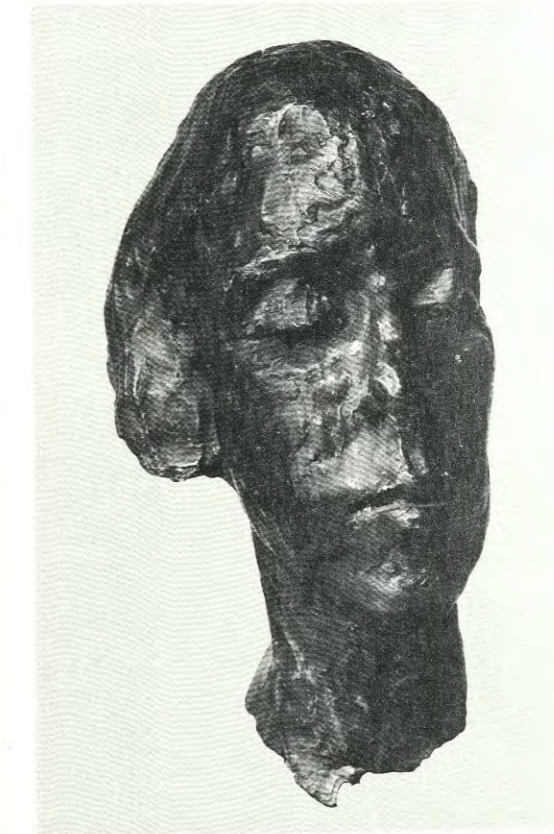
JJ: I saw Lucinda Childs perform a piece that was, for me, very strange. And immediately I thought, "Oh my god, this is very attractive. I have to do this." That's when I really decided to go into performance, but it took me several years.

In order to perform you have to move. I took all of the workshops I could, and each was different. Deborah Hay's would be about doing a movement that she might do; Yvonne Rainer, the same thing. Trisha Brown used theatrical exercises developed by Viola Spolin to teach improvisation. Steve Paxton was working with everyday movement. Lucinda Childs was very controlled. I would also go to their performances. You learn by looking, and I wanted to see what was already being done.

IS: Your project to become a performance artist began with a period of intense research. Was it inhibiting not being a trained dancer?



Joan Jonas, video still from *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, 1972. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

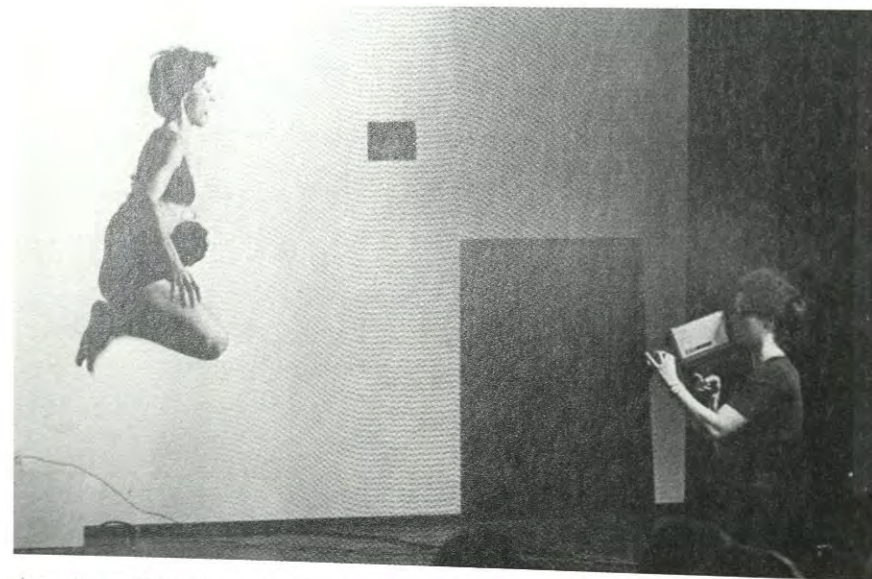


Joan Jonas, *Self-portrait*, ca. 1961. Painted plaster. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

JJ: No, it wasn't, actually. I even went to Merce Cunningham's classes once or twice, where I saw for myself in the mirror how totally different a dancer's body is. But to become a performer, I really had to learn how to move, which I did, in part by doing my own thing.

IS: Your first performances with mirrors were, uncomfortably, silent, but SOUND soon became a shaping element.

JJ: My first thought when I stepped from sculpture into performance was that now I can make something with sound. Initially, I made sound in abstract ways—clapping blocks of wood, for instance, like in *Noh theater*—to sound out space, or silence. I was also interested in sound delay and in creating situations where you saw a sound being made before you heard it.



Joan Jonas, *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, 1972, performance at Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, 1973. Photograph by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



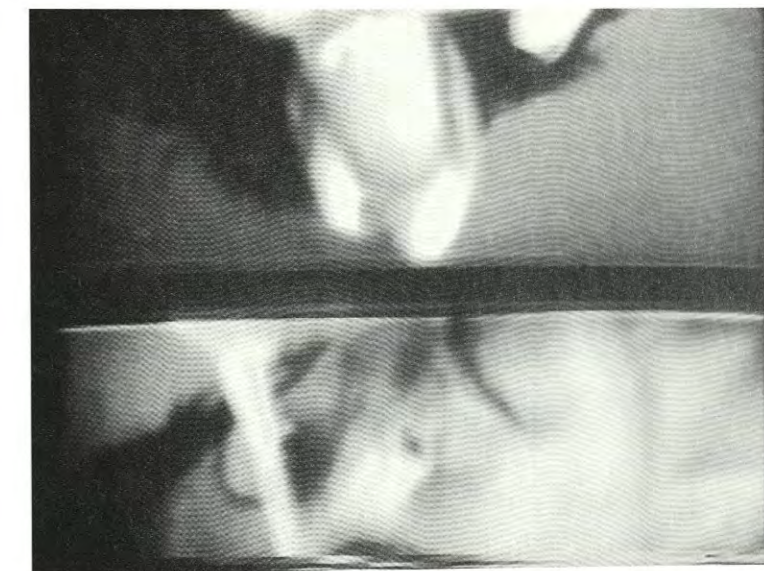
Joan Jonas, *Mirror Piece II*, 1970, performance at 14th Street Emanu-El YMHA, New York, 1970, with audience members Robert Smithson and Richard Serra reflected in mirror. Photograph by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



Joan Jonas, *Jones Beach Piece*, performance at Jones Beach, NY, 1970. Photograph © Richard Landry

IS: The art historian Douglas Crimp used the term "de-synchronization" to describe your strategy of taking us out of the flow of real time. How did VIDEO, which you've greatly used to abet this aim, enter the picture?

JJ: I love film and have always gone to the movies. The minute I found out about the Portapak camera, I wanted to get one. So, I did. In 1970, when we went to Japan, I bought one there and started working with video. I imagined that I was making film. I had experimented with Super 8, but actual film is very complicated. Video is instantaneous, and it was a new form. I was very interested in that. I began by exploring the qualities of the medium that were different from film. However, throughout my work, the way I use time and think about time remains very influenced by what I know about film—and music.



Joan Jonas, video still from *Vertical Roll*, 1972. Photograph courtesy of the artist

IS: Film is called the mirror of its age. You've used video like a mirror in your PERFORMANCES and INSTALLATIONS.

JJ: To make a work, I must have something concrete in my mind. When I started doing performance, I needed a place to enter, and that's when I thought of the stage. The stage could be an empty city lot, Jones Beach, a school gymnasium, or my loft, which is where the pieces began to be more theatrical, in terms of sets and costumes. But I didn't start concentrating on installation as an independent form until 1994, with my retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Nor did I really show my work in galleries until the 1990s. But I did show my videos and performances at Castelli-Sonnabend in the seventies.



Joan Jonas, *Delay Delay*, performance on Lower Manhattan's West Side, New York, 1972. Photograph by Gwenn Thomas



Joan Jonas, video still from *Beautiful Dog*, 2014. Photograph courtesy of the artist

IS: DRAWING in your work is more than a medium, it's a way of thinking and performing.

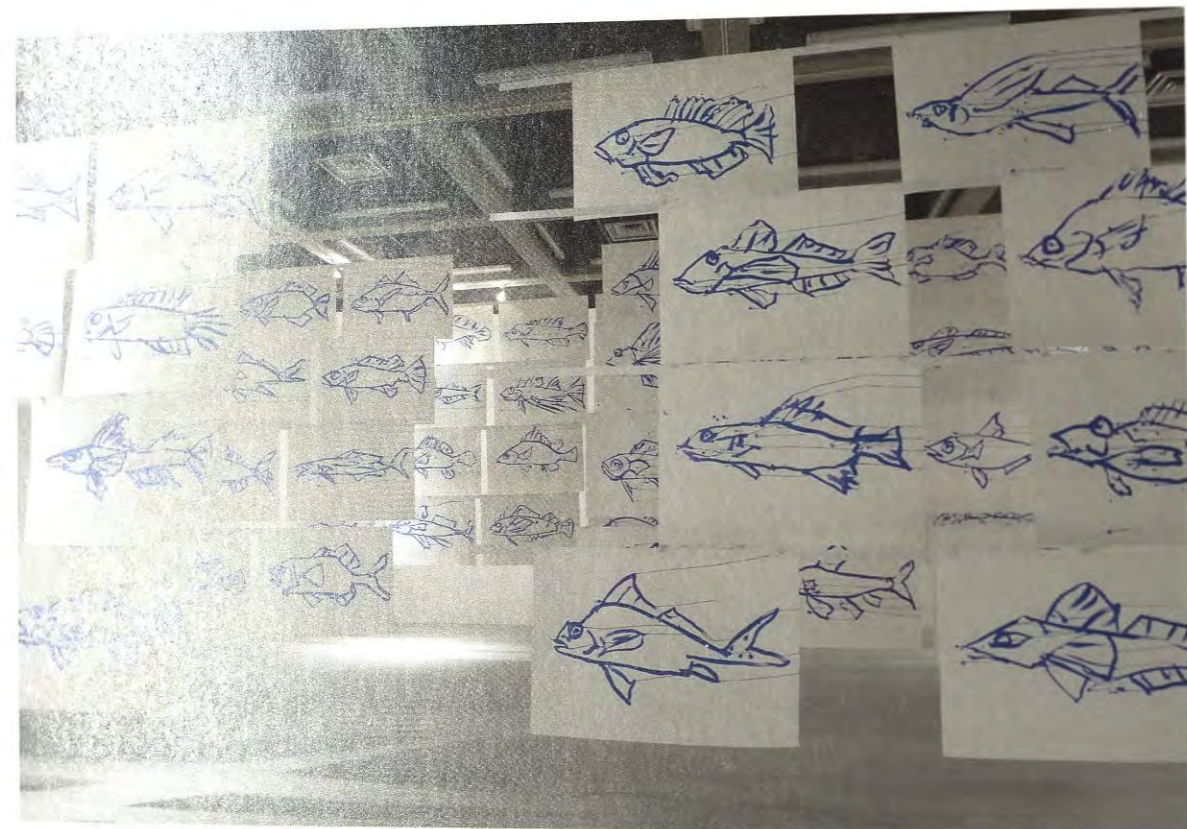
JJ: In the early outdoor works, I purposefully set the audience at a distance, because I saw the gestures and configurations as drawings in space. After I got the Portapak, I started drawing for the camera. I would make small drawings on stage that audiences experienced on screen, as large projections. I had all these different ways of drawing that were influenced by the setup of the camera and the monitor. Draw without looking. Draw while looking at the monitor. Don't look at the paper. You can't totally control drawing in a performance. It gives you a different way to arrive at an image. The result is always surprising.

IS: Wearing a billowing paper coat and hat, you appear to have become a drawing element in recent work.

JJ: I'm a character making drawing. With each new piece, I think, what image do I want to draw? How shall I draw? And how can I make the drawing relate to the situation, because that's always a question.

IS: Which brings us to the question: what will you draw for VENICE?

JJ: The subject is animals. There will be a lot of drawings in three of the four main rooms. They are based on installations I did at the Center for Contemporary Art (CCA) in Kitakyushu, Japan, where I've been an artist in residence four times.



Joan Jonas, *they come to us without a word*, installation at CCA Kitakyushu Project Gallery, Kitakyushu, Japan, 2013. Photograph by Kenji Miura

On my third visit, I brought along an old book I found in San Diego of Japanese FISH. Often what happens in my work is that I get inspired by something I randomly find or collect. The book is in Japanese, with beautiful, hand-drawn illustrations, exquisitely colored. In Japan, you eat a lot of fish, and we're all thinking about overfishing. This is really what attracted me to the idea of using the book to make drawings of fish and hang them in a certain way, not on the walls but throughout the space, from poles.



Plate 39 in Toshiji Kamohara's *Coloured Illustrations of the Fishes of Japan* (Osaka: Hoikusha, 1955)

I wanted to work with a craft particular to Japan, and a kite maker agreed to make me about eighty KITES out of Japanese paper and bamboo. Traditionally, the kites, which come in all of these beautiful shapes, are decorated, but mine were like blank sheets of paper. In Kitakyushu, I painted them different colors, then pasted shapes cut from hand-tinted paper, using stencils based on the drawings I was doing.

IS: The kites will bring wind, and the fish water, to Venice. What about Matisse? The kites make me think of his cutouts.

JJ: Matisse is one of my favorite artists.

IS: To get that sweep and scale of line, Matisse famously drew with a piece of charcoal attached to a long pole—a fishing pole, perhaps. Joan, you draw with a crooked stick! You've also been known to use ink and chunks of ice, as well as to dribble ink into snow. Like a witch, a crone, a shaman, with a wand, a cane, a dowser's rod, you make drawings appear as if by divination or magic.

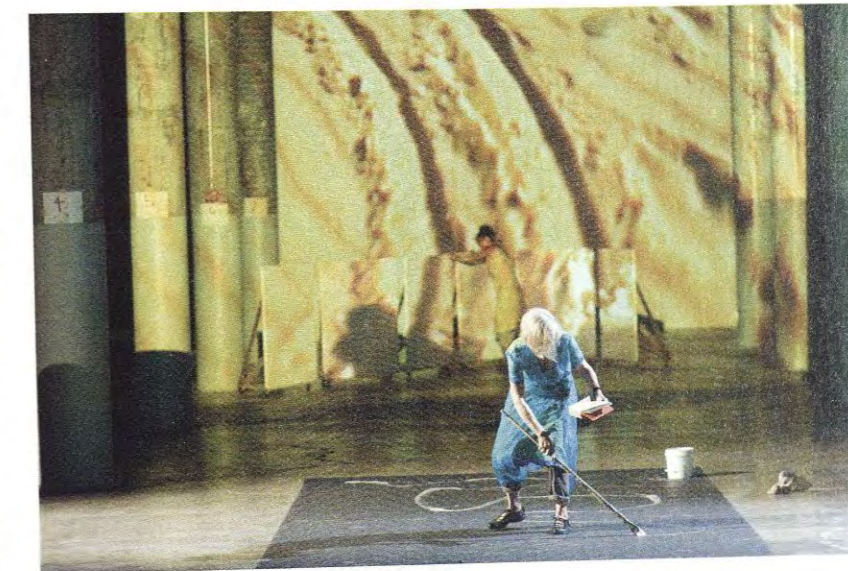
JJ: I like to work very fast. I draw the fish by looking at the book and not at the paper, which is on the floor. I'm standing, using a long brush. One minute, two at most. I'm always looking to bring in new techniques.

I'm also doing BEE drawings, using a Rorschach-style inkblot technique. Given how much drawing there will be, I'm already talking to a conservator about archivally printing these works on paper and showing copies, so they don't just fade away in the Venetian light. I'm also working with the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia on a curtain that will be both theatrical and functional in the space.

IS: Schools of fishes, swarms of bees. What brings the bees to Venice?

JJ: I'm trying to unite different elements on various levels. The bees partly come from reading Jakob von Uexküll [1864–1944], a German biologist, who wrote about animal perception. I've always loved his description of how bees find nectar, transport pollen, and make honey. It's so miraculous. He was also the first to study the "information dance" that bees use to communicate; they do four different dances.

IS: Apparently, it's relational: the mood of the hive affects how well the dance and its encoded message are received. I imagine signals in the hive are increasingly down, given the global effects of climate change, pesticides, and destruction of habitat on bee populations.



Joan Jonas, *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, 2005, performance at Dia:Beacon, Beacon, NY, October 2005. Photograph © Paula Court

JJ: Certainly, it's an issue that connects the imagery of fish and bees. But I didn't want to make a gloomy piece about the world situation, even though it is a sad situation. That's why I have the CHILDREN. I wanted to have their innocent voices. This is their future we are talking about, after all.

IS: Where are you finding the children, and how will their voices be incorporated into Venice?



Joan Jonas, *Reanimation (In a Meadow)*, dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany, 2012. Photograph courtesy of the artist

JJ: Through workshops. We'll meet every Saturday until March, when I leave for Venice. They're mostly children of artist friends, ranging from the five-year-old girl next door to Lorna Simpson's and Carol Shymanski's teenage daughters. We will talk about animals, about things that are threatened, creatures that might be disappearing, or not. Children think, "Oh bees, they sting." But I found a very nice beekeeper in Manhattan, who is also a biology teacher, to show us bees and all that they do. Another thing I want to do with the children is try and make little bee dances.

IS: What a sweet echo of all those early downtown dance workshops!

JJ: We'll see what happens, starting next week. The workshops are being held in a big space MIT has rented for me to use as a STUDIO in the West Village. We set up a back-projection screen with two stages; each stage has a screen with front and back projection. We'll have a computer and a video mixer, like I use in all of my performances, so you can go from live camera to prerecorded video. During the workshops, we're going to be projecting from both directions, sometimes mixing, sometimes blocking, with the children in front and around the screens. It will be a big visual experiment. In Venice, the stages and screens will be part of the installation; you can see them in the model.

IS: [looking at the model] That's amusing, the scale model of a viewer looks like a Giacometti. I also see you have blocked off the central doorway so that visitors enter through the left wing of the pavilion.

JJ: I got the idea from Sarah Sze's approach to the pavilion during the last Biennale [2013]. It makes for a more linear progression through the four rooms and the rotunda. In a way, the whole piece is like a performance that you go through one room at a time.

IS: I'm thinking of *Reanimation (In a Meadow)*, your work for dOCUMENTA (13), which also took the form of a very inviting little house in a public garden, but there, viewers could only look through the windows. I especially remember the video of glaciers appearing like sad and monstrous figments of global warming in a room.

JJ: I'm always looping elements of the last project into the next. *Reanimation* started with Halldór Laxness's 1968 novel *Under the Glacier* and continued my interest in Iceland. It also introduced the imagery of bees and marked a shift toward more environmental thinking. And yes, in Venice you get to go inside the house.

IS: The fourth, and last, room we haven't talked about yet. The setup in the model looks like one of your stage sets, with relatively domestic seating elements and screens.

JJ: And like the last part of one of my performances, the fourth room may not get resolved until the very end. I recently saw a drawing of the eye of a whale and it looked just like a human eye. All mammals have "semicircular canals" in their ears. There is the eye of the storm. And then, we come from fish. I'm trying to unite these things in the last room, the "human room." I'm not worried right now if it's going to make sense in that way. This is how I work.

I shot video in Canada last summer, in relation to Venice (some of it Ozu did with a GoPro camera around his neck). I'm also working with ghost stories from Cape Breton.



Joan Jonas, interior view of *Reanimation (In a Meadow)*, dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel, Germany, 2012. Photograph courtesy of the artist

IS: Cape Breton, like Iceland, is another embedded landscape in your work.

JJ: I've been going there since 1970. Rudy Wurlitzer and Philip Glass, with JoAnne Akalaitis, bought an old summer camp with all these A-frames, and they invited Richard Serra and me along with a number of other artists. We eventually bought land. I now have my own house and studio and spend part of every summer there. I'm inspired by the place.

There used to be a magazine called *Cape Breton's Magazine*, full of stories and interviews, chronicling aspects of the culture that were dying out. The ghost stories are from the magazine's collection. I didn't want a literary ghost story; these are just everyday people talking about their experiences.

IS [reading]: "The wind . . . opened the front door. It was a beautiful afternoon. . . . Just like a choir, the voices came in."¹

JJ: I will use fragments like that.

IS: Research is an important part of the process. Are there other sources for Venice?

JJ: The work always begins with finding a subject of interest and then exploring where that interest leads. For Venice, I've been reading John Berger's *Why Look at Animals?* [1980], which talks about ancient bonds between humans and animals that are broken, and Giorgio Agamben's *The Open: Man and Animal* [2004]. It was Agamben's philosophical writing on the tick that led me to Uexküll. I'm looking at these great illustrations he used to show how different creatures—a fly, a dog, a human—see the same room.

IS: The human room: the dog only sees snacks and things to jump up on. Coincidentally, I just saw a work by Pierre Huyghe titled *Umwelt* after Uexküll's concept of worlds of animal perception. Will there be a PERFORMANCE in Venice?

JJ: Yes. Right after the opening I will come back to New York to start working on a performance that will take place somewhere in Venice. I never perform in my installations. It really takes all of my concentration to develop an installation, and the performance is more or less another endeavor working with the same material. I will reedit the video and work with the composer Jason Moran on the sound.

IS: This will be the third time you've collaborated with Jason. How do you two work together?

JJ: To start, I talk about the themes, show him some video backdrops, and he responds by playing a sequence or a tune. I choose what I like best. We respond to each other rhythmically. It's his music and we add sounds. It's important to say that we don't collaborate on the performance, but working with Jason has had a great effect on my work. Also, once the piece is set, the improvisation is over. I always perform it exactly the same way.

IS: Like a ritual. Who are some of the other COLLABORATORS and CONTRIBUTORS to Venice?

JJ: I like working with artists; they bring their own way of doing things. David Dempewolf is my veejay. Although I oversee all aspects of the editing process, he is technically my support. He knows my work really well and helps me to bring in material from past works. He's also a really good audience. We've worked together for eight years.

I am also working with several others: David Sherman on video, and Meredith Walker and Jin Jung on other aspects, such as props, models, and SketchUp files.

Jan Kroeze is a professional lighting designer and friend since the seventies. When he heard I was doing Venice, he said, "I want to do the lighting." Which is great, because lighting is not my thing.

IS: It's a very intergenerational team, Joan, from age five on up. Does your experience as a teacher play a role in your work?

JJ: I'm not sure what direct effect, if any, teaching has had on my work. But I've been inspired by individual students, and by the activity of teaching. It certainly kept me from the isolation of the studio. It started with some part-time teaching at UCLA in the early nineties; then, I was hired at the Academy in Stuttgart [Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart], where I worked closely with students. I was going through a transition; it was a good period. At MIT, where I taught from

1998 and am now professor emerita, the exchanges with students and colleagues and access to new technology have been great.

IS: As invitingly rich and layered as your installations and performances are, there is also something forbidding about your work. We want to enter the image, but we're held back by a sense of trespass or danger. There are jarring visual leaps, abrupt and dissonant sounds, manic movements, gaps. There's screaming.

JJ: From the very beginning, I wanted a slight disturbance—I wouldn't use the word "shock," just an uneasiness. I've often been asked about fragmentation in my work. What I recognize is a conscious desire to change the mood, to create a kind of strong rhythm, through a soundscape or a landscape that is always shifting. Because I was looking at the structure of film, I was interested in the potential of the cut, in cutting, which is never seamless in my work. I think it also reflects my way of thinking and speaking: I want to make beautiful images, but I'm not really interested in pleasing people.

IS: You have such a unique voice. In tone and timbre, your speaking voice is nothing short of a material presence. As an artist, you are a strong feminist voice. Your work critically addresses the ways in which women are perceived and represented in culture; at the same time, it embodies and constructs a profoundly female world. So my question is: were you born with that voice?

JJ: The way I speak, I was born that way. I have a very low voice—it's gotten gruffer and less soft; I do speak fast and in monotone. What I've worked on is opening up my throat and my body, and having a certain clarity of rhythm. It was useful to perform with the Wooster Group and work with my voice in relation to text. I've acted in two of their productions; in *Nayatt School* [1978], I played a character named Celia Coplestone.



Joan Jonas, *Double Lunar Dogs*, 1980, performance at Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, July 1981. Photograph by David Crossley

Finding my own voice as an artist was very important. I was involved with the feminist movement, as were all of my artist friends. Improvising with my own sensibility and body was partially research into the question of whether or not there is such a thing as female imagery. Seeing Jack Smith, who performed, like in Noh theater, both the male and female parts and with such femininity, had a profound effect. When I began working more directly with narrative—with fairytales, myth, the writings of H.D. [Hilda Doolittle, 1886–1961]—I was exploring the place of women in history, as outsiders, witches, storytellers. I have always been interested in the poetics of how women are depicted, which is political, of course.



Joan Jonas, *Volcano Saga*, 1985–89, installation, Queens Museum of Art, Queens, NY, 2003–4. Photograph by Ari Hiroshige, courtesy of the Queens Museum, Queens, NY

IS: From voice to *Vorstellung*: Joan, we are mutual fans of the German art historian Aby Warburg and his passion for the driving force of images, which he linked across time and space in his *Atlas of Memory* [1927–29]. *Vorstellung* was his term for the mental picture behind an image. He ascribed to it an almost supernatural power to transmit and animate cultural memory. I experience a similar intensity, ambition, emotion, through your work.

JJ: My work is, in a fundamental way, about making and connecting images. I've always been interested in how ritual and myth can be used to describe a present-day situation or suggest a character. I didn't know that term, but I was deeply moved by Warburg when I explored his character and writings for *Lines in the Sand* [2002]; I had the feeling he could have been a dancer, he was so attuned to movement. Warburg's openness to world cultures was also exciting to discover.



Joan Jonas, *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, 2005, performance at Dia:Beacon, Beacon, NY, October 2005. Photograph © Paula Court

IS: Let's bring the conversation back to Venice by way of a picture behind the image of your work in my mind: Velázquez's *Las Meninas* [1656]. There is the easel, the dog, the mythic cast of characters, and the mirror, a magic mirror that brings viewers onto the very stage of picture making. Are there pictures you are looking forward to seeing in Venice—a city of water, glass, reflections—and will mirrors be a part of your new work?

JJ: I love Tintoretto. I studied Renaissance art history in college; the intellectual aspects of Mannerism attracted me.

I am working with glassmakers in Murano on several things right now. The rotunda space joins the two wings of the pavilion, and I was thinking of making a kind of chandelier, naturally. I am designing a metal shape on which to hang crystals. A light will shine through them, like ice. It's an experiment at this point. But I made a similar piece for *Reanimation*.



Joan Jonas, installation view of *They Come to Us without a Word*, U.S. Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale, 2015. Photograph by Moira Ricci

I'm also experimenting with having mirrors made in Murano. Because I want distortion, they are working with an old-fashioned technique that Alex Rosenberg, a former student, reminded us of. You make a big glass cylinder—it looks like a bottle—and cut it. The glass actually flops open. These mirrors are thick and they're beautiful. We're making several. I don't know what I'm going to do with them yet.

Ingrid Schaffner interviewed Joan Jonas at her New York studio on January 6, 2015. Thanks to Erik Moskowitz, Amanda Trager, Rachel Pastan, and Chris Taylor for their excellent input in the process of preparing this interview.

NOTE

1. Kate Redmond in "Remembering St. Paul's Island, Part One," in *Cape Breton's Magazine* 5, July 1, 1973, 15, 16.