

Rebecca Cleman and Karl McCool interviewed by Barbara Clausen and Kristin Poor, January 22, 2021

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Barbara Clausen: So, hi everyone. This is the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base, and we're interviewing today Rebecca Cleman and Karl McCool from EAI, Electronic Arts Intermix in New York. And we're really, really happy that they're here today to talk to us about working with Joan at EAI, over the years, and especially right now. And Kristin Poor is also here. My name is Barbara Clausen and I'm going to pass it to Kristin to ask the first question.

Kristin Poor: Okay. And I'll just record for the record that today is January 22nd, 2021. Rebecca and Karl, thank you both so much. Perhaps we could start with you each telling us about your roles at EAI, and perhaps just a brief mention of EAI's history and mission. Thank you.

Rebecca Cleman: Sure. Thank you Kristin and Barbara. I'm Rebecca Cleman, and I'm currently the Executive Director of EAI. I transitioned into this role just last year, and was previously the distribution director, though I started working at EAI in the year 2000. So, I have been with the organization for a very long time. EAI's mission, and one of the things that has kept me at EAI for so long, is that it was founded to be an alternative paradigm, supporting artists, working with media and video.

Rebecca Cleman: In our mission statement, there is a lot of focus on television. And the reason for that, is that television was seen as a potential alternative to the institutionalized way that art was presented in museum and gallery settings. And I think this is important to consider in the case of an artist like Joan, who is making work that is...really defies classification, and integrates a lot of media, and is accessible, and reaches the public in a new and exciting way. So that was really what EAI was founded to support in 1971.

Karl McCool: And I suppose I would just add, since Rebecca so clearly laid out what EAI's history is, and what we're about. But Rebecca mentioned she had been the distribution director, so I am now the distribution director. And before that, I worked under Rebecca as distribution manager.

Karl McCool: So, my role at EAI is mainly to...everyone at EAI has some relation to our artists including Joan, but mine is probably the role that is most engaged in the back and forth between artists

and curators, in planning exhibitions, and acquisitions, and the like. And I've been with EAI for, in March it will be six years, sorry.

Rebecca Cleman: Karl, do you want to say something about the MIAP Program? Your experience going through the MIAP program, just quickly.

Karl McCool: Sure. So, I'm one of two people at EAI who went through the MIAP Program, the Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program at NYU, where Glenn Wharton was a visiting instructor. And oddly, I probably...I don't have an archiving position at EAI. I mean, EAI is, first of all, not an archive. But also, the other person, our technical director, probably uses a lot of those skills and that knowledge more than I do.

Karl McCool: But nonetheless, that grad program has been extremely helpful in what even I do, I think what all of us do at EAI. We all have to handle these questions, and they are questions that keep coming up time and time again, about like, what is the correct format? What are the current best practices? So forth.

Barbara Clausen: And I imagine that is also something that must be—with all the technological developments of the last ten years—very obvious, that must also pose an ongoing challenge, and questions regarding distribution and accessibility of your collections and of working with artists. And I thought maybe you could, from both of your perspectives, talk about that a little bit, in regards to managing, distributing, preserving.

Rebecca Cleman: Well, I think Karl, one of the reasons why I asked you to mention MIAP, is to speak to a significant shift that's happened, and that I've seen in my time at EAI, which was an increased professionalization around the distribution, preservation, and exhibition of media art. I have seen that change significantly and it's something that Lori Zippay would speak to, and has spoken to me about a lot, is just how radically different it is, dealing with video art in the 2000s, as opposed to the eighties, or even previously the seventies.

Rebecca Cleman: And EAI, under Lori, was really leading way in focusing on archive, even though we're not an archive, focusing on preservation concerns, and really emphatically stating that these are artworks that need to be treated with care, and with a preservation attitude for the long-term. Availability of these works, which is never a finished task with media art, so it's something that is never complete. But now there are actually programs, training individuals to support that work.

Rebecca Cleman: And Karl, I think you apply that, what you've learned in many ways, constantly. I think that, even these questions of how works are distributed, then displayed, and how to stay true to an artist's vision, certainly go back to things that were probably discussed in the MIAP program.

Karl McCool: Right. That's true. I think EAI in its history has always been a distributor, but always more than just a distributor. So that in the past, in the seventies or the eighties, we were distributing artists' tapes, but we were also a hub and a place for artists to edit with editors and create work. And there has been a shift where now that most artists edit on Final Cut, or Adobe Premiere, and they do that in their own home, if not a studio, even.

Karl McCool: At around that same time—and Rebecca you probably would have been around more for this, but my sense from our history is that, around that same time—it also became clear that for a lot of our artists, especially artists of Joan's generation, preservation became a big concern. And a lot of that work that we do in addition to distribution, in addition to public programming and education, shifted from editing and creating work with artists to helping artists and helping institutions preserve work.

Karl McCool: And it is interesting that, as I think Rebecca mentioned, we're not an archive, and yet we do have to deal with these questions. Just as our artists have to deal with these questions. Because a lot of times we end up becoming a defacto archive, or just simply aware that we have this incredible, not just a rich history with these artists, but also we literally have these tapes and these materials.

Barbara Clausen: If I remember what I've heard from Joan, but also from Lori, you also have materials that are not necessarily there for distribution, but that EAI cares for together with the artists.

Rebecca Cleman: Yeah. That actually speaks to something very unique, probably, in EAI's relationship with Joan. And we have this with many artists that we work with, but not with all of them. EAI works with about 200 artists. So we can't necessarily have such a personal connection to all of our artists, and some of our artists are not based in New York city, but Joan is, and has been working for EAI for so long that she has come to trust EAI, to help her in a number of ways.

Rebecca Cleman: And I do know that we have materials that we don't distribute, but that we have helped Joan to edit. It's content that has been

used for other projects of hers. Or we've done some editing for works, installations, pieces that have been displayed in museums, but they are not specifically our single channel video tapes that we distribute.

Rebecca Cleman:

And I think that that speaks to the unique relationship that we have with Joan, which we do actually have with some other artists. When I think about our archives, and the collections of tapes that we have, I think of Joan, I think of Carolee Schneemann, I think about Tony Ramos, I think about, just, materials that we have kept for artists over the years that are not exactly, not relegated to the works that we have in distribution.

Karl McCool:

Yeah, I would agree. And the same names immediately came to mind for me too. Joan is one of a very select group of artists who have a very close relationship with EAI going back years and years. And so, we do have these materials that we've helped edit or store. And yeah, the same names come up, like Carolee Schneemann, Tony Ramos, or Tony Cokes.

Karl McCool:

And it was before my time, but the other thing that strikes me is, we've had long relationships with other artists, white male artists with blue chip galleries, that we've had long and very strong relationships with. But I don't know that we've necessarily become a repository for those kinds of original elements and materials, like we have to, and we're very happy to, with Joan. Or with Carolee, with artists of color and women artists who now have wonderful gallery representation and recognition, but didn't, I think, when we started working with them in a way that some of their male white peers already had that infrastructure, and they had assistance, and tony galleries and things like that.

Kristin Poor:

Well, thank you. That's a really important point. And also just to remember the range of, I guess we could call it stewardship, that EAI offers that it's not just this distribution, or even the creation, which I think is so interesting to know about in EAI's history of the relationships with artists like Joan. But also the preservation, and the education, and the public programming that you mentioned, all fall under this kind of bigger rubric of stewardship.

Kristin Poor:

And I wonder if you could speak about that a bit in relation specifically to Joan more in the present day. How does that work now? We're particularly interested in *Mirage* and *Organic Honey* as our two art work case studies for the Joan Jonas Knowledge

Base, but also just more broadly speaking, how is that stewardship manifesting itself today in relation to Joan?

Rebecca Cleman:

I think this will be a multi-part answer, of course. And a lot of it has to do with the current moment. The shift to digital files, the shift to ubiquitous flat screen displays when many of Joan's works from the seventies very directly took advantage of, and called attention to the technology of CRT monitors. And also, as part of the success that Karl is mentioning, and support, which is wonderful, there is a museumification and an institutionalization of some work.

Rebecca Cleman:

So there's a little more of a codification when it comes to installations versus single channel video works that distribute in more accessible modes. Video is inherently a highly mutable art form. Joan's practice has changed as an artist as well and she has integrated other practices, other media, alongside the video works that are now displayed in more ambitious installations. And this concept, I think, of single channel video art doesn't have the same meaning that it had in the 1970s or even direct camera performance works.

Rebecca Cleman:

So, just to think, the title that I always point to when this conversation is happening in a general way is *Vertical Roll*. And I think maybe Karl and I could talk a little bit about our relationship to *Vertical Roll*, which falls into the *Organic Honey* compendium of videos. But as I mentioned earlier, that's a work that incorporates a gesture that's specific to CRT monitors, the vertical roll, which will not mean anything necessarily to those who have only watched television via flat screen technology.

Rebecca Cleman:

And of course, there's more than the vertical roll, it's also performance, and it relates to a larger project of Joan's. So I think my question is also for Karl, because I know a little bit about this, but just the migration. My own experience of Joan, through distribution, is that she's also one of those rare artists who really considers the context her work is being presented in. And she has strong feelings about how the work is shown.

Rebecca Cleman:

And sometimes, certainly will say, "No, I don't want my work to be presented in this way." But [she] keeps an open mind at the same time. I know she sometimes surprised me in coming back and saying, "Well, actually I think that would be okay. We can adapt how the video is shown for this museum's context or for this purpose." So that leads to your other question about showing work online, showing work in a flat screen setting. I found Joan to be an artist who is adaptable but is also very careful about how the work is shown.

Karl McCool: It's interesting, the online question is something that we're dealing with quite a bit at EAI right now. For future reference, we're speaking right now during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. And so increasingly, right now, Joan's work, and a lot of our artist's work is being shown online because of social distancing.

Karl McCool: And actually I think about Joan a lot because she is at one extreme. We have one artist and one estate that are at the other end of the spectrum. They do not want their work online pretty much at all. They just say no every single time. They don't think it's secure, they're afraid of people bootlegging their work, and of their work just circulating online without their control. And Joan is actually, I would say of all of our artists, probably the one who's at the absolute other end of the spectrum.

Karl McCool: Some of our artists are more careful about...I would say most of our artists are open to online presentations, especially at a moment like this when museums keep closing and reopening and closing and reopening, and people are afraid to go out to galleries and want to socially distance. But even then, I think most of our artists are a little fussier about which presentations, whereas Joan in this period has been remarkably open—and interested—to her work showing on YouTube, showing on all sorts of platforms.

Karl McCool: So that's actually been quite interesting to see, especially since, to be quite honest, it runs counter to another trend we found, which is that, for the most part, it's been younger artists who have been most open to viewing things, and having things viewed online because the younger the artist is, the more likely they've already had to put their work online to get it out there to begin with. So it's quite interesting for Joan, who's more of a foundational generation, to the kind of video work that we distribute, to be just as interested in doing this and open to this.

Rebecca Cleman: Karl, I'm wondering, specific to *Vertical Roll*, and maybe we haven't had to deal with this for the last year. Has this come up, this issue, maybe you can help me to answer this question.

Karl McCool: The CRT monitor?

Rebecca Cleman: Yeah. Just how inevitably we've had to ask her, this work is going to be shown on a flat screen or it's going to be projected. I think that's maybe more of an issue. It's going to be projected in a gallery space. I have a sense, but I'm curious about your recent conversations with Joan about that.

Karl McCool: In my experience, she's remarkably open to it if it's a screening or something like that. So she's fine with...whereas again, we have another artist who's estate really doesn't like works that were meant to be seen on a monitor, projected. Even if it's in a screening program, in a cinema, just a one-time screening. They are concerned that audiences won't understand that it was meant to be seen on a CRT monitor.

Karl McCool: But Joan is definitely far more open about that. If it is part of a theatrical sort of screening program, even if it's one that's going on for the course of a day, or a few days, if the idea is it's part of some sort of theatrical setting, theatrical screening, she's quite open to that. But I would say certainly, in terms of an exhibition, yeah, we would definitely...before we even speak to Joan, to be honest, we would already start explaining to a curator that the inherent qualities of the work just make most sense on a monitor.

Barbara Clausen: So coming to that question of installation and presenting Joan's work in exhibitions. Joan is very particular about the dimension of the image in relationship to the setting and the setup. I've experienced from a curatorial perspective. And I wonder for you at EAI, when you are approached by an exhibition space or by a curator concretely with we want to present *Mirage*, we want to present *Organic Honey*.

Barbara Clausen: Of course there's like the Stedelijk collection, there's the MoMA collection, but that we want to go to EAI to help us figure out a way of presenting specifically these two works. Walk us through it. What would happen? Then they say, "We can't get it from MoMA, we're not going to get it from the Stedelijk because we can't. We really wanted to work with projected image," or that's for you to say now. But what would you recommend...and they have Joan's blessing, so...check, check, check. So what's the next step?

Karl McCool: Well, I guess first I would just mention two things. One is, if they already had Joan's blessing, then that is all we really need to hear. Joan, as all of our artists do, retains the copyright to her intellectual property. We're here to make sure that she receives royalty for the use of her work and also that it's shown the way she wants it shown. So if Joan wanted it shown upside down, and had her reasons as an artist to want to do that, that's, I think, it's ultimately always her decision.

Karl McCool: Now, if someone came to us, and they hadn't yet spoken to Joan and we hadn't yet spoken to Joan, we would do some vetting beforehand or try to understand what the curator intends to do.

And if it's something that we thought was just a terrible idea, we would obviously have that discussion before we went to Joan to figure out where did they come up with this thought, or advise them like, "well, she's probably not going to approve this, this way."

Karl McCool:

It's interesting though, because you mentioned *Organic Honey* and *Mirage*, and I don't know about you, Rebecca, because maybe it's changed over the years. But in my experience in the past five or six years, the two are very different for us. The *Organic Honey* videos...they get shown separately in all kinds of ways, it's a very open conversation. The *Mirage* works...we have *Mirage* and *Mirage 2* listed on our website, and I think also *Good Night*, *Good Morning*, certain works, other works we don't.

Karl McCool:

And this gets back maybe to what we were saying before about being a repository for materials that we don't actually distribute. So, we have digitizations that we've made and that we preserve of *Volcano Film* [1976], or *May Windows* [1976], but they're not listed publicly on our website. That's not something we distribute or let the public know that we have.

Karl McCool:

So there's that issue, first of all. And then there's also, with Joan's permission, we have allowed *Mirage* and *Mirage 2*, and some of the works that we do have publicly listed on our website to be shown, but it's much more of a conversation, and it happens far less frequently,

Barbara Clausen:

Karl, and Rebecca, I'm just going to go back to that again. Are there specific rules that apply to these works? Let's take *Mirage*. Because I totally hear you saying, *Organic Honey* can be shown on four monitors separate. There's different ways of showing it, almost like modules. *Mirage*, if I think of the Whitney installation from the 2000s is like a double screen, or it's a very elaborate installation with various projections, so video used in various forms. And of course the installation that's owned by MoMA, also has objects, and many different types of objects and elements that come together.

Barbara Clausen:

But when I think of *Mirage* and the double projection, is there something that guides you, or is like a starting point? Is there like an ideal form for example, for *Mirage*, if somebody would want to project those videos or present that work in form of video and not in form of installation? Is there a video installation version of it that you have as an outset, to start the discussion with the institution?



Karl McCool: Well, I'm not sure I would say a video installation version. It's interesting this has actually come up with other artists quite, quite recently, as in, just in the past couple of weeks. This question of what constitutes an installation. We have one artist who has shown a work with sculptural elements and that's editioned and it's sold by her gallery. And yet what we distribute is a dual projection, but the projections have to be a certain distance from each other. They have to be a certain height. And there are rules about the space that's in.

Karl McCool: And it became this question, the artist and their gallerist were posing as well, "isn't that also an installation?" So with EAI and our work, so much of it comes out of that history of a single tape that someone played on a monitor, and then eventually people started to project. For a lot of our works, including a lot of Joan's, the rules are very open-ended because initially the idea in the creation of the work was that, this was going to be shown on all kinds of different monitors and projectors and so forth.

Karl McCool: But there are exceptions, as I said. There are works that we have that have to be projected in a certain way or at a certain height and so forth. And I suppose you could call that installation. It does get interesting with someone like Joan and *Mirage*, just as with this other artist I mentioned, whereas as you mentioned. Like MoMA has a version that has sculptural elements, it has all kinds of other elements that are so different from what we're dealing with here.

Karl McCool: My experience, and I don't know what you might know about this, Rebecca, because I imagined this would be right around the time you came to EAI. My understanding is that *Mirage* was a tape that we had, perhaps in distribution. I don't actually know. And that in around 2000, Seth Price and Joan edited *Mirage 2* at EAI. And after that, the two were typically shown together in dual projection.

Rebecca Cleman: Yeah. In fact, we do have a note. Our website is driven by a very information-rich database, and we have a distribution condition from Joan. It's a note from 2015, that she wants *Mirage* [1] and 2 to always be shown together in installation.

Karl McCool: Right. And so typically, that's how we've shown it, or we've made it available for people. If you're not talking about MoMA and this larger installation, if they're not having that lent to them or something. Certainly in my time, in the past five or six years, it's been *Mirage* and *Mirage 2* shown side by side. I don't know...and I'm, to be honest, looking right now in our database,

what the history before 2000—before *Mirage 2* was edited—I don't know what the history was at that point.

Rebecca Cleman:

To be honest with you I don't really either. I think it's a question that speaks to something in general with EAI, again, an organization that represents nearly 4,000 titles by 200 artists, and grew out of this concept of what Nam June Paik called the mailable artwork: that you can just drop a tape in a bubble wrapper—not that it was done without care—but that it was a very different process than insuring a painting and shipping it off to a museum. It was meant to be accessible, and as I said earlier, kind of mutable, in how it was presented.

Rebecca Cleman:

So, I think *Mirage* is a great test case, actually, where my guess is we had this work in distribution. And I don't know how much distribution activity it saw on its own, but maybe Seth spoke to the motivations for doing this edit with Joan to create *Mirage 2*. So what you see is this work that has shifted and grown and taken in more elements over its life.

Rebecca Cleman:

So, again, it's that wonderful thing about video, a video artwork, or work in intermedia. That it's not just molded and put on a pedestal and done. It mutates over time, the artist changes their own feeling about it, and I've experienced that to a certain extent...just Joan's own feeling about how this project is presented.

Rebecca Cleman:

And then you might have a situation where like MoMA's beautiful installation and the resources they were able to devote to this project might have an impact moving forward, on how Joan wants this to be shown and represented. So it's a constantly developing and evolving representation on our part.

Barbara Clausen:

This is so fascinating to listen to both of you, and thank you so much for this insight, especially about *Mirage*. And I also feel that there's something interesting when you go back to this Paikan idea of putting a tape in a bubble wrapper or envelope and sending it off. Somehow one could say that with the internet now and with streaming these videos on the internet, there is a kind of egalitarian accessibility that comes back into play, where you don't need a high end crystal, or super high lumen kind of projector to be allowed to project this one...you can actually access it.

Barbara Clausen:

There is a kind of almost social sense into those video works that comes back. And I also think with *Mirage*, what's interesting is that it was originally performed in a cinema, in a place for the moving image. And I was wondering, Rebecca and Karl, how do

you see that as a place where you actually are yourself a site of moving images?

Rebecca Cleman:

Well, I think this is something that warrants...it's already happened, but I think it warrants more discussion and scholarship and writing to rethink. EAI's fiftieth anniversary is this year. And it's not just EAI's fiftieth anniversary. Germane to your question about *Mirage*, it's also Anthology Film Archives' fiftieth anniversary.

Rebecca Cleman:

So let's take these two organizations. I know Anthology is very dear to Joan, and she speaks of it often, and of the influence of experimental cinema and the films that were shown there on her. And she's an exceptional artist in this way as well, that she's not a video artist. And I think there is a little bit of an overly simplistic view that you have this camp. And there certainly were these subcultures and these groups that didn't necessarily overlap. They were very focused on what they were doing in video or film. But there was much more overlap happening between artists working with video and artists working with film.

Rebecca Cleman:

And I think that that obviously is reflected in their practice as well, where Joan is making work thinking about television, she's thinking about video. She's very, very savvy in how she's using the medium. But then she's also doing these performances. And she's obviously very influenced by cinema, and that setting, and the history of experimental film and sees herself working in that as well.

Rebecca Cleman:

So, I do think there's maybe a bit...I love what you're observing about the internet in this moment and the facility of being able to send files, and that's very important. But I also think, perhaps, there's become oversimplification in thinking about this work is either a video art piece—and this actually is part of the museumification of these works—that this is a media art piece and that's all it is. It's not this hybrid example of performance/film/video, and it really takes in the form of all of those spaces for public reception.

Rebecca Cleman:

It's really about—and Joan is giving a lot of attention to this, as were so many of the artists working in film and video, growing out of this idea of expanded cinema, but also participatory guerilla television—so much about the viewer's experience of the work. And that is when we talk about Joan being very careful about how works are presented and being very concerned about that. I think that's partly because she cares so much about the viewer's experience of her work. Theater is also a very important aspect here, so there's this awareness of the audience that is

just really vital. And I think that's one of the unifying concerns here, in works like this.

Karl McCool:

Yeah, you're reminding me that *Mirage* is probably a very good example that crystallizes just this issue of...*Mirage* is a sixteen millimeter film. *Mirage 2* is something that was edited on video. But in both cases, they're works that are performance art, they're documentation of performance out on the street. But they're also—just like we expect video art of the era to be there—they have all this material taken off of television news and commercials.

Karl McCool:

So it's just as engaged, even the sixteen millimeter film, so it's just engaged in television as this new medium. So it does, in a way, combine all of these elements of what Joan was doing, of what other artists of the period and artists who came through EAI were doing...film, video, television, performance, public interventions.

Kristin Poor:

Yeah, as you both have, I think, captured so eloquently, *Mirage* and *Organic Honey* don't fit neatly into these categories of medium. And that's part of what has made them such really rich case studies for us at the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base, the way that they do sit between, and also encompass, all of these different categories. And it's really important to hear from you both this history of distribution and exhibition because it's this context of encounter that is so important. This is what makes it so important to the evolving meaning of the work.

Kristin Poor:

And I think it's really important to touch on this history of distribution, which we don't always think about so much in this context of the history. Of course we talk about exhibitions and so on, but it's really important to really record and consider that. And I do hope that that's part, too, of [the archiving] work that's happening at EAI. We're really tracking these moments of where things appear in the different contexts. I wonder if we could pivot a bit to a question about the curatorial and programming work featuring Joan's work that EAI itself has organized over the years, if you could talk a bit about that.

Rebecca Cleman:

Yeah, I think there's quite a lot, actually, that we have done with Joan through the years and that has ranged from focused public programs to screenings, to panel discussions. For our fortieth anniversary, we commissioned...Joan actually did a live performance for us. In a way, there are so many events that—I'm trying to think of specific ones to highlight for you—but, I think, we've done again, artists-focused events with her as we have done in the past.

Rebecca Cleman: We did a collaboration with Dia, a rooftop screening and project that was really wonderful. And recently, Lori Zippay had curated an exhibition up at Dia:Beacon called *Circa '71*, and Joan participated in a panel discussion, which was a really wonderful conversation about her history with EAI. And I think that was very enlightening as well.

Barbara Clausen: I actually have another question that goes back, but stays with this question of...you just mentioned that Joan also performed for EAI at an event, that she—I think Lori also mentioned it in her interview—that she did a little improvisation for the screenings of *Mirage* on the rooftop. And I was wondering about these events, that as Kristin just so eloquently said, the sitting in-between and embodying also these questions of different media that come to play together in Joan's work.

Barbara Clausen: And I was wondering when she, for example, performs, I'm being stuck again on... obviously, we're concentrating at the JJKB on *Organic Honey* and *Mirage* because they're early works that still not only speak of their own time, but continue to speak of the times that they have lived through and continue to live in. Has it ever been of interest to you to also then distribute the performance documentation?

Barbara Clausen: So I know with *Organic Honey*, you do do this, but for example with *Mirage*. *Mirage* was just recently reperformed for the first time at Tate. So, does the status of the documentation of the performance, which then becomes its own work, in difference to the video performance...could you speak a bit about that in relation to these works from the seventies?

Rebecca Cleman: Yeah. I think that, again, echoing what Karl was saying earlier about deferring to the artist, if Joan has documentation that she thinks would be appropriate to distribute through EAI, that's usually the channel through which we receive that kind of material. I do think that things might shift a little bit, as we're very focused on the educational component of what we do. So, EAI is split into these two major activities: one, distribution for exhibitions and screenings and public display [and two,] distribution for education and scholarship. And we've been thinking a lot about that added content and how valuable that is for students and scholars to be able to access and look at that documentation.

Rebecca Cleman: Now I think it's important to make those distinctions—something a lot of artists feel very strongly about—that the documentation performance needs to be very distinct, not only from the performance, but from what might be, and this is

certainly true of Joan or Carolee, what might be a creative piece incorporating a performance. And so you have all these different tiers and that's where the artist's input is so vital, because if we're distributing a work that's really just for educational use, it might be pretty raw. It might just be a recording of a live performance.

Rebecca Cleman:

And that's certainly something we'd be interested in on that side of things. We have tended to focus on works that we are able to distribute in the broadest context for practical reasons. There's also a financial component for us. We're a very small team and we're working with so many artists that we do have a capacity that we have to, in terms of, we can't take on like 100 works that won't see much distribution activity necessarily.

Rebecca Cleman:

Although the facility to do that is increasing, given the work with digital files, so they have their own challenges and it's not a walk in the park with them either. But Karl, do you think that I'm accurately describing our relationship to that kind of performance documentation?

Karl McCool:

Yeah. And you're making me think, I haven't quite thought about it this way, but it's almost a question for, or about, Joan. Because we distribute artists' video and some film in digital form, it tends to vary widely, as the way artists work with that format varies. So, we have artists who are maybe more predominantly performance artists, thought of more as performance artists, and we might have tapes or films that are really documentation of performances.

Karl McCool:

I'm looking at what we distribute for Joan, and I'm just thinking of it in comparison, to say, Vito Acconci or Marina Abramović, or certain other people who we've distributed, and it strikes me suddenly that so much of the work involves performance, but it's already blended in with all this other [stuff]. It's edited, it's blended in with film and television, and with her drawing in a lot of cases, particularly when you get to later works like *Brooklyn Bridge* or *Double Lunar Dogs* or something that allows for that technology to bring that drawing in even more so. But even *Mirage* does that, right?

Karl McCool:

So, you're making me realize...the short answer is, as Rebecca said, I feel like the short answer for any question about anything in EAI is always "it's up to the artist." But the more complicated, the more nuanced answer is...you're making me think about the fact that there are these other artists who have film and video out there that are wonderful, that we distribute, like say Vito

Acconci, that are more just very bare bones documentation of a performance of an action or something like that.

Karl McCool:

But looking at Joan's work, none of that really is the case for what we have in distribution. It's all something that she's really mediated, and added to, and performance is one facet of this complicated work.

Rebecca Cleman:

I just wanted to add something, because I think this is also true to EAI's history, which Lori might've spoken to, which is the sense of what's valuable. And even though I said we have a capacity and we have to be practical about what we take into distribution, we also want to represent our artists as fully as possible. And [we] are able to take on works and to represent them and provide access to them, where, for example, a commercial gallery might actually just focus on the finished works, the works that are going to be sold, or offered to a collection.

Rebecca Cleman:

Exactly, they're making a hard distinction, which...that's their capacity, that's their practical consideration. One of the big differences in our models is that it's not just the artist's input and us listening. We're driven by that, as Karl said. But we also are really open to providing access to everything that's relevant.

Rebecca Cleman:

Carolee Schneemann is actually another great example here, where she has a lot of work that incorporates performance, and that is multilayered, and has a lot of superimpositions and is a work unto itself. She also has these lectures that she's given, where the documentation is a little bit more raw in that case. And then I think there's some very raw documentation that we don't even have yet that...I'm certainly interested in that, because for someone who wants to do a deep study into Carolee and her work, we're able to provide that platform. So that's what I meant about being very open to that kind of content.

Rebecca Cleman:

And I will say that artists like Joan and Carolee and Cecelia Condit, a lot of artists will say, "Oh, do you want this? I have this documentation [of] this performance that I recorded, do you guys want this?" And I think the answer usually is, "Well, yeah." We obviously won't be providing this for a formal exhibition or screening, but it probably is going to be of interest for students. And increasingly, and one of the reasons why we're building this platform where ideally students and scholars will be able to look at the website and in one place, see all of this work together...it just gives a fuller picture of the artist.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah. And I think that is a nice way to come back to the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base, which Rebecca you've been so generously—and Karl you've been amazing in helping us, at least for these two case studies that are at the heart of our project—to really help supply [us] with so much material and so much information. And we're of course totally with you. And I'm just realizing it's really nice that EAI's and Anthology's fiftieth anniversary falls with the launch of the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base in the same year, and together with Dia's show, which of course is like the stars aligning, one could say.

Barbara Clausen: I do think it's interesting at that moment when artists such as Joan or Carolee Schneemann, in the last ten years have suddenly experienced...they've always been recognized as important artists. They've always been icons. They've been mentors, they've been incredibly important as teachers, as performers to the arts community, but they actually have reached far wider audiences than ever before.

Barbara Clausen: And I was wondering about that popularity of these specific female artists of that generation. And you could include many different artists in this bracket, but specifically about Joan, did you feel that effect at EAI? Does that echo with the demand that you get and the questions that you receive?

Rebecca Cleman: I would say absolutely. Yeah, I think you're correct. I think that these are amazing individuals, these are amazing artists, so they have always garnered respect. They have not gotten the recognition that they were due for decades. And Joan is a great example of that, where what's happening now is wonderful, but I think there was a long period where, yeah she was venerated within certain contexts, but it wasn't widespread, and it was specific to Joan as a woman.

Rebecca Cleman: And I think it was specific to working in media art and performance and these ephemeral arts that are not, just to be really crass about it, were not perceived as being marketable necessarily. They didn't work within that model so well, which has led to a current shift, certainly, where we have seen a significant increase. I've seen a significant increase in interest in Joan's work, and that has just grown exponentially every year.

Rebecca Cleman: That then sidelines with gallery representation and ways of working with Joan's work. And this is kind of a global issue, suddenly...some of her uneditioned single channel video presented in a new way, as an editioned piece. And Joan has been very mindful about that shift. So, as she's seeing the



success, she has still wanted her work to be accessible and available.

Rebecca Cleman: And that's actually not just for the general public, but there are some institutions that we've worked with who would not be able to buy an installation of Joan's now. They just don't have the resources. There are major public institutions that can represent Joan in their collection by working with a single channel video that we distribute.

Rebecca Cleman: So we don't pretend that we're operating as a commercial gallery in the way that we're able to represent all of her object-based...that we're able to focus our attention on say, a big installation, but the throughline through Joan's increased popularity is this availability and this access and this representation of her certain strain in her art making in the single channel video.

Karl McCool: Yeah, you're reminding me. I'm glad you answered that question, Rebecca, because I just thought about it, and I quickly Googled it, just to make sure I was correct. I must have started working at EAI maybe a couple months before Joan was in the Venice Biennale. So, in my experience at EAI, that success had already come in my time at EAI.

Karl McCool: But I certainly have heard from other people and Joan that it wasn't always the case. Because I've seen it with other artists in my time at EAI, I can well imagine how that happens. And as I mentioned before, particularly for...I do think there was a whole generation or generations, especially of women artists, who ended up with the gallery representation that their male peers had, like twenty years before them.

Barbara Clausen: Well, Kristin I really want to thank you for this comprehensive and really in-depth conversation about Joan's relationship to EAI, and why your work is so important and why her work fits into also the history. Your...each other's histories really interlink, and will continue to do so in the future.

Barbara Clausen: On that note, final question or final comments or final question, what do you think will be the legacy of Joan's work in regard to that question of video distribution for the future? Are there different forms of continuing to work with an artist?

Barbara Clausen: There are certain things set already now where you don't necessarily need to go back to the artist, but could work with the studio, or could work with the gallery, or is that still something

that you always will have forefront[ed], to just really work directly with the artist? Obviously, if possible. Can you speak about that?

Rebecca Cleman:

That's a really big question. And it's a big question that we're certainly facing with all of the artists that we work with. But in particular, artists of that foundational generation, as Karl has so accurately described it. And it's inevitable that the way that we work with this material will change, and it has changed, and it will continue to change.

Rebecca Cleman:

We're finding for example, now that museums are acquiring these works into their collections, we have these time-based media questionnaires, which are always a little bit of an insight into how an artist wants to think about the legacy of their work. And some artists really—offhand right now, I don't immediately remember where, maybe you can answer this Karl, sort of where Joan falls in this spectrum, but—we have artists who are very clear and are specific about how they want their work to be shown. Or someone like Vito Acconci raised this kind of fascinating issue of not wanting to fetishize older technology.

Rebecca Cleman:

So, he wanted his work very specifically *not* to be shown on older equipment, but to bring it forward into whatever was new and was contemporary. Other artists resist those questions. Bruce Nauman, for example, has guidelines for how his film-based work would be presented. They should be projected at relative home movie size, but he doesn't want to write down specific measurements.

Rebecca Cleman:

Some artists will give us very specific dimensions and he resists that because he wants there to be more openness, more interpretation, and that's maybe the wrong emphasis for that work. So, the most important thing is that we record as best we can, as we're doing, what the artist wants, that's crucial. But we also have to be open to adaptability. And I think EAI's...surprisingly at this fifty-year mark, we're seeing, of course, some things that need to change, but we're also seeing this important throughline focusing on access and education.

Rebecca Cleman:

And that was there in our founding. We were founded by a gallerist who really wanted to create a new way of making work available and education was huge to him. And that was partly because Nam June Paik just was, I think, filling his ear with ideas about what the electronic era and the internet, already thinking about computer[s] and the internet in the seventies, what that was going to be, what that was going to enable in terms of

education and democratization of information and the way that art would exist publicly.

Rebecca Cleman: So, I think that these are ideas that are foundational for us. I think it's crucial to the artists that we work with. Not all of them want their work to be accessible in the same ways, but increasingly that's key to EAI and that's key to the organization and our role, and what we provide uniquely, I think.

Rebecca Cleman: So that, probably, moving forward is going to continue to be a way that we distinguish ourselves from the galleries that are now more serious and working with media-based artists or the museums. We're all collaborating in representing these artists, but we all also fulfill different roles. And so I think that that's changing a little bit how we specifically define what we do.

Barbara Clausen: Well, thank you so much. Karl, last final words? Are you guys good with this wonderful statement?

Karl McCool: Yeah, I thought that was really well said. I don't know that I have too much to add to that.

Barbara Clausen: And I look forward. I think everybody at the JJKB, and EAI, Dia, Anthology, I think we all look forward to continuing these conversations throughout the year.

Kristin Poor: Thank you both.

Barbara Clausen: Thank you so much. Fantastic.

Rebecca Cleman: Well thank you. It really means a lot that you're including EAI, and being so conscientious about folding this history into this conversation. Obviously, it's for us an incredible, it's more than an honor, it's why we exist, for artists like Joan. So it's really meaningful that we're included in this project. That's it.

Barbara Clausen: Thank you so much.