

Andrea Lissoni interviewed by Barbara Clausen, March 22, 2019

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- Barbara Clausen: Hi. Today is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, this is Barbara Clausen. I'm conducting an interview with Andrea Lissoni, who is the senior curator of international art at Tate Modern in London. I will speak to him about his work as a curator with Joan Jonas.
- Andrea Lissoni: Hi, good morning, I'm Andrea Lissoni, senior curator International Art (Film) at Tate Modern where I started in 2014. I used to work at HangarBicocca in Milan, the institution is now called PirelliHangarBicocca. I worked there for almost five years, considering that I started at the end of 2009 and I ended in mid-2016, but I say five years because between 2009 and 2012 I worked somehow part-time, even less than part-time, and I really took over at the end of 2011 or beginning of 2012. Then in 2014 I left and moved to Tate and just worked on three more shows.
- Barbara Clausen: Maybe you can tell us a bit about how you became aware of Joan's work.
- Andrea Lissoni: I started my studies at the end of the 1990s, and I studied at the University of Pavia. There was no possibility of studying contemporary art so I had to enroll in modern art, which means that the limit was the end of the nineteenth century [/beginning of the twentieth]. Luckily I had a professor who understood that it could be interesting for me to develop a research that I could bring towards the current days. Therefore, given I was really into interdisciplinarity back then and I was convinced that the most important [work] that was happening was in between performance and light, moving images, which back then there was somehow still very much video, and of course contemporary art and music. Inevitably I started looking for the artists that were engaging with these forms. I think through the study and reading I bumped into Joan's work, and I don't think I saw anything for a long time.
- Andrea Lissoni: My background is very much rooted in a seminal festival that was called Festival video di Taormina [not to be confused with Taormina Film Fest, the video festival was an independent branch in a multidisciplinary context – video, film, theater and dance - that in the early 90s was definitely very much looking ahead] and my mentor has been since Valentina Valentini,

perhaps the most visionary and prepared scholar as well as curator in Italy in between theater, dance, and [video]. So that's when I think I started seeing single-channel videos of Joan.

Andrea Lissoni: I could be wrong, but I don't have any memory of having encountered an installation, I should really go back and see if I saw an installation before, but actually I guess the sort of turning point was a show that I saw in Paris that was organized at Le Plateau.

Barbara Clausen: Yes, at Jeu de Paume and Yvon Lambert.

Andrea Lissoni: Exactly, it was a show at Yvon Lambert and at two public institutions, one at Le Plateau and another one that was in a temporary space, I can't be more precise. I think it was curated by Caroline Bourgeois, more or less in the Bastille area [Jeu de Paume site Sully]. In that building, in the Bastille area, there was a couple of small works of Joan that I can find out.

Andrea Lissoni: Then I started paying more attention because her practice was definitely different from any other working artist I had encountered before, and back then I really remember I was struck by the fact that her practice was so much in tune with what I was thinking was the most relevant in art. And what was for me the most relevant in art in the mid-2000s was this extraordinary huge generational shift towards projections and beyond projection and the integration of props and cultural elements.

Andrea Lissoni: I should say something completely different, but important: I was very close to Mike Kelley who had shows in Milan in the late 1990s. The beginning of this huge project that is now known as *Day is Done* was in Milan, because the first installation of the *Extracurricular Activity* series was presented at Emi Fontana. I remember very clearly since that encounter with Mike making a bridge between the practice of Mike and the practice of Joan. It was so fine. I guess I had some conversations with him about how she was important for him and how he didn't have a specific relationship with the New York scene, and she was a sort of crucial figure in the New York scene.

Andrea Lissoni: So this is the only, let's say, clear reference to contemporary artists that for me was groundbreaking, inspiring, and super important, that I was close to and that was the bridge to Joan's research path. Finally I met Joan in person, in Como at Fondazione Antonio Ratti, when she was invited as an artist in residency. All my students back then, well most of the students I had back then, among them Moira Ricci, who became the official

photographer for plenty of Joan's installations, were selected to be a part of that summer workshop.

7:07 Barbara Clausen:

Where did you teach?

7:08 Andrea Lissoni:

I teach for the School of Fine Arts of Brera in Milan in the department of New Media. Moira was one of my best students.

7:24 Andrea Lissoni:

So, that's where I met Joan in person, and I remember very clearly I wanted to meet with her, I wanted to see the performance she made with the students in the Ex-Chiesa di San Francesco [a deconsecrated church] in Como was the outcome of the seminar she made. That was already a strange, let's say, revisitation or reinterpretation of *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah, this was in 2010 [2007].

Andrea Lissoni:

That was in 2010 [2007].

Barbara Clausen:

It was about the time of *Reading Dante*.

Andrea Lissoni:

Exactly, yeah that's when I started talking to her. But of course she was already working with Raffaella Cortese and she was very much around in Italy.

Barbara Clausen:

Italy has always been a place that has embraced Joan throughout the years.

Andrea Lissoni:

Going back now, I remember I saw the show in Rivoli, which was an important show made by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, but I don't remember having met her at all. So the actual conversation started, a loose conversation, started in 2010 [2007] when she was in Como. Vicente Todolí started officially working at Hangar, he approved the idea of preparing a show on Mike Kelley, which wasn't the retrospective that was about to begin [at the Stedelijk], it was a different approach, very much related to the first work he made in Milan actually, the *Extracurricular Activity*, and his, let's say, engagement with performers, gender, and many questions I think are still to be developed.

Barbara Clausen:

Like popular cultural memory?

Andrea Lissoni:

Yes.

- Barbara Clausen: The memory of popular culture, especially in the days of American youth culture, but also this suppressed part of these cultures.
- Andrea Lissoni: The show, I'm sure you remember, we invited Joan, the show was let's say the springboard, was the blueprint for Joan's show at HangarBicocca, no doubt. The reason why, I think there were two reasons. First—
- Barbara Clausen: The Mike Kelley show was what year at the HangarBicocca?
- Andrea Lissoni: Let me check.
- Barbara Clausen: It was 2013, no?
- Andrea Lissoni: I guess either 2012 or 2013, but that could be wrong.
- Barbara Clausen: I'll check, don't worry. Keep on talking, so that was the springboard for her?
- Andrea Lissoni: I think so because the way we installed the works in the space and also the kind of work we selected—So we went for, I am still obsessed with *Light (Time) – Space Modulator*, which is a [work] that is an homage to of course [László] Moholy-Nagy but also is loosely based on his first house that became [his] studio. And the work demonstrated a strong connection with Mike and Joan which is something that hasn't been again explored as much.
- Barbara Clausen: Yeah it was 2013. What was the work's title again?
- Andrea Lissoni: It was *Light (Time) – Space Modulator*.
- Barbara Clausen: Yes.
- Andrea Lissoni: So when was it exactly? Let's try to remember.
- Barbara Clausen: Okay so it was the 24<sup>th</sup> of May to the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, it was the summer show of 2013.
- Andrea Lissoni: So as you can see it's the link because Joan was invited at the Venice Biennale that year, and I traveled with Joan by train from Venice to Milan to see the venue that she of course didn't know, and we walked through the show. I remember that was somehow the blueprint for her show, the floor plan.
- Barbara Clausen: She saw what was possible.

Andrea Lissoni: The show was based on this idea of sound, it was based on this idea of you as a viewer being optically and realistically engaged with the works. We worked through the construction of his studio made with the floor plans of all the schools he attended to like deep down or deep underneath, let's say the cut works that he made for the show in Braunschweig. You will literally move from one space to the other and encounter different media and different screens and sound and images scattered in space in a way that would then trigger the show of Joan.

Andrea Lissoni: I guess it was the possibility of keeping a black space between one work and another, between the other space, allowing somehow to fade in and out with the following work but still keeping the presence.

Andrea Lissoni: Going back to the reason why Joan was there, Vicente [Todolí], I think at the end or the beginning of 2011–12, approved the idea of a Mike Kelley show, which was interesting as the first show more or less under my, let's say control. But I should be honest, it couldn't have happened without Emi, [and with Vicente] we were already working on the main leading idea of HangarBicocca as a space where there would be shows considered retrospectives to artists that never had important shows in Italy and assigning one entire space to an artist and a small one to another and trying to plan years ahead.

Andrea Lissoni: So in sorting out this chess game we decided that Joan would be the best artist for 2014–2015. I should be honest, Vicente was very much convinced and really insisted for a show of Joan, and not that I wasn't, but I remember it was like the outcome of double desire. Since the beginning he insisted Joan Jonas must have a show. That's how we started, and actually we made the trip with Joan from Venice to Milan all together to discuss the display and place. Then we started the conversation about the decision of which works would be presented in the show. I have some documents here and notes.

Barbara Clausen: So in regards to the process of how you decided...you know there's a decision by the director, by you, by Joan, together, "let's do this big show," and then there's this moment of research that had been done before that decision was made and research that's then done to come up with the concept and to produce the show.

Andrea Lissoni: Yes.

Barbara Clausen: These are overlapping fields obviously, and I was wondering about that.

Andrea Lissoni: Yes, to be honest the research—yes and no—in the sense that Joan is a living artist, she's very keen on what she wants and what she would like and this is what I found [shows document]: we started it in June 2013. So this is a document that goes back to when she saw the Hangar for the first time. So the notes are works that are not often seen, so we said the bases were *Reanimation*, *Mirage*, an installation of drawings—which I didn't have—, and we wanted to present a performance of the newer work, [which was an unwritten rule for any show at HangarBicocca]. I mean, I wanted a performance of the newer work. These are the four that we wanted the most. *Volcano Saga* was a question mark.

Barbara Clausen: Which is interesting too because these works really underline also how important *Mirage* is to her work, and I feel that it's really one of your curatorial accomplishments—besides having produced this beautiful retrospective—that you really brought to the foreground *Mirage*, again which was shown at different times and of course in different conditions, but there was a sense of really connecting her work from all those different epochs from her work from the 1970s to the 1990s to the 2000s. I feel that highlighting *Mirage* is really key somehow.

Andrea Lissoni: At the end of the 1990s I encountered the work of Jack Smith, and it really changed my life. I made a little film retrospective of his in Bologna [at the Link Project] where I was working. Then I started deepening the research into his practice, and I think I wrote something in *Mousse* and found some traces. So that's what I did, and now, in 2019, I'm in conversation with Dora García, who is an artist who is very much obsessed with memory and bringing back something that is related to some specific space. When I was studying in Genoa—I did my art history specialization [at the University of] Genoa in the late 1990s—I discovered a seminal moment [in the history of the experimental art scene] which is a show, a couple of shows, that Germano Celant made in 1981 in Genoa, [entitled] *Inespressionismo Americano*. [*Il gergo Inquieto*, of which a branch was *Cinema Off e Videoarte a New York. Il gergo inquieto*, curated by Ester de Miro (a rather visionary project, was the backbone was Celant's book *Offmedia. Nuove tecniche artistiche : video, disco, libro*, 1977).] They basically invited the film [and art] avant-garde to Genoa [in 1981].

Andrea Lissoni: And Joan came as well. Part of the group, and I could find all relevant information, among the artists who decided to go to Genoa and presented their work was Jack Smith, who incredibly enough got stuck in Genoa and couldn't go back. He stayed there for four months in Genoa and became a sort of local hero.

- Andrea Lissoni: He was also known as an actor [and swiftly] became a sort of underground Hollywood superstar [in the cultural off scene], and there was this whole story that I kind of reconstructed [as I could. Whilst conducting that research] I realized [how much] the practice of Joan could be related to the work of Jack Smith.
- Andrea Lissoni: I couldn't find any specific document but I think during the journey from Venice to Milan or when starting the conversation with Joan, I realized that actually she was very much influenced by Jack Smith.
- Barbara Clausen: And she writes about it.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes.
- Barbara Clausen: Specifically around that time.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes in the catalogue raisonné [*The Work of Joan Jonas*] there is a text about this, but back then the catalogue wasn't published, so it wasn't known. So I didn't know that back then.
- Andrea Lissoni: This I think triggered *Mirage* as the work we wanted to have as the centerpiece or starting point in the exhibition, and it literally was at the center of the show.
- Barbara Clausen: I remember Joan telling me about the show and planning and everything and her really underlining how—She was like telling me about the curator of the show, that *Mirage* is so important for you and I felt that was really interesting.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yeah and then we went for trying to think about work that hadn't been seen so often so, like *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, the Paris piece of Yvon Lambert [*Street Scene With Chalk*], the Dante piece [*Reading Dante*], *Double Lunar Rabbits*, and *Reanimation*.
- Andrea Lissoni: It is interesting because you couldn't experience [the piece] at Documenta in Kassel, because *Reanimation* as we know was set in a little house, but you couldn't actually get the actual work. We wanted to present *Reanimation* as it was supposed to be presented.
- Barbara Clausen: There was a show at Yvon Lambert I think where she really felt like, "This is how I want this work to be." I remember her saying that, for *Reanimation*, the first time that it was ideally shown was really at Yvon Lambert. It made it a standard.

- Andrea Lissoni: Exactly. Luckily the show of Cildo Meireles—
- Barbara Clausen: Which is 2014 too.
- Andrea Lissoni: ... at HangarBicocca left the Cube, the most spectacular space at HangarBicocca and the only with natural light as a sort of limbo, a smaller white bubble within the majestic architecture whose walls were painted white, ..[inaudible]. So we thought, ok even though in principle we shouldn't display drawings in this environment given it doesn't meet the required museum climate standards, it is now conceived in a way - because of the Cildo Meireles installation - that we could consider it as a perfect environment to host *Reanimation*, as Joan would like. So that's the reason why we installed *Reanimation* and some of the drawings, as for Joan's original wish.
- Barbara Clausen: Also in that backroom.
- Andrea Lissoni: In a sort of protected environment.
- Barbara Clausen: Which makes sense too because the installation is so based on this idea of a house, so it's really this sense of a *mise en abyme*, of a house in a house, and it really has that architectural framing, architectural-sculptural framing that is vital for that piece.
- Andrea Lissoni: Totally. That was I think one of the first ideas to take advantage of the existing white walls and of the actual environment of the Cube. So this was perhaps one of the first works we decided to install in the show. I'm sure you are aware of the fact that that show triggered the final form for *Reanimation* as it is now. Still, there is a question which to me is super important, which is the [huge drawings painted directly on the wall] in the back [that] are [not] part of the work [as it is displayed at] MoMA and that we kept in Malmö, and that we kept also [in the Tate Modern display in the Tanks.]
- Barbara Clausen: I just want to say that the show that Andrea curated for Hangar then travelled to Malmö Konsthall, which we will talk about in a bit, but also that *Reanimation* was reinstalled at Tate Modern in 2018 for her show here and it was also, at least for the artist, it was one of the most important or ideal presentations of *Reanimation*.
- Andrea Lissoni: Absolutely. Then in the process of preparing the show, we went to Stockholm where Joan did present a small show at Kulturhuset [Kulturhuset Stadsteatern] made of *Wind*, *Reanimation*, a series of photographs, a selection of video works in the archive, and *They Come to Us Without a Word*, literally the



beginning of the work. This was I think what then triggered the installation [that eventually Joan developed in Venice].

Andrea Lissoni: This was interesting because she made the installation at Kulturhuset, she performed *Mirror Piece* there, and it was the first time after the presentation in New York, at the Guggenheim, teaching the local dancers. And then she did present *Reanimation*, the performance, at a museum in Umea where she was part of that show curated by Ute Meta Bauer called *Theatrical Field* if I'm not mistaken.

Barbara Clausen: Yes, *Theatrical Field* in Umea, which was then also presented in Singapore.

Andrea Lissoni: In Singapore, exactly. In that show Joan presented *Lines in the Sand*. Actually there was a sort of strange survey shown in Sweden in 2013, because a component was at Kulturhuset in Stockholm and a component was in Umea, and in Umea you had the *Lines in the Sand* installation as well as *Reanimation* [performed].

Andrea Lissoni: So that kind of shaped the idea of the show in Milan, and also it somehow pushed us to present the performance of *Reanimation* with Jason Moran in Milan as the only event part of the exhibition. I think she performed in front of something like two thousand people. It was huge. There are images online. Actually the footage of the performance is the one that is now circulating; it's always installed next to the show, as we did here at Tate Modern. The version on the monitor of *Reanimation* is the HangarBicocca version.

Andrea Lissoni: She performed later *Reanimation* in the show, and the show—it's in a huge hangar—, and on the right side there were light works, meaning there were monitors and projections against the wall of *Songdelay*. So it was a huge room that we kept just before encountering *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things* for a potential stage to present *Reanimation*.

Barbara Clausen: You also once mentioned to me there was a kind of figure for looking at Joan's work, there was like a form, and that was the form of a snake.

Andrea Lissoni: Oh yes. This is a completely different story.

Barbara Clausen: It's a different story, but it also plays a role if I'm not totally mistaken.

- Andrea Lissoni: Yes. I think we had two main problems when installing the show and one pleasure. The pleasure was being given the opportunity from the Stedelijk [Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam] to display a work which is the Irish-German work called ... *Sweeney Astray* [*Revolted by the Thought of Known Places ... Sweeney Astray*]. The main achievement beyond I think the pleasure of seeing *Mirage* was picking out ... *Sweeney Astray*. There was a negotiation with the Stedelijk about the opportunity of not displaying the photographs, because they could be of course damaged, so we went for reprints. But the most problematic was, how do we install the works, what the final intention is going to be [when] the space is completely open [and there isn't any guidance provided by white walls]?
- Andrea Lissoni: The two problematic works back then were *Volcano Saga*—I'm sure [staging manager] Matteo De Vittor—can be a very good witness, and [the question at stake were]: what is the front, what is the back, how do you [experience it?] I remember Joan moving the work many times, moving the screens.
- Barbara Clausen: To understand the direction, this directional moment of ... *Sweeney Astray*.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes, [both *Sweeney Astray* and *Volcano Saga*]. The other, I think, wonderful task was finding the orientation for *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*. It's very complicated. I always think that when one enters a show, or rather a space, they need to be aware of where they are and to know what is outside. And if they don't, you have to give this feeling of what is outside. This is the reason why we [installed *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things* that way, suggesting that the "back" of the projected images was the ideal "outside," the landscape behind the blue walls of the actual building]... And this was quite contrasting because the work has always been seen in a monitor.
- Andrea Lissoni: [As for] *Songdelay*: given that it was shot in film, I decided, why not ask Joan to scale up? I would in principle be very against this decision, but Joan confirmed that actually since it was shot in film that she was dreaming of keeping it looped and she couldn't back in the day[s, she was happy for us to project it onto a screen]. So we [installed the screen] onto the wall - a metal wall that faces a huge railway, [where] trains are passing by [- as to suggest the idea of a huge window towards an actual industrial decaying landscape. I'm not sure it's clear, the idea was to echo through a work the real landscape outside.]

- Andrea Lissoni: I thought it's interesting to project that work over there because of the depth of the space, it allows you to feel this sort of other space outside. It works as a sort of window. On the other hand, you kind of get the sense that there are trains and buses and something moving, that there is a huge street—if you see the map from Google Maps, you see how Hangar is oriented, next to factories, [alongside the railways and a main street. It's intriguing to suggest such] feeling as if you were watching in the same position Joan shot.
- Andrea Lissoni: Similarly, *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things* which is shot partially in a former factory - which is Dia Art Foundation- has an outside component that somehow lets you feel the landscape. [So, this is the principle that led the orientation of the screens.]
- Barbara Clausen: Absolutely. At the end there is an essential scene where the character of Warburg so to say leaves the asylum, and the doors of the basement of the Dia:Beacon former Nabisco factory are opened, and he walks into the light.
- Andrea Lissoni: Exactly. I thought this part of the work needs to be on the wall, it needs to be on the right [east] side because it gives the feeling that out there, there is a landscape. So this is how we intended to hang the work.
- Andrea Lissoni: In this way we found out the "snake," in the sense that [the drawing triggered] how we wanted to [display] *Double Lunar Rabbits*. And more or less we did because the space is [divided in] two [immense] wings. One is inhabited by the huge seven towers by Anselm Kiefer, that I managed to curtain off for the Mike Kelley exhibition.
- Barbara Clausen: It's an L-shape.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yeah. So you now have a huge square, and that's where you have to install the works [that require to be seen from a 360 perspective, the pieces one can walk around to]. And that's where we installed *After Mirage* and the new work that she made for the show in Milan, that we commissioned, which is *Beautiful Dog*.
- Barbara Clausen: Which is also the entry piece in Malmö.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes, exactly. Then as I started to enhance this idea I'm obsessed with, the feeling when you walk into a show, we did *Double Lunar Rabbits* to smooth down the curve and to kind of lead you in.

- Barbara Clausen: At the elbow of the L.
- Andrea Lissoni: Exactly. You would literally get this visual [feeling], and then on your right you'll have the huge projection of *Songdelay*, so we already draw you in somehow.
- Barbara Clausen: You had really different gravitational pulls for the viewer, there was one that kind of would lead afar through *Songdelay* and one that would lead around into going into the space itself.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes,. This is what we did also with Mike Kelley. It was the only show that used the two spaces [of HangarBicocca] following the first episode of *Extracurricular Activity*. I installed the [catwalk piece (*Runaway for Interactive DJ Event*, 2000)] in a way that it obliquely cut the space . This I made because for like ten years this space was made in a way that you would enter here and face the huge seven towers and get stuck there. I wanted somehow to separate the two experiences and draw the audience inside. So this is what we did. The way we similarly installed the snake, this one huge drawing which is a component of *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things...*
- Barbara Clausen: It's on black paper, and it's painted with white paint, and it's also an image that is up in the installation.
- Andrea Lissoni: Exactly. When I saw the painting [which of course is inspired by Aby Warburg and the experience that Joan herself had], I realized that incredibly enough it was able to potentially trigger the feeling of the *parcours* a visitor would have through the show. As many other curators I was back then obsessed with [the history of exhibitions based on bodily perception and particularly] the drawings of *This is Tomorrow* and how [this crucial aspect has been considered when planning the show]. I thought, ok, how incredible this show could be.
- Barbara Clausen: Guiding the viewer through the space without being didactic. So in a sense you don't number out how the viewer goes, but you would naturally create a kind of *parcours* that would allow the spectator freedom to turn and stay or move on or to take a little bit of a different direction, but it would still lead the viewer.
- Andrea Lissoni: True. It [the drawing] could have worked as a sort of almost invisible or transparent [substance] like Duchamp suggested, a guide to the space, with the actual spiral of the "snake" coinciding with *Reanimation*, which actually requires [the viewer to follow] a spiral movement.

- Andrea Lissoni: That's also the reason why we were so keen on showing the fishes on the wall of *Reanimation* in a way that it would give a sense of rotation. A fish that would be projected and then become a huge drawing with chalk and then projected through transparency. All oriented in a way that they somehow follow a direction, which is what I learned in Kulturhuset, in Stockholm, when I saw the drawings of Joan hanging. Even though Joan paints or draws when performing on the floor, naturally the dripping of the colors as soon as the drawing is picked up gives the idea of movement. So you have the feeling that the fish, the bird, moves [following a direction]. It seems sort of obvious because the paint is dripping. I thought how interesting it would be projecting, through the transparency, the fish in a way that gives a sense of movement in that self-contained room, given that *Reanimation* is made like this.
- Andrea Lissoni: So actually when entering *Reanimation* you wouldn't be entering a dead-end work, which would be seen as a danger, but you are entering a sort of spiral that would allow you to begin again and go back and re-see the whole *parcours* from another perspective. That is one of the main tasks in a space like HangarBicocca in which, as soon as you get to this final point, you go back, [and the final point becomes a linchpin].
- Barbara Clausen: Because it has a corridor-like character, even though it's a giant corridor.
- Andrea Lissoni: Exactly. It's like a church. This is how I suggested that the audience would come back and, given that the work of Joan is time-based and has so many videos of different length, of course when you go back you very likely encounter different stages of the same work.
- Barbara Clausen: It also seems so essential because, as it's listed, there were twenty-two works in this exhibition. Though looking at the map and the plan and the photographs, you still don't feel an overwhelming sense that there is too much or that it is too clustered, but that the works really kind of evolves.
- Barbara Clausen: Also it the sense of the order of the works: they were not chronological, so it wasn't that you started with the early years and then at the end you had the latest piece, but somehow the linearity was broken in certain moments. Especially in the beginning where you have the *Double Lunar Rabbits*, and you always kind of disrupted the sequence that one would maybe expect. I thought especially in Malmö that that worked really well.

Andrea Lissoni: Something I didn't say that I'm sure one could find by going through these documents is that another obsession—knowing that the work would not have been easy for the audience of HangarBicocca and in Milan, for audiences who aren't highly educated to contemporary art—one "trick" I would say I learned to use, and that was very much inspired by Joan's practice, was making sure that some elements would appear more than once, or at least two times.

Andrea Lissoni: That's the reason why *After Mirage* was there, at the beginning. I mean *After Mirage* is not necessarily a major work you would encounter when entering, but we decided to install it there because the cone is such a leading image in Joan's practice, and you would see the cone first in *After Mirage*, then you would look on your right, and you would see the cone again in *Mirage*, but already you would have encountered another point of conversation with Joan which was only the *Purgatory* version of *Reading Dante* which has it again as part of the single video work.

Barbara Clausen: Did you show *Reading Dante*?

Andrea Lissoni: No. Only the projection of the *Purgatory* [*Street Scene With Chalk*] in which we see the infamous action of Joan in downtown New York playing with cones and this strange guy coming in and performing as well. That moment is in the *Purgatory*. I really wanted the *Purgatory* to be there because it would visually help that part based on rituals, hoops, memories, and echoes, and reverberation which is what we then developed. Cones were the leading image, the [anchoring] theme.

Andrea Lissoni: *Purgatory* is an interesting story: Joan [is very attached to it,] there is no checklist in which *Reading Dante* doesn't appear. Joan absolutely wanted to present *Reading Dante*, and I was really against it, the reason being that *Reading Dante* was presented at the Venice Biennale already, but also it was presented at Raffaella Cortese gallery a few years before. Joan was really in love with *Reading Dante*. I always thought it's a great work, but sometimes perhaps you don't really want in Italy to see a work appearing about [that], you know... It could be seen in a strange kind of touristic way, so I just didn't want it. That was a serious discussion point.

Andrea Lissoni: Then we watched entirely the work and went for this wonderful compromise, which was [triggered by the fact] that we didn't have any single work on the left side [west part of the exhibition]. So we went for installing only a screen to block the space and welcome the audience, and only a screen of the

*Purgatory* which has this really beautiful image inside of a working site. There is a beautiful image in the back that is suggested by Joan of a hug that doesn't really happen. I think it comes from [Dante's encounter in the Purgatory with his friend Casella by] Giorgione, the moment in which someone, Joan often quotes, tries to hug someone but then he discovers that it's [impossible, because there is no body]. This was a sort of statement of the show: we really wanted to suggest this idea of being in a space that was inhabited by immaterial figures giving up to the optical and enhancing bodily [perception, and the feeling of a bodily ghostly presence].

Barbara Clausen: I'm looking at the checklist right now, you also showed smaller pieces or video pieces as projections such as *Wind, I Want to Live in the Country (and Other Romances)*, there's also a series of video: *Merlo, Vertical Roll*, of course, *Barking*. So there were really a series of works that sometimes would appear in other works and then come back again. I think that show really brought up the different overlapping layers of how Joan works, her precision to begin and to end, but at the same time that precision being based on actually shifting from one work to the next and drawing up those relationships.

Barbara Clausen: I was wondering: did you want to show *Organic Honey*? You're starting point was really with *Wind* and *Songdelay*. With *Organic Honey*, there are parts of these videos being shown, but then some works are not. So there's a selection process that you made.

Andrea Lissoni: We couldn't present *Organic Honey* for one reason: HangarBicocca doesn't have museum standards [climate control-wise]. We could make this exception for *Reanimation* in the final room, because the work did belong to Joan, and she installed the drawings [personally and acknowledged the risk].

Barbara Clausen: Did you feel that while she was installing the pieces, the bigger installations—such as *Reanimation, Volcano Saga, ... Sweeney Astray, Lines in the Sand*—, do you feel that she made a lot of adjustments, so that it would fit so to say the endlessness of the space at hand? Because it is a big hall, and pieces were kind of framed by lighting if I understood correctly. For some of these pieces like ... *Sweeney Astray, Lines in the Sand*, but also *Volcano Saga*, there are very specific layouts that exist, and I was wondering how much these layouts were followed or how much she was really involved in adjusting them?

Andrea Lissoni: She didn't. She obsessively changed the orientation, but she didn't touch the footprint of the work.

- Barbara Clausen: This is very important.
- Andrea Lissoni: She's so rigorous about it. As soon as the shape is given, that's the shape.
- Barbara Clausen: The footprint, I think that's a very interesting term. That should be really underlined: there's a footprint to each of the installations, each one, that though in its orientation can be turned, sometimes different pieces can be perhaps adjusted, but there's a fine network of relationships between each item of the installation and a network of relations that remains as a footprint. Thank you Andrea, I think that's a very important thing to remember.
- Andrea Lissoni: As I said, we changed the orientation of *Volcano Saga*, we moved the screen of the *Purgatory* so many times, back and forth, we moved the *My New Theaters* many times and went for a very different decision in Malmö. [*My New Theaters* there became again divisors for the audience: to transform something in an almost performative piece, as curator you can suggest the audience to get very close. Therefore we installed them in a way that they could be in dialogue with the space, draw some ideal perspectives as well as triggering a performative attitude that would have then been noticed by the other viewers, in a sort of mirror game.]
- Andrea Lissoni: As well as with ... *Sweeney Astray*, we played with the position, but the footprint was made in a very specific way and was agreed to by the registrars and the conservator that came from Amsterdam (the work was lent by the Stedelijk). This is what in the end happened. Of course we played with *Beautiful Dog*, and we played with *Mirage*. "Played" meaning that we decided where the final point would be just after having installed the main works and imagining what the journey of the viewer could be.
- Andrea Lissoni: The reason we went for some single-channel works and not other ones is that I noticed that there was a very specific influence of Giorgio de Chirico's works in Joan's practice. So we chose the ones that were somehow comparable, inspired or close to Giorgio de Chirico's paintings. I tried to stress, as I [often] do, not necessarily knowing or seeing the relationship ... You can't know the perception of the audience. That's the reason why *I Want to Live in the Country (and Other Romances)* was there, because there are moments [that can really recall de Chirico paintings (the ones in which you see this strange Mexican mask in the background could be a typical example)].



- Andrea Lissoni: This was also very useful to stress on the one hand her influence, her relationship, her passion for the *The Palace at 4 a.m.* by [Alberto] Giacometti, who is not an Italian artist but was born on the other side of the border and whose influence on Joan is [indisputable], and Giorgio de Chirico. Also I think we went for *Merlo* and *Barking* because they were both shot in Firenze [Florence], in Italy. So I wanted to have some [works related to the country], and these were produced by Maria Gloria Bicocchi at Art/Tapes/22, and they have to do with the landscape, and they also have to do with collaboration.
- Barbara Clausen: What I would love to quickly address is the title.
- Andrea Lissoni: I know I have some references because we went through many possibilities, and then we ended up with that title.
- Barbara Clausen: So it was really you together with Joan that came up with that title?
- Andrea Lissoni: I really don't remember who came up with it.
- Barbara Clausen: In discussion with the artist?
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes. Then because of the space, because of the darkness, because of the lack of light, because of the time-based works, we came up with *Light Time Tales*.
- Barbara Clausen: In regard to technical issues, I know you mentioned two technical teams: one the technical director which was very important for this exhibition.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes. Matteo De Vittor.
- Barbara Clausen: Then the other person... Because you weren't physically there, you were already at Tate when the show was actually installed if I understood correctly.
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes. [I got there a week before the opening, for the final placements and the fine tuning.]
- Barbara Clausen: And then the other person at Hangar was assistant curator Fiammetta Griccioli. I was wondering about technical questions: was there a specific technical team that you used to install all of the works?
- Andrea Lissoni: Yes, I think it was the first show that we worked with EIDOTECH, which then worked with Hangar all the time. Actually, I don't remember where our contact with EIDOTECH came from.

Anyway, what is relevant is that it was the first time that they worked with Joan.

Barbara Clausen:

That was the first time they worked with Joan?

Andrea Lissoni:

I think so because they didn't know each other, and for sure it was the first time they worked with HangarBicocca. You know what, I know the connection: they worked on Documenta.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah exactly. Because Joan showed *Lines in the Sand* at Documenta.

Andrea Lissoni:

I thought that Joan was particularly satisfied with them at Documenta [13 in 2012 where she presented *Reanimation*].

Barbara Clausen:

What we're trying to show is how many different people from outside of the institution as well as inside the institutions work on an exhibition of that large of a scale.

Andrea Lissoni:

Yes.

Barbara Clausen:

That's absolutely important, how many expertises are needed. I imagine also specifically with the sound being concentrated around each of the works, because there were no walls between the pieces... Did you use directional speakers for that?

Andrea Lissoni:

Partially, but not really. I think we used the normal generic speakers. I should ask Matteo.

Barbara Clausen:

I'm asking because I am wondering about the spillage of sound of one piece going into the other. I experienced it a little bit in Malmö, and it was really fascinating. Joan's work with sound is so important, that sense of distance of the viewer/listener to the work itself. I was wondering about that: in the Hangar experience, was there this effect that you would come closer, and you would be more absorbed by the sound, and that would also lead you through?

Andrea Lissoni:

Yes. I remember Joan being very preoccupied by the way sound was travelling after having seen the show of Mike Kelley. That was a really major preoccupation for her. Then we decided to really work on fine-tuning, because you really have to make a compromise. Given that we were so happy of this idea of a show on reverberation, echo, and mirroring, then we also take for granted the fact that there was an obvious spillage of sound from one work to the other.

Andrea Lissoni: We thought it could also be interesting as long as it doesn't become messy, or too noisy. We thought also that it would have been interesting to move from one work to the other and to keep her voice in mind, which was perhaps the most important [thing] about such a display. We tried to focus on Joan's voice.

Andrea Lissoni: Then I'm sure you know, some works were not made following high recording standards. Therefore, particularly in *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, you have moments of really high pitch. The work is not really balanced, [nor] in tune sound-wise. And *Reanimation* as well. But *Reanimation* was contained [in its own room, as we said].

Barbara Clausen: It was contained and it really had that very different status.

Andrea Lissoni: One of the main problems for Joan with *Reanimation* was that it wasn't visible. She thought the audience would miss *Reanimation*.

Barbara Clausen: I have two more questions. There's one about programming, all the events that were accompanying this project: there were performances by Joan, but there were numerous events, so to say, that came along with that exhibition.

Andrea Lissoni: Yes. Definitely there were screenings as we always did in a smaller room. A long time after there was an official presentation of the catalogue, and there were two main performances: one was the performance of *Reanimation* with Jason Moran as it was performed in Kassel, in a new bigger version, in front of a huge audience.

Andrea Lissoni: The other one I didn't work on: there is a sound and music curator at Hangar, Pedro Rocha—he curates all sound events and concerts that are associated with the shows, there are normally one or two. In the case of Joan [on top of *Reanimation*] with Jason Moran, Pedro proposed a different performance that happened later when the show was still up. Joan was fine with it, she didn't say anything, and the performance was by Jennifer Walshe. Jennifer is a British composer, musician, performer close to the American avant-garde and very much engaged in feminist subject matters. She was a collaborator of Tony Conrad, so we thought she could be a very good fit. She works with props so it was very interesting.

Andrea Lissoni: Then there were some more events: [the artistic duo] Invernomuto [Simone Bertuzzi and Simone Trabucchi] with students of mine as well, and they did attend the workshop in Como as did Moira Ricci—then they made the work there, and

they were performers for Joan's performance in the church. They are now an established duo beyond Italy's contemporary art scene. They were very much influenced by Joan. They work with moving images and sound in particular, [mostly single channel videos and] installations. They are also well known for working independently as musicians [they both lead different bands or groups that are really prominent in the international electronic music landscape].

Barbara Clausen: There were really different types of influences and similarities. Were there any type of theoretical event or symposium that was planned with it?

Andrea Lissoni: No.

Barbara Clausen: But you contributed to the catalogue, so the big monograph that came out that year was really important.

Andrea Lissoni: We presented a public conversation with Joan. The catalogue was also another important part: in the sense that there is a rule at HangarBicocca, [which consists of] always producing a new book. Of course we were aware of the book Joan Simon was preparing [*In the Shadow a Shadow: The Work of Joan Jonas*, 2015], and that book was paused, stuck in time since so long. We agreed with Vicente Todolí that it would be so important to make the book appealing, so we gave up the idea of adding another book and instead contributed to this book. The publisher was looking for substantial financial support. It took in a way a lot of time for the book to be completed because I think Joan Simon wanted to integrate the very last part of Joan's practice.

Barbara Clausen: Also the Venice Biennale and this show at HangarBicocca.

Andrea Lissoni: Yes. So we had the compromise also that we would get some images of the show in. I remember having had long conversations with both Gregory R. Miller, the publisher, and Joan about me being a contributor, and I said, "Absolutely no," because it makes no sense to enter into an editorial project [already planned, I found it somehow inappropriate]. And I said just to witness the fact that HangarBicocca was there. We kept the structure as it was, and we just bought it. Then also we shared that small quote.

Barbara Clausen: Did you plan the curatorial floor plan, the blueprint for the exhibition, already with Malmö in mind?

- Andrea Lissoni: No. Malmö happened in a very unexpected way, and there were two more collaborations with Malmö afterwards, just simply by chance. The director Diana Baldon came to the opening of the show and was blown away. She said it would be nice to find a way, even though Joan's practice is not as known in this area,.. She thought it would be fantastic to make a show, and she had just worked on an exhibition of Ad Reinhardt. So we travelled to Malmö, and we could work on this show.
- Barbara Clausen: That show at least I got to see, also in preparation of the DHC/ART show which was much much smaller, which was kind of the opposite. The challenge at the Hangar was putting everything in this almost dollhouse, very complex space. Also changing elements of the Venice piece that we showed, because we then moved props on the side, and Joan really changed the way the screens would interact with the space and actually created the architecture for this space and moved it again closer to *Reanimation*. It's interesting to see all those different layouts.
- Barbara Clausen: Is there any advice you give to curators who want to work with Joan in the future or who want to show Joan's work in the future? Listen to these interviews? [Laughs]
- Andrea Lissoni: I think one of the wonderful points of Joan is that she is very convinced of her ideas, [to some extent even] stubborn, but also very open-minded. So I guess the more you contribute with unexpected perspectives, really coming from watching her work, spending time with the works, the better. This is what I learned.
- Andrea Lissoni: I mean I guess the core relationship I could have with her is based on the fact that I spent so much time in her work. I think I happened to notice something she was very happy to speak about. Mostly I would say is the way she edits. It's incredible, it's visionary, it's contemporary [and always looking ahead]. The way she frames and she edits.
- Barbara Clausen: How she edits images, how she edits space. Perhaps this is a good idea to have two interview series first on this relationship of Joan's studio and work process in relation to her work and a second interview series on this question of editing for which I hope you would be available to talk with us again. With that, thank you very much from the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base.
- Andrea Lissoni: Thank you.

*This transcript is intended to provide an accessible form of interview audio content. It has been edited for factual accuracy and clarity. Any alterations are noted with brackets.*