

Gwenn Thomas interviewed by Kristin Poor, June 21, 2019

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Kristin Poor: Today is June 21st, 2019. This is Kristin Poor and I'm here with Gwenn Thomas at her studio in Manhattan. Gwenn, I thought we could start with how you met Joan?

Gwenn Thomas: Yes. I don't remember exactly the year, but I would say that I met Joan because I went to a gathering at the house of Jeanne Reynal, and Jeanne Reynal was a friend of my mother's. My mother was an artist, as was Jeanne Reynal. Jeanne Reynal was a mosaic artist, worked with mosaics. So, my mother and Jeanne were part of the New York ... well, the group of abstract expressionists really. But this was a quite a lot later that I went there to Jeanne and her husband, Tommy. Their house in the West Village. And I met Joan there and Joan was just leaving for Mexico, and I remember that but that's how we met. And then we stayed in touch, that was kind of how we realized, you know, that we knew other friends in common and we stayed in touch.

Gwenn Thomas: And I at that point, I think then was just studying sculpture with Tom Doyle. Later on I started at Cooper Union, I started working ... after I graduated I did some photography, and started working with well, a filmmaker Hans Namuth, and worked for him, and also worked for Dan Budnik, who was a photographer who I got a job working for. So, I learned a lot about doing photography from Dan. And also from working with Hans Namuth who had a company called Museum Without Walls. And Hans had already made the film, you know on Jackson Pollock, and he made a film on Albers. So, I did some darkroom work there but also mainly I worked for him in the film. And Dan Budnik had done a book on Tony Smith and other artists. I learnt sort of how to do dark room work from a wonderful printer that Dan had making prints for him, Igor Bakht.

Gwenn Thomas: So, I was sort of astride these two situations and still making some sculpture on my own. But I thought I would like to go into film and film editing, but then I realized that I could do more on my own with still photography then getting into a whole direction of film. But I also worked for Jonas Mekas. I had been ... let's see. I worked for Jonas Mekas at the same time as I was at Cooper. So that was before I worked for Hans. And I worked part-time at Anthology Film Archives and through all that I might have become in contact with Joan again because of working at

Anthology for Jonas Mekas. And actually I worked for P. Adams Sitney who was the ... it was one office with P. Adams and Jonas. And Jonas I always had this, he always smiled also because I had been in a film when I was about 12 years old, 12, 13, made by Joseph Cornell. So, I was this young girl in the film that Joseph Cornell made but it was shot by Rudy Burckhardt, who was a friend of my mother's.

Gwenn Thomas:

It was called *Nymphlight*, the film that Joseph Cornell made that I was in. It was about a young girl in Bryant Park. And we shot it at 5 a.m., so there was hardly anybody in Bryant Park at 5 a.m., and sort of discovering the light coming up and the birds. And so it was directed by Cornell, but it was shot ... and it was really my mother knew Rudy Burckhardt. That's right, that's how that happened. Who was also a filmmaker, a cinematographer and a painter.

Gwenn Thomas:

And so after that, in fact I have here a little book which I found again which Joseph Cornell gave me. And it has a little note to me about that film. Because after he did it, he said he didn't think he could do anything with it. But then it turned out, he did.

Kristin Poor:

And so do you think it might have been Anthology you reconnected-

Gwenn Thomas:

To Joan?

Kristin Poor:

To Joan.

Gwenn Thomas:

I think, but I think I never really lost touch. I think that we knew each other from that time because it was sort of ... it was a moment when, after I graduated from Cooper I was still making sculpture but then as jobs I thought I would ... I started doing all this photography. And I had done, at the last year of Cooper, they also had a film course where we students all used Bolex cameras. And I did some animated films, objects moving on a surface.

Kristin Poor:

And how did you start working with Joan?

Gwenn Thomas:

So then I think that I started photographing performances in general and doing some work like that, that's how it started. I did some photographs of the work of other artists. And through that, but it was also that Joan and I were friends. We lived across the street from each other, because I had a loft on Grand Street and West Broadway. Starting in 1972, I had a loft on ... and she

lived at, I think, 66 Grand Street, which is across the street. So we saw each other a lot.

Gwenn Thomas: And then I had another friend, Carol Mersereau, that was also photograph Joan's work. And it was a very small art world. And so what happened is that I knew Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar, and Willoughby was the publisher of *Avalanche* and Liza was the editor. And for the last three issues I did a lot of photography. Maybe even the last four issues.

Gwenn Thomas: And then in that way I met Joan and she asked me to ... you know, we'd go to her loft where she'd do performances. We'd go to other concerts of Phil Glass, we'd go to all these other ... downtown was a very active community. And it was still had the feeling of being sort of off site. But as I say, the loft I had on West Broadway and Grand, there were hardly any ... you know, it was really dark at night down there. It was still just the beginnings of what would become a very changed environment.

Gwenn Thomas: People went to each other's studios. Performances were in different places and spaces and lofts. So I went to Joan's performances. And then we started-

Kristin Poor: Is there anything you remember about those performances at the time?

Gwenn Thomas: Well they were done, a lot of the ones that she did then were done in her own loft, on Grand Street. So she was able to set everything up, the props and what was involved and then they took place there. So it was very immediate, and I think that has a lot of effect on the work she did, because video was just starting then as a medium that artists were getting interested in using. Because it was very ... it was different from film. It was something that you could really be private and film. Yourself, or the way she did herself, I think. And that the fact of those performances were still very structured and having seen the *Mirror Piece* years ago, the memory I have of it, and that was the one I think I had been in, the one that ... and then I saw it now in 2019 in Porto, in Portugal at [Museu] Serralves.

Gwenn Thomas: Yeah, as I say, I saw it again now—

Kristin Poor: This is the *Mirror Piece*?

Gwenn Thomas: The *Mirror Piece*. I saw it again now in 2019 in Porto in Portugal, at Serralves. And it's beautiful now. I mean I think you can ask yourself also, what lasts in art, in a sense. And it really is so

fresh, that piece is still so ... really exciting work. And I remember being in it years ago, and then seeing it now recreated and done again, it's beautiful. But her work really was very unique and very much her own.

Gwenn Thomas:

And as I said, I see some of the themes that she was dealing with then, like in *Mirage*, the volcanoes, they've all come back now. It's a thread through her work of nature and interiors, like *Good Morning, Good Night* [*Good Night, Good Morning*, 1976]. Interiors and landscape, and nature. And it's gone right through her work into the present. And with all the concern now, and the work she's doing about oceans and the beautiful pieces she's doing now have all come out of her interest, her vision from the very beginning. And that is what is also so special about her work, is that she's able to ... her work becomes a source of new work, constantly going on and transforming itself into new work. And going on, from there. So it's not as though it stops and starts, or it goes in a linear progression. It's like a whole... it's a whole world that's constantly expanding and returning to itself and then coming out in different ways. Like, as I mentioned, like a sun with different spokes coming out and returning to a center and coming out again. And one can really see that in the work.

Kristin Poor:

Yes, I think that's so interesting and that's something that we're really trying to make space for with the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base. To find a way we can really look at an artwork that is iterative and has all these different versions. And that returns to similar materials and motifs and ideas, again and again in the way that Joan does in her work. I think that's such a great point also about the ecological and now that comes through.

Gwenn Thomas:

Yes, because now it's just so crucial now. And the world we're living now, it's almost as though she ... and also now, at this point in her work, that she's doing the piece in Venice. I mean I saw it at St. Mark's, part of it, which is the ocean, done by Ocean Space. But at this point, she can have a whole new tangent coming out of what she was already working on. And so it makes it so relevant. So in fact what she was working on years ago was a vision of what she would still be working on into the future, but is now become like a global issue, that's very urgent. Urgent.

Kristin Poor:

And you mentioned *Mirage*. Do you have memories of seeing that at Anthology, or any of the other performances that Joan did at Anthology back in the '70's?

Gwenn Thomas:

Well, I do remember ... yes, I do remember sections of it. And then ... but it's mixed also with some of the memories I have of the *Organic Honey Vertical Roll* piece, which of course has the

hoop in it. And she's working with that. So she worked with the objects too, which returned. And props. Yes. That returned, I think. Again in many pieces.

Gwenn Thomas:

But *Mirage* I think, the drawings. The fact that it really is ... I think that the idea that the audience would be participating in the making of the work, in a sense. Because she's drawing actively as the film ... as the video is filming her drawing, she's doing it there. I think at first with *Mirage*, it was all filmed before. The videos, the first version. And then it was there. Then as it grew it became more and more performative, in the sense that she was doing the drawings as the video monitors were also filming her then in actual time, in real time. And the whole rest of the set was going on. So it was very, the audience, it was very participatory.

Kristin Poor:

Through the live feed videos, you remember? Interesting.

Gwenn Thomas:

Yes. And I think that when she did those drawings, they were done just for that performance. And they were just tossed away after the performance. So they were done as really almost time based work, in a sense.

Kristin Poor:

In the room with the people.

Gwenn Thomas:

In the room with the people. Yes, exactly.

Kristin Poor:

And what about the chalkboard, do you remember that piece of *Mirage*?

Gwenn Thomas:

Yes, where she was doing almost like these cone-like drawings, with chalk. Doing them on the board. Yes, I do remember that. I remember ... yeah, she did a lot of different performances and different versions of the same work. And so it had, I guess each time it changed a bit or it was not set in one way of being. It was transforming all the time. Which makes it very actual, very live. And I think that was very new in that sense. I think that was very ... a very new way of seeing. New way of seeing. And for the audience in some sense not in the work, but actually participating, in that sense.

Kristin Poor:

Experiencing it getting made in front of them.

Gwenn Thomas:

Yes, yes, the actuality of time. So it's not ... you know, she wasn't showing drawings that were already made and putting them up. She was making the drawings as the piece was going on. So it was physically filming the hand working, directly. The chalk on

the board, the drawing, the actuality. That's I think very, very seminal in her work. And in many aspects of her work. I think that seeing the drawing actually being made as not a presentation of a show of drawings, it's not that. It's not like a show of drawings that somebody is performing next to. It is actually the drawing itself being made then and there.

Kristin Poor:

That immediacy. That's an interesting point.

Gwenn Thomas:

That immediacy. And I think it's almost you feel that she's emotionally connected to what she is doing right there in the present. It's the work that's in the present. It's not what was done, it's really a performative situation. That it is performance. It's an experiential situation.

Kristin Poor:

That's great, thank you. You mentioned briefly this memory you had while watching the performance of *Mirror Piece* in Porto. Do you remember anything else about your own experience as a performer in Joan's work?

Gwenn Thomas:

Well, there were many of us. So we were ... and we had a very sense of, you know, a lot of the people who were in it were other artists, other dancers, they were all ... I don't know how many we were, but I guess the one in Porto was 15, so maybe we were 15 then. More or less in that respect. And we all enjoyed it, I think. That was also something. That everybody enjoyed doing this. It was not something you had to do, or anything. Everybody wanted to do, because I realize now that it was much more of a community. Downtown was much more of a community then. And one felt much more interconnected with everybody. I mean not that we were close friends with everyone, but for the majority there were probably quite a few that were close friends. That you saw all the time, that people came to see your work, you went to see their work, and so participating in Joan's performances was also part of a whole group of us that was very exciting. It was something that we enjoyed and that was interesting to do. I would say.

Kristin Poor:

How did you start documenting her work?

Gwenn Thomas:

Well, I think that it just sort of happened very organically, let's say. Or very ... I was doing photography, so I think I had been working as I say for ... I guess the example of Dan Budnik. I started doing some photographs of other artist's work. I mean I did photographs also of Richard Serra's work. And then also because of doing ... I did a lot of photographs of Richard Serra's props. Not props, his models. I did photographs of Richard Serra's models in his studio. So that he could see how ... so I took

photographs of the models on different angles. So he could see how they would be enlarged, huge. So still have ... I was looking at those contact sheets the other day. You know, they were all just done as little documentations so that he could see what he would ... and I think at that time that he and Joan were together for quite a long time.

Gwenn Thomas:

So I think that Joan must have said can you take some photographs of the performance, and then *Choreomania* I think I took some photographs in her studio. And from that point, at other times. But other people were photographing her work too, I think you know about that Babette Mangolte photographed a lot of her work, and they did it very extensively. I was not doing it as extensively as some other people, and also Peter Moore and ... so I did it, certain ones.

Kristin Poor:

Did she give you specific directions that you recall, or ... ?

Gwenn Thomas:

Usually, except when it came to *Twilight* then we did ... but otherwise I would just do what photographs I thought were, you know, how I would photograph, how I would see that performance. And I would give her afterwards the contact sheets and then sometimes I would make prints and then other times ... you know, I was doing a lot of work with Willoughby and with Liza, that was like, on other artists. Daniel Buren, and others, and we went to Cologne. And then there was also a space called 112 Greene Street, where ... because I knew ... I was a friend of Gordon Matta-Clark, and I photographed some of his work.

Gwenn Thomas:

But at a certain point I have to say I stopped photographing the work of other artists for the most part. And I would say the whole time arc of my doing that was until about, well, '73, '74, '75, '76. Up until about 1980. And at 1980 I ... in fact I did some photographs for Nancy Holt, who is also a friend. But then at that point I decided that that's not ... I got a teaching job at NYU and Parsons. And so I started teaching, and I found that that was ... and doing more and more of my own work. And so, I kind of-

Kristin Poor:

So you kind of stepped away?

Gwenn Thomas:

I stepped away. I felt more that teaching was much more in line with my own work. Because I was able to develop my ideas. And in fact, because of teaching and because you have to stay on your toes so much and be sharp for the students that it actually-

Kristin Poor:

That was enough.

- Gwenn Thomas: That was it, yeah. I think that that was better.
- Kristin Poor: So when we did, before you switched gears and you were photographing Joan's work, and you said you remember photographing *Choreomania*, did you photograph *Organic Honey*?
- Gwenn Thomas: *Organic Honey*, I don't think I did. And I thought that was an incredible piece. I thought that the way of using the structure of the monitor, the video roll, in that, was incredible. The vertical roll was just beautiful, and I think that's an incredible piece.
- Kristin Poor: But that the video component struck you, particularly at the time.
- Gwenn Thomas: Yes, I thought the whole way of she using that structure and also I think it's an incredible piece. And also that she made this kind of alternate person for her. An alter ego for herself, in that character. Making a character and emotionally connecting. And I think that she was at the forefront of using this video technology. Which she had this intelligence built into the structure of the work. It was like using that as a structure. And I know that the idea of using the video was also, it gave a sense of empowerment to do, you know, you can see that she felt a freedom in using the video technology. She was able ... And I would say the performance becoming sculpture, becoming film, becoming performance. It's going back and forth and using the technology to be able to do that is very ...
- Gwenn Thomas: And also, that *Organic Honey* was really going back to storytelling. Using video as a storytelling tool. And making a character in disguise so that she would have an alternate, an alter ego. And I think what's interesting is she goes back to these other ritualistic situations but brings it really into the present. And I think that, you know, it's ... going back to the future. It's like going back to archaic rituals or the past and seeing the future, in another way. And her work is like seeing in another way. And *Organic Honey* is a very strong piece in that sense.
- Kristin Poor: Thank you, for that. Just backing up slightly, you mentioned staging the performances. Not the performances, but rather you staged within Joan's studio certain set ups for *Twilight*. And I wondered if you could tell us a bit more about the story behind those photographs that we now associate with the performance and how they related and how you two came to do that, and more about that situation.

Gwenn Thomas: Well, I think that I didn't photograph the actual performance. And so I think Joan thought, let's do it in the studio to kind of re-create. Because when one thinks about it, she was really using, you know, the hoop was also in *Mirage*. She's stepping in and out of the hoop. So she has these tools or props that she had already been using, and it reappears in *Twilight* but somehow in a different form. And it's such a strong image because it's really, she's sort of in this hoop but it's also the light and the video. The video is used as a source of light. And that's what ... it's a window, actually. A window of light, in a sense. So it's like going into darkness. Not retreating, but into a private space. And I think that that's what is emotionally very resonate about that piece. Is it's being in the hoop is almost like a womb like, private space that is the person separate from the situation as well.

Kristin Poor: And how did you chose that particular moment to re-create in the studio? And was it a one-to-one correspondence with part of the performance?

Gwenn Thomas: We just set that one image, that one thing up. That one moment up. And I photographed it from quite a different few ways. But we found one image of whole roll that I did, I think. It usually was I'd shoot quite a lot. And so we set that up. Just that way. And I shot it from several different angles. But then one image really was somehow ... the lighting and everything which we made. So it's really out of darkness comes this light piece. The video is a sculpture, also. The video monitor is a sculpture. So it's like the figure reacting to this intense light of the monitor. Of the sculpture, really. So it's a sculpture and a figure, really. You could say in its essence in that way it's not ... it's something very classical, in a way.

Kristin Poor: Yeah, lots of instances where the lighting is really a key component of the set up.

Gwenn Thomas: Yes.

Kristin Poor: And did you do anything in particular with other ... I don't know if you remember any other lighting situations, or ... the other times you photographed?

Gwenn Thomas: We did some set ups when she did all these different expressions.

Kristin Poor: Oh, yes.

Gwenn Thomas: We set that up. I mean she sort of let me sort of do these different expressions and, you know, I think I had one ... I did a lot of photography that I tried to use available light but just setting up one light. I mean they weren't done with flash. It was set up light or else I had enough light in the setting of the camera that I could adjust the light. Or sometimes I used a tripod. So I could get control that way. I mean I would say that I used ... I used a very good camera. I used a ... I was doing 35 millimeter but I had a good sense of lighting, I would say. But I did it quite naturally. It wasn't as though it was totally, technically taking many light readings and so on. It was more adjusting the depth of field and the aperture and just sort of trying different ways. In that sense, kind of naturally.

Kristin Poor: And how did you and Joan select the images afterwards? You mentioned that you would give her contact sheets and sometimes prints and she would choose from the contact sheet? Or was it something that you would have pre-selected some of the images that you thought worked best? Or how ...?

Gwenn Thomas: I think sometimes, but often I would say, "This is the contact sheet." I think with *Twilight* I pointed out the one I thought was the best one. And I think then she agreed, or she said, "Yes, this is a good one." And then that photograph seemed to be, it was somehow printed a lot. It was used in ... it became a good example of her work. Kind of encapsulated a lot of her interests. A lot of what her work was.

Kristin Poor: Yes, I can see that.

Gwenn Thomas: So it was published in the first book on video art, but it was published in ... it somehow had a resonance that went on. But I think for the most part I would make the contact sheets and we could go over them together. I did that with Liza, for *Avalanche*. Because they had an office of *Avalanche* on Grand Street, which was also very near where I lived, where Joan lived, it was just down the street. So we were all kind of aware of each other, I would say.

Gwenn Thomas: I would give them to Liza and then she would say, "Let's do this and this," photographs. And so there's an *Avalanche* archive at the Museum of Modern Art, where a lot of those contact sheets of mine and photographs are in that archive. Maybe 20 photographs from different periods of time. And probably some of Joan as well, I think. I'm not 100% sure, but there might very well be.

Kristin Poor: And it was for *Avalanche* that you photographed Jack Smith?

Gwenn Thomas: Yes.

Kristin Poor: And Jack Smith was of course influential for Joan, so we'd love to hear you speak a bit about him.

Gwenn Thomas: Well, you know, I knew of his film, *Flaming Creatures*, but this was not ... the situation where I did the photographs of him was in Liza and Willoughby and I went to Cologne in 1974 and we went to photograph what was ... it wasn't an art fair, it was more of an art show that was in a space in Cologne and there were a lot of artists in it. Daniel Buren, and other artists at that time, but Jack Smith was doing a performance there which we went specifically to document.

Gwenn Thomas: So I ... and part of the performance was in the zoo in Cologne, and the other part was in the streets of Cologne. And he was dressed in costume in the zoo and talking with the animals and he complained a lot about the whole idea of the museum. And what the rents were, that the rents were high, and was talking to the animals. And I photographed these, I guess I did about 180 photographs of that day. Because we went from the zoo to another space in the city of Cologne to continue photographing. And later on, the photographs were used in a collage which was made at Avalanche. It wasn't made by Jack Smith, but my photographs were used in the collage that was printed. And then other photographs I did were all in this article about Jack Smith.

Gwenn Thomas: And the fact that he was a ... I mean he himself considered himself an actor. He was a filmmaker, he was an early, early performance artist. And very extraordinary. I mean, very, very extraordinary artist who gave performances in his loft on Grand Street, that sometimes he would appear, or not appear. The performance was going to be at midnight but then he wouldn't appear until 1am. And sometimes he wouldn't appear at all. And so ... that was the reason that I really had done those. The reason I did those photographs because we went to Cologne. To do it specifically, and some other performances in Cologne. But it was mainly that performance.

Gwenn Thomas: So I documented it, and it became out of 180 photographs I made an edition of ... I made it down to 50. So it was condensed. So the narrative was condensed and was clearer at 50. And so it really was the whole beginning of his dialogue. And what he was saying, and you know, which he had a lot of grips with any kind of ... he was a complex person. And I think was very, very anti-establishment, to say the least in that sense. I mean in the sense that he considered the high rents being ... everything he kind of forecast, everything he said, because he resented borders or

boundaries of any kind, let's say. And everything he said was so prescient. Because now we have so many problems with borders. And he was talking about that in 1974. And also with high rents and real estate having taken over. And everything he said, he was saying then that has become a reality now. And he was also such a visionary, because he ... and then I think he became very reclusive and had any kind of ... I mean he had problems with all these situations.

Gwenn Thomas:

But the photographs that I did have been shown quite a bit, independently of *Avalanche*, just on their own. And also last summer at Artist Space when they did the show on Jack Smith, then. And I think that yes, Joan knew of his work and was very interested in his work.

Kristin Poor:

And would you say it was the same audience?

Gwenn Thomas:

Yes, I would say some of it was the same audience. Maybe ... I mean, the audience, yes, because there was a lot of cross overs between Anthology Film Archives and the same people also went to Joan's performances. When Jack Smith passed away, Jim Hoberman and Penny Arcade saved all his archive. They went into his space and took everything and saved it. So that was because of them that so much was saved.

Gwenn Thomas:

So there are ten films of Jack Smith and I think that each film was, is an edition of ten I think. I'm not 100% sure. But I had the show of ... well, we showed my photographs of Jack Smith because Joan recommended that the director of Yvon Lambert gallery see them. So they were shown at Yvon Lambert gallery with a sound tape of Tony Conrad, while the photographs were in the main room there was a sound voice of Jack Smith, recorded by Tony Conrad in a performance called *Les Evening Gowns Damnées*. The damned evening gowns.

Gwenn Thomas:

And in the other room there was a screening of Ken Jacobs' film, *Blonde Cobra*. Which I guess he had done the cinematography for Jack Smith's film, *Blonde Cobra* that was in the other room.

Kristin Poor:

So that was also a connection to Joan?

Gwenn Thomas:

That was also a connection to Joan because Joan, yes, actually made that happen because my photographs were shown because of Joan speaking to the director of Yvon Lambert, Olivier Belot and that's how he loved, he really liked them. So we decided to do a whole installation with them.

Kristin Poor: And I know you've also photographed a number of cones and things like this, in process, Joan's work in process in the studio in the '70's. There was one image of yours that was used of them for the ICA in Philadelphia exhibition of *Stage Sets*, which was taken in Joan's studio.

Gwenn Thomas: That was taken in the studio, yes. They were ... the cones were there, yes.

Kristin Poor: And I wondered if you have any memories of Joan working in her studio at that time, or anything else that might stand out to you?

Gwenn Thomas: Well I remember her doing the drawings a lot. You know, going over there and seeing her putting drawings up and seeing all the drawings that she was working on. And also, more recently, when she came back from Japan and did all the fish, all those fish drawings that are beautiful, and the octopus and all the different ones there.

Kristin Poor: And were those photographs that you took that ended up as the [exhibition poster] image for *Stage Sets*, were those staged also? Or you went to her studio and it was set up like that?

Gwenn Thomas: Well, we used to move things around and just sort of like ... she would come with them in different areas. So it wasn't set up like a static situation. You know, when we went there sometimes we moved things around. Or she would move them and say, "Come from this angle, do it from here." And then I would go around and do it in the round or from a special angle. I would say it was quite fluid, in the way. Sometimes she would move something and it wasn't only one way of seeing it. But I would photograph it from different perspectives and then she would decide which one she thought was good, was emblematic of the piece, and so on.

Gwenn Thomas: Because the stage sets I think are really interesting because as we said, I think they're beautiful pieces on their own as well. The objects themselves are beautiful. They're sculptures, really. And of course they're made for performances that she will do. That she did, and so on.

Gwenn Thomas: But I think a lot of them can exist. I mean they would be seen in the context of the performance. And they repeat, because they come back in different performances, the images repeat. The pieces are used again and but they are also sculptures. So they are props and exist independently of being props, I think, as well.

Kristin Poor: Yes, I agree. As you know, that is what I'm really interested in.

Gwenn Thomas: I think they really exist separately, yes. And I think that that whole concept of ... yeah, I think it's ... because otherwise, as opposed to making ... I think that that's what's interesting, is that they can exist as sculptural pieces as well.

Kristin Poor: Okay, thank you. And then I guess in moving towards wrapping up are there any questions that you have, that you think are important to ask Joan?

Gwenn Thomas: That's an interesting ... you know, as I said I think that her work from before, and maybe I'm repeating myself but it's so much now in the present that's why I think her work is so actual and so exciting is because it's been this organic way of working that is still, up until now, still re-inventing itself. It's still re-inventing itself over and over again. And we live in a time now where technology has become so ... I mean, it's so ubiquitous and how we use it, that to go back to the source of how it was really used at the beginning in this way as an artist, as she making art, very intelligent and very emotionally her own work. This work is her own, it's not coming out of a theory. It's not coming out of ... I mean, she has of course been interested in the work of Borges, in the work of Dante, she's done work on the Icelandic Saga, many works have come out of literature that have inspired her, and so you see this cross generative back and forth between ideas of myths and literature and writings that have come into her work.

Gwenn Thomas: But in that way I think it's very prescient, because it's really incorporating well, video performance, drawing, sculpture, and also how we see other ideas in literature coming into the work, and myths. So it has many, many different aspects. Yes.

Kristin Poor: Is there anyone else you think that we should interview?

Gwenn Thomas: Well, let me just try to think now. Well, I guess some of the people I would suggest I think you have probably already interviewed. But somebody that might not be ... I mean, the friend that I knew from years ago who also photographed Joan's work, is Carol Mersereau. But she might have some thoughts about that period of time. Because she also, well, had a boyfriend then who was a sculptor and he was also a friend, knew Richard Serra and also knew Joan and they were also part of this group that we all knew.

Kristin Poor: Right. Well, that would be interesting to hear.

- Kristin Poor: Well thank you, that's really helpful.
- Gwenn Thomas: And if I think of anybody else I will also ...I mean, I would know one or two other people. Randy Hardy and Epp, Epp his wife. E-P-P Kotkas. She was a dancer and she was in several of Joan's pieces. And she was in the one we were all in out on the beach, way out in ...
- Kristin Poor: At Jones Beach?
- Gwenn Thomas: Yes, I think she was in that and so was Randy. And they're right here, they live right by here. They might be very good to talk to about the whole downtown scene then too. And Randy is a sculptor.
- Kristin Poor: Okay, great, thank you.
- Gwenn Thomas: They're friends that I see all the time still.
- Kristin Poor: They're your neighbors.
- Gwenn Thomas: Yeah, exactly. And also they still know Joan too. So that, yeah. Those three.
- Kristin Poor: Thank you. And is there anything that we missed that you think is important to put on the record today?
- Gwenn Thomas: Let me just see ... I wrote some things down. There was ... I mean, I think that we've seen a lot of this as something that is ongoing, you know. I think that that's what's wonderful. Sometimes with other artists you see sort of a beginning, this stop, the worked stopped at this point. And her work has just been flourishing. And it's as though the more she has been working, the more, as I say her work has become more and more relevant, and is still so fresh, is what I think is fantastic about her work. And yeah, I would just leave it at that.
- Kristin Poor: That's great. Well thank you so much Gwenn, this has been wonderful. We appreciate it.
- Gwenn Thomas: Good.

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.