

Vicente Todolí and Fiammetta Griccioli interviewed by Barbara Clausen, September 3, 2020

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Barbara Clausen: Hello, welcome to the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base interview series. Today is September 3rd, 2020 and we are here today with Vicente Todolí, the Artistic Director of the Pirelli HangarBicocca in Milan and Fiammetta Griccioli, the Assistant Curator of the Pirelli HangarBicocca in Milan, and they have generously agreed to speak with us about Joan Jonas's exhibition, *Joan Jonas: Light Time Tales*, which was shown in Milan from October 2014 to February 1, 2015. And then also traveled to the Malmö Konsthall.

Barbara Clausen: My name is Barbara Clausen, I'm the curatorial research director of the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base, and I want to thank you and welcome you today to speak to us. Maybe we start out with the question about your relationship and how you got to know Joan, and Vicente, it would be great if you would begin.

Vicente Todolí: I remember the first time I invited her was when I was the director of Serralves Museum in Porto, in Portugal for the opening show. It was called *Circa 1968*. That was in June 1999. Of course, I knew the work from research, but [had] not really seen much, only some videos. I guess around 1997, I may have seen, probably ... I saw one of the *My New Theater* [pieces], and that's when I got the idea to invite her, but also by building this structure, not into the exhibition. I don't even know how many structures we had. There were two or three. I forget now.

Vicente Todolí: That was the first contact with the work, but actually I met her at a dinner at her apartment, her loft in New York, because I worked a lot with Robert Frank. I did many shows with Robert Frank. Every time I'd go to New York I would see Robert, and Robert said, "Oh, let's to go a dinner at Joan Jonas's house." There, after dinner, she started playing with the masks, and went out on the table, a kind of performance. I think that was the first personal contact, but I guess probably I invited her to participate in the show around 1998. I may have seen that work, probably 1997 in New York, and checking with Fiammetta, we saw maybe the show at...

Fiammetta Griccioli: Pat Hearn Gallery?

- Vicente Todolí: At Pat Hearn, probably. That was [*My New Theater* pieces] this kind of device which became an architectural, sculptural presence.
- Barbara Clausen: When did you have the idea to invite her for an exhibition for Milan?
- Vicente Todolí: Well, I arrived in 2012, and...well, actually before that, she had performed at Tate Modern when I was Director, at the Turbine Hall. I guess that was the second time. I forget which year was that, 2008 maybe, or 2006.
- Barbara Clausen: 2006, I think. We can check it out.
- Vicente Todolí: 2006, okay. That was the second time that we came to work together, and then I arrived in May 2012, so I started thinking about the program. I had already been thinking about the program, but I guess by the end of 2012, I already had the program more or less figured out and she was the third show. The first was Dieter Roth and Björn Roth, *Islands*, the second was Cildo Meireles and I think that Joan was the third. They were all testing how to use that space, because we do site-specific retrospectives. So, shows that only exist there. They can be adapted, but rarely. In this case it was adapted later for Sweden, but they were all tests.
- Vicente Todolí: The first test was an artist with...was so different, no? Like, Dieter who played all the pianos, let's say. The second was more kind of sculptural installations by Cildo Meireles, but that was a good test, you know, how it could work. With Joan, it was a kind of a challenge. Of course, I have seen her installations at Tate. One of the works, I saw the show in...at the Wilkinson Gallery in London, also. So, there were always rooms. It was a very intimate work. So, I said, "is it possible, in such a huge space, to still keep it intimate?" That was the challenge, no? I said, "well, I think it can be done with light and darkness, invisible walls. So, each work gets its own border. Each work has an area of influence with no walls, but still is the space and it can be intimate." That was the challenge.
- Vicente Todolí: So, I remember that Joan had built a model, and I went to...she was not sure about it. I went to her loft and she said, "well, you know, my work's so small, walls ..." I convinced her. I said, "you don't need no walls. I can see." I convinced [her], each work will activate this space of separation, invisible but present, you know? And she agreed. So, then that's when it started, and when Andrea started working on the show. Obviously, a condition of the shows was, it had to be a retrospective, and it

had to be different to all the previous shows. So, it had to...otherwise, it couldn't be just one more or less show... A show more or less based on another show. No. It had to be a completely new and different presentation of the work.

Vicente Todolí:

So, because we wanted to avoid that the artist comes and says, "oh, I do three new works. One for the piazza, one for the Navate, one for the..." No, that's not the idea. The idea is to look back on your work in symbiosis with this space. It's with the halls, which is the Navate, or the...the industrial architecture of HangarBicocca.

Barbara Clausen:

I think there's also such an interesting sense of performativity within that exhibition, because the exhibition became something that transgressed the single works as an installation, and they kind of became something of a whole, if I understand that correctly.

Vicente Todolí:

That is something that we believe, that for the show to be successful, all of the works which are different, like the igloos of Mario Merz, at the end it's an installation of installations. So, it's a work made of many works, but it's a whole. That's the proof that it would work. If they looked separate, then it's not so interesting. I mean, it can be okay, but I would say the test really is that it has to work as one work, I think, that has many works inside, and from different periods, and also different experiences.

Barbara Clausen:

When I spoke with Joan at one point, she said that it was really important for her also to see the Mike Kelley show, that that was also influential for her to really understand that you could really offer her the possibility of actually being able to create such a show, to produce such a show as she in the end did.

Vicente Todolí:

Yeah. No, I mean, it was a kind of a leap of faith, because you don't know if it works until you open. That's when you...the rest is, okay, in my work. I really believed, when I asked her, I believed it will work. But yes, you have to have faith, because finally it's a space that has its own soul. Then you have to really have that in consideration.

Barbara Clausen:

Well, I think one of the things that was so especially remarkable was that there was a real sense of distinctive sound, and also an overlap, so people could really go from one, almost like islands, to the next, and be accompanied but then enter again a new world, and this movement within the exhibition that seemed to be so—

Vicente Todolí: It's an archipelago. It's an archipelago, and the spectator is the guy who goes with the boats from island to island, but from one island you see the island, which is the sound of the sea you hear? The one of the island you left, the one that is approaching? It's...the sea, the sound of the sea, it's the waves against the beach. So, different beaches. So, in this sense it was like that, and it ended in water. The last room was—

Barbara Clausen: Was *Reanimation*. I think that's also a very strong metaphor for how Joan works with her installations. The show really teaches...or, teaches, but really conveys also, I think, for younger curators who in the future will use the JJKB, to really see how, and how effectful it was to not always have walls, and how this show became so important for Joan Jonas because there was an intimacy that was offered by the generosity that you were able to give her.

Vicente Todolí: Yeah, which is a kind of contradiction. But yeah, let's say that the biggest loneliness is man in the universe, no? So, it's a big space. It can also be very lonely. You can be yourself. Also, the idea that there was no stage, but the whole thing was a stage also, you know? So, it had this kind of performing element. So, no room, just space and no stage, but the world is a stage.

Barbara Clausen: Yes. But you did perform *Reanimation*. If I understood that right, you had *Reanimation* in the first part of the space. You moved some elements. Could you tell me about that?

Vicente Todolí: Yeah. It was at the beginning of Navate. So, the first work was the piazza, and it was just on the right side, but you were looking at the, let's say...at the big wall at the entrance of the exhibition. So, you were not seeing her work. Well, one work was on the right side, the piazza, but let's say that...it became its own space, no, Fiammetta?

Fiammetta Griccioli: Yeah. I mean, *Reanimation* was in...it was the only work that basically had its own space, as Vicente was saying. The interesting thing about our space is that you don't just go in one direction, but you always have to come back. So, it was a kind of a turning point, because after you saw *Reanimation*, you re-saw again the show, looking at it—

Vicente Todolí: I misunderstood. I thought you were talking about the performance, where it was staged.

Barbara Clausen: Yes, I am actually, and that's—

Fiammetta Griccioli:

Oh, sorry.

Barbara Clausen:

No, it's a perfect...no, Fiammetta, it's perfect, because that's... There's a doubling that happens with performing and installation. Maybe, Vicente, maybe you want to say something about that. I think this is very—

Vicente Todolí:

In the installation of *Reanimation*, since it was the Cube, the last room, as Fiammetta says, it's the end, it's the beginning. It's a round trip, always. It's a round trip, because finally, it's like going to a place and coming back, and on the way back you see things that you don't see on the way there. So, the trip is not complete, because also in the second part when you're returning, you think you know but you miss many things. But also, it's the time of sedimentation, of your way there. The way back is when things sediment and you see them again from a different vantage. Then, on the way out there, at the end, that's where we have the performance. But the performance, let's say, was...it felt natural. It felt it could have been being staged all the time, no? It would have been a perfect wound of reality, no? Yeah.

Barbara Clausen:

Do you think this exhibition had an effect for future programming? Did you feel like for you this was an important exhibition in some way for thinking about how performative elements are integrated?

Vicente Todolí:

Exactly. Yeah, it's, "if we can manage to do this, then we can manage almost to do anything." It was limiting the test that...how works which apparently would not fit conceptually, no, in this... Because the temptation is always to say, "ah, big space? Big works," you know? But not necessarily. That was the test. Of course, like the [Anselm} Kiefer towers. Of course the Kiefer towers work. They are 20 meters high. But okay, that's also in a way, now we know. But this kind of small, intimate performing installations, revisited, would work? That was more difficult to believe, no? So, let's say that with that, for example, later the exhibition of Philippe Parreno, it was completely a performing exhibition for the duration. In a way, that was also kind of, "okay, we are not worried." We had already done it with Joan, so it was possible.

Barbara Clausen:

I also think it's an exhibition that's interesting because it really also highlights the conceptual approach that Joan has in her work, that somehow, even sometimes in the performative, in the performance, how finely and precisely she prepares and plans, while at the same time, because of that, I guess, is able to improvise and to adapt.

Vicente Todolí: Exactly. Yeah. Well, that's what she did with the installations, she adapted. She adapted in order to make them islands, you know, with no walls? It's what she does with the performances. They look like they are the same. They look like they are kind of more improvisational than they really are, because as you say, every detail is thought, no? Finally, the installations are like freezing those on time, encapsulating them and freezing them, no?

Barbara Clausen: How do you feel the audience reacted to Joan's work? Were they familiar? Were the Milan... I mean, Joan has presented her work often in Italy before, since the 1970s. How did the—

Vicente Todolí: Yeah, in Rome. I went in Rome to the gallery, to the gallery where she started, the first performance in Rome. L'Attico.

Barbara Clausen: L'Attico, yes, that was in 1972 and 1973. Yes. Yes, that's also part of the Knowledge Base. We actually have really found all the photographs and content sheets for those performances and that performance, and it's quite fascinating. She has always had this very close relationship to Italy, of course. I was just wondering, how did people react to this exhibition? How do you remember that?

Vicente Todolí: Fiammetta, who is Italian and lives there, because I don't live in Milan, she will know. Fiammetta?

Fiammetta Griccioli: Well, I think actually, let's say, in the art world people had an idea of her work, but the impression was that nobody knew it in such depth, and that they actually discovered all this, especially the installation part of her work and how she translated installation to performances, or vice versa. So, I think it was truly a very profound discovery. Regarding the public at large, I think what was interesting was what Vicente started to do with Hangar, when the exhibition program, was really for people to come close to contemporary art, or to work like the work of Joan Jonas whilst in Italy, it probably would have been... Let's say, for a larger public they wouldn't have entered so into contact with such a work that can sometimes be perceived whilst, how the show was built and how the shows are built in Hangar, you really walk through these works and through the shows, and all the material that you are given. It was, I would say, really a discovery.

Fiammetta Griccioli: So, I'm sure people in the art world knew her, but not such in depth, for sure. I think people associated her more to her performative work.

Vicente Todolí: I think originally insisting that all the programs at Hangar, mainly, are retrospectives, is because this way the public gets to know really the work. You dive into the work. You immerse yourself into the work. After that, you cannot say you don't know the work. Of course, we leave things out, many things, but still I think it's the amassment. How is it possible to go in one go, in one show, and really give your hands and your mind and your senses into the work of the artist, no? Because also, the immensity of the space, I think, makes the viewer, the visitor, more aware of their own body. If you are in a small space, you take another attitude. But there, you have to make decisions all the time where to go. You're free to go. So, do you go left? Do you go right? Do I look from this work to this other work? It's something that in museums with rooms, you cannot turn around and see another work, fifty meters from a distance.

Vicente Todolí: So, all that makes you believe you are navigating. You are really the owner of your destiny there. The spectator really is in charge, is in the driving seat. I think that is, for people, the main thing, to have an approach with less preconceptions, more open, into the work.

Fiammetta Griccioli: Another thing that was interesting, just to finish, about Joan, is that a lot of people asked us...thought she was a young artist. That was the most interesting reaction we had. So, a lot of people thought she was twenty, twenty-five, and then when we told them actually she was eighty and she was a very important artist, I mean, people were shocked about how contemporary her work was. That was the most shocking reaction.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah, it's something that's also echoed when we speak with academics, how much her work... Or people who teach, or artists who teach, or academics, how much her work is teachable, how much it really communicates also to younger generations, and how it really, because of its openness in technology as well, it faces, it poses new questions and challenges. It's not just that it's liked, but it really also provokes questions about narratives, provokes also questions about research. How do artists deal with research in their work? How do they absorb it and translate it?

Barbara Clausen: I was also wondering if you could maybe respond a bit to the question, how did you choose the works? This is also...let's not forget that the JKB is also for conservators, and really also for curators. How did you approach that, approaching an artist to choose works?

Vicente Todolí: Well, the schedule was collected by Andrea, so his curatorial (work) is different. Once the exhibition was programmed and she said yes, then Andrea took... I was informed about what they were doing, et cetera, but usually, when we approach an artist... In this case it was not like that, because it was impossible. We already have tested the exhibition. We deal with the checklist selection, and then we test in the space, but even with tapes, sometimes even with cardboard models, before we approach the artist to know if it will work. So, well, some artists, they are convinced already. But some artists, you need to really go there to have a feeling, to have a feeling of the works you think could live in the space. Then, with the artist, this evolves and there are changes.

Vicente Todolí: But essentially, the script is made. It's like a film. The script is made when we go there, so more or less we know the kind of film we're going to have. Of course, it changes also when we're doing it, in the case some loans are not possible. Also, we also have the problem of no walls, no climate control. We have heating. I mean, it's...not everything can be shown. So, doing a show there is about abstracting yourself. You have a huge space, but you have so many things that would not work there, you know?

Vicente Todolí: I think that also is what makes them stronger, because everything has to be really, really, really anchored, you know?

Barbara Clausen: Yeah, it would show every mistake. But also, I guess it also was really...I guess with artists like Joan, who are very precise about which choices of works they might choose, and there's also really a working together with the artist that I'm hoping that Fiammetta can tell us a little bit about, on the ground while installing.

Vicente Todolí: Exactly.

Barbara Clausen: Vicente did you have a vision of the...did you have a moment where you were like, "oh, I kind of imagine this is what the show..." Did you get an impression of it?

Vicente Todolí: I get...I imagine all the shows before I approach the artist. I imagine them. I have to. I imagine them, but then I go to the space and I imagine the experience there. Without this imagination, I would never... Well, the result then is something else. Sometimes it gets closer, sometimes... But I have to say, I am very happy with all the shows. I hope the artists too, because if the artist's happy, then we are happy. That's our motto. Art comes first.



- Barbara Clausen: Also, your team seems to really work together very closely. So, technical, curatorial, programming.
- Vicente Todolí: Yeah, we're a very small team. We are like a commando. I don't say team. I say we are like commando, and we have a mission which is to put together this exhibition. It's very, very young and effective. Young, effective..an effective commando. So, that's also one of the secrets. We are not lots of staff. We are a small staff, but all our time gets devoted not to seeing what other people do, everyone can be autonomous, but they also work incredibly in teams. So, that's I think also one of the secrets, yeah.
- Barbara Clausen: This also...I think this is also maybe as the part of, what could one give as an advice to a curator who thinks, "I would love to show a show of Joan Jonas's work," or a director, is actually to think about that working experience and that process as well. What would you pass on as advice?
- Vicente Todolí: Well, the first thing is, don't think what the artist can do for you. Think what you can do for the artist, you as an institution. That would be...so, that means you have to find something new to say. You have to really be very proactive, you know, and not go to the artist and say, "oh, I would like to do the show. Any ideas?" That's not my approach. I think the artist needs to be tested also, otherwise it's like playing a tennis game, only one person. It's impossible. It's not a tennis game. Then it's handball. It's egotistic handball, you know, against the wall. So, I would say first, do lots of research. Research, research, and research, and only after research... Don't go for a name. Research. While you do research, other things will come out. Maybe you turn, yeah? So, don't choose the artist as a strategy, thinking what showing this artist might mean for your career or for the museum. No. Think about the artist first.
- Barbara Clausen: I think the question of research is also interesting, because if I understood it right Joan was also able to spend some time in preparation of the show, in the planning of the show, in Milan. Is that correct?
- Vicente Todolí: Yes. Actually, they always come, all the artists. That's essential, many trips. We always take two years, at least, so we have plenty of time to work on the show. With young...for the stage before, you know, for younger artists, sometimes it's one year and a half, but for the Shed it's at least two years, sometimes four. For the Shed, for Navate, for the big space. So, I think I have to leave you.

- Barbara Clausen: Thank you very much for taking the time.
- Vicente Todolí: Say hi to Joan.
- Barbara Clausen: I will.
- Vicente Todolí: I hope to see her here again once this Covid shit is over.
- Barbara Clausen: Yes. Thank you so much, and—
- Vicente Todolí: Bye, take care.
- Fiammetta Griccioli: Ciao, Vicente.
- Vicente Todolí: Bye, bye.
- Barbara Clausen: Now we're going to continue with Fiammetta. So, I think there were a lot of really interesting points that were brought up, and I actually would love to hear you more, because you were really there doing the installation process.
- Fiammetta Griccioli: Sure. We...as I was saying before, I work in Hangar as an assistant curator, so depending on who is curating the show I have been either with Vicente or, at the time, with Andrea. So, I really had immense privilege and pleasure to work on this show together with Andrea and Joan. We had the opportunity a year before... As we started working on the show, to go to Sweden, actually, and see *Reanimation* in person. We went to Umeå in the north of Sweden with Andrea. This was around October 2013. That was a very decisive moment, because that was as we saw the performance, and especially Andrea, we really thought that we have to absolutely have this performance, and we saw also the piece. We saw *Lines in the Sand*, and then in Stockholm there was another show at the same time where there were several single-channel pieces. So, that was also quite a decisive moment, and the opportunity to see a series of works.
- Fiammetta Griccioli: I think another important reference point, and you were mentioning it, was the 1994 show at the Stedelijk Museum.
- Barbara Clausen: Yes.
- Fiammetta Griccioli: We talked a lot about it, and how that was a moment in which she translated, in a way, performance to installation, and it allowed her then also to do installations, and from there to go to performances. She kind of saw this issue, what do you do with performative work, performance art? As far as I know, she's one

of the only artists that has found this very incredible way, and how she's also rigorous with single-channel works, with her filmic work and video work, and that was another, I think, key point in thinking about the show, that there was no hierarchy between the single-channel works and the installation works. So, it was really also a challenge to make sure that...each work was properly shown. So, if it was a projection, it was a projection. There was a rigor in that.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

But there wasn't, like, A works and B works. It was important to... That's really a great lesson I learned with Andrea and Joan, and the specificity of each work. She has such a knowledge about projection, back projection, screen. It's really incredible, and she's very rigorous. Whether it is performative work, or video work, or filmic work, and then that's really important.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

I think, between the choices of the works, really this idea of also showing works from the past, but also works from today, to show how her work is still up...what we were saying today. It's still up-to-date now, and there's also no hierarchy between previous works, or key works, and works that she's been doing today. It was a back and forth. So, you'd enter the space and you'd have very recent works, but then you would cross recent works also as you went through and at the end, and vice versa.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah, there's really something interesting about not following a chronology, but to have this communication between earlier and more later works, and to create... I know there was an important drawing in that show. That was that snake drawing, because I was thinking about what's the « parcours » that was drawn out for that exhibition? I don't know if you remember, there was this snake, kind of a continuous S shape, that was in one of the drawings, you can see it. Did you feel... So, I'm kind of jumping from the production now to what... There's two questions. Before, maybe, we stay in the production. There was a question for me. How did you deal with conservation issues? Because I know the HangarBicocca is a giant hall. How did you... Because the JJKB is also for conservators. How did you engage with that? How did you deal with that?

Fiammetta Griccioli:

That was a great challenge, and also, if you would like to interview her, she's a very intelligent and really forward-thinking person. We worked with Iolanda Ratti. She was previously Time-based Conservator at Tate, and really understood the challenge of doing such a show in such a space. We also compiled with her, also with Andrea and Joan, of course, these wonderful captions that were present in the space. I mean, we can go through this afterwards, but I also want to tell you about the materials we

can add. We've been going through the stuff. That's also something interesting, because it doesn't appear anywhere. So, it was huge conversations with Joan about how she wanted to actually build these captions. That was actually related to the idea of conservation and what you consider... If you consider a work a material, if you consider a part of a piece, a work, a ready-made, and especially for *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, where there was the coyote and a series of, I mean, objects. So, wonderful, very interesting conversation.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

So, I mean, if you want to interview her, I'm sure lolanda, but...I mean, to make it...I'm sorry if I'm going long on things. You can just cut me.

Barbara Clausen:

No, do not, this is perfect. This is exactly what we're looking for. So, there's a combination of having this bigger vision institutionally, as a context, but then there's also really the details that are really important for future users, and to know how is that realized? How are shows like this produced, actually? So, for us this is of great importance. Go ahead.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

So, it was really together with lolanda and Andrea, and this was really like a vision of when you work with people like Andrea and Vicente, to understand what kind of people you need on a team, or you can have, and what are the important parts. Also, because we had loans from quite important museums, such as the Stedelijk Museum for *Sweeney Astray*, *Mirage* was coming from MoMA, *Lines in the Sand* was from MACBA. Also, the dialogue you need to ensure with these institutions. I mean, now it's changed, but not everybody necessarily knew the space. It's always very tricky and delicate when you have to lend such pieces.

Barbara Clausen:

These processes often take many... That's why sometimes these shows also take so long to prepare, because it takes—

Fiammetta Griccioli:

Yeah, because you need to request works at least a year in advance. You need to present a lot of documentation like facility reports, thorough statements about why you're doing that show, why it's important to present such and such a piece. Then you also have interesting conversations with the couriers that come, or with the actual museum, because sometimes it might happen that works have been in storage for a very long time, and haven't been presented. Sometimes, museums might not actually know how you could actually re-adapt the piece to this space, because as Vicente was saying, we don't have any walls.

Fiammetta Griccioli: So, you will get installation manuals that say, "you need to present the work in a room that's five-by-five, da-da-da-da-da, no lumens, this and this and that," and then when you're actually in a huge hangar space where you don't have any natural light, where you don't have any walls... So, also to be able to re-adapt them to the space is also, for sure, a challenge.

Barbara Clausen: I imagine you also have limited climate control, no, in these spaces? It's not as if—

Fiammetta Griccioli: Yeah, what we do is, we have all of these data loggers. We monitor, constantly, the space, and so we will do weekly checks on the works, so we've actually never had any problems. For shows like this one, as we were saying, if we don't have one in the team we'll work specifically with a conservator. Depending on the work and everything, there will be a [complete] documentation. So, you always have to compile a condition report when the work comes in, and co-compile it with the courier if the courier is accompanying the work, and when it [leaves the institution]. As I said, we discovered really interesting things, because...I don't know. For this Mario Merz show we just did, there was this piece, I think it was in storage for [more than] ten years and hadn't been shown since.

Barbara Clausen: Which piece, sorry?

Fiammetta Griccioli: From Mario Merz's exhibition we did.

Barbara Clausen: Oh, Mario Merz.

Fiammetta Griccioli: [...] Because we worked with his, let's say, long-term collaborator that has installed all his works. So, they were actually learning from the show, taking notes about how actually the piece was to be presented, since the artist wasn't present anymore. That's an interesting part of Iolanda's job. She always interviews the artists, and one of the main questions is, "what happens when you're not here tomorrow?" An interesting question is, "if the technology changes, does it have to be a projection? With the sound, if the sound ..." All these kinds of questions.

Barbara Clausen: Absolutely. Those are questions that are really also at heart for the co-directors of the JJKB. There's Glenn Wharton. He's one of the main media conservators who used to do media conservation at MoMA. We've compiled a lot of interviews with, for example, the conservators at MoMA and the conservators at the Stedelijk, to really show how much detail goes into especially

these questions, and we will be sure to get in touch with Iolanda Ratti. And then interview her.

Barbara Clausen:

I was also wondering if you could tell me a bit about how you worked with the sound within that space, and technology. I know you were working also with a very advanced technical team.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

Yeah. So, also in this case, if you want to go more into the detail... As you know, as assistant curator you're kind of at a cross-hold between teams, so then more in the detail, if you'd like to interview Matteo [de Vittor], I'm sure he's very happy and very thorough. But basically, we worked with Eidotech, which is a fantastic company in Germany who...I mean, they work at the Venice Biennale, et cetera. So, they're very thorough. There was a lot of planning before, and a lot of conversations, because as you know, every...not only the single-channel works or the *My New Theaters* but then every single installation...I mean, certain works had six projections inside them.

Barbara Clausen:

Yes, and Eidotech has really been working with Joan, I think, since documenta 11, if I'm not mistaken.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

Yes. They had a very good knowledge of her work. I would say sound was one of the biggest concerns, because sound in the space bounces a lot. So, as you were saying before, it was a huge challenge to be able to concentrate on a work, to zoom in as you were in front of a work, but at the same time you had this landscape sound going around, which in a way contributed also to the immersivity of the experience, I would say. Until the very last minute, it was constantly adjusted. Also, because people in the space absorb sound and change how sound is perceived, so together with Matteo and Eidotech, all the certain... You know, and it's also budget always comes into this, because of course if you have huge budgets then you can use incredible directional speakers and the most soundproof, chic material that you find, but of course—

Barbara Clausen:

Who has that?

Fiammetta Griccioli:

You always have to compromise between all of these—

Barbara Clausen:

I think that's a really important point also for future curators who might check into these interviews, is the level of compromise that you have to take, I think from an artistic point of view but also from a curatorial point of view, to really

understand that often compromise is really the means to get to your goal.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

Yeah. But I must say, without...I would say the compromise is always to the point that it doesn't compromise the work. What I mean is, I've been to shows where you hear sound everywhere. You can't hear the sound, and the sound is not... Sometimes, people are just not so careful with time-based media, which is a bit sad. Like, the projection is not there, the screens are not done well. I mean, here, not only because Joan is precise but because you want to present the work at its best, and I have to say there, it was very carefully taking care of that.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah. But that's also interesting, because specifically in Joan's case, she's always somebody who has always stayed up-to-date with technology, and she even adapts, partly, her aesthetic. If I think of the videos she made with her dog, Ozu, with the GoPro camera, or if she uses a different kind of HD technology. It's already there in *Vertical Roll*, how she really un-specifies the medium specificity, in a way, coming back to that [Rosalind] Krauss essay. It's really the sense of how she puts it on its head, and actually makes it work because she makes it dysfunctional, which of course Douglas Crimp wrote about early on already. That's amazing to see that also come to life in a curatorial process, where you really see how works are installed to be slightly adapted and have this flexibility.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

Yes, absolutely. I think flexibility is really a key word there, because as you were saying, she's very detailed, and then she can improvise. She's very rigorous, and then she can be flexible. I think that's what makes, probably, her work so outstanding, because she has the courage to be both, and not use technology for technology's sake. Sometimes you have this thing of, "Oh, there's this... 3D technology's coming out, so I'm just going to use it." She really has this, how do you say, casual way of adapting to time without being... You know, like how sometimes older people try to act young? She doesn't have that. She's just naturally old, young at the same time.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah. I also wanted to ask you about the programming, because I know you had a really ambitious programming throughout the exhibition. You had Joan performing *Reanimation*, but there were also a lot of other programs happening throughout the show. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Fiammetta Griccioli:

Yeah, I will try. Basically, the idea also in Hangar is to have a program that accompanies every show, but that is very related to the exhibition. So, we always...let's say, the idea is for people

to come back to the space, also because... I mean, now the perception has changed, but you have to imagine that until a couple of years ago it was perceived as very far away from the city center. I mean, now the city has transformed, the public transport has transformed, but it was very important to get people to come back, to come back to see the show, re-think about it. Also, that's one of the reasons why the public program was very central.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

So, the most important, I would say, had to be there... basically part of the show, was to have the *Reanimation* performance. I think there were hundreds and hundreds of people. I mean, it was like going... I'm not saying a Lady Gaga concert, but huge rounds of applause. I mean, you wouldn't think you were looking at a performance of contemporary art. The whole space was filled with people. That was pretty amazing to experience, because the scale really changed. That was really a special moment. Then there were different appointments. So, the person who was in charge of this is my colleague, Giovanna Amadasi. So, in dialogue with the curators, with us, she constructs the public program. She had invited also an art historian, Giovanna Zapperi, to give a lecture about the more feminine aspects in her work.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

She invited two young artists called Invernemuto to... They did a kind of sound workshop in which, going back to the sound references in Joan's work, about how you can have more of a reggae piece in *Organic Honey*, or how you would have the *Ursonate* by Kurt Schwitters. So, they kind of built a sonic journey, and that was kind of to underline how sound is also an important part of her work. My colleague Lucia Aspesi, I mean, she was working as a researcher at the time. Now she works as an assistant curator, we alternate shows. She had curated a projection evening, and had selected a series of videos that had to do with thematics that were very present in Joan's work.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

It's interesting, because in one of the last... In one of the videos, there was a video of Trisha Baga, and we just curated together a show here at Hangar on Trisha Baga. Looking at Trisha's work, there's so much of Joan, and that's really interesting to see how she has influenced younger artists. I'm thinking if I'm missing something.

Barbara Clausen:

I'm looking on the site. You had the sonic journeys, you had video programs. You had Giovanna Zapperi give a lecture. You had—



- Fiammetta Griccioli: We always have a concert. So, we had a music curator, Pedro Rocha, and he had invited Jennifer Walshe to have a concert in the space. So, this was a bit Vicente's idea, was always to have... Well, maybe concert is not the right term, but let's say a more performative musical moment for every show. So, Pedro, in conversation with the artist, would think about someone that might be apt for the show, and this was also part of, let's say, Vicente's vision of how the institution, and how it worked. Because we have that incredible space, it made sense for people, once again, to be in the space and to experience the show also in a different way.
- Barbara Clausen: Maybe, because we've come to an hour, maybe to kind of find a closing moment, to talk a bit about how the show then was brought... How did the show go to Malmö, to Diana Baldon?
- Fiammetta Griccioli: Yeah, she actually had come to see the show and she fell in love with it, so she... Let's say it wasn't one of those cases in which it was born as a traveling show from the beginning, but it became a traveling show after she actually saw the show. I think the impact, physical impact of the show, was very important for her. Then, from there, conversation started about which pieces to bring to Sweden, what had already... She had had, as we were saying before, had shows before, and then together with Andrea, they selected... Because of course the space is smaller. I would say it's a third of Hangar. I mean, interestingly it's also a big open space in a way.
- Barbara Clausen: Yes, it is.
- Fiammetta Griccioli: There were similarities to the space, and then they—
- Barbara Clausen: For Joan, one of the real differences was the floor. I mean, obviously the size, but also that it... In the Konsthall in Malmö there's really this beautiful wooden floor.
- Fiammetta Griccioli: You're right. Yeah, I forgot about that.
- Barbara Clausen: The warmth from the floor. That is something that really stayed in her mind, which is interesting, how something—
- Fiammetta Griccioli: Very.
- Barbara Clausen: We always think of dimensions, but there's the sense of—
- Fiammetta Griccioli: Absolutely, material. Yeah, absolutely. I had forgotten about that. It's very interesting.

Barbara Clausen: It is interesting. I was lucky to see the show in Malmö.

Fiammetta Griccioli: It worked very well. I saw it only once, and so sometimes when you see one thing once—

Barbara Clausen: I guess it was like a smaller version of it, but it was really interesting. I think it's going to be very important that we speak with your colleagues Matteo de Vittor and also to Iolanda Ratti. I think we're going to do that.

Fiammetta Griccioli: Absolutely, I can put you in contact.

Barbara Clausen: Yes please. That would be great.

Fiammetta Griccioli: I can speak to them tomorrow.

Barbara Clausen: That would be really great. So, maybe we should wrap up this interview now, and then you can... So, in that sense, I think I want to maybe ask you, just to close the conversation, what would your advice be for somebody who's a curator of your generation who wants to approach Joan's work?

Fiammetta Griccioli: To approach her work in specific?

Barbara Clausen: Mm-hmm.

Fiammetta Griccioli: I guess personally, a great thing for me was to not have any kind of preconception, and to really listen and observe and look at her work, and to have the courage to experiment and put things together, because in reality, then, in an artist's work, elements and things just keep on coming back, and the circularity inside the work, I think, is the most interesting thing. How an element is there from the beginning, and then it will come back under a different form, so that... Really, to approach her work with a very open mind. I think there are endless connections and possibilities of showing her work together, and I think that this possibility of combining her work will open up the possibility of always having different aspects emerging that probably didn't emerge in our show.

Fiammetta Griccioli: I mean, you could probably show different installations and show them in different ways, and I think other connections will come up. It's so rich and dense, whether it's the formal aspects, whether it's the themes that she faces, because just the fact that nature is so central, and narration and fairytales, and whether it's instead the formal aspects and the feminine, but in such a subtle way. Not at all didascalical. It's so subtle, how it's political

without being in your face, that I think it's such a generous work that it really needs to be embraced, for the generosity.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah. Well, thank you very much to both you and Vicente for the generosity of speaking to us, and thank you for listening.

Fiammetta Griccioli:

Thank you so much for the wonderful project that you are doing.

*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.*