

Catherine Wood interviewed by Barbara Clausen, April 23, 2020

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Barbara Clausen: Hello, this is the interview with Catherine Wood. She's the senior curator for International Art and Performance at Tate Modern. It's the twenty-third of April, 2020. This is Barbara Clausen. Thank you Catherine for agreeing to be interviewed for the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base. I think we'll start out really easy. We're just going to start with the question: how did you come to know Joan Jonas and her work?

Catherine Wood: Hi, Barbara. Nice to be here. I feel that I've known about Joan's work forever. There must have been a point of encounter, but I confess that I can't picture it because images of her work had come to me through publications on performance. I was really struck by actually encountering her and her work in the early 2000s at Amanda Wilkinson's gallery—Wilkinson gallery should I say—around the time that we organized the early performance of Joan for Tate. So somehow, Joan's work moved from my consciousness as art history to being somebody who I was meeting and talking about trying to show a new work in the Turbine Hall, which was a formative experience for me curatorially. As part of that process in the early 2000s, of thinking about how do we access that history that's disappeared, how do we bring it into the museum, even though it's really not represented in our ... It wasn't represented at all in our collection at that point.

Catherine Wood: But I was beginning in the early 2000s to work with young artists like Mark Leckey or Monster Chetwynd who were working in a kind of image-based mode of performance that owed a huge debt to Joan, and we all had images of her work in the back of our consciousness. But to then meet Joan and talk about how we might share that work live or her new work *Lines in the Sand* in real time, inside the museum was a shift in terms of that history being kind of palpable and shared. I mean it wasn't history because it was new work but, you know, a historical figure having a place amongst trying to bring in that new generation who were looking back to what she'd done, on the ground she'd established.

Barbara Clausen: Did this earlier curatorial work ... Was that also something that you discussed in your writing? Did you write about Joan in those ... I know you've written about her, maybe you can ... How

does your writing influence or did influence or continues to influence that curatorial work?

Catherine Wood: How does my writing influence my curatorial work? Well—

Barbara Clausen: In regard to Joan and this work.

Catherine Wood: Joan has come into my writing repeatedly. I've written specific texts about Joan for publications on her. She's come into my book *Performance in Contemporary Art*. I think she's the only artist ... Yeah, I think she's the only artist that has two images. Because the territory that she set out of being a live person performing and intersecting with recorded images, her being the first—okay, maybe the second; I think she credits Richard Serra—but the first person to start using the Portapak camera after she brought it back from Japan and setting that in dialogue with the live body was just so fundamental to how ... The only way that I could understand what making live performance meant as I came to see my generation doing it. So when Mark Leckey made his performance in a pub in Brixton, in 2001, or something [with his band donAteller, 414 Club, Brixton] and called it a luxury line in performance because it was kind of appropriating pop songs and fashion imagery he was intersecting with the idea of how you can inhabit an image. That was territory Joan had established a few decades earlier.

Catherine Wood: So in a way, the significance of what she'd done came to me through grappling with trying to write about my generation. But similar to my approach to Yvonne Rainer—who I understood as well although her work preceded Joan's, and I know that Joan was aware of it and that's something we've discussed—I think equally as a precedent Yvonne's approach to image-making and ideas of cinema, and how you could be a live body in relation to the screen in relation to two-dimensionality, the masquerade at stake in that composition, painting, pictoriality, bringing kind of so-called traditional materials of painting and drawing in dialogue with asserting one's own physical shape as a form. Joan set out the language for that, that artists now are working with. So she's everywhere in my thinking and writing.

Barbara Clausen: Thank you. Maybe that leads us also to the question how you came to curate this incredible performance series in 2018 of which *Mirage* was part of. Could you speak a bit about the curatorial context and the decision to present or to work with Joan to have her do something that she's really never done before actually, to restage a work from the 1970s?

Catherine Wood:

Yes, I mean, I think it's important to try and situate that focus on Joan in the live exhibition in the Tanks at Tate Modern as part of a bigger ambition that I've had within the museum to give space to this kind of practice. Joan is, as I've said, an emblematic figure in that regard so hence the focus on her. But we'd worked with her in 2004 on *Lines in the Sand*. We've commissioned her to do the BMW Tate Live Performance Room, the online piece, which was fantastic. She made the kind of version of *Reanimation* to camera. We'd also acquired her work in the process, *The Juniper Tree*. I felt that you can sort of track the presence of Joan and her work at Tate Modern as an indicator of the degree to which this kind of work was being brought in more substantially to the core program and mission of Tate. Because acquiring her work: was it a stage set? Was it an archive? Was it a document? Or was it simply a work? These are conversations we've been having.

Catherine Wood:

That was one step in that process. Then to be able to focus a retrospective on Joan and, moreover, to make that a two-pronged retrospective, both upstairs in the galleries and in a new format we devised since opening the Tanks in 2016, which was the live exhibition, specifically geared to us as a museum being able to accommodate the practice of an artist like Joan who, as I said, throughout this territory has become increasingly important in the last fifty years and especially for artists of a young generation who don't distinguish between being performance artist or a painter or videomaker. Just what Allan Kaprow said. So, Joan then became, in a way the ... She sort of represented the impetus for us to actually make a space like the Tanks and use it in the way that we decided to use it, which was each year ... I remember conversations with Nick Serota actually when we were planning it and with Sheena Wagstaff, "What would we do with these spaces?" They're incredible spaces.

Catherine Wood:

Theater organizations in London would come and say we could do amazing theater things in there. We could do amazing music concerts in there. We discussed and knew that there was a strand of art practice that we couldn't accommodate until that point, which needed the lighting and sound control that the Tanks can offer, the lack of formal seating, or the lack of white wall space. These kinds of conditions that would allow you to either make an installation that's got an immersive feeling or show film, video or make a live performance in ways that the gallery just can't. They can accommodate more people as well. So Joan was actually in our thinking from the planning, and we invited her to do a speech, as I recall, when we opened the Tanks in 2012 for six months, prior to their proper transformation and prior to the opening of the Blavatnik building above. We did an experimental program called *15 artists in 15*

weeks or *Art in Action*. Joan gave the inaugural speech then because she was so much in our minds as a kind of figure or *the* figure whose work needed those spaces and why we needed them to show her work.

Catherine Wood:

Andrea Lissoni and I had conceived of this two-pronged approach to making a retrospective that would show the breadth of Joan's practice. We were very lucky to be granted the permission to use both the upstairs galleries on level two in the Blavatnik building and the entire suite of the Tanks. So what's fantastic about that situation in the Tanks is that we have the South Tank which has the lighting grid and the sound facility and the projection and the AV stuff that allowed us to do this live retrospective, opening and closing event mode, also with a kind of installation version during the day with Jason Moran's music that we negotiated with Joan somewhat live during the process of rehearsing.

Catherine Wood:

But then to show that juxtaposed with *Reanimation* and the other earlier films and installations in the galleries next door so that you can get this total sense of moving between that work, which includes remnants of performance, traces, documents, that is intended for gallery display and an experience of walking into *Mirror Piece* at repeated interval through the day, or encountering *Mirage*, this foundation in the history of performance with Joan now performing to her younger self. In terms of what a museum is it felt like a huge leap to be able to do that.

Barbara Clausen:

Absolutely.

Catherine Wood:

One of the things that touched me the most and that I was most excited about in terms of what the museum is with Joan and her work in it was when Joan worked with the assembled crowd of younger artists, dancers, performers who came to be in *Songdelay* [*Delay Delay*] and to be performing in *Mirror Piece*. The master class aspect; I just thought this museum is not about collecting objects, this moment of transmission where Joan is showing them how they ought to walk, not in a dancery way, not in a theatery way, in a Joan performance, you know, understated but very particular way. The way she transmitted that to them and that they carried it, and the attitude they carried in doing *Songdelay* on the river outside that has stayed in the DNA of the art community in London in this extraordinary way. The experience of doing that and learning it from Joan and then sharing it with the public.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah. When you worked with Joan to really present or represent *Mirage*, can you speak a bit about focusing in on *Mirage*? What you proposed to her, what was she was proposing in it. Because I remember it was not in the exhibition as an installation.

Catherine Wood: Yeah. We had wanted it to be. We had discussed it being in the exhibition because it had been in Milan.

Barbara Clausen: Yes. And in Malmö [*Light Time Tales*, curated by Andrea Lissoni, Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan, 2014; Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, 2015].

Catherine Wood: It was a feature. And you asked me whether that exhibition was an influence: absolutely. I thought it was one of the best exhibitions I've ever seen. It was just that movement in the exhibition between the close-up clues or the core sort of brain activity of the drawings in focus and the small constellations of objects. Then the macro scale of the entirety. It was like the map and the territory, the whole thing. That was such a powerful experience I thought of getting lost in Joan's world and yet orientated in Joan's world, the map and the territory. I guess I just had a long standing fantasy about seeing her performing *Mirage*, and she was willing.

Catherine Wood: I mean with *Mirror Piece* it was a little more straightforward because, as you know, *Mirror Piece II* is much more of a kind of living sculpture. It's choreographed according to instructions. It doesn't need Joan in it so it was less about that cult of personality. That conversation was fairly easy to negotiate with Joan. She had that score that she had made for the Guggenheim some years earlier.

Barbara Clausen: Yes.

Catherine Wood: Although it was another job then to retranscribe it and rework it for us, it was something she knew how to do and was open to doing. *Mirage* touched on some flashpoints in a different way. It made me think back to that extraordinary seminar with Klaus Biesenbach and Marina Abramović [performance workshop, MoMA, February 2010]—I don't know if you were there as well, Barbara.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah. Yes I was.

Catherine Wood: Remember the sort of reenactment conversation between Joan and Marina? Joan had resistance—and she has always had a

certain degree of resistance—to the idea that something could authentically be remade.

Barbara Clausen: And still has because of this notion of “I move forward”. It has to move forward. It can't just be a reprise of something that worked really well in the past.

Catherine Wood: But to me this is what's been amazing about the conversation with Joan and what I've learned from trying to re-approach these works, where I think the conversation around Abramović and reenactment felt like—not that it actually ever was—but felt as though it was an approach towards a forensic reconstruction of something that happened, as though that were desirable and possible. Joan understands distance, nostalgia. She understands the gap. Obviously this is what she has been mining in her practice forever, even when she's simultaneous with a projected image. She's always been mining the gap between the document and the live presence now.

Barbara Clausen: Absolutely.

Catherine Wood: That's quite infinitesimal, because it's a simultaneous projection. Sometimes it's forty years which it was now. So learning how to approach that historic work through Joan was about understanding how she grows it now, and how she situated herself and her capacities. This was a big question from her, “How will it look for me to do this piece with my projection of my younger self? With my physically more limited capacity as somebody who's much older?”

Catherine Wood: Actually that just turned out to be such a beautiful, moving part of it. I think she specifically redesigned it so that she could accommodate certain movements, what she would hold or move or how she would step on the stage part. So she kind of adapted it to her current situation, which seems entirely within the logic of how she's always worked.

Barbara Clausen: Yes. Also being in her early eighties, at that time, which I thought was interesting how she was aware of her own capacities and at the same time, as the performance happened, almost transcending that.

Catherine Wood: Well, that's it exactly. I mean, I was fearful at certain points that we were pushing her too far to do it, but obviously she had such a desire to do it too. It was transcending of limitation in the event.

- Barbara Clausen: Absolutely. I wonder—because that is a topic we discuss a lot—what role did documentation play in the preparation for *Mirage*? Like photographs, texts, film clips, all kinds. Do you remember that?
- Catherine Wood: We did watch film ... We watched video footage of the original together, which wasn't very—
- Barbara Clausen: From Documenta in 1977?
- Catherine Wood: Yes.
- Barbara Clausen: From Wulf Herzogenrath.
- Catherine Wood: Yeah. We looked at photographs and video together. She also invited her friend, an artist—
- Barbara Clausen: Paula Longendyke.
- Catherine Wood: Yes, exactly. Paula.
- Barbara Clausen: Paula Longendyke. Who we also interviewed, so this will be interesting.
- Catherine Wood: Yes, so that was really reassuring for Barb— for Joan.
- Barbara Clausen: For all of us, honestly.
- Catherine Wood: Yes. Joan, as you know, often has her crew of loyal friends and collaborators around. I think that helped her give ... As much as on one level I think she trusted our feedback, my feedback as a curator who's worked with her and yours, she also wanted feedback from someone who'd been there and seen the original. She kind of wanted to say, "Is this absurd to be redoing this like this or is it okay?"
- Barbara Clausen: Yeah. And Paula was working with her at the time, really involved in the production around 1976 for this piece, so I thought that was a really genius move to really go back to somebody who was so involved in the production.
- Catherine Wood: Exactly.
- Barbara Clausen: Almost like Paula's memory of it becoming part of that amount of documentary material.

Catherine Wood: Yes. It's evidence of Joan's 360° approach to reconstruction that as I said it wasn't ... I noticed that with any of the works, it was never about recreating an image of the work from the photo or the documentation, which interestingly is the approach in a very permissible way, permission-taking way that the young generation have reenacted works by Joan's generation. I also think that's fine. Monster Chetwynd has taken an image of Yves Klein's *Anthropométries* and remade it in the same way that Mike Kelley used the high school yearbooks as a prompt to imagine what that scene might have been. Joan has done almost the opposite and sort of mined her subconscious, those who were there and used the matrix of the original composition authentically in the sense of using the elements of the chalkboard, the video projection, the stage, the props. She's taken the same elements and the same aesthetic composition, but she's filtered it through the possibilities of now in a way that isn't about recreating an image.

Catherine Wood: She didn't cast somebody young who looked like herself to make it look like what it looked like then. I think that was the profound depth of seeing the piece and understanding that Joan was transmitting a language, sort of shamanistic, transmitting this language that she had invented to us, several years later.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah. I felt a really important factor was that the stage sets for the first time were shown in the space next door.

Catherine Wood: Yes, exactly.

Barbara Clausen: Because really that question of vocabulary and the framing became so clear and legible. They were really shown for the first time at that moment, literally, I think, since the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia] in 1976, which was profound also in the question of how the setting up of space and how the structure of space has influenced her work all along.

Catherine Wood: This is why the alphabet or the language that Joan invented was something I really wanted to set out clearly in the tank spaces in relation to say the displays we did in the opening of the Blavatnik building in 2016 from object to architecture. That whole attempt that we made to try and situate a language of minimal form sculpture in relation to the body. Andrea and I talked a lot about Joan's kind of set of props as almost like a set for her—I was going to say “magic show”, it sounds silly ...

Barbara Clausen: Well—

Catherine Wood: But show how she didn't specifically, narratively, mythically invested those things that she made and would show in a gallery with actions and intentions, words, sounds and show them in dialogue with each other. So that yes, you might see them mute in the gallery or in display mode, and then you would see them in use. And show the charge of connection between those two things.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah, Kristin Poor, who is also working with us on the curatorial of the project, she's written about this in using ... She's really coined this term for the “sculptural prop”.

Catherine Wood: Yeah.

Barbara Clausen: Which is interesting if you think about that.

Catherine Wood: Absolutely. I mean I just said it in a mythological kind of way.

Barbara Clausen: Well, I think that's interesting, because really, that—

Catherine Wood: I was going to say—that's how it felt down there in the liminal spaces of the Tanks— I felt a palpable charge and this kind of aura, the forbidden aura coming back, but in a very specific, deliberate way through Joan's world and her staging of things, and her use of them. But on a really prosaic institutional level, there was also this ongoing debate since 2004 about whether the items coming in for Joan's performances—the sand tray and the chalk in *Lines in the Sand*—were they props or artworks? So Joan's not only blurring the boundary in terms of art practice, disciplinary boundaries, but literally within the institution we have to negotiate that question with our registrars each time so that Joan was allowed to touch her own sculptures and play with them and handle them.

Barbara Clausen: Yes. That brings me to my next question: who was involved as part of the team? Not necessarily in exact names but, for example, from an institutional side, because this interview will also be helpful for conservators and curators, like which departments were kind of involved in the process of presenting *Mirage*?

Catherine Wood: Frankly, all departments in a sense because the live exhibition always falls between our freelance production team led by our producer Judith Bowdler, who brings in people who are experts in lighting design, sound, theater production. Steve Wald, who always works with us and worked with Joan as well in 2004. So we've got that side of the kind of event production, then for

elements of the props or ... Well, the props cum objects that Joan brought specifically. We always work with and discuss with our registrars often and Sculpture Conservation. Sometimes that's a bit of a moveable feast in the sense that we don't know and we have to negotiate how we're going to bring those works in and whether we can bring them in on the commercial insurance rather ... Because if we bring them in under the Tate's usual Government Indemnity Scheme that we would bring in a Picasso painting with ... And it's really not a question of value, it's just that then only one person in the institution is allowed to handle that object with gloves on.

Catherine Wood:

So we want to protect the work and look after it as carefully as possible. We talked to our conservators and registrars about how to do that with the utmost care that we would give to anything and yet retain the freedom and the permission for Joan to handle the props and use them. I mean some of the props ... For the other pieces, for *Mirror Piece* and for *Songdelay* and *Delay Delay*, we were making our own props on site, so it wasn't the same.

Barbara Clausen:

This is incredibly helpful and really incredibly interesting information I think for future users. Do you remember who the performer ... I mean Joan performed alone and also had an assistant if I remember right, but there were not ... Were there more performers?

Catherine Wood:

Oh, she had one person come on, didn't she?

Barbara Clausen:

Elena [Mazzi].

Catherine Wood:

Yeah.

Barbara Clausen:

But it was a very reduced people who were in the end involved and really being present on stage. It was really her.

Catherine Wood:

Yes, exactly. Yeah. Because I mean she had all the other—I know you're focusing on *Mirage*—but obviously she had all the other performers in the other pieces.

Barbara Clausen:

Yes. She also had somebody from Italy who worked with her on preparing the other performances.

Catherine Wood:

Nefeli [Skarmea]?

Barbara Clausen:

Nefeli.

- Catherine Wood: Yes, who was fantastic.
- Barbara Clausen: Yes. She was somebody that Joan also really enjoyed working with in the sense of a younger company or a younger colleague to really work through, especially I think with *Songdelay*.
- Catherine Wood: With both *Songdelay* ... Well, yeah, I know we're going between calling it *Songdelay* and *Delay Delay*. It was another reinvention between the two. But Nefeli, who's based in London, she'd worked on Joan's Art Night performance of *Reanimation* a few years ago [Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2016] with Kathy Noble, and they'd got on really well. Joan spoke so highly of her that she actually said, "Nefeli understands the work so well, and she can watch me and perform it back to me. She gets the movement and has this presence that I would actually a.) not only trust her to cast people to perform my work but also [inaudible]." Joan took the longest to agree to do. She was worried about her own capacity to do it in terms of energy because she was doing a major retrospective upstairs plus overseeing two pieces with lots of other performers in and *Mirror Check* and the collaboration with Jason Moran. So the question of *Mirage* was in the balance for a long time with Joan until quite late on actually. We were hoping and praying and saying, "We'll do whatever you want to help facilitate."
- Catherine Wood: There was a point at which she wondered whether Nefeli might do it for her I think. I hope that's all right to say that, Joan. She started thinking about stand-ins. Nefeli was someone she had this affinity with. But actually I think Nefeli helped her understand that she could do it herself. Nefeli was absolutely fundamental in helping to find the people who performed in the other works and teaching it to them. So she did an initial phase with Joan of casting people, and then she began to work with them, or she did some work with Joan again in New York, one to one, on reconstructing the pieces as a score that could be used now. Then she helped teach and manage the group in London, and Joan could come in and out and do her master class adjustments and demonstrations and checking much in the same way as a choreographer would work with kind of principal dramaturge.
- Barbara Clausen: For *Mirage*, were there any particular adjustments that you had to make for the Tanks in the space? Do you remember the setup? I mean, it was very ... If I remember right there were seats, there was a gallery of seats. What did you do to the Tanks for this performance?
- Catherine Wood: Well—

Barbara Clausen: Was there a stage?

Catherine Wood: There was a low stage. There was a big debate about the height of the stage and getting on and off it. Joan was worried about being too high up or it being precarious. I mean I just remember a long back and forth about the stage and the height of the stage and it being slightly different. We did adjust things from the original set both for Joan's capacity and for the Tanks. The tank has nothing in it apart from the lighting rig that is there to be used, and you can hang speakers on it. It's a bare-bones infrastructure that we have to add to for anything we do. It's not like a theater with a given setup. So for any event we do we build into it. What we had to have for this setup, for Joan, was a situation where we could get in and out with the different works through the ten days with minimal shifts and changes in the physical setup. So I think it was just a large screen, the monitor, the stage, and the other props.

Barbara Clausen: Yes. There was a table—

Catherine Wood: Yes, and the table. Yeah.

Barbara Clausen: There was a table. Did you feel doing rehearsals—I guess there weren't too many rehearsals in the Tanks because of time issues—but do you feel the piece still changed or was adapted or tweaked while it was rehearsed on site?

Catherine Wood: Yes, there were. I mean we did have some feedback sessions. Both Andrea and I, and also Isabella Maidment, were watching the piece and giving Joan degrees of feedback. I remember talking to her specifically about that extraordinary sequence where she's dancing on the spot with the volcano. Yeah, so there were some conversations about duration and repetition and pacing in terms of lengthening or shortening certain aspects. But on the other hand, most of it was more or less given in working with the idea of the original stool and the original videos that she had. They were fairly small things. But I remember conferring with Andrea about discussions we were having with Joan. Certain things she was open to, other things ... We were also learning from her by seeing it live for the first time, which in itself was mind blowing. It's a work you think you know, you think you know it from the experience of documentation, and you absolutely don't.

Catherine Wood: I realized what a master of pacing and duration she is. I mean, through how she held us there with that piece and kind of pushes through the limits of repetition and durational images, which you cannot read from a video document.

- Barbara Clausen: No, you can't.
- Catherine Wood: You can't have the haptic experience of it.
- Barbara Clausen: Yeah, in this case it's interesting that somebody who worked so much with this relay between media and live and mediated can actually create a situation where it unhinges that correlative relationship completely and puts it into question at the same time, like so confirming it and so questioning it.
- Catherine Wood: Yes. Put it into free fall. I mean it was sublime. Like these passages with the found footage of nature and the volcano.
- Barbara Clausen: Yeah, totally. It was performed how many times in that spring?
- Catherine Wood: Twice.
- Barbara Clausen: Twice.
- Catherine Wood: I'd say we ...
- Barbara Clausen: As Tate has acquired *The Juniper Tree*—I know *Mirage* is not part of your collection—but do you feel that transition from having a work being performed and becoming part of your collection, and I know Tate has been really spearheading a lot of the questions around how to collect performance and how to keep things as open as possible. Do you have any thoughts that in an imaginary world or in an imaginary situation if you were able to acquire *Mirage*, what would some of the thoughts be for you that would be important for you to consider? Or some of the steps or questions that you'd have?
- Catherine Wood: Well, actually, this, I think, is at a crunch point in the whole debate. You've kind of hit the nerve with that question, that's what I mean because I'm not sure—although, never say never—it's not clear to me how *Mirage* could be acquired, actually, for the reasons we touched on at the beginning in the Marina conversation. Much as Joan didn't opt for the forensic reconstruction, she opted to situate herself in relation to an existing composition. But for us to feel it through the present tense rather than trying to see something that happened forty years ago, it was still very much about her presence as the artist.
- Catherine Wood: It made me think about Marc Camille Chaimowicz's piece also in our collection, *Partial Eclipse* [1980–2006], which similarly, in the 1970s, he made a slideshow of himself in his apartment in Approach Road, where most of his work was staged at that

point. When we restaged that about ten years ago, he did invite a younger artist to play himself: walking, pacing back and forth in front of the old images. Then he appeared in it himself as well. So maybe it would be a conversation to have with Joan, but in a way the fact that she portrayed herself now in that existing work rather than casting somebody else to be her, or to even explore that option, in a sense made it much more difficult to imagine acquiring it as a score, whereas *Mirror Piece* is much more straightforward in that sense.

Barbara Clausen:

Yes, [inaudible].

Catherine Wood:

I guess the fault line in collecting performance has always been between the kind of authentic presence question of the artist-maker. What are the two, the earlier tree composition and the ... that Pip [Laurenson] talks about in *Collecting the Performative*?

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah, that's true. You're putting—

Catherine Wood:

Whether it's the musical score version that anyone can play and interpret or whether it's the work that is made in the act of creation and then fixed. Now I would say—

Barbara Clausen:

[The Languages of Art]

Catherine Wood:

No. Yeah.

Barbara Clausen:

By Nelson Goodman. Yeah.

Catherine Wood:

I would say that Joan's work is somewhere in between the two, like *Mirror Piece* is more like a musical score. You could cast *Mirror Piece II* that we did. You can cast anybody into it. You've got the props, you've got the score. Joan has reworked it with Nefeli, it's redoable ad infinitum, and you can give the directions and do it. There's something that happens in *Mirage* with Joan herself, live, conducting it and inhabiting it in relation to the images of her younger self. The way she plays that, that feels to me like the work of it is in the act of creation that she's making in a way that will be very, very difficult to replicate.

Barbara Clausen:

Yes, I absolutely agree with you. I'm also thinking here of the only other performance in the now, so to say, that for me kind of meets up with that, in difference to *Lines in the Sand* or *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, is *Moving Off the Land*, her latest work, which is like an ongoing lecture performance, and which you guys I think performed for the first time after Kochi [Kochi-Muziris Biennale] in the framework, in the performance

program of the exhibition. Where *Moving Off the Land* as it's been developing also ... There's really a kind of parallel with *Mirage* and with *Moving Off the Land* that I find very interesting also in the sense of dimension and micro/macro.

Catherine Wood: I thought that was an amazing work.

Barbara Clausen: Yes.

Catherine Wood: Yeah, seeing Joan performing that in the Turbine Hall ... This was following the retrospective proper. Yes, it absolutely relies on her presence. I think maybe what's confusing and complicated about Joan is that she's not a body artist. It's not the authentic presence of flesh and blood and pain of Abramović, because she's working with images it seems ... and inhabiting the image and very aware of all those dimensions of masquerade and two dimensional planes and composition. It doesn't seem to be about authenticity in that sort of naked way. But she has this shamanic presence that's to do with her as a conduit for the mood and the world of the work. That would be very, very difficult to replace in a work like *Mirage*, I think, and equally in *Moving Off the Land*.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah. Perhaps, this is really ... Thank you so much for all your thoughts. This has been really incredible. I think so many of us will enjoy reading this again and listening to this. I want to jump into two or three a bit more maybe. We've talked about the conservation, you know, the collection, the mission of collecting it. How did you guys document the performance?

Catherine Wood: We always document fairly straightforwardly working with our Tate media team, a sort of single shot. This is what I always want, not a kind of TV theater close-up on the main actor drama, but something that captures the whole setup, which of course in Joan's work is essential. So capturing the installation with her performing within it really. We captured it on video and photography similarly that way for the Tate archives, and shared it with Joan. But Joan, this is bad ... Sorry, but I need to check whether Joan commissioned anything in parallel because this is ... Ours is a more sort of standard arrangement. Joan may or may not edit ... With *Mirror Piece II*, she will edit the footage that we made so that she's happier with it and we will then have that for use for educational purposes too which suits us both, because then it represents accurately.

Barbara Clausen: I think she also has her studio team often document her performances alongside. David [Sherman].

Catherine Wood: Yes.

Barbara Clausen: Are there specifically any concerns for you in regard to reperforming this piece? Let's say another institution would want to reperform it, would there be ... or a curator would approach you and let's say has the okay from Joan. Is there any advice or any concern that you would have that you would want to share?

Catherine Wood: No, I mean, ironically, it's not that piece that we have been approached about as yet. Or maybe not ironically, maybe it's exactly for the reason we've discussed, is that we've been approached. *Mirror Piece II* was reperformed in Portugal and may or may not be—depending on the state of the world, in terms of what goes forward from here—again. For *Mirage*, I mean, I don't feel any sense of ownership in terms of having initiated the reconstruction with Joan. I mean, nor should I. But I think it's really about the conversation with her and her capacity to want to do it. I did have the feeling from her, which was quite emotional actually that it may be the only time she did do it was with us. It wasn't necessarily something that she wanted to or felt she could keep redoing.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah, I think one of the things that would probably be advisable for people is to of course engage with Joan but also with the people that she had developed the work or the assistants or the people that worked with her on the piece like there's probably, like Elena, like Paula Longendyke. These different ...

Catherine Wood: Jin [Jung].

Barbara Clausen: Jin, of course. Yes. Sekeena Gavagan. Like really that team of people that could probably give different viewpoints and perspectives on process.

Catherine Wood: Yes.

Barbara Clausen: Would you have a question at the end that you would have liked to pose to Joan or for the artists? Do you think there's a question for the artists? Not even necessarily you to Joan but like in the sense of is there a question one should consider asking an artist, or Joan if representing work such as *Mirage* or even *Organic Honey*?

Catherine Wood: Yeah, we didn't have enough time to debrief. We did have some time, which was wonderful, but I didn't ask her—and I would have liked to actually ask her—how it felt, how she ... What

relationship or closeness or community or not, she felt with the audience in a situation like the Tanks doing *Mirage*, which is a piece that she'd done in such different circumstances in the 1970s. In a way, the reason I want to ask her is because she and I had this moment looking at the photographs of Jack Smith performances that are in the Tate collection now. She said to me, "You just don't get any sense of what it felt like. From those photographs you don't get any sense of being there: the crowd, the few people that were there, him turning up late shouting at people, drinking or whatever was going on. The chaos and the duration and the messiness: you see it aesthetically, but you don't feel it. You'll never get to that."

Catherine Wood:

We had an interesting conversation about the fact that nevertheless it was important that those photographs are represented in a collection gallery, amongst other works as a clue. Even if you don't get full access, it's kind of a clue as to something important that happened, a trace. Then again, the conversation evolved towards the fact that even if people can't experience the Jack Smith performance, they can experience performance made by artists in different ways within the institution now, which you couldn't in the past either. So you might have a sense, putting together the visual impression of the photo document and the experiential encounter with a work by even another artist or by Joan, something between these things puts you in the imaginative frame of the world of that kind of work.

Catherine Wood:

So I wondered how Joan would evaluate her own presence now making it work for a museum audience, much as it was filled with artists and friends and longtime supporters as well. But what does the kind of abstraction of community or the anonymity of the audience do, not starting from a place of the given understanding or a given investment that you might have in New York in the 1970s—or that's how I fantasize it. But I'd like to ask her more about that.

Barbara Clausen:

Yes. Well, I think that's a great question to end this wonderful conversation. Catherine, thank you so much.

Catherine Wood:

My pleasure.

Barbara Clausen:

Thank you so much.

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.