

Douglas Crimp interviewed by Glenn Wharton, March 1, 2019

© the authors and Joan Jonas Knowledge Base, Artist Archives Initiative, 2021

<http://artistarchives.hosting.nyu.edu/JoanJonas/douglas-crimp-interview-march-2019/>

- Glenn Wharton: Today is March 1, 2019. This is Glenn Wharton. I am here with Douglas Crimp to speak with him about Joan Jonas, for the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base. So first of all Douglas, thank you very much for being agreeable to be interviewed.
- Glenn Wharton: Maybe we could just start with the early days, your first awareness of Joan, if you can remember. I would imagine it was her work in the 1970s, in downtown New York, but what are your first memories?
- Douglas Crimp: I don't actually remember precisely when I met Joan or through whom, although I have an idea who it might be. That would be Helen Tworikov, through Helen Tworikov, who is still a mutual friend. Helen Tworikov is one of the daughters of Jack Tworikov, the abstract expressionist painter. She, herself, is not—other than through her father and sister—an art world person. She's the founder of *Tricycle* magazine, the Buddhist magazine, and has devoted her life to Tibetan Buddhism. But Helen was part of a circle of people that included Joan and Richard Serra. Joan and Richard were involved, at that time.
- Douglas Crimp: So this would have been possibly as early as the late 1960s. I certainly knew Richard by 1971, when I was working at the Guggenheim Museum. I worked on the exhibition that became notorious for excluding the work of Daniel Buren. Richard was in that exhibition.
- Douglas Crimp: But, so I'd say right around 1970 or so, I was introduced to a group of people that included Joan and Richard. A group of people, by the way, many of whom bought property in Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia and still go there. Joan still goes there. Helen still goes there. But that also included Philip Glass and JoAnne Akalaitis—Philip, of course, the renowned composer, and his then wife, JoAnne Akalaitis, who is a theater director, also quite renowned. Rudy Wurlitzer, who was a novelist ...
- Douglas Crimp: So this is a group of people that I knew vaguely and got to know better over the years. I actually very much associate them with Nova Scotia, because I sometimes visited them there. Indeed—not to kind of jump ahead—but I spent some time there in Nova

Scotia one summer, working with Joan on what came to be the Berkeley/Stedelijk Eindhoven catalogue [*Joan Jonas: Scripts and Descriptions 1968–1982*, 1983].

Glenn Wharton:

Since *Organic Honey* and *Mirage* are both artworks that we're drilling down on as case studies for the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base, did you ever see either the performances associated with them or—

Douglas Crimp:

I did, yeah. The performance that I first saw, that I remember best and wrote about in my memoir, was *Choreomania*, which was not a video work. It was a performance piece done in Joan's loft, using a prop that was designed or built for her by Richard Serra. That was a swinging wall. It was a kind of rectangular wall that had some sort of brackets on the back of it so that the performers could appear around the edges of that wall. The wall was also ... A portion of it was mirrored on the front. So sitting in the loft, you saw yourself mirrored in the performance area.

Douglas Crimp:

Joan performed ritual-like activities, probably similar to the ones that she had done in *Delay Delay*, which was the enormous outdoor performance that was done in Tribeca, with the audience on the roof, on Greenwich Street. I did not see that but, of course, I know very well the film that was made using content from it, which is called *Songdelay*. *Songdelay* I think dates from 1973, if I'm not mistaken. So then the performance must have been a little earlier. So actually *Choreomania* would have been earlier even than *Delay Delay*.

Glenn Wharton:

So you did see some of her performances in miscellaneous places in lower Manhattan back in the 1970s.

Douglas Crimp:

Yes, I did. Yes. I was very intrigued by her work and then particularly in 1976 I was commissioned to write about Joan for a special issue on performance art of *Studio International*, which was a British magazine. I think that's the first writing that I did on Joan.

Douglas Crimp:

I focused mostly, I believe, on a work called *Twilight*, which was done right around the time of *Organic Honey* and *Mirage*. A little bit later. It was done, I believe, at the space that the Anthology Film Archives was then using on, I believe, Mercer Street.

Douglas Crimp:

Because I wrote about that one, it's the one that I have the strongest memory of. It was one of the performances, like *Mirage* and *Organic Honey*, that incorporated video into the performance, so that you were seeing an image of what you

were watching live but often deconstructed in one way or another.

Glenn Wharton:

Did you see any of the performances of *Mirage* or *Organic Honey* or any other?

Douglas Crimp:

I did, yes. I have unfortunately rather vague memories of them. All of that has kind of blurred together. Then, once I began working with Joan on the scripts and descriptions of her work, my memory has been colored by making sense of it, in order to get it on paper.

Douglas Crimp:

So this is more about my memory, than anything else. It's just that there's a ... I have a general sense of what things were like. I remember Babette Mangolte behind the camera. I remember the sorts of costumes that Joan wore, the way that she always incorporated drawing into her performances, often with a blackboard but also with sheets of paper. Things that actually are quite continuous with what Joan is still doing, but in a way that I think incorporated video in a very different way.

Douglas Crimp:

The video is now ... I think it would be accurate to say that at that point the simultaneity and at the same time the kind of de-synchronicity of video and liveness was essential to what those performances were like. So the fact that the video was actually shooting what was being performed in front of you and then manipulated in one way or another differs from the fact that video is rather more autonomous from the performance you're at now. So it's often shot at another time, elsewhere. It's more thematically related than formally or structurally related.

Glenn Wharton:

We could easily go further in that direction, and I would love to, but I would like to ask you some practical things since the Knowledge Base is geared towards people who will be re-exhibiting her work in the future or conserving her work.

Glenn Wharton:

Do you have any memories of her working process back then? Who she worked with? How she found people? Did she have long-term relationships or did she establish new groups of people for each performance? Also technical people with the videos, video production.

Douglas Crimp:

Well certainly Babette Mangolte—the cinematographer and filmmaker and photographer—was someone who worked with Joan a lot in that period of time, as she did with many, many of the downtown performance people. Whether from the dance world or the earlier happenings world or ... Babette didn't arrive

in New York until the very early 1970s, I believe, but she got connected to all of that downtown world very quickly. Joan was one of them, one of the people that she was centrally involved with. So Babette was a continuous presence.

Douglas Crimp: I think that was a time when people, when artists appeared in each other's work. So, for example, Gordon Matta-Clark appears in *Songdelay*. I don't know whether he was actually one of the performers in *Delay Delay*, but he was in the film.

Douglas Crimp: I know that some other ... In *Twilight*, for example, I believe the performers, some of them, are younger than Joan—and I want to say students, but I'm not sure that Joan actually would have had students at that point—but possibly students of fellow artists. I'm not exactly sure.

Douglas Crimp: But I think it was just, at that time, that performance artists were part of a larger world that were all working in each other's work and available to each other.

Glenn Wharton: That's very interesting. That says something about the downtown scene back then.

Douglas Crimp: Yeah. It was much less professionalized, of course. It was much more, you know, the audience also was all of us. It was a small world, but the worlds of dance, music, performance, painting, and sculpture, and so on, that really formed a world, and people participated in each other's work and were the audience for each other's work.

Glenn Wharton: Do you have a sense of how she trained people or worked with them or conveyed to them what she was hoping for in her performances?

Douglas Crimp: I don't really, actually. I know that Joan is someone who has continually done performance workshops and worked with people for her performances. I think, certainly recently, Joan has really collaborated with people who are also themselves, someone like Jason Moran, who is a great artist in his own right, and he would bring to Joan's performances something that was uniquely him. The result is something that's—even though it's a Joan Jonas performance—his presence is something truly essential to them.

Douglas Crimp: Whereas I think, I mean, I don't know. In recent works, she has used children. The children are ... She obviously has trained them, but their own presence as children and their own abilities

or desire to act, essentially to be in front of a public, is something that is also very visible in the performance. So there's some element that would be not entirely controllable and yet is very much integrated into the work and works in the work.

Glenn Wharton: Maybe this is backing up a little bit, but you described when you first met Joan. Could you describe your relationship with her over the years? How you worked together, especially when you were writing about her.

Douglas Crimp: Well, we've been friends for all of this time. I would say, in some ways, closer now than ever. I mean, it's a friendship that has built over time and has been quite continuous with probably some gaps.

Douglas Crimp: You know there was a ten-year period when I did nothing that wasn't related to the AIDS crisis. All of my work, all of my writing, my teaching, all of my activity was that, from 1987 to about 1997 actually. I kind of absented myself from the art world during that period of time, with the result of often not seeing things.

Douglas Crimp: So there are gaps. I feel it most fully now in relation to dance, because I've been writing about dance recently, and the fact is that there's a whole chunk of time when I just ... When certain things that were historically important were done in dance that I did not see. That would have been true of Joan's performances as well.

Glenn Wharton: Also other things, very important, such as the AIDS crisis were going on that demanded many people's attention.

Douglas Crimp: Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Let's get back to the 1980 exhibition at Berkeley. You mentioned to me, before we started the interview, that you didn't actually see the exhibition.

Douglas Crimp: That's right.

Glenn Wharton: We'll get to the actual catalogue but before that, what knowledge do you have of it, in terms of what kinds of works were in the exhibition? We haven't found a checklist yet.

Douglas Crimp: I'm sorry, I'm not going to be helpful, because I really don't know. As I said, I was brought in a little bit later. David Ross, who was the curator of the exhibition, at some point contacted me

and asked me if I would work with Joan on the text, to make a book out of it. And I agreed to do so.

Douglas Crimp: Of course, at that point, I don't know that he ... He must have contacted me while they were working on the exhibition, with the hope that this book would have come out either with the exhibition or immediately after. Something like that.

Douglas Crimp: Of course there was something like a two-year delay. At least two years, right?

Glenn Wharton: Yeah. I think the book ... Yeah. Several years later.

Glenn Wharton: Since this was her first retrospective, we're trying to give it as much attention as we can.

Douglas Crimp: Of course. Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: We'd like to research everything, and maybe we will come up with the checklist.

Douglas Crimp: I'm surprised that Berkeley wouldn't have one in their archives.

Glenn Wharton: We haven't found, yet, the archives related to that exhibition. So we're not sure how much Berkeley has or whether someone else might even have that information.

Douglas Crimp: Or how about Eindhoven as well? Have you checked with the museum there?

Glenn Wharton: We haven't, but we will. Yes, we'd love to get floor plans, checklists, everything: press releases, whatever information might still be available, correspondence.

Douglas Crimp: There must be, yeah.

Glenn Wharton: We're hoping to find that trove. We haven't found it yet.

Glenn Wharton: Okay. So you really can't talk about what was in it.

Douglas Crimp: I'm sorry, no.

Glenn Wharton: One of our big questions was whether there were performances, even related to the exhibition, whether it was in the exhibition or not. But, you know, a series of performances.

- Glenn Wharton: Another question we have is about installations. Because we understand that she didn't really create installations until 1994, but we're just curious what kind of works were installation-like. Or were there just videos and objects? Was there any kind of either performative action or environmental recognition of space?
- Douglas Crimp: Well David was himself a video curator. I mean, that was his field at that time. So that might be, I mean, I think it would be likely that he was interested in doing a video exhibition, figuring out how you make an exhibition out of video art.
- Glenn Wharton: Okay. Well let's move on to the publication, then. I'd be interested in hearing about your role, David Ross's role, James Elliot's role, Joan's role, in just assembling the catalogue.
- Douglas Crimp: Joan and I were pretty much on our own. Our work extended over quite a long period of time. Both of us had other things going on, of course. I struggled to make order of a lot of random, seemingly, notes. I think eventually ... Joan gave me a lot of material that were notes for these performances. I think eventually we would just sit down together and write a description of the ones that didn't have scripts.
- Douglas Crimp: So all of those earlier ones, which are simply described, most of them, I did not see. Of course, I was able to see the ones, the films. Like *Wind*, for example, *Songdelay*, all of the very early films, and the tapes.
- Douglas Crimp: But I would write. Joan would describe. She would sort of explain what happened.
- Glenn Wharton: So this would be a conversation with you, and then you would write?
- Douglas Crimp: Yeah. Exactly.
- Glenn Wharton: Then would she have a look at your writing?
- Douglas Crimp: Oh, yes of course. I mean but in the very process she would be ... I would be sort of transcribing what she was saying to me, and then I would write it out so as to make sense of it. So I was—having not seen many of the performances myself—I was ... Well, first of all, I was completely beholden to Joan for the material. Then I also was trying to make it as clear as possible with the writing.

- Douglas Crimp: So I think, I'd always ... When I think about this publication, I'm always reminded that somebody told me that Lawrence Weiner thought that I had imposed too much order. That I had made too much sense, I suppose, out of Joan's work. That I had somehow given it a kind of coherence or structure or something that he felt was somewhat inimical to the work.
- Glenn Wharton: What's your response to that?
- Douglas Crimp: Well, you know, I understand it. And he's right. I really ... I struggled to make sense of it. Actually I think that, in doing so, I actually provided access to that work. I mean, the much more general response to that book is that it successfully gives one access to the early work.
- Douglas Crimp: Of course, then when it came to the scripts, those were ... The task was a very different one. Which was that to sort of ... to make them legible, so that the kind of way that the descriptive, the passages that were spoken, and those that were describing the structure, and so on, had some kind of way of existing coherently on the page. That there would be a sort of continuity of that structure from one to another.
- Glenn Wharton: How were those scripts generated? Was it, again, in conversation with Joan, and then you wrote them down?
- Douglas Crimp: Joan had them.
- Glenn Wharton: She had them.
- Douglas Crimp: Joan has scripts for those later performances. I mean, later in that moment.
- Glenn Wharton: So they were preexisting?
- Douglas Crimp: They were.
- Glenn Wharton: They were published in the book. Were they edited at all?
- Douglas Crimp: I edited them. No, because they were pretty, as I recall, they were pretty rough. So I made them as legible as possible, as readable as possible.
- Glenn Wharton: Were they in notebooks that she wrote? Or were they—
- Douglas Crimp: I somehow have a memory of just piles of pieces of paper.

- Glenn Wharton: Okay. You did an initial edit, and then did she edit them afterwards?
- Douglas Crimp: Yeah. Or she certainly looked at them, and if I had ... I mean, I got things wrong, inevitably. So we revised. So there was quite a lot of that process, actually, of back and forth.
- Glenn Wharton: Okay. That's actually very helpful.
- Douglas Crimp: I mean we spent a lot of time together, working on this, actually. So when I recall the time in Nova Scotia, for example, we spent days working these things out.
- Glenn Wharton: Okay. I'd like to switch to archives of information. You mentioned Eindhoven might have some information about the exhibition in Berkeley. Are you aware of other troves of documents that we should be aware of as researchers right now?
- Glenn Wharton: We are, of course, working with her and going through her own personal archives in her loft and reaching out. We just received two boxes of information from the Stedelijk Museum that they copied for us, which was very generous. We'll be going to Amsterdam next month to meet with people there and learn more about the 1984 exhibition.
- Douglas Crimp: Yeah. No, I think before I was confusing, because Eindhoven is actually the Van Abbemuseum. But is it the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum?
- Glenn Wharton: Well, the Stedelijk is in Amsterdam.
- Douglas Crimp: No, I know, but Stedelijk just means city.
- Glenn Wharton: The museum is called Stedelijk Museum. It's in Amsterdam.
- Douglas Crimp: Right. But I think the one in Eindhoven is called the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Anyway ...
- Glenn Wharton: No, that's actually a good point, then. Yes.
- Douglas Crimp: The exhibition went there. It was actually through the auspices of Eindhoven that money, enough money, came through to actually make the publication. I believe. Because I think there was a ... I think one of the things that held it up, probably, was money.

- Douglas Crimp: But it was also our process which just took a lot of time. I think once the two exhibitions—the one in Berkeley and the one in Eindhoven—were finished, there was no pressure to ... I mean, there was always pressure to get it done, but there was no deadline. So it spread out over what seemed like a very, very long time, but I guess it was not so long.
- Douglas Crimp: But the result was, of course, that it didn't appear anywhere. I mean, there was no exhibition that it appeared in conjunction with. So at the time that Valerie Smith did the exhibition in Queens, somewhere they dug up these boxes and boxes and boxes of that catalogue. It was sold there. And it sold well there. Now, I think, it's become rare, but at that moment it suddenly reappeared as a brand new publication.
- Glenn Wharton: The moment of the Queens exhibition?
- Douglas Crimp: That's right. Which was, what? In the early 2000s or something, right?
- Glenn Wharton: So possibly the Queens Museum may have something in their archives, even from the book, research that went along with the book or—
- Douglas Crimp: Maybe. I don't know.
- Glenn Wharton: Any other possible—
- Douglas Crimp: Well Valerie Smith might be someone that you could just check, like how she came upon the fact that these catalogues existed.
- Glenn Wharton: Yeah. Okay.
- Glenn Wharton: Given that what we're doing here with the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base is providing information for curators, conservators, critics, others who will be engaged in Joan's work in the future—one way or the other—I'm imagining let's say a future curator might wonder how Joan would think about exhibiting her work this way or that way or bringing in new performers. Of course we'll be talking to Joan about this as well, but do you have any thoughts, just from working with Joan, about the interpretive authority that a curator might have or concerns about anything: the costumes, the props, the way videos are shown?
- Douglas Crimp: I don't know. It's such a big question. I think Joan's work is a ... really presents all of the problems of what even constitutes the

work. That's something that Joan has had to figure out as she has herself, over the last twenty, thirty years, developed a museum practice alongside of her continuing to do new performance works.

Douglas Crimp: So that the museum or gallery exhibition, I'm thinking like the enormous exhibition ... Was it two summers ago?

Glenn Wharton: At the Tate?

Douglas Crimp: At Gavin Brown.

Glenn Wharton: Oh, Gavin Brown.

Douglas Crimp: Which is such a large gallery space, that it was really a museum-like exhibition. It started downstairs, with this collection of Joan's objects, a lot of the objects that she actually uses in performance but not necessarily. They were just Joan's things that gave you a sense of her aesthetic.

Glenn Wharton: I remember them laid out on tables.

Douglas Crimp: Yeah. It was totally marvelous. Of course, that was Joan's idea to do that. I mean, I suppose that one could replicate that, in some sense. But of course what it would mean ... Who knows what will become of those objects.

Douglas Crimp: Hopefully, Joan's objects will be preserved, because they're so much a part of her thinking and literally part of her work. I mean various kinds of things that make noise or taxidermied animals or things like that that are used in performance.

Douglas Crimp: But the particular relation of video to prop, for example, is something that she's had to figure out as she's developed this museum practice.

Douglas Crimp: So where do you take that, once Joan is no longer with us, and you want to somehow give an audience some sort of insight into who this artist is? It's going to be very difficult.

Douglas Crimp: I think, at some point, that we have to also assume that we don't have access to a great deal and that we can give a false impression that we do. So you wouldn't want to clean it up too much. I mean, I guess it's a little bit like what Lawrence Weiner accused me of for cleaning up Joan's work.

Glenn Wharton: Well, we are very aware, with the creation of the Joan Jonas Knowledge Base, of the power of classifying and structuring information. Because just the way that we organize the information is going to influence what users of this digital resource will find and the relationships of materials that we establish.

Douglas Crimp: I mean these are questions of the archive, in a way, in general. Because archives don't simply store what's already there, but they also organize it in such a way. There are decisions of what to keep and what not to keep and so on that are already constructing a form of knowledge that isn't ... that's a second layer.

Glenn Wharton: I've thought about this a lot, starting with these knowledge bases that we're creating and their relationship to archives. Because archives ... Yes, there's that initial decision-making about what to keep in the archive and what not to keep. Archivists strive to maintain relationships. So if a number of materials are in a box together that the artist assembled, the archive would retain that box or those relationships—even if they're not in the box, but there would be a way to identify those relationships. And they create finding aids, but they're very aware of the importance of discoverability for the researcher. So they don't want to overinterpret.

Glenn Wharton: I think what we're doing is one step beyond that, towards interpretation. Because we're creating this resource as a team of researchers, and we're working very closely with Joan but, inevitably, starting with the case studies that we're selecting, the artworks and the exhibitions, and then how we organize whatever we can find: floor plans, checklists, video documentation, images. But we're trying to provide more than less and set it up so that users can make their own relationships. We'll have a series of interviews, as well, that hopefully will help build out the complexity of Joan and her work.

Glenn Wharton: Okay. Can you think of anyone else that we should speak with? Anyone else that comes to mind for interviews or even just informal communications about—

Douglas Crimp: Ann Reynolds. Have you spoken to Ann Reynolds?

Glenn Wharton: Ann is one of our project advisors.

Douglas Crimp: Oh, she is. Okay.

- Glenn Wharton: Yes.
- Douglas Crimp: Well, Lynne Cooke. Have you spoken with her?
- Glenn Wharton: Not yet, no.
- Douglas Crimp: But you're planning to?
- Glenn Wharton: Yes. She's on our list.
- Douglas Crimp: Okay.
- Glenn Wharton: We did interview Chrissie Iles.
- Douglas Crimp: Um-hmm. (affirmative)
- Douglas Crimp: You know it would be interesting to talk to Richard Serra. I don't know how possible that is right now, but it would be interesting.
- Glenn Wharton: We will try.
- Douglas Crimp: You know it might be really interesting to talk to Helen Tworikov, because Helen would have a very different view of Joan, not being someone who's herself engaged in the art world so directly.
- Douglas Crimp: But they've been very close friends for ... They've known each other longer than I've known Joan or Helen. I met Helen in 1967. I think somehow it might just be interesting. I don't even know myself how many of Joan's performances Helen would have seen. Much of the time she wouldn't be around. She's not someone who's continuously lived in New York. But I would rather imagine that she—because they're close friends—that she would go and see the exhibitions and so on that were ... the things that she was able to see.
- Douglas Crimp: But just like a perspective on Joan that would be little offbeat. But they are close.
- Glenn Wharton: That's a very good idea. We'll approach her.
- Douglas Crimp: Okay.
- Glenn Wharton: Anyone else that comes to mind?
- Douglas Crimp: It would be interesting to talk to people that Joan has ... just students who have worked with Joan. Joan could of course tell

you who are the most ... the ones who she was closest to or that she then used in her performances. There's a, I believe, a Vietnamese artist [Thao-Nguyen Phan] that she mentored in that, what is it? The watch company, I think, that has that mentoring [Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative]. They put well-known artists together with an unknown artist, and they mentor them for a year.

Glenn Wharton: Yes, I am aware of her, and I think that's a fantastic idea, interviewing her as well.

Douglas Crimp: So yeah. I think Joan has been a very important teacher. I think—I don't know how useful that would be for what you're trying to do—but I think it would be interesting to get the take on Joan, on Joan's process, through some of her former students.

Glenn Wharton: That is a very good idea.

Glenn Wharton: Can you think of anything else that we should speak about?

Douglas Crimp: I don't think so.

Douglas Crimp: You know, it should be said somewhere, so I'll say it, that Joan has been, I think, shamefully neglected by New York institutions. She's never had a major exhibition here as she did at the Tate, for example, or at MACBA. And thank heaven she was chosen to represent the US in the Venice Biennale a few years ago.

Douglas Crimp: Now Joan is extremely busy. She's traveling all over the place and making new performances. She's totally productive. It's really amazing and wonderful and heartwarming to see it happen to her, but it's still shocking to me that MoMA or the Whitney or some major institution in her own city has not recognized her.

Douglas Crimp: It may be that conceiving just how to do an exhibition of Joan's work is a hindrance, but it hasn't stopped others, in other places. So I find it deeply shocking, actually.

Glenn Wharton: Well let's hope someone listening to this interview acts on it.

Douglas Crimp: I mean this is someone who virtually invented performance art. I mean not solely but ... And virtually invented video art and certainly invented the relation between the two or a particular relation between the two.

- Douglas Crimp: We take it so for granted, these forms, now or these mediums, but I remember when there was no such thing as performance art. There were forms of performance throughout modernism, of course, but what we now call performance art didn't exist before Joan Jonas. So that alone should suggest the degree of importance that we associate with her.
- Glenn Wharton: In your earlier writing about Joan, you do mention that the margins in which she was working and her creative process was unnamed at that point.
- Douglas Crimp: Yeah.
- Glenn Wharton: The genre was not named. You also write about the de-synchronization of her work. Should we spend a few minutes on some of your thoughts? I redirected you earlier when you brought that up, but I want to hear some more.
- Douglas Crimp: Yeah. When we did the catalogue, I wrote a small introduction to it. I had written the piece for *Studio International*, so I had some ideas. But I think I ... I think I hit on something that really resonates in the term de-synchronization. That, to me, is a philosophically important thing that Joan has done, that she doesn't allow for a kind of fantasy of totality. She pulls the body into parts. You can't tell, at times, whether what you're seeing is live or not. You can't tell which, whether the video image or the live image, is the one that you're to make sense of.
- Douglas Crimp: So there's always a kind of way in which her performances demand of the viewer a kind of acceptance of fragmentation, partiality, and lack of completion or coherence. It's one of the things that, for me, not only characterizes her work but makes it profound.
- Douglas Crimp: But now, also, in addition to that, of course Joan has—and we can now then sort of see it going back all the way—but there are thematic concerns that are driving her work. Landscape has always been one of them but the environment and the earth—now of course these issues are urgent— but they've been there in one way or another all along with Joan in a quiet and lyrical way, I think.
- Douglas Crimp: That's not something that one would have thought to say about Joan around the time that I wrote the de-synchronization introduction. That's something that develops later and can only be read back, I think, into the work.

- Douglas Crimp: Certainly the early work has a feminist thematic. That's been constant with Joan, as well. The body has been an issue for Joan all the way through.
- Douglas Crimp: Something else though that should be said about Joan, I think, is that there's something ... Well, there's something completely unique about Joan's performance style. It's so anti-theatrical. It's so matter-of-fact. It's so direct.
- Douglas Crimp: There's no one else like Joan. Her stage presence is so utterly unusual and so "Joan," you know. She's like a kid playing and, at the same time, someone with extremely profound ideas. There's something very touching about her performances for that reason.
- Glenn Wharton: All this is incredibly important. I mean, your thoughts, your observations, your reflections, because you've been writing about her and knowing her for so many years. I think people will find this very helpful—
- Douglas Crimp: Good. I hope so.
- Glenn Wharton: ... in writing about her work in the future but also reinterpreting her work, re-exhibiting her work. Anything else?
- Douglas Crimp: I hope that there will be more writing about Joan's work. I mean, not only has she not been given her due by institutions, but there should be a real literature on Joan. It doesn't really yet exist. I mean, there are now some very substantial publications, but there should be ... There should be dissertations, for example. I'm surprised there aren't.
- Glenn Wharton: There's a few percolating right now.
- Douglas Crimp: Oh, really. Yeah. I could imagine that would be.
- Glenn Wharton: One of the research associates on our project, Kristin Poor, is—
- Douglas Crimp: Oh, I know Kristin.
- Glenn Wharton: ... she's writing her dissertation not solely on Joan, but a section of it is on Joan.
- Douglas Crimp: Yeah, that's right.
- Glenn Wharton: Are there areas that you think should be further researched and written about that just haven't gotten into publications yet?

Douglas Crimp: About Joan's work?

Glenn Wharton: Joan's work.

Douglas Crimp: Well, I mean, no. Just everything. I mean I want a really, really good monograph on Joan Jonas, for example, a really smart monograph or two or three of them. It'll happen.

Douglas Crimp: [Loud bang] That's just my mail.

Glenn Wharton: It came in with a bang.

Douglas Crimp: Yeah.

Glenn Wharton: Well do you have any further thoughts?

Douglas Crimp: I don't think so.

Glenn Wharton: All right. Well thank you very much for this interview.

Douglas Crimp: You're welcome.

Glenn Wharton: On my behalf, but I think for a lot of people who will be listening to it in the future. So it's very helpful.

Douglas Crimp: Good. Thank you.

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