

Joan Jonas on *Organic Honey* performances and videos, interviewed by Barbara Clausen, Kristin Poor, and Tracy Robinson, December 17, 2020

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Kristin Poor: Today is December 17, 2020. I'm Kristin Poor, here with Barbara Clausen and Tracy Robinson from The Joan Jonas Knowledge Base. And today we're speaking with Joan Jonas about *Organic Honey*. Joan, thank you for taking the time to talk about this with us today. We wanted to start by discussing *Organic Honey* in terms of the performances. And would you be able to tell us a bit about the origin of *Organic Honey*?

Joan Jonas: Yeah, there's never a concise origin, but it developed after I came back from Japan with my Portapak I bought. I went to Japan in 1970. Actually, I went there with Richard Serra and we saw a lot of Noh drama, the plays, when we were in Japan. And at the same time I bought a Portapak. I came back with the Portapak, and also the Noh theater was a big influence on my work. Not the only influence, but one of the bigger influences, because it reminded me that narrative could be...narrative with images, and certain use of props, would be the direction I would go in. And also the use of masks. I started using masks when I came back from Japan. And so really that's how it began.

Joan Jonas: And then of course, having a Portapak was a very important new tool for artists. You could sit in your own studio and record yourself and see yourself simultaneously, on monitor with the camera, it was called a closed circuit. I don't think we use that term anymore, but the closed circuit was camera, monitor, and then the subject, which would be me most of the time, in this case. I could say another source would be...I was for many years before that interested in film. I didn't study it formally, but I certainly, in a way, studied it by going to see as many as I possibly could. All the film houses in New York were showing historical films and contemporary films at that time.

Joan Jonas: I wanted to make a film, and I thought of... When I first got the Portapak and sat in my loft, I thought, now I can make my own little films in my loft and I don't have to deal with the technology of the film camera, nor do I have to have an intermediate step, taking the film to be developed, and so on and so forth. So I thought of video as being very related to my idea about making films. And I compared it to that, the technologies.

Barbara Clausen: Can you speak a bit more about this link between film and video specifically, how you dealt with that at that moment, in relation to *Vertical Roll*?

Joan Jonas: Well, *Vertical Roll* is an example of working with the medium of video. The idea of the vertical roll, you could just turn a knob on a TV set and make that vertical roll, the bar going down or going up, however you want to see it, continuously. And so I immediately compared it to film and compared it to frames and a film going by. So *Vertical Roll*, I thought of it as frames and a film going by, but it wasn't quite the same. But, whenever I made...in the early days, I continuously compared those technologies. For instance, with all the elements of dealing with the light meter on the video camera. All I do is turn a little knob and I can make it look washed out, or darker, and so on and so forth. So those are the two things that stick out in my mind. Also, learning how to frame an image, probably seeing a lot of films and seeing what the framing devices and what--

Barbara Clausen: And when we speak about context, I was also thinking about cultural contexts. There was a mention...you once mentioned Marilyn Monroe, a shoot of her, this kind of iconic moment of female, kind of--

Joan Jonas: Well, that actually was probably one of the main things that gave me an idea for myself performing, and the idea of an audience watching me. So I read somewhere, somebody wrote that they saw Marilyn Monroe singing in front of a camera that was pointed at her. And this viewer was to the side. So we saw the profile and the viewer was very interested in how different the resulting recording would be from his view of her. So the camera had one view and the viewer had another view of the entire situation. And I guess, really, that's what...those video performances came out of that. The structure of the video performances came out of that idea, that set up.

Barbara Clausen: And were there other contemporary works at the time that were important for you? Maybe not in the sense of...or even historical works, maybe not even so much as in artworks by colleagues directly, but maybe historically, for example, or from your studies. Could you speak more about where that character came from, *Organic Honey*?

Joan Jonas: I think I don't know where it came from. It came from me. It came from performing for the camera and getting dressed up to do that, and putting on different costumes and masks and disguising myself. I wasn't an actress. I wasn't even an experienced performer at that time, but so my performance is

very minimal and very, you could say subdued, in a way. But I was able to alter my image by these costumes and masks and recording. Also at the time, it was during a very strong part of the woman's movement. So I was also questioning what it is to be female. What does the word female mean? And so Organic Honey is also an exploration of, quote, "what does the word female mean?" And it was an exploration of that.

Joan Jonas:

And so I guess that I disguised myself as a female. I mean, I was, am, a female, if you want to put it that way. But what does that mean? And I think that everybody was using this cultural reference of masculine and feminine. And I remember I took a course in Mount Holyoke about *Moby Dick* and the teacher kept talking about the masks and the harpoons. They're all phallic images. Sometimes it goes too far, in that way. I wanted to explore those issues. The other thing was, Jack Smith was performing. When we came back from Japan, we ran into Michael Snow and he said, "You have to go see Jack Smith on Greene Street. He's performing in his loft." We went on Saturday night, at midnight. And we went every Saturday for a couple of months.

Joan Jonas:

They were four hour performances. And Jack Smith, he was not a minimalist. He was a filmmaker. And I really didn't know his work. Maybe I'd seen *Flaming Creatures*, but I didn't know his performance works. And it was quite amazing, so that really had an influence. It had an effect on me in that it was a kind of freedom, also, to get away from minimalism.

Barbara Clausen:

In that case, if I think of an artist or one of your contemporaries at the time, if I think of somebody like Carolee Schneemann. Did you see any of her work at the time? I mean, very, very different.

Joan Jonas:

No. She was in London. I think that she was living in London and I didn't see her work until much later. I didn't know her. Let's say, the people whose work I did see were the dancers: Yvonne [Rainer] Simone [Forti], Trisha [Brown], Deborah Hay. And then the visual artists like [Robert] Rauschenberg, [Claes] Oldenburg, Robert Whitman...their happenings, I saw. And that's...Lucinda Childs, which was one of the reasons I moved into performance from sculpture. I mean, I spent quite a bit of the sixties looking at this work, and finally decided in 1965 or [19]66 maybe, that I would go into the area of performance and shift from sculpture. I was influenced by seeing those works. I liked the idea of not dealing with an object, and having multiple points of view, and dealing with time and music and sound that I could suddenly have all these things to deal with. I wouldn't be confined to making an object and I wasn't happy with what I was doing.

- Tracy Robinson: Can you take us through the development of the score, the different materials and media that you used for the performance?
- Joan Jonas: The score...I didn't write those scores for any of my works until pretty much after the performances had reached more or less a final stage. I mean, sometimes I would go continue to work on them, but the scores came afterwards. So I worked on those, say the *Organic Honey* work, by just working on it physically and intuitively, and trying things out, experimenting, putting things together. I thought about film. I was thinking of montage, for instance, putting one image after another. And so, I collected objects and props, probably before and during. And the Noh theater was so interesting because it dealt with very simple props, which attracted me. And so the materials I bought at flea markets. My costumes, in *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, I think I worked with what I had and I had some costumes. But then for *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, right before I made *Vertical Roll*, out in LA, I went to the Rose Bowl and I bought those costumes that you see in *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* and *Vertical Roll*. The belly dancing costumes and the twenties dress.
- Joan Jonas: And I made that headdress. There was an earlier headdress that got chewed up by my dogs that had peacock feathers in it, but then I made a new headdress with pink feathers. Anyway, so it was a constant collecting, and reassessing, and rearranging--
- Barbara Clausen: And the artificial doll mask.
- Joan Jonas: Well, I got that in an erotic store in the forties someplace. Yeah. It had a certain quality to it, which I like.
- Barbara Clausen: I also thought of this thing of...especially when you use the mask, or when you use the headpiece, or you wear the satin, different fabrics. I thought of the video *Veil*, if I'm correct, where you take off different layers of fabric. Is that in any relation to this piece?
- Joan Jonas: That was way before this piece. And it was also inspired by, I think, a Kenneth Anger film that Richard [Serra] and I saw. And in which layers...it's a filmic device, the layers and so on. It's not original. But I like the idea of revealing continuously with the masks being taken off. And there's a relationship for sure, but that was way before these *Organic Honey* pieces. And maybe I thought of it. I don't know. I don't remember. And also, there was a relation to theater, the idea of the curtain and so on, hide and reveal.

Kristin Poor: What about the drawings and other images that you use in the performance? Would you tell us a bit about how and why you chose those?

Joan Jonas: Of course, I made drawings before I started doing performances and I brought the discipline of drawing to my performative works. So I drew in different ways, either in the space, a big drawing, or the set could be a drawing. But when I got to video, I started drawing for—the earliest drawings are for the video—either for the camera or, I say, “drawing for the monitor.” I drew with a camera on the piece of paper while I was looking at the monitor. So I set up these situations that were like handicaps. So how is a drawing going to turn out, if I just draw. Maybe sometimes I would draw the frame on a piece of paper. So I knew the limits and I could draw within that frame, but it was drawing for the monitor or drawing for the camera.

Joan Jonas: So all the drawings in *Organic Honey* were with that in mind. Then the dog drawings. When I started working with the vertical roll, I made drawings around the vertical roll. So the vertical roll...the drawing would come apart, because the tops and the bottoms of the drawings were reversed. And then when the bar came down, it's hard to explain it. It brought those two halves together in a continuous drawing of a dog's head, in this case. I drew my dog again and again in different ways because I had a dog and I included...the content of the piece was very much related to what was around, what was in my loft, what was in my grandmother's fans, what I found at the flea market, my dog, and so on. So I brought the immediate into the piece. And in that way, I don't like...the word personal is very tricky, but I think it's true for all artists and writers. You work with the familiar, in some way, what's known.

Barbara Clausen: So there wasn't really a story that you were telling?

Joan Jonas: No, but I had for years been very involved with reading myth and also looking art history. It's all about, through the years, every painting has a story. And the history of myth, I was very interested in the history of how art began in Greek and Roman, and in Chinese, what were the earliest artworks? How did that begin out of nothing? And a lot of it began with ritual. So when I began to do my own work, I thought of my work in terms of...that I was doing ritual, but I didn't copy old rituals. I thought of these actions as my rituals for an audience in my context.

Joan Jonas: And...there was another part. Oh, yeah. So I'd been studying mythology and reading these stories. And then I read of course, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by [James] Joyce. And I was

very interested...that made an effect on me, the way he worked with the myth of Sisyphus. And the character was a character in *Portrait of the Artist* and stood for the main character. And I thought that was very interesting. And so that became part of my thinking.

Barbara Clausen: But when I think of myth, I also think of the narcissism, looking onto your own image.

Joan Jonas: Well, that was a part [of it]. At the time, there was a very strong feeling against narcissism by these dancers that I knew and artists and various minimalist artists and people I knew. Narcissism was verboten in a way. And so I wanted to explore it. And also, video is about narcissism. In the beginning it brings out narcissistic tendencies. You look at yourself and you're staring at yourself like looking in the mirror or looking in the pool of water, like Narcissus. So I really focused on the narcissistic elements. I had also been working with mirrors before this video work and mirrors are certainly... I called the video an ongoing monitor. The video monitor was an ongoing mirror. So it was a mirror, only it was moving. A moving mirror that exists in time.

Barbara Clausen: So do you feel in any way that *Organic Honey* was like, somehow there was something about trying to rethink the way portraiture works, or to create a portrait of...no--

Joan Jonas: No. The word portrait never came to me.

Barbara Clausen: Okay.

Joan Jonas: It has never.

Barbara Clausen: Okay.

Joan Jonas: I mean, you could say it is, but that's somebody else's term, not mine. I didn't want to do produce an autobiography. I didn't want to take a picture, and say this is Joan Jonas. I wanted to be someone else, actually. So that's Organic Honey. So then I developed this alter ego or persona, which is what I called her. And I called her Organic Honey. One morning I got up and I saw the honey jar on the table and it said "organic honey." So that's why I named her Organic Honey.

Kristin Poor: Joan, tell us about how you went from the making of the *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* video to the first performance?

Joan Jonas: Some little details, I can't remember about how one thing went to another. Oh, I know, of course. Carlotta Schoolman had invited me to do a video for TV because I think she was working at Channel 13. In those days, they showed our work on Channel 13. And there was a program every Friday night on Channel 13, they showed artists' videos. So she invited me to make a video and I was working on one anyway. She invited me to finish it and show it. So I was working in my loft for over a year, just getting into it. How do I begin?

Joan Jonas: And then when I began to work specifically for that, I think I moved to 112 Greene and I was working in a studio at 112 Greene in the basement. And I was thinking of the Marilyn Monroe metaphor and so I made what I called a movie set, a stage set...with just a piece of plywood on sawhorses, all my props on the table and set up the video camera facing the table, and the back wall...there were photographs and you see them, you'll see what I did. And I had a Japanese print. So I made it so that it could be looked at while I was making it. In other words, the process of making that video was continuous. And I had a cameraperson for some of it because I couldn't do everything and perform at the same time.

Joan Jonas: So the camera simply went from one thing to another. I'm not sure there are any edits. There might be. Yeah. Because *Vertical Roll* has no edits, but I never said that about *Organic Honey*. But anyway, so it was one continuous process. And then Sol LeWitt asked to bring his class to see my work. And so they came to 112 Greene and they watched me making that video, actually. That was when I made the video, for the class. Not just for the class, for myself, but with an audience...a small audience, of course. And that was the beginning of the so-called performance that went on to LoGiudice. And since I always wanted to develop things and change things, I developed that piece by adding, I think, three other performers, one of whom...we all played the cameraperson. I mean, anybody could be the cameraperson and then moved it to LoGiudice. It was a bigger space. So I wanted to explore what it meant to be in a bigger space.

Joan Jonas: And I used monitors before that. There was one monitor that... I think there may have been two, one that I looked at and one that the audience saw, at the 112 Greene Street performance. And I don't have any photographs of that performance. But when we got to LoGiudice, I wanted to have a projection. And what I didn't say before in the last interview, maybe clearly, is it was very, very hard to have projections. Projectors were not available. I didn't own one. I had to rent one. But I wanted to have a projector in this performance because I wanted it to be a

big image so the audience could see the details. And there was a place on Canal Street or someplace, CT Louie he was called, and he was Chinese. And he rented out equipment. And you went into his shop and you saw all these people sitting there with video cameras and decks, completely taken apart on a table in front of them. So that they take apart and assemble that technology, sort of the way...

Joan Jonas:

That's the way Steina and Woody, the Vesulkas, worked. They went at it from that direction, taking machines apart and putting them together in different ways. That was not my thing at all, but I relied on CT Louie. Whenever I had a performance at LoGiudice, I often had to call him to come and fix the projector before the performance, because they broke down. The equipment broke down much more often. [It] became more reliable over the years, but there were often glitches in the system. But it was pretty good. It went pretty well. So I enlarged the piece that way, by having a projection in one half of the space and the monitor in the middle and then the performance. And so the audience, again, saw the performance and the camera. And that again, a closed circuit TV setup with a camera filming what was in the space and that image going to the monitor and the projector. I also played a couple of prerecorded tapes on the monitor. And we manipulated the camera for that, in that situation. But I did basically the same actions.

Kristin Poor:

When you went to Rome with the performance, which was after the LoGiudice performance, what did you bring with you? How did it change? Did you have the same number of performers?

Joan Jonas:

No. In Rome, I think it was just me and the camera. I think one of the performers came as the cameraperson, but it was just me. I think. I have to look. I should look right now. Well, anyway, you can look it up. I couldn't get out my book today. So I brought all the props...suitcase full of my props that I use in the performance. I think I brought my camera and my deck. And in Rome, I think we had a projector, but I'm not sure. It was a very important performance situation, [a] little festival that L'Attico put together. Fabio Sargentini and Simone Forti had begun those little festivals before this and she worked with Fabio to put this one together. And also, Sol [LeWitt] probably, that was the reason I went to Rome. He probably suggested that I be included, I think. And so for the Rome performance, I think I improvised quite a bit, which I would now consider a mistake, but... I have to say another thing, that the performance was very rehearsed, minutely, because I was the one that planned all the camera...all the framing of the shots, and the camera movements.

- Joan Jonas: The whole thing was like a dance or a movement piece, the cameraperson and myself. And the cameraperson had to be exactly framing the images that were in a sequence. So the audience was seeing a sequence projected as well as the live performance in relation to that sequence, which was details of which was being filmed. So they saw these details simultaneously with the whole thing. And that's what I did in Rome.
- Tracy Robinson: You developed a script for *Organic Honey* that was eventually published in *The Drama Review* in 1972. Can you just talk about the process of writing that script and also the process of publishing it as well?
- Joan Jonas: Frankly, I was thinking today, I don't know where my copy is of *The Drama Review*. So I have to look at that script. It was an early version of the scripts that are in "the big book," [*In the Shadow a Shadow*] as we call it, or my other catalogues, or even the Berkeley catalogue, because I think you've interviewed Constance DeJong. It was the first time anybody had written about my work, maybe, or one of the first times. And so I don't remember what that script is like. It must've been very rudimentary. But I had written—the model for all my scripts—Richard [Serra] and I made a film together called...what's that film about? Oh, *Paul Revere*. And I wrote the script for that and I designed the script and it was published in *Artforum*. So it had different columns, it had the action, the sound, the lighting, and so on, different columns. So you could see the simultaneous things that were going on. And I'm sure that the script and *The Drama Review* was based on that script. From then on, I made all my scripts like that.
- Tracy Robinson: Can you also speak about the decision process behind the sound and the music in the performance? There's a lots of, like, you hit spoons, there's pennies dropping into a glass.
- Joan Jonas: Well, the sound is very minimal and I think they're all progressive sounds really, basically. Except for when I then introduce the Reggae music, but that was for *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*. But for the first one, they're all percussive. I had, for years, outdoors...using stones, hitting them together, blocks of wood. Yeah, so I've been using percussive instruments, stone and wood for a few years before that. When I first started performing outdoors and indoors. *Songdelay* was blocks of wood. And so I took these into *Organic Honey*. And I remember I said, in the other interview, there were no words. But there were, because I said, "This is my right side and this is my left side," and point, which I was pointing to, that is the discrepancy

between a mirror and the television...that the images reversed. They're not the same, one is the reversal of the other.

Joan Jonas:

And so one of the videos that came out of that whole process was *Left Side Right Side*, a few years later. But I never showed that in the performance. And then, "this is my right side, this is my left side," I think those are the only words. And then I howled a dog and that was...Djuna Barnes. That's right, yeah. I read this book by her. Now I can't remember, but in it she howls like a dog. And my dog was part of my imagery. So I had made a video called *Duet*. I mean, I made a video of myself howling, and then I showed that in the performance, and howled with it. And so then I made a second layer of that, by filming that. And that's called *Duet* where I'm howling with myself on the monitor. And what else?

Joan Jonas:

I know there's a scene where I have this woven purse over my face. It's something I bought in Greece and it's a geometric pattern. And I'm mumbling something, I'm mumbling, which you can't understand, the Lord's Prayer, but I'm just saying it very fast, just the words I happened to know by heart. So it's one thing I knew by heart. So I'm mumbling that, that's another sound that's in. So it's all different. And then when I made an installation of that work, putting that all together worked because it's all percussive sounds that don't interfere with each other, the way language or certain kinds of music [do]. So there was only later in the installations, the Reggae music, as music. And then there was hitting. Yeah. In the video *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, I hit the mirror with a hammer, and I was hitting my own image. I think in the performance, I already stopped using a hammer.

Joan Jonas:

It seemed too violent. I hit my own image and broke the mirror and I didn't want to be quite so violent against my own image. So I switched to using this big silver spoon that I had hitting my own image, but not for the entire time. And then for the *Vertical Roll* video, I put the sound on afterwards, of the woodblocks hitting each other, in time to the vertical roll. So that was after.

Barbara Clausen:

Because you just mentioned the mirror, of course, for *Vertical Roll*, which is important. Can you speak about the different types of mirrors you also use in the beginning of the performance? If you think of *Mirror Check*, or I think you also mentioned once there was a mirror that was once slid across the stage.

Joan Jonas:

Yeah. I think also my studio was in Venice where I made *Vertical Roll*, but this is after the first piece. It was next door to Larry Bell's studio and he actually took a lot of photographs of my

performance. But he gave me a two-way mirror. I'm pretty sure I used it in the piece. It's part of the installation. And then I used regular mirrors to reflect my face looking at the mirror, which was recorded by the camera. So the camera is on my face looking in the mirror, and things like that. So yes, I used mirrors. I think the one that Larry gave me was a two-way mirror, which was transparent sometimes. Yeah. And maybe I had a two-way mirror from someplace else. I don't know. But yes, I used mirrors because video related to mirrors, it came right out of the mirror pieces.

Barbara Clausen:

Yeah. And I remember once you mentioned that there was a giant mirror that was turned on its side with wheels, from *Choreomania*.

Joan Jonas:

Well, that...*Choreomania*...was a wall that Richard [Serra] designed and it consisted of three, four-by-eight panels put together. So the size of the mirror was three, four-by-eight panels put together vertically. And on one of those panels was a mirror four-by-eight foot mirror. And so when I was finished with that performance, we disassembled that prop. And I took that mirror that was attached to a wooden frame, put wheels on the bottom, and turned it on its side. And it became another prop in many of, like...we wheeled it in for the LoGiudice piece. It came in at the very beginning of the piece to set up the piece and the audience saw themselves in the mirror.

Joan Jonas:

It was another way of referring to my earlier work with the mirrors in which the audience saw themselves in mirrors. And then I later used it in *The Juniper Tree*, actually, that mirror. So I do that often, props get used over and over again in different ways. It interests me, too...the context will alter the meaning of the prop or the use of the prop, and so on. So that's something that's interesting.

Tracy Robinson:

You created these other single channel videos like *Duet* and *Anxious Automation*. Can you just touch on their relationships to *Organic Honey*, between each other and the editing process?

Joan Jonas:

I remember I had to describe over and over again to a good friend who's a curator. It was very hard for people to grasp that. First of all, the word "tape." We called our early work "tapes." "I'm going to make a tape," because they were tapes on a reel to reel recorder. There were three-quarter inch tapes, the early videos. And so that was part of the terminology. I constantly, from the very beginning, shifted back and forth between making video work for the performance, performing live, making a video in my studio using some of that material, and making what I

called an autonomous video, which means it could be shown by itself—although there may be performative elements in it, it didn't depend on being performed—and recording performance, which would be a documentation of a performance.

Joan Jonas:

So I would start with the video, *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, then make the performance. And I'd have certain things I added and altered. And then I think the next video was *Vertical Roll*. So I made that on an autonomous video and then I put elements of that back into the performance. So I performed some of those actions live in the performance. And then *Left Side Right Side*, I just took that and I made a video a little bit later because it was a little bit more elaborate, *Left Side Right Side*. I took the idea of the left side, right side and made another set up with one monitor and one mirror and the camera. So there are those different forms that the work could take. And there was a constant taking [of] material from this form and putting it in that form. Because I would think of different things to do and different relationships when I did reuse the material. So that went on.

Joan Jonas:

And then making the documents. In the very beginning, when I first saw the documents of my performances, I did not enjoy it because it had all the ambient sound that... Now I have a completely different feeling about it. I document everything. So at the beginning, I didn't show those documents. But I did later on. I got much more open and became a little bit more free. But what I did do, in order... At one point, in [19]73, when I made a performance at Castelli Sonnabend, Joyce Nereaux ran Castelli Sonnabend [Video]tapes and Films. So she helped with this. Anyway, we recorded the performance at Castelli of *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* on two cameras. And so I had that material. I didn't show it. I think until later, I was in your show, Barbara, in Canada, I don't think I actually showed it formally. And now I have it.

Joan Jonas:

But I made a video from those videos and I really wanted to do another one because I made a short version. I made a video of the performance that was at Castelli and that is shown as part of the installation. So there's a video of the performances, 1973 Castelli. There's *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, there's *Vertical Roll*, the video of the performance score *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, *Anxious Automation*. I think that's it. Oh, *Duet*. Those are the videos that are shown as part of the performance. I mean, as part of the installation. I put them all together now because I wanted to, in the installations, have as much of the atmosphere of the piece as possible. Because when I first started translating my work from performance to

installation, which is another form, by the way, we all know that now, but at that point, it wasn't clear. That's why the so-called installation in Berkeley, I say it's not an installation because I didn't think about it at all. We just hung up the props. But in order for it to work with me, it has to be constructed in space and there has to be a relationship between the video elements and so on.

Barbara Clausen: Joan, before we go to another question, I was wondering about the video element, that was only a part of the performances, which was *Two Women*.

Joan Jonas: Well, the reason I made that was because *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*. *Organic Honey* was getting more and more focused on turning into itself. And so I thought more and more just having only women. And so that's when I made that video of two women kissing, and I showed it at the end of that video, but I never show it by itself. And I don't show it with the *Organic Honey* piece. I think it would take away, that's my feeling, that the content is such that it would, for me, take it away on another path, the whole piece.

Barbara Clausen: Yeah. We're also wondering about the use of paper when you have, like in Italy, there was like long sheets of paper that were used--

Joan Jonas: Castelli. I started using these photographs. I don't know if that's the first time I did that.

Barbara Clausen: Like paper screens, or like--

Joan Jonas: I know, I'm just trying to think. I'm not quite sure when... Anyway, at Castelli, in the performance, there was a back room. And I had photographs of my dogs. And I don't know if that's all. But, at some point I left the room, but, Babette [Magolte], the camerawoman at the time, followed me into the backroom and filmed me and filmed these dog photographs, probably in relation to a vertical roll don't remember. So the audience couldn't see what we were doing, but they could see it on the monitor. And then when I did the piece again at [Galleria] Toselli, and also in the installation, instead of having another room, I had a wall of paper. But of course, that wall of paper paper comes from a number of earlier pieces: *Funnel*, *Stage Sets*, when I use paper to make shapes, big sheets of paper forming walls to make shapes.

- Joan Jonas: And I may have been influenced by Japanese, but they don't necessarily do that. But paper is a very important material for me and I use it in different ways. But that's where that idea came from. So I put photographs and things behind the paper wall and the audience couldn't see behind. And then we went behind the paper wall and then they did the same thing, basically.
- Kristin Poor: Joan, would you tell us a bit about the difference between *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* and *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*? Meaning the two performances. How did one evolve into the other? How did you move from one to the other?
- Joan Jonas: Well, it was a matter of time. I can't tell you details right now. I'd have to look it up. There are two scripts actually. One of each. There's a script for each. I took many elements from *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* into *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, and then *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, I had all new costumes out there in LA that I got at the flea market. And I had this idea of the vertical roll and all the actions I did for the vertical roll. So I basically performed *Vertical Roll* live for that second piece. And I think it was probably much tighter than the first piece, *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* was probably, with all the performance, much more open. And I'm not sure, I have to see it again. And a little improvisational, but not totally. *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* was totally rehearsed and paired down. Yeah.
- Barbara Clausen: Did *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* have elements that were improvised still, but that were still in development?
- Joan Jonas: Maybe, I don't remember, frankly. I know in Rome I had this big improvisational thing that didn't work at all. And I'm not sure about New York. A lot of it was set, but it was much looser.
- Barbara Clausen: And when you performed *Organic Honey* throughout the seventies at certain moments, did anything change? *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, did anything change after those first performances or did the script stay as tight and as scripted as it was?
- Joan Jonas: The way I work, before I come to a last version, I'm constantly making small changes. But I don't remember exactly what those are. I'd have to look at a lot of photographs and scripts to see what I might've done, but there are small differences.
- Barbara Clausen: But the order of events, the order of actions--

Joan Jonas: They're pretty much the same.

Barbara Clausen: The same.

Joan Jonas: I mean, I always came out to that Reggae music. That was always the opening. I always worked in front of the camera and took the paper off. That whole sequence is always the same. And then dropping the pennies was always the same. What changed was, well, I think I made a drawing of a dog's head that was slightly different. And then, as I said, performed the actions for--

Barbara Clausen: Before we go into the next interview, which will focus on the installation of *Organic Honey*, before we stop this video, I just have a final question. That is, why did you decide to stop performing *Organic Honey*? Was there a reason for it, or did it just happen?

Joan Jonas: Well, I went on. I've had other pieces which I was developing. I was always interested in experimenting and doing something, trying something new. So it's not that I stopped performing it, it's just that I went on and did other performances. And I really stopped because physically I would not be able to do it. I could not do it now. I can't jump up and down like that, and so on. It's a more athletic performance. The jumping up and down particularly. I think that's the only thing that would be hard. But it was a piece that, I mean, I go back to *Mirage* over and over again, because it's like *Mirage* was more, in a way, open. *Organic Honey*, I worked on it for a number of years, a number of videos that are set and then the installation was set. And I never had the desire to go back into that work at all. I think it's done and it is what it is. I'm happy with what it is. Yeah.

Barbara Clausen: Well, with that, thank you very much. Thank you, Tracy. Thank you, Kristin. And thank you from all of us to you, Joan.

Joan Jonas: Okay.