

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Richard “Dickie” Landry

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Columbia University

2015

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Richard Landry conducted by Sara Sinclair on January 14, 2015. This interview is part of the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Transcription: Audio Transcription Center

Session #1

Interviewee: Richard Landry

Location: Lafayette, Louisiana

Interviewer: Sara Sinclair

Date: January 14, 2015

Q: Okay, so today is January 14, I am sitting here—

Landry: 2015.

Q: —2015, a new year. This is Sara Sinclair with Dickie Landry in Lafayette, Louisiana.

Landry: Right. Welcome to Lafayette.

Q: Thank you!

Landry: Your first trip to Louisiana.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Unfortunately, it is just as chilly, but not as nasty as New York City.

Q: Almost as.

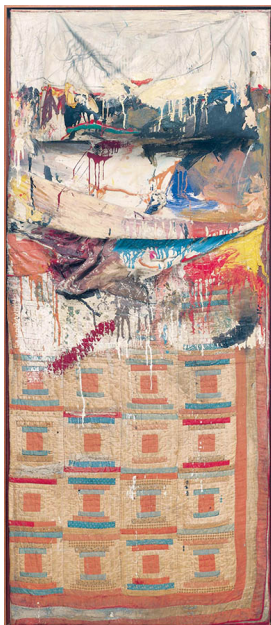
Landry: I was known in New York City as Richard Landry the photographer and Dickie Landry the musician. It all began November 16, 1938 in the small village of Cecilia, Louisiana. My mother does not remember if I was born before midnight or after midnight. We all assumed it was after midnight. I grew up on my family's 80-acre pecan farm, which I still operate. Spending most of his time in Central and South America building sugar cane refineries, my father was hardly ever home. When I was six years old, my mother decided I should become the next pope, cardinal, or priest, better yet, altar boy in the Catholic Church. One morning she brought me to church to introduce me to the priest. The choir was practicing. I turned to my mother and I said, "I would rather do that." My mother said, "If that will make you happy, you do that."

I joined the choir and learned how to read and interpret Gregorian chant. I sang seven days a week for eight years. At the age of thirteen I quit the choir and also the Catholic Church and I never looked back. I started studying the saxophone in the fifth grade at the age of ten. My brother, who is eight years older than I am, left me his saxophone when he joined the air force. I figured if he could do it, I could do it.

My first professional job was in a society band at the age of thirteen. I was paid ten dollars for four hours of work, for me that was a lot of money in those days. It was better than working in the fields for my uncle. I worked for him digging potatoes, breaking corn, cutting sugar cane, planting cabbage, and picking cotton. Picking cotton was the hardest; I would make only a dollar a day for a hundred pounds. At that time I did not know any better. It was normal to make that little money.

At some point in high school I became interested in art. I would visit the library and read books about composers and artists. I noticed that most were published either in New York, London, and/or Paris. I figured I could get to New York by walking, but getting to Europe would be a problem. A couple of months before graduating, I was having a major problem in my head of what I wanted to be, a jazz musician, a classical musician, or a classical artist. One day I walked into the library and was looking at *Time* magazine. There were always articles on art in the back section of the publication. In this one issue there was an image of a piece by Robert Rauschenberg.

When I saw what he had done and realized that this piece was hanging in a museum, I said to myself, “If this man can get this kind of recognition about this piece, I am free to do whatever I want to be.” It cut all ties to classic, jazz, whatever. The image was of his bed that he had painted and hung it on a wall [*Bed*, 1955]. That is how I got to know Robert Rauschenberg’s work.



Robert Rauschenberg
Bed, 1955
Combine: oil and pencil on pillow, quilt, and
sheet, mounted on wood support
75 1/4 x 31 1/2 x 8 inches (191.1 x 80 x 20.3 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of Leo Castelli in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Never in my wildest imagination did I ever think that I would get to meet, hang out, and much less travel the world with him.

Q: Right.

Landry: In 1969, I moved to New York City with my now ex-wife, Tina Girouard. We rented an apartment at 98 Horatio Street in the West Village. At the time she was working with a dancer, Deborah Hay. Deborah wanted to watch a 16mm film of hers; I had the 16mm projector. She asked me if she could invite a few friends. I said, “Sure, invite whoever you want.” The first person to show up at the door at this very tiny apartment was Bob Rauschenberg and a Swiss art dealer. I recognized him and I said, “Before you come in, I want to tell you how I know whom you are.” I recounted the story of seeing his work in high school. He walks in saying, “Thank you,” and “What do you have to drink?” “I have Jack Daniel’s.” He said, “Perfect, my drink!” This was at nine o’clock at night. We viewed the film and we drank. I was smoking a lot of weed in those days and I offered him some; he said he had never done it. I was surprised. “You, never?” He responded, “Never!” He smoked a little. They left at four or five o’clock in the morning, completely drunk and high. I had to put them in a cab and give the cabbie the address: 381 Lafayette [Street]—

[Laughter]

Q: Please deliver them here!

Landry: A couple of weeks later while working with Keith Sonnier, he mentioned he was looking for a 16mm film camera. I said, “Rauschenberg has one, you should call him.” His response: “Oh, I cannot call him.” I said, “You guys are in the same gallery so I assume you know him?” “Oh no, I cannot call him.” I eventually called Bob and he remembered who I was and invited me to a party. I arrived there at 7:00 PM; the party was in full swing. I left the next morning at 6:00 or 7:00 completely inebriated. I was stumbling out the door with his 16mm Arriflex movie camera. He said, “Wait a minute, wait a minute, I really do not know who you are and you are leaving with my twelve thousand-dollar camera—oh, but you are from Lafayette. You are okay!” That is how it all began. Eventually, I started going to a lot of his parties, openings and soon after I began to perform at his openings.

Q: Right. Okay, well, before we talk more about that moment, let’s go back a little bit.

Landry: Okay.

Q: I’m curious about a few things that you just touched upon; you said that there was that moment before you saw the picture in *Time* magazine, where you were contemplating these three different futures for yourself.

Landry: Right.

Q: So what were the distinctions that you were making, the imagined futures of each of those three different paths?

Landry: I had no idea.

Q: Okay.

Landry: I really liked jazz. While my brother was enlisted with the air force band he would send me records of the West Coast jazz musicians. I thought the music was nice and comfortable, but I soon realized I was not a jazz musician. I did not have the concept to repeat things in order. I still have that problem today.

Q: Okay.

Landry: I was sixteen when the Stan Kenton Orchestra came to New Orleans. Along with the group were [John Birks] Dizzy Gillespie, Erroll Garner, Candido [Cándido de Guerra Camero], and June Christy. Posted in bold print on the headlines of a New Orleans newspaper: “Extra! Added Attraction, [Charles] Charlie Parker [Jr.]” On the way to the concert in New Orleans, I asked my band director, “Who is Charlie Parker?” He said, “You just wait!” When I heard Parker and Dizzy play, their performance completely changed my direction and my concept of jazz. I also realized that I did not want to be associated with the white boys from California who were not doing it for me, while the African Americans were. I tried very hard to learn the

concept of this complex form of music but realized that I really could not do it. To this day everyone thinks I am a jazz musician, but I am not.

Q: That's interesting. So they think you're—

Landry: When an audience hears me perform my solo concerts they think I am playing jazz but I am not. I am improvising but it's free improvisation.

Q: Okay, but everybody else is convinced that you're doing that.

Landry: Yes.

Q: But you don't feel that you are.

Landry: I am not. No.

Q: Okay.

Landry: I am convinced I cannot. If you hear me play a jazz song, you would understand—like I said, I am a great improviser but I am not following a structure.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Unlike my paintings and photographs, which are very structured.

Q: Yes.

Landry: While in high school I decided I liked the flute. I bought a twenty-five-dollar flute and took lessons my first year at the university.

Q: Sure!

Landry: The way I give interviews is everything falls apart and then comes back together in a congealed way, at some point.

Q: Like life. Okay, I read a little bit about your first trip to New York. Your brother had left to go to school.

Landry: Right.

Q: And you rode up with a friend of yours.

Landry: In a 1956 red and white Corvette.

Q: Yes. So maybe you can tell me about that first trip to New York.

Landry: My first trip to New York City was with Rene Arceneaux. Oil and gas was discovered on his family property. In other words, he had money. He bought a brand new 1956 red and white Corvette. He mentioned that we should drive to New York City to see his friend and my brother. I said, “Yes, let’s go!” The summer of 1956 we drove to the city in his brand new Corvette.

In those days there were no interstate highway systems. I remember the gurgling sound of the engine while driving through these very small towns in Tennessee and Kentucky. In just about every town that one had to drive through you had to go around the town square. Mothers and their daughters were on one side of the square; the men and their sons were on the other side of the square. I remember overalls, pipes, and straw hats. This is no joke! Going through one town I snuggled down in my seat and told Rene, “Do not stop, continue driving.” I was scared of the whole scene.

When we arrived in New York City we drove straight to the famous jazz club Birdland. I remember parking half a block away. I walked straight into the club dressed in a zoot suit; it was the style at the time. It was a light green suit, long coat almost down to my knees and extreme peg pants, but not the hat or watch chain. I am seventeen, he is twenty-five; they carded him. In New York City a person had to be twenty-one years of age to enter nightclubs. We spent two weeks in the city and I went to Birdland every night. Musicians that we saw and heard were Miles Davis [III], [Earl] Bud Powell, [Joseph] Philly Joe Jones, and a number of other great jazz musicians of that period. I knew then that I would eventually have to get back to New York.

Q: You were sold.

Landry: Yes! I went back to the city a few times after that but I do not remember those times, where I stayed or what I did, complete loss in the memory.

This was 1956. In 1963 I decided that after graduating from the University [of Louisiana] in Lafayette, I wanted to take flute lessons in New York. I went to the [Louisiana] State University in Baton Rouge to meet the head of the music department who was a flute player. He gave me the address of Arthur Lora, a flutist in New York City. I wrote to Lora and received a letter from him inviting me to come to the city. I did not drive to the city; I took the Greyhound bus, a 28-hour horrendous ride!

Q: Wow!

Landry: My first lesson was at 3:00 PM. I arrived 15 minutes early and I heard someone playing the flute. At three o'clock I rang the bell. A short, elegant Italian man, about seventy years old, answered the door. "How long have you been standing here?" I said, "About fifteen minutes. I heard you practicing." He said, "Practice? I do not practice anymore." I said, "What were you doing?" Lora: "I was warming up because I did not know who was coming, you might play better than I do."

Mr. Lora's first question: "Why do you want to learn how to play the flute? Do you want to be a soloist, go to Juilliard [School, New York] or do you want to play in an orchestra?" I said, "I just

want to learn how to play it.” He said, “I will take you. Let me hear you play.” I majored in clarinet at the university. With clarinets you have to slap the fingers down to help get the sound; one really has to pop the keys. Playing the flute is totally different; it is like butterflies, nimble fingers. Once I played for him he realized that I had played the clarinet. Lora: “Okay, I will take you, but we will start from the very beginning, one note at a time.” I am thinking to myself, I am here for six weeks, six notes; the lessons are costing me eighty dollars an hour, which was a lot of money in ’63. After the lessons I would take the A train up to Yonkers to a house where I was staying. I would practice fifteen, sixteen hours a day. There is another story connected to this story.

Q: Wow.

Landry: During the second lesson, he said, “My god, what improvement.” I said, “Mr. Lora, you said one note at a time. I am a poor boy from Louisiana, six notes would not cut it.” He said, “I was exaggerating. I will give you the fundamentals, but I expect you to take it from there.” By the third lesson he asked me, “You really do not know who I am, do you?” I said, “No sir.” He said, “Do you know who Arturo Toscanini is?” “Yes,” I said, “He is one of the greatest conductors of the twentieth century.” He replied, “I have been his principal flute player for the past fifteen years.” My jaw dropped! Next question to him was, “With whom did you study?” He said, “I studied with [Georges] Barrère.” I was even more impressed; Barrère was a legendary French flute teacher.

This experience I had with Arthur Lora allowed me to be able to perform Philip Glass's music years later. Philip's music reminded me of the exercise that I was practicing for Lora. I came back to Louisiana in late August thinking I was going to move to New York City in the fall of 1963. November 3, 1963 I was busted for growing marijuana on my family farm. At that time it was the biggest raid in the state of Louisiana.

Q: Wow!

Landry: If I had been convicted of the offense, it was a mandatory twenty-five-year sentence at the Angola State Penitentiary in Louisiana.

Q: Wow!

Landry: Ten years before that, it was the death penalty. Fortunately, I had a great lawyer, [Joseph] Minos Simon.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Minos came to the jailhouse and said, "I am going to ask you one question." I said, "Shoot." He asked, "Where did you get the seed?" My response: "I have no idea." His reply: "I will take your case." I said, "What do you mean?" Minos: "The law, as it is written, states that the seed has to be a Mexican derivative, which means to me that you would have had to walk across the border, fly across the border, or drive your car across the Mexican border, pick up the

seed, bring it back to Louisiana, and put in the ground. Since you have no idea where the seed came from, I will take your case. You are not going to jail.”

That was a huge relief to me to hear those words. I bonded out and the wait for the trial begins. One night I woke up in a cold sweat thinking, I am going to jail for twenty-five years. I called him first thing the next morning. He said, “Come to my office.” When I arrive, he mentioned that we should go to his courtyard, “I know that it is not bugged.” [Laughs] He begins with, “Look, I am a criminal lawyer. I do not care if you stabbed your mother a hundred and ninety times, deboned her, gave the bones to the dogs, made ground meat, fed the rump steaks stuffed with garlic, and served it to your friends with the best wine. You are not guilty until the Supreme Court finds you guilty. As far as I am concerned, growing weed in your backyard under these circumstances, you are not going to jail.” Eventually it came to fruition and I spent five years probated to the state of Louisiana.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Probation meant I could not leave the state; I could not hang out with musicians or play in bands, home at 10:00 at night. A week after that decision was made, I was playing upright bass in a jazz trio at the Playboy Club in New Orleans! I knew the probation officer had a regular routine of showing up on the farm on a certain day of every month. I would drive from New Orleans to the farm the day before and put my gloves on pretending to be fixing fences and dealing with the cattle. At the same time I was also divorcing my first wife and had moved to Lafayette. I had Keith Sonnier’s brother, Barry [Sonnier], who was AWOL from the service,

living with me. I am also playing at nightclubs all over the state of Louisiana in a blue-eyed soul band, the Swing Kings. This band opening up for people like Otis Redding [Jr.], [Riley] B.B. King, Wilson Pickett, Sam [Moore] & Dave [Prater], the list goes on. I did all of this for three and a half years without detection.

One day my new young probation officer came and he said, “Landry, I just figured out you been lying to me for two years.” I said, “Yes sir, I have.” His reply, “I tell you what, I really like you and this thing about marijuana, a weed growing in your backyard, I think it is totally nonsense. I am giving you six months off your probation.” A couple of days later I rented a U-Haul truck, loaded everything in the back of it, including the garbage can full of garbage, and drove to New York City with Barry Sonnier in the cab with me.

Q: All right!

[Laughter]

Landry: All right, that is a lot of history there!

Q: Yes! Well, before we arrive in New York again, I was actually interested in asking you about your journeys back and forth between, you said, '57 and what, '63, when you'd go out to New York every year?

Landry: Yes. The thing about that is that I do not remember much.

Q: Okay.

Landry: I do not remember where I stayed and I do not know exactly what I did.

Q: All right.

Landry: It is completely blank. I think I just wandered around the city.

Q: Yes?

Landry: Just wandered, no—yes, I would go to the jazz clubs and listen to the great jazz musicians of that period. But I do not know where I stayed or know what else I did, except go to the clubs at night and wander around the city.

Q: Yes. My question was— I am from Toronto. I used to go to theater school in New York and I would take the bus back and forth whenever I'd go home. I remember it was this really nice kind of contemplative time, where I would think about everything that I had just done in one place and get ready for being in the next place.

Landry: You have to remember, this is the middle of the sixties and integration was hot. I had problems with the border patrol at every Greyhound bus stop. They were stopping and questioning me. I assumed that it was because of the way I was dressed. The minute I opened my

mouth, because of my Cajun accent, they would say, “Oh, you are from Louisiana, go on. Keep going.”

[Laughter]

Landry: They thought I was an illegal alien.

Q: Yes.

Landry: On a trip back to Louisiana we stopped somewhere in North Carolina. A family of six African American kids, age thirteen to, maybe, three get on the bus and they were speaking French. I found out that they were from Louisiana and I knew some of their relatives. We get off at the station in Atlanta, Georgia. I could feel the tension. I did not think anything of it. One of the kids came to me and said, “Nobody is answering our questions.” I said, “I will go find out what is going on.” I get the answers to the schedules. As I am walking back to tell them what to do, this huge white policeman comes to me and says, “All right boy, come with me!” He escorts me into a little room behind the bus station and puts his baton in my chest— This is a hard one to talk about.

Q: Oh!

Landry: He said, “I see you like niggers!” I tried to explain the situation, but the more I talked, the more the baton went into my chest. He said, “We do not like niggers here, if I see you even looking at them and/or talking to them, you are going to jail for a long time in Georgia!”

Q: Wow.

Landry: I walked out and with my best ventriloquist’s voice whispered to the kids, “Follow me!” We got on the bus and got out of there. That period in the South was a pretty heavy time. A couple of other incidents on the bus trail, same stuff. You could not look at a black person, you could not talk to them, and you could not associate with them.

Q: Yes.

Landry: In the meantime, in New York City and in Louisiana, these are the people whom I am hanging out with.

Q: Right.

Landry: One of my Creole friends once asked me, “What is integration?” I said, “We are supposed to be together.” His answer, “I thought we were?”

Q: Right.

Landry: The university I attended in Lafayette was the first university in the South to integrate.

Q: Right.

Landry: I learned a lot from an old uncle of mine, my mother's brother. He taught me how to fix anything, whatever had to be done, just do it. Learn how to do it. One thing I did not learn was how to start a conversation with people. My uncle would spend hours talking with just about anybody that would listen to him. He said, "If you do not ask questions, you won't know."

One night I was at the jazz club in New York City, the Five Spot, and saw John Coltrane perform. He played fiercely for an hour and twenty minutes. He did not give anybody else a solo, walks off the bandstand, and as he walked by me, I said, "Sounded great, John!" His response: "Thank you, man!" To this day, I am going, "Why did I not offer to buy him a drink, go shoot up, smoke a joint, glass of water, coffee, anything?" That is the lesson I did not learn from my uncle—I did not ask Coltrane any questions, something I regret to this day. The next time I saw somebody of that stature was [Randolph] Ornette Coleman. In December of 1968, upon arriving in the city, I had stopped at Smith's Diner on Second Avenue and Thirteenth Street. I go in and have a cup of coffee, call my friend who I was going to stay with, no answer, get back to the car—saxophone, all the clothes are gone!

My girlfriend is crying. I tell her to relax. "I have money and I will replace everything." I rented a room at the Broadway Central Hotel. A side note to this story is that the kitchen of this hotel is

where the performing venue the Kitchen was established. To continue the story: I looked in the *Village Voice* and I see that Ornette Coleman is playing at the Village Gate, which is on Bleecker [Street] around the corner from the hotel. As I am walking down the stairs, there is Ornette. I said, “Ornette. Hey man.” I then introduced myself. We started talking and at some point he said, “Your accent, where are you from?” I answered, “I am from Lafayette, Louisiana.” His reply, “I got beat up in that town once!” I said, “I got beat up in New York today.” He asked, “What happened?” I said, “They stole my saxophone.” Ornette took out a piece of paper and wrote down his telephone number and gave it to me. He said, “If you need a saxophone while you are here, this is my number, call me.” We have been friends ever since.

Now, go back to the story of my studies with Arthur Lora. The house that I was staying in, in Yonkers once belonged to Arturo Toscanini.

Q: Wow! All right.

[Laughter]

Landry: Are you getting what you want?

Q: Yes!

Landry: All right.

Q: Absolutely. Let's talk about the moment that you arrived in New York. You moved to New York. You said within a month, you had met this amazing group of artists.

Landry: When I arrived in the city I knew two people.

Q: Yes?

Landry: Keith Sonnier is from Mamou, Louisiana and William "Bill" Fisher, an African American, who was a high school band director in Opelousas, Louisiana. I met Keith in 1962 at the university art department in Lafayette. Keith had recently graduated from Rutgers [University, State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick] and was now living in New York City. I met Bill when I went to the school where he was teaching to give a bid on the instruments to repair. I walked in and I took one look at him and the first thing that comes out of my mouth, "You smoke marijuana, don't you?" He looked at me, shocked, and said, "How did you know?" I said, "I just have the feeling." We became friends. He later moved to New York City.

At that time I was thinking of where should I go, New York City or San Francisco. I drove to Highway 190, the main road for traveling east or west; there was no interstate system at that time. I am parked on the side of the road trying to decide in which direction I am headed, east or west.

A friend of mine stopped and asked, "Hey man, what you doing?" I said, "I am trying to decide if I am going to San Francisco or New York." He said, "It is 5:00 in the afternoon, come spend

the night and we will talk about it.” One of his questions was, “Whom do you know in San Francisco?” I said, “No one.” He then asked, “Who do you know in New York City?” I said, “Keith Sonnier and Bill Fisher.” His reply, “Call them.” So I called them and they both suggested that I should come up to the city. I did and decided after being there with those friends that New York would be the place to be. That is how that decision was made.

When I arrived in 1969 I began working with Keith, who was with the Leo Castelli gallery [New York]. The artists in that gallery were Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, and James Rosenquist. Bill Fisher was the chief arranger at Ahmet Ertegun’s Atlantic Records: Aretha Franklin, [Josef] Joe Zawinul, Otis Redding, et cetera. Bill said he could not hire me as a saxophone player. The reason was that there was a whole line of other players that had been there for years. He hired me as his copyist. Bill would spend all day arranging the music and I would stay up all night copying the music. There were no computers in the day, so all the music was handwritten. I had great penmanship.

My other job was going in and placing the music on the music stands in the studio. Aretha Franklin was scheduled to record with a number of musicians. There was supposed to be two saxophone players, but only David “Fathead” Newman shows up, King Curtis [Ousley] was a no show. Bill said, “You got your horn?” I said, “Yes.” Aretha walks in and has Fathead and I come up with a part for her vocal on this one song. We did and we began to record, but after a few passes, in walks King Curtis. I quietly put my horn down and walk off.

A week later the people at Atlantic call me for a session. “We really enjoyed your playing and want you to come in and record, but we want you to sound like King Curtis.” I said, “This is his number, call him.” I walked away from Atlantic Records and never went back.

Q: Yes?

Landry: I went downtown to the art world. It was through Keith, Richard [Serra], and Philip that within a few months I met all these artists. [Narrator note: Gordon Matta-Clark, Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, (Stephen) Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Jon Gibson, (Laura) Laurie Anderson, Ulrich Rückriem, Susan Rothenberg, Mary Heilmann, Nancy Graves, Spalding Gray, Richard Nonas, Jene Highstein, Joan Jonas, Jasper Johns, Jim Rosenquist, William Burroughs, Mabou Mines, Chuck Close, Robert Wilson, Lawrence Weiner, (William) Bill Wegman, Joseph Kosuth, Bruce Nauman, Lucinda Childs, Trisha Brown, Deborah Hay, and so many others.]

Q: Yes.

Landry: It was through Keith Sonnier that I got to meet Philip Glass. Visiting Keith in December of 1968, he mentioned that he saw an interesting concert by a composer, Philip Glass. Keith thought that it was visually interesting and aurally interesting. I said, “What do you mean by visual?” He said, “Philip had a maze constructed and he had one continuous sheet of music pinned to the wall. A violin player then walked through the maze performing the music.” This was what was visually interesting to Keith.

I called Philip and visited him at his home on Eighth Avenue and Thirteenth Street. At the time he was married to JoAnne Akalaitis and had two kids. He had just come back from Paris where he had been studying with the classical composer, Nadia Boulanger. I know what a score looks like and I could see the scores all stacked up. Philip was fumbling through them but was not showing me anything. In hindsight, I believe he did not want to show me his scores because he had put that music in the past. He was coming up with his own style, which later was coined minimal music. At one point he said, “Excuse me, I have to make tea for a blind friend of mine. You might know who he is.” I said, “Who is he?” Philip replies, “Moondog [born Louis Thomas Hardin].” When he said Moondog, I said to myself, “If this man Philip Glass has Moondog living with him, I have to pay attention to Philip Glass and to who he is.”

This is the story of how I know Moondog. I was six years old when we got electricity on the farm and my father bought a radio. He was partially deaf so the sound was always cranked way up. I used to stay up on Saturday nights with him listening to the heavyweight fights live from Madison Square Garden [New York; narrator note: (Joseph) Joe Louis (Barrow), Jersey Joe Walcott (Arnold Raymond Cream), and all those great boxers of that period]. After the fights, this gravelly voice would come on and say, “Live from the streets of New York City, jazz with Moondog!” Moondog was my first underground hero. I then went upstairs and spent two hours with my hero, reminiscing. Do you know who he is?

Q: Yes.

Landry: The next day I went and took the photograph of him that is in my exhibit. As I was leaving, Philip mentioned that he was having a dinner at Steve Reich's loft the following week. He said, "Bring your horn." There were several composers there and we each performed one of our compositions. Then Philip said, "I am going to play a short piece." He played for forty-five minutes! I am sitting in a chair and I went through every emotion in the book.

When he finished, I said, "Philip, this is the best new music I have heard in a long time." While I was in university in Louisiana I was very interested in the new avant-garde music coming out of Europe—Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez, Luigi Nono, and others. Every two months I would organize concerts at the university and get the best players to interpret this very complex music. Hearing Philip's music, on the contrary, was sweet, beautiful, and mesmerizing, while the other, I thought, was cacophony.

This was the fall of '68. Philip mentioned to me that he was starting an ensemble in January and asked, "Do you want to be in it?" I said, "Sure!" So I came back to Louisiana thinking I have a job in New York City, I will be playing music. I arrive in the city and realize that Philip had only one concert in '69. He realizes that I needed work and offered me to join him and his cousin Jene Highstein to see what they did. They had a moving company.

I went the next morning and we climbed the five flights of a tenement building. Philip proceeds to put a refrigerator on his back and walks it down the stairs. I said, "Look, I have picked cotton, milked cows, dug ditches, cut sugar cane, broke corn, but I am not moving anybody's fucking furniture!" He said, "What can you do?" I said, "I can plumb." Philip, "I tell you what, since you

are new in New York, you cannot get the license. I will get the license, you will be my assistant and you will teach me plumbing.” That is how we became plumbers. The first job was in my loft in Chinatown to install a string of galvanized pipes. In those days there was no PVC pipe; these galvanized pipes had to be cut and threaded to exact lengths.

Q: Yes?

Landry: We installed the pipes, turned on the water, and there was a leak at every joint!

[Laughter]

Landry: I shouted, “Philip, look, all the leaks!” He said, “You are the assistant, you are supposed to have tightened them up!” [Laughs] We plumbed for a couple of years. Our last plumbing job was for Christo’s wife, Jeanne-Claude.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Jeanne-Claude wanted a bidet in her bathroom. When we arrived, she said in a very thick French accent, “I am going shopping, I do not want a mess!” Philip explained, “Look, we have to cut the floor, it is a mess. There will not be any water from the toilet, but there will be a mess.” She comes back a couple of hours later; she freaks out, cussing us out in French. I am the assistant. I am not even looking at her; I am looking at Philip. He is turning blue, not red. She says, “I am going shopping again, I do not want a mess when I get back!” When the door closed,

Philip said, “Pack up!” I said, “We are not finished!” His response, “We are done!” We left the mess lying there and walked out! He went to driving a cab and I went on to working with artists and taking photographs.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Next question.

Q: Yes, so you said—

Landry: Am I doing okay?

Q: Great! You talked about the session with Aretha Franklin and being invited back, and that moment, making a choice to go downtown to the art world.

Landry: Yes.

Q: I’m interested in what you think the differences between the two communities were and why you felt more at home with the one?

Landry: I loved music, but I realized that I wanted to do my own individual thing. For the people at Atlantic Records—come in and record, but you have to sound like somebody else—just turned me off completely.

Q: Yes?

Landry: Even today, I am not very comfortable in a studio recording someone else's music. If they say, "Do this," I freeze. I say, "We will be here for hours, just getting this one five-second passage."

Q: Okay.

Landry: I am exaggerating.

Q: Sure.

Landry: Unless the music is written down.

Q: Yes.

Landry: In the art world, I am melting lead and splashing it against walls with Richard Serra. With Keith Sonnier I am helping him build his large glass and neon pieces that are also dangerous. I am a videographer for both Lawrence Weiner and Keith. With Gordon Matta-Clark, I am helping him cut up buildings. In the meantime I am taking photographs of all these happenings. I enjoyed this work better than interpreting someone else's music in the recording studio.

Q: Yes.

Landry: In the meantime, I am helping Philip Glass with his ensemble. By the end of 1970, four of the musicians out of six in the ensemble were from Lafayette, Louisiana.

Q: Yes. Was that because they were your friends and you invited them to—?

Landry: Yes. Philip is a great composer, but not a great performer. There were other composers in the ensemble that had problems performing his music. Although Philip's music looks easy, it is a very complex system of numbered bars and lots of repetition. We would rehearse the music very, very slow, da da de da—mistake. Da da de da, da da de da, da da—mistake. For me this was painful! My friends in Louisiana are realizing that I am surviving in New York so they started coming up one at a time. As they arrived in the city I would have Philip invite them to a rehearsal.

After rehearsals he would hire them on the spot. Eventually, five musicians from Louisiana besides myself went through the ensemble: Robert Prado, Rusty Gilder, Steve Chambers, Richard Peck, and Jon Smith. Philip would compose something new every week and bring it to rehearsals. We would run through it, then he would ask, "What do you think?" Everybody would voice his or her opinion. A few times it was not favorable. He would pick up the music and come back a week later with something new. At some point in 1975, Philip said, "What I am writing is what you play," in other words, we did not have anymore say about his compositions.

Q: All right.

Landry: Richard Peck spent thirty-five years with the ensemble and retired recently. He was a freshman at the university in Lafayette when I first met him. We would have morning sessions and he always would bring a tape recorder and record the sessions. He would then go home and listen to the recordings. I asked, “What are you doing?” Richard, “I want to hear what I sound like.” Besides being a great player, his action of recording interested me. At the time he was in the pre-dental curriculum at the university, but instead of going to classes he was at my house every other day practicing twelve hours a day in the corner of my living room.

On one of my trips back to Lafayette he came to me announcing, “My mother has called me white trash for the last time, I am going to New York with you.” We drove to the city and spent one night. The next day we drove to Nova Scotia, which is another twenty-hour drive. Philip heard him, hired him, and thirty-six years later—he was still performing with the ensemble.

Q: Wow.

Landry: Wait until you get to Janet [Begneaud, née Rauschenberg]! I can’t wait to hear that interview! My god, the stories she has! Phew!

Q: Okay. Where to next?

Landry: Pardon?

Q: You've told me how you started to get into photography. At that time, you were taking pictures, you were playing music. Did it feel like those two things fit seamlessly into your life? Was it easy to be doing both? Pursuing both?

Landry: Yes. My work ethic is good. I am playing the music I really like and working with artists whose works I really liked. So life was good.

Q: Right.

Landry: Musicians bore the hell out of me, but art and artists still captivate me.

Q: Yes.

Landry: The thing about music is that you practice a few hours a week, then you perform for a couple of hours. After all of that you wait a month to do another one. With the artist, one day I am working with Gordon Matta-Clark, the next day with Keith, Graves, Weiner, et cetera. I am getting hired as a photographer and also as a helper, which to me is more exciting.

Q: Yes. Tell me about your first show at the Castelli gallery in 1972.

Landry: I am at a dinner at Rauschenberg's one night. Leo Castelli and his [ex-]wife Ileana Sonnabend were there.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I am sitting next to Leo and he mentions to me, "Do you want to do something at the gallery?" I said, "Like what?" He replied, "Anything you want to do." I said, "What about a concert?" He response: "Perfect, I always wanted music at my gallery." He had just moved his uptown gallery to 420 West Broadway. I had six musicians, all from Louisiana, staying at 10 Chatham Square, my loft in Chinatown. We would start jamming at 9:00 at night until 9:00 in the morning, playing freeform jazz. I ran back to the loft and announced, "I got us a concert!" They asked, "What are we going to do?" I said, "What we are doing now." Kurt Munkacsi was Philip Glass's engineer at the time and was working with John Lennon. Kurt borrowed Lennon's sixteen-track mobile studio, backed it up behind the gallery at 420 Broadway and recorded the five-hour concert. The recording was eventually released on the Chatham Square Records label as a double vinyl record, produced by Leo Castelli.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I will never forget Leo running around the gallery jumping up and down clicking his heels!

[Laughter]

Landry: A few months later, he said, “I understand you do photographs and drawings.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Do you want a show?” I had my first photographic show at the Seventy-seventh Street gallery and a year later at gallery 420 on West Broadway.

Q: Yes.

Landry: A few artists were furious with me! “How did you get that?” I said, “He asked me.” They told me that I was doing too many things and that I should pick one and do that better than all the rest. I said, “I get bored very easy so that is why I am working in these fields.”

Q: Right.

Landry: It is not my style to do just one thing—that really pissed them off.

Q: They saw it as the shows just coming to you and they had been pursuing their careers for years with no luck.

Landry: Yes, like them bringing their work to the galleries, trying to get in and getting turned down.

Q: Right.

Landry: Leo asked me.

Q: Right.

Landry: Leo and I became very good friends. I was editing video at the gallery one night. He was walking around the gallery looking at a Jasper Johns installation. My curiosity got to me and I asked him, “Leo, what are you doing?” He says, “I put this show together and these paintings will never be, in the history of art, in the same room ever again.”

Then he looks at me, he said, “You like art.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “I am going to turn you into a painter.” My reply, “Leo, I always wanted to paint, but I do not have the time. I am too busy touring with Philip and doing my own concerts.” He said, “Well, you think about it.” Some time later, I had moved to Florida. My girlfriend, Babs Case, ran the Center for the Arts in Stuart, Florida. She invited me to take a painting class. I finally did but my first painting was horrendous. Horrible!

Q: [Laughs]

Landry: I walked out and threw it in the trash! [Laughs] At the time I was drawing on brown paper bags. An artist who was living with me asks me, “What are you doing?” I said, “I am drawing.” He commented, “Here is some good cotton rag, draw on that.” I said, “How do you think my drawings would transfer to canvas?” He said, “There is the canvas, gesso, and the paint, you know what to do.” The first painting I did was a big turn-on; literally, a very sexual turn-on.

It blew my mind! My paintings came out of my work in video with Keith Sonnier. If you remember the old TV screens, there was a rounded top and bottom, unlike the rectangular screens in today's models. I just squared off both. If you turn around and look at those three photographs in the middle—

Q: Oh yes!

Landry: Those are Cibachrome rayogram prints. The style of my paintings came from those prints. They were printed in 1974; I did not start painting until 1994. I went to New York City a couple of years later after I had begun to paint. Leo was in degrading health at that time. In fact, when I saw him and he got up to shake my hand he almost fell over. I mentioned that I was painting. He said, "Do not show them to anybody else. I want to see them first." Unfortunately, he died before I could show him the paintings.

Q: Yes.

Landry: That is how I knew Leo.

Q: Yes.

Landry: One night at a dinner in his apartment I saw the Jasper Johns *Flag* [1954–55] hanging above his mantelpiece. I said, "Leo, what is the story of the painting?" He said, "This painting

was one of the paintings in my first show of Jasper's. A man came in and bought it for six hundred dollars. Two weeks later he came back and wanted his money back!" [Laughs]

Q: Whoops!

Landry: Whoops! [Laughs]

Q: Okay, so let us talk a little bit about—you told me how you met Bob. How did that friendship end up segueing into collaboration? How would you guys spend time together in the beginning?

Landry: All around the world at drunken parties!

[Laughter]

Landry: Drunken openings.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Bob liked to play dominoes so whenever we had the chance we would play.

Q: Yes?

Landry: I am horrible at math. Even today, I have to think, “Okay, eight and five is—?” And I go okay and three is eleven, okay, twelve, thirteen.

Q: Yes.

Landry: There is this visual thing about dominoes; it is something that works for me so I think I am a good domino player.

Q: Was he okay about losing?

Landry: Bob was okay about losing. Bill Wegman, on the other hand, hated to lose! I learned to let him win sometimes. Once Bob brought the twelve set numbered dominoes, he said, “I am going to get you on this one.” I beat him three out of four.

Q: Oh.

Landry: Then he started asking me to perform at his openings and eventually came the ROCI [Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange] tour [1985–91].

Q: Yes.

Landry: You want to talk about the ROCI tour now?

Q: Sure.

Landry: A couple, Joyce and Scotty, called me one day and invited me to fly to Mexico City to see a Picasso show at the Tamayo Museum. I said, “I have seen Picasso all over the world, I am not interested.” I hung up the phone. I called Keith and told him of the offer. He said, “Go. Alberto Raurell [Soto], the director of the museum, is a friend of ours. Call him!” I called and Alberto said, “Come! Do come!”

We fly to Mexico and attend the closing of the Picasso exhibit. I have never seen anything like it. Alberto hired every mariachi band in Mexico City. There were hundreds of musicians that kept parading in and out of the museum in a single line. Hundreds of people were waiting to get in. The guards are releasing pigeons and peace doves. I will never forget this one image of this poor woman looking through the window crying. She was holding a number of pigeons in her hands. Alberto tells a guard, “Go hold those pigeons for that woman and let her in!”

One day we are stuck in a huge traffic jam when Alberto asked Tina and I, “After this show comes down, do you all want to do something, Dickie, like your concert? And Tina, an art show?” We both said, “Yes!” He said, “We only have six weeks to get it together.” As you know it usually takes a year, year and a half to put together exhibits. He said, “You all think about it and if you can get it together, it’s on.” We came back to Louisiana and in six weeks we were back in Mexico City.

One day at lunch I meet the richest man in Mexico, Emilio Azcárraga, Jr., the owner of TV and radio station, Televisa. Emilio was a tall big man with a streak of white hair down the middle of his hair, like a skunk, they call him El Tigre. A number of my family members are at this lunch. Emilio and I are drinking and getting drunk.

He looks at me and said, “I see that you are doing a concert at the Tamayo tomorrow night? So, how are you going to entertain me on your little saxophone?” I said, “You have not heard me play.” He said, “Yes, but I have heard the people you play with and I do not like the music of Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and/or the Talking Heads. How are you going to entertain me?” I let it go by and in the meantime we are getting drunker and drunker. He says it a second time. I just said, “You have not heard me play the saxophone yet.” The third time he says it, I get up and I yelled, “Fuck you! I do not care who the fuck you think you are, you have not heard me play saxophone, and so you cannot say what you are saying.” Everybody was telling me, “Calm down. Do you know who you’re talking to?” We continued to argue. Then he said, “Look there,” pointing to a giant oversized chair in the corner of the room.

Q: Yes?

Landry: He said, “My father built that for me and told me once that when you think you are getting too big for yourself, go sit in that chair, so let us both go sit in that chair.” As we are sitting there, I looked at my watch and realize that I am late for the sound check. I said, “Emilio, I am late for the sound check.” He said, “Let’s go.” We jump in his limousine and go to the museum. I started playing and all of a sudden I see men running to him taking notes. He then

comes to me and said, “Would you mind if I televise your concert live to the whole Spanish-speaking world tomorrow night?” I said, “Oh!”

Q: Guess he liked it, then!

Landry: At the dinner after the concert he said, “You do not know what I like and what I collect.” He then took me to his office. There were shelves from the ceiling to the floor, wall to wall of videocassettes. These were of his personal collection of all the divas of the opera and classical world, including Maria Callas, the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, pianist Arthur Rubenstein. Emilio would send his Televisa crews all over the world to video their performances.

Q: ROCI.

Landry: The director of the Tamayo, Alberto Raurell, asked me, “What’s happening in New York?” I said, “I just had a meeting with Rauschenberg and he is putting this tour together called ROCI, Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange. Bob’s idea was that he would construct pieces with the aid of the artisans of the country he was working in. After completing the work he would exhibit all the finished work plus works from his own collection.” Alberto said, “Wow, that sounds interesting!” I gave him Bob’s office number. The rest is history.

Q: Oh, okay.

Landry: Yes.

Q: So tell me about the meeting that you had with Rauschenberg when he was first explaining to you what he wanted to do.

Landry: I do not remember any of that at all, except him asking, “You want to go play some concerts?” Of course I said yes, but we never once talked about money.

Q: Right.

Landry: When it was all over, he said, “You want money or a painting?” I had learned long before that, take a painting, not the money. It is a small painting, right up there. The one in stainless steel [Untitled (*Shiner*), 1987].



Robert Rauschenberg
Untitled (*Shiner*), 1987
Acrylic on stainless steel
24 3/4 x 16 7/8 inches (62.9 x 42.9 cm)
Private collection

Q: Oh yes! When is it from?

Landry: 1988.

Q: Okay. Cool!

Landry: I do have some prints, photographs, and a couple of drawings of his.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I did not travel to all the cities. I performed in Mexico City [1985], Moscow [1989], Cuba [1988], and the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C. [1991].

Q: Sure.

Landry: Yes.

Q: So what do you remember about the trips?

Landry: The most exciting ones for me were Cuba and Moscow. Cuba was like going back in time to my 1956 high school prom. All the cars were '56 or pre-'56. We flew in a private plane from Miami [International] Airport direct to Havana, which was unheard of in 1988. Armand

Hammer, the Russian philanthropist, liked Bob's work. He contacted Castro and had him invite Bob to this festival where Castro was giving prizes to artists, poets, and writers from Central and South America. Mr. Hammer then went to the State Department and got clearance for us to fly to Cuba.

Q: Wow.

Landry: We waited hours in the Miami airport; we were scheduled to leave at 7:00. Time passes, 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, no word or pilot. We keep seeing this guy sticking his head out the door, looking both ways. Finally, he hollered, "Hey! Are you the people that are going to Havana?" I said, "Yes." He said, "We have a half hour to get off the ground." So we hustled everything on the plane. That photograph on the wall is of Bob and I on our way to Havana.



Rauschenberg and Dickie Landry en route to Havana, 1988. Photo: Janet Begneaud, courtesy Dickie Landry

Q: Oh, wow!

Landry: There was supposed to be a big party when we landed but we were so late that nobody was there. We had to unload everything including ten 5-gallon cans of white paint that was used to paint the museum walls and also cases of Jack Daniel's!

Q: Who else was on that plane?

Landry: Bob's sister Janet, his assistant Darryl Pottorf, Bob, and me. At the ceremony Castro spent maybe five or ten minutes with the other recipients. According to Bob and one other person with him, he and Castro had a forty-five-minute conversation.

Bob recounts that the entire time he was talking to Castro, he was always, "touching my coat and straightening my tie." At one point Bob backhands him and the guards showed some concern. Bob said, "Excuse me! Oh, by the way, I have a great place in Florida. You should come and visit me." Castro replies, "You are the first American to invite me there in thirty years."

Q: Oh wow!

Landry: Castro, "I tell you what, I have a great place here. You and your people should stay for a couple of weeks." Bob agrees, but when he gets back to the hotel he told us, "Why did I agree to that? I do not want to stay here!" Janet said, "Bob, Castro invited you, we have to stay." We stayed on the old Du Pont plantation. Arriving late in the afternoon the servants got us coconuts out of the trees and we made rum coconut drinks. They served us chicken in a sauce for dinner. We had the same chicken the next day for lunch and dinner.

I remember walking into a shoe store seeing maybe three pairs of shoes on the counter. I later went into a men's and women's clothing store, there were maybe a couple of suits on the rack, a couple of dresses, that was it.

Havana reminded me of New Orleans in a lot of ways. It had that feeling and the look, but after thirty years, it had decayed and was falling apart. I met a lot of musicians and artists. I performed three concerts in Havana: Castillo de la [Real] Fuerza, the Ford America House [Casa de las Américas], and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. The Castillo de la Fuerza is the iconic image of the fortress that is in every photograph you see of the harbor in Havana. I played my saxophone into a grand piano with the sustain pedal down so the strings could resonate. It was a beautiful sound in that structure. Castro was upstairs listening, but I never met him. I am so happy now that we can go there again.

Q: Yes. Yes.

Landry: Moscow, we arrived there in the middle of February. The Russians were apologizing because the snow was melting and it was not cold enough. I was not complaining. This was before Glasnost, before Mikhail Gorbachev. We had this robust blonde woman as our tour manager. We want to do this, "No, you cannot do that." We want to do that. "You cannot do that." We want to do this. "You cannot do that!"

Q: [Laughs] What kinds of things were you asking to do?

Landry: Oh, I don't know, "Let's go see this and go do this." Very mean, bulldog-looking, "No, you cannot do that." The restaurants looked empty and when we would ask for a table, waiters answered, "We are full." A twenty-dollar bill would get us in. We basically ate tomatoes, potatoes, and an occasional piece of beef for the entire period we were there. Most of the time we lived off of caviar and champagne! [Laughs]

Q: Not bad!

Landry: Not bad, but after a while, I just wanted to get out of there.

Q: How long were you there?

Landry: Three weeks.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Outside there was a line about a mile long waiting to get in. I was standing in the middle of the museum and I started playing when they opened the doors. I usually close my eyes when I play, but I could hear people coming in. All of a sudden, I realized my sound was getting smaller and smaller. When I opened my eyes there was a circle of women and men around me. Some were touching my clothes and many of them were crying. They were also rushing to the art and

feeling the fabric and touching all the works. Bob's crew and the museum staff were freaking out. It was intense.

Q: And how did you guys make sense of that at the time?

Landry: It is the first time they had seen such provocative art with cloth, pieces of wood and metal. It was totally shocking to them. Trisha Brown was there at the same time doing this piece, *Astral Convertible* [1989]. We needed car batteries to run these tower platforms that were the set. For days we could not find car batteries, nobody could find the batteries. Finally, about five hours before the concert, somebody in the bureaucracy realized that there was a car battery manufacturing business directly across the street from the theater.

Q: You played music in *Astral Convertible*, yes?

Landry: No I did not play live. The music was all on cassettes. The set for *Astral Convertible* was eight module towers with lights, cassette machines, movement sensors, batteries, and speakers. The object was, when a dancer would cross in front of one of the towers a sensor would either turn the music and lights on or off.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I had eight tape recorders, each two tracks, so there were sixteen tracks of sound. What happened when the performance started and dancers were dancing around the modules, one

cassette would come on and stay on, and never go off or never come on. It was the same with the lights. One light would come on and stay on or never come on. The modules never did work.

The first time I ever got mad at Bob was at this question-and-answer session. He said, “I really did not like the outcome of the music.” I said, “Wait a minute, do not tell me that you did not like the music because you never heard all of it. Nobody has ever heard all the music that I did.”

I realized we were in public and I should not be ironing out our clothes in front of the public. I apologized to him after. A couple of years after many performances Trisha asked John Cage to replace the music. He says, “Do not play any music at all.” I am thinking, “All right.”

[Laughter]

Q: So what was the second time you got mad at Bob?

Landry: Never. That was the only time.

Q: One and only?

Landry: One and only! We just had fun being together. I remember at his parties, when the loft was jam-packed, we were all drunk, he would come to me saying, “Let’s play this game.”

The game was that we would walk up to groups and without stopping we would listen to the conversations and then interject our ideas at the same time, then walk away. Later we would

recount how many conversations we had interacted with. He said, “How many did you get?” I said, “I got five.” He said, “I got seven, I beat you!”

[Laughter]

Landry: Here is a story about Janet’s husband, Byron [Begneaud]. He never did like Bob’s work. There were a couple of the cardboard pieces at his home in Lafayette. Bryon told his son [Byron] Rick [Begneaud, Jr.] to get rid of that cardboard stuff. “Go and put those things in the trash!”

Q: Hmm?

Landry: Eventually, as Bob became famous and started making money, Byron changed his mind about his brother-in-law. One year Bryon comes to New York and buys two paintings from Leo. Of course, he could have gotten them for free. At the dinner after the purchase, Byron looks at Leo and he said, “Leo, the paintings I bought today, would you store them for me and when the prices go up, sell them!” I thought that Bob would choke.

[Laughter]

Landry: “Dickie, can I talk to you?” We left the room. Bob said, “Do you believe what he just said? I thought that because he finally bought a couple of my paintings, he was actually beginning to like my work.” Bob said later that he always hated to go over to Bryon’s house.

Bryon was one of those exotic animal hunters. He had all the stuffed heads of the exotic animals that he had killed hanging on the walls in his home.

Q: Oh.

Landry: Bob said, “I was always afraid that my head would be on that wall one day.”

[Laughter]

Q: But Bob didn’t say anything to him?

Landry: No.

Q: Funny.

Landry: I assume he did not—that was as far as I wanted to go.

[Laughter]

Q: So I wanted to talk a little bit about the piece that you worked on with Trisha Brown, *Astral Convertible*.

Landry: *Astral Convertible* with Laurie Anderson? [Note: Anderson composed the music for Brown's *Set and Reset*, 1983, for which Rauschenberg designed set and costumes]

Q: Yes. One of the things that we had been interested in talking to people about is what it was like to collaborate with Bob. Maybe you can just talk to me about how you became involved in the piece.

Landry: I met Laurie Anderson in 1974 at a Gordon Matta-Clark Anarchitecture meeting. Laurie came with the artist Richard Nonas. She walks in with her little camouflage violin case and I said, "Oh, you are a violin player?" Laurie, "Yes." I said, "Would you play something for us?" "Oh no," she replied. It was not long before we became great friends.

In 1981 my son, Russ, who was eighteen at the time, was killed in a hold-up while working at a service station. I was devastated and I spent three years in Louisiana licking my wounds. Three years later I decided to go to New York and see if I could salvage some of my career and to see what was happening. At that time I was not in the Philip Glass Ensemble anymore so I had nothing. While in the city I had a dinner with Laurie. As I am getting ready to leave, she said, "What are you doing in the city?" My reply: "I am looking for work." She said, "What are you doing next week?" I replied, "I am supposed to be in Atlanta, Georgia to play with the Talking Heads at this big concert." She said, "Bob and I are doing something with Trisha Brown at BAM [Brooklyn Academy of Music] next week, you should come and join us." I said, "What am I going to do?" She says, "Just bring your horn, do not think about it, and we will figure it out in the pit." I called David Byrne and explained the situation. His answer: "Man, all your friends are

in New York. You should stay and do that.” So I stayed and that is how I got involved with that collaboration. I had nothing to do with the production except to perform with Laurie in the pit. I never discussed any ideas with Bob or Trisha.

Q: Okay.

Landry: It was just Laurie offering me—

Q: Some work.

Landry: Yes, work. A week later I get a call from her manager. He asked me if I would like to go on a twenty-eight-American-city tour of *Home of the Brave* [1985, eponymous documentary released in 1986] with Laurie. I said, “Sure!”

Q: It’s a new chapter.

Landry: It was also at this time I was recording with the Talking Heads and meeting Paul Simon, with whom I eventually worked with on *Graceland* [1986]. So my career had a new beginning. A new chapter, without the Philip Glass Ensemble!

Q: Right.

Landry: That is a whole other story that I should not divulge at this time. Eventually I will.

Q: Okay. And with *Astral Convertible*, you spoke a little bit about the set design.

Landry: Right.

Q: Were there conversations leading up to that where you discussed, “Okay, this is the idea, this is what the movement’s going to be like, this is what we—”

Landry: Yes. In those days, there was no digital equipment; it was cassettes and cassette players.

Q: Right.

Landry: Trisha asked me about the music. I told her that I was going to have two tracks of stereo on eight cassette players, so that is sixteen tracks of sounds. She asked, “What are the sounds?” I said, “I do not know yet.” I eventually used different sounds, my saxophone compositions, street sounds, percussion sounds, weather sounds, et cetera.

Q: Right. And before you realized that technically it wasn’t going to work, did you have conversations, the three of you, about, “Okay, this is what I’m going to do, this is what I’m working on,” or was it more like you worked independently?

Landry: Yes, we worked independently. Bob always said, “Do what you want to do.”

Q: Yes.

Landry: He did what he did and Trisha did what she did. We never discussed the process. I knew how the towers where supposed to work.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Trisha blamed me for not getting the music to her in time and I said, “It had nothing about the music getting to you in time. The piece didn’t work.” No matter if I had gotten the music the night of the performance it was not like a symphonic piece where the music was continuous.

Q: Yes.

Landry: There was no way you could have heard the entire piece because it was not composed or structured that way. It was all contingent on the towers working the way they should have.

Q: You said you were approaching the sounds in a similar way to how you observe Rauschenberg approaching the images, like found sound and found images.

Landry: Yes.

Q: Yes.

Landry: If you go to Bob’s backyard in Captiva there is a huge pile of junk. He picks material from this pile, then turns those materials into works of art. This is how I approached putting the music together. That is how I thought of it.



Rauschenberg in “lizard run,” where he collected scrap materials to be used in his *Gluts* (1986–89/1991–94) and other works, behind his Laika Lane studio, Captiva, Florida, ca. 1992. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

Q: Yes.

Landry: The way I constructed the piece was my homage to Bob. I could have played a saxophone solo all the way through, but that was not the object.

Q: Yes.

Landry: The object was to break up the sound—I had car horns on one track, I had street sounds on another track, I had my saxophone compositions, I had drums and different instruments spread all out in the sixteen tracks. Each cassette was ninety minutes long.

Q: Wow.

Landry: The piece could have gone on forever or at least ninety minutes.

Q: Yes. One thing that's been interesting is—so I interviewed Hisachika [Takahashi], for example—and we've interviewed a couple of other dancers, so people that he collaborated with, like you. It's so interesting now to ask about how those collaborations began. Because so many people sort of suggest what you're suggesting, which is, "Bob just said I should do what I wanted to do."

Landry: Yes. I did not tell him what to do.

Q: Yes. Yes, yes, but at the beginning, at the outset of a piece—

Landry: No, it is trust.

Q: Yes?

Landry: Once [Robert J.] Wilson was asked in an interview, how is it to work with Dickie? Wilson's answer: "I trust Dickie and he trusts me. I understand him, he understands me." Not once did Bob say, "I do not like this." Trisha was complaining I did not get the music to her in

time. I said, “Well, there was a reason for that, because—” Anyway, it is a stupid reason. She blamed me for a lot of things. But that is Trisha. I will not go there.

Q: Okay. Did Bob talk about his work?

Landry: Never. Not to me. We never discussed his work. I did not think I had to. “Why did you do this? Why did you use that?” Those are redundant questions.

Q: Yes.

Landry: There was total mutual respect for each other’s craft.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I remember sitting at the table with Hisachika and Bob. Hisachika asks me, “Dickie, are you still doing those horrible drawings?” Bob shouts out, “Hisachika! This is my house, you cannot talk to people like that!” Bob looks at me. “Dickie, you like your drawings?” I said, “Yes.” He says, “Your art is just as good as mine. Hisachika, never, ever tell that to anybody in my presence, ever again!”

Q: Yes.

Landry: Bob always told me that he was lucky and was in the right place at the right time. In hindsight I feel the same way. I could have been in San Francisco five years earlier, not making certain phone calls and making certain decisions to go to New York City. It took a while for me to realize that, upon arriving in New York City, I had jumped to the top of the contemporary art world and the jazz and rhythm 'n' blues music world in one giant step. I thought to myself, “This is the way it is done, you walk in and you get the best jobs in the city.”

Q: Yes. Why do you think—?

Landry: I never questioned Gordon why he cut buildings. I never questioned why Nancy or even asked her why she's building camels.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Or Keith why he's making neon art, why Richard was splashing lead on the wall with no mask, molten lead.

[Laughter]

Q: So then what do you think the relationship is between—there are people who are making art and then there are people who are critics, the gallerists, the dealers, the people who are interpreting and commenting on that work.

Landry: I can agree with certain critics, but I cannot agree with some others. When Bob had a show here in Lafayette at the [Paul and Lulu] Hilliard [University Art] Museum [*Robert Rauschenberg: Scenarios and Short Stories*, 2005], I gave an interview to the local paper. I was asked a couple questions, “What do you think of Jasper Johns?” I said, “I think he quit painting in ’75.” “What about Warhol?” I said, “I was never interested in Warhol, ever.” The article came out and I am thinking, “Oh my god, I am going to get roasted over the coals for saying all of this.”

A week later a very famous critic came to give a talk before the opening. His first words were, “Has anybody ever seen a photograph of Jasper Johns smiling?” On the cover of the local paper there was a picture of Bob with that radiant smile. He said, “Look at this—this is a photograph of joy and happiness.” He then said, “I think Jasper quit painting in ’75 and I never paid attention to Warhol or his work.” I shouted out loud, “Yes!”

[Laughter]

Q: Somebody agreed with you!

Landry: Yes! Anyway, where were we going with that question?

Q: I was just asking about—for me, it’s been interesting interviewing different people, some artists, some critics, some gallerists, because there’s such an inclination now to interpret all of this work that was done and to give it meaning. So it’s interesting to ask the people who were

making it, was that the intention? Were there conversations at the time, “Oh, this is what the meaning of the found image and the found sound is,” and, “This is what we were trying to do,” and, “This is what we want to say.”

Landry: Well, with Richard Serra, it is a precise idea.

Q: Yes?

Landry: If you talk to Richard Serra, it is all about the idea, the total concept of the piece. The lead pieces that we built were a precise language. The same with Gordon Matta-Clark. With Keith it was a little bit of a fluctuation. Whatever it takes to create the piece, I do not question it. If that is what you want to do, let us do it.

Q: Yes.

Landry: No questions asked. I would not ask Nancy, “Why are you building these camels? Why?” Or, “Why are you cutting up the floor?” “Why are you putting my health at risk by building these incredibly dangerous lead pieces, each weighing four hundred pounds, that could crush me in a second?” No questions. Let us get the work done. The four people that were building those lead plate pieces for Richard’s first show at the Castelli uptown warehouse [Castelli Warehouse, New York] were Spalding Gray, Chuck Close, myself, and Philip Glass.

Q: Yes. Okay, you said whatever it takes to get a piece done.

Landry: Yes.

Q: So with Rauschenberg, what did it take for him? What was—?

Landry: I only witnessed Bob working in the studio one time in Captiva; he had five or six paintings on the wall. I was having a cup of coffee and he was having a drink. Bob picks up a paintbrush and makes a stroke, he proclaims, “That painting is finished.” Another stroke. “That one is done.” Da—done. My girlfriend, Babs Case, once asked Bob, “How do you know when a painting is finished?” He said, “When you see the next painting in it.”

Q: Hmm.

Landry: With Richard, I saw the whole process, with Gordon I saw the whole process, with Keith I saw the whole process. I never did question it; the process was not my idea, it was their idea.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I liked the work and liked taking photographs. The money was good and I was helping the artists make their art. [Laughs] Chuck Close wanted to give me a drawing on paper for a 16mm film I did for him. I said, “Chuck, I really need money for the rent.” I took the money. Gordon Matta-Clark wanted to give me one of the cutout pieces. I said I needed the rent. That

piece sold for a couple of million; Chuck Close, seven hundred thousand dollars. Richard Serra also wanted to give me a piece, “Do you want a piece or money?” I said, “I would love to have a piece, but I need the money.” He said, “I will give you both.” So I got a piece from Richard. To this day, when people offer me art—that is if I like it—I will take it.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I do not refuse art anymore.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Unless I really do not like it. [Laughs]

Q: Right, unless, you do not want to look at it.

Landry: Someone gave me a wooden sculpture. When I woke up the next morning and saw it, it scared the hell out of me! I called a friend of mine and I said, “I have a piece for you!”

[Laughter]

Q: Come get it now!

Landry: Come get it now.

Q: Okay, well, what about with yourself? You created this new technique of giving solo concerts on tenor sax?

Landry: Yes.

Q: You pioneered the use of a quadrophonic—

Landry: Delay.

Q: When you were doing that, was that analytical? Was that, “Oh, I want to do something new?”

Landry: No. The way that happened is that Robert Prado, one of the musicians in the Glass Ensemble, his wife went completely nuts, psycho. He went back to Louisiana to take care of her. While in Louisiana he was working in the oil field and had an accident. Because of the accident he died about nine months later. I was devastated. I went back to New York and decided to do a memorial concert at 10 Bleecker Street. This space was where we rehearsed and performed with the Glass Ensemble. I had just finished this film for Lawrence Weiner, *A First Quarter* [1973], where I had used a stereo delay. I asked my engineer, Kurt Munkacsi, “Can I have more than two delays?” He said, “Yes, as long as we have enough tape recorders to make the delays.” I replied, “I want four delays.” He set it up and without much rehearsal, I walked up to the microphone and started playing. When I finished, I said, “I am never having a group again.”

Q: Okay.

Landry: It was not really thought out, I wanted four delays. It is like having a quartet.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Your own quartet. That is how I came up with the quad delay idea.

Q: Right.

Landry: It was pure—

Q: Of the moment.

Landry: Of the moment, yes.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I realized that performing solo was not only easy, but also satisfying to be able to perform with oneself without having to have other musicians. I never wanted to have a group after that.

Q: Because?

Landry: Having a group is like having six wives or five wives or four wives. Someone is always sick, needing money, or whatever. There are always problems.

Q: Oh, yes. Okay, so in 2005 the university here, the Hilliard University Art Museum, Lafayette had a show, *Robert Rauschenberg: Scenarios and Short Stories*.

Landry: Right.

Q: And the university hosted a conversation, which you were a part of.

Landry: Right.

Q: So it was Rauschenberg, Trisha Brown, you, Darryl, and [Christopher] Chris Rauschenberg.

Landry: Right.

Q: Do you remember anything about that show, what you guys talked about?

Landry: Yes, that is when I brought up the problem with *Astral Convertible*.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Have you seen the DVD of the interview?

Q: No.

Landry: I brought up the question about the music. I had to air it out with Trisha Brown.

Q: Okay.

Landry: Bob wanted her to do more work with me, but she just refused, stating that I had not given her the music in time and she did not trust me.

Q: Okay.

Landry: I had to let it all.

Q: Okay. And what did she say?

Landry: I did not care what she had to say!

Q: So what did you say then?

Landry: I said, "I told you some time ago that the music did not work because of the way we handled the towers."

Q: Okay.

Landry: I had all the music, I had sixteen tracks of music, but we only heard maybe three tracks of the whole piece.

Q: Yes.

Landry: You never heard the whole thing. And do not say I was the one who ruined that piece or it did not work because of me. I had had enough.

Q: Okay.

Landry: As I remember, I let it out on her on that interview.

Q: All right.

Landry: After the lecture, Bob patted me on the back and said, "Nice."

Q: Had you met Chris?

Landry: I have known Chris since he was a kid.

Q: Okay. Really nice guy, yes.

Landry: Yes.

Q: So what about trips to Captiva?

Landry: The trips to Captiva.

Q: Did you go down to Captiva to visit?

Landry: Yes. I went there before he died. I had a number of posters from the ROCI tour that were never signed, so I brought them for Bob to sign. We always had great conversations and that night was no different. After he died I was invited to perform for the memorial services in Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Museum of Art [New York], and in Fort Myers. I spent a couple of weeks in Captiva. No one had been in his house since his death. They asked if I would mind staying there. I said, “Not at all, I would be happy to.” I later went to the big studio; I had never been in that space. Everybody was working on projects, including his nephew Rick. I took out my saxophone and started walking around in a circle playing. When I finished, I looked around and everyone’s head was down, they were all crying! They said, “How did you know that is where he died.”

Q: Hmm.

Landry: One night, Darryl said, “Let’s go do the art game downstairs.” I said, “What do you mean?” “Let’s go make art.” He showed me how to do the photo transfer, which was one of Bob’s signature techniques.

Q: Yes?

Landry: I did some transfers using my photographs, but the finished piece looks just like a Rauschenberg. The next day I went downstairs and I noticed that there were twenty small square paintings on a table. I said, “Wow, what are those?” He said, “I took some of Bob’s ashes and I painted them in the paintings.”

Q: Oh, okay.

Landry: I said, “What do I have to do to get one of those?” He said, “Pick one out.” I picked that one in the middle that is hanging on the wall.

Q: On the side?

Landry: No, the one in the middle has the ashes. The other two were added on later.

Q: Huh. Why do you think you guys hit it off the way you did?

Landry: I never did think about that one! He was just fun to be with!

Q: Yes?

Landry: And I am fun. I respected him so much that I often wondered why he invited me into his world. I never did try to figure it out. We just liked each other.

Q: Yes.

Landry: He also gave the biggest, juiciest kisses you ever had!

[Laughter]

Landry: Everybody will attest to that, I was not the only one!

Q: Yes.

Landry: In January 1978, I had a fire in my loft building on Thames Street and had to move out. Bob invited me to stay at 381. I was there for three or four months.

Q: Was that before or after he started Change? [Note: Change, Inc. was established in 1970.]

Landry: After.

Q: Was that because of the fire?

Landry: Yes. Change was established to help artists in need.

Landry: He once said, “Money has destroyed the art world.” Which, in hindsight, it has.

Q: And he meant the money was corrupting people?

Landry: Yes.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Artists, dealers, collectors.

Q: And he felt he had witnessed that over the course of his own work.

Landry: Yes, he witnessed it personally. He sold a painting to Robert Scull, the owner of the New York City Yellow Cab Company, for \$1,500. Several years later Scull sold it for \$1.5 million. Bob confronts him, demanding, “I want part of the action.” That never happened. Many times over the years, Bob and his lawyer went to Congress to change the copyright laws relating to paintings, but unfortunately they were never successful.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Unlike my photographs I took in the seventies, they are all copyrighted for over a hundred years. Once a painting is done and bought by someone the artist has no protection rights.

Q: Yes.

Landry: You understand that whole situation?

Q: Yes. When you think of him now, was there a particular memory or a particular image of him that you most often—

Landry: The smile, the laugh, his hands, and of course those huge feet.

Q: Yes.

Landry: I remember that at openings he would be so drunk that when he would start to fall we would prop him up again. He was a great drinker; I never could keep up with him!

Q: Yes.

Landry: Two years ago I played a concert at the [Solomon R.] Guggenheim [Museum, New York] for John Chamberlain's retrospective. I found out two weeks before I was going to do the

concert that John had started learning how to play the saxophone, which I did not know. I wish I had known.

Q: Why do you wish you had known?

Landry: I would have offered my advice, give him a lesson, or just hear him play!

Q: Did you ever play music with Bob?

Landry: No. Bob had a group of workers in Captiva including [Lawrence] Larry Voytek. He would jam with this group of assistants. There was also Kat Epple, a multi-wind-instrument player, who he had perform at many of his openings.



Kat Epple and Rauschenberg with
Laury Getford in the background,
Captiva, Florida, ca. 1999

Q: All right. Well, maybe this is a good place to pause for today.

Landry: Okay.

Q: Then, hopefully we will meet again in New York.

Landry: I will be in New York from February 21 until mid-March, or maybe longer.

Q: February 21.

Landry: My show is the 26th of February.

Q: Okay.

Landry: At Salomon Contemporary in Chelsea.

Q: Okay.

Landry: The images of the exhibit are in the catalogue I gave you.

Q: Yes.

Landry: There are stories that go along with the images.

Q: Yes.

Landry: That will be interesting—

Q: Thank you so much!

Landry: —to read.

Q: Thank you.

Landry: You are welcome! I have left out a lot of stories, but I think you got the gist of the conversation.

Q: Yes.

[END OF SESSION]

Transcription: Audio Transcription Center

Session #2

Interviewee: Richard Landry

Location: New York, New York

Interviewer: Sara Sinclair

Date: March 6, 2015

Q: It is March 6, 2015. This is Sara Sinclair with Richard Landry, this time at 381 Lafayette, in New York City.

Landry: Down memory lane.

[Laughter]

Q: Yeah, different place, huh?

Landry: When you said, "Come up to Columbia or 381," that was an easy one.

Q: Easy choice?

Landry: I did not even have to think about it. [Laughs]

Q: So how did it feel arriving here today?

Landry: Like I was coming to a party. [Laughs]

Q: Yes? And who were you—

Landry: Bob would be the first one I would see in the kitchen.



Rauschenberg in the kitchen of his Lafayette Street home and studio, New York, 1968.
Photo: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust

Q: Right.

Landry: Of course, Hisachika. And one never knew who else would happen to be there. It always felt good.

Q: Well, before we jump in, let us just talk more about this place, now you are back here.

Landry: 381 Lafayette. First of all, it is ironic that his family lives in Lafayette, Louisiana and he ends up living on Lafayette Street in New York City. Every time I came to visit there would be

his new works on the wall. I remember the *Erased de Kooning* [*Drawing*, 1953] being on the wall in the kitchen; to me that was one of the most iconic American art historical pieces I had ever seen.



Robert Rauschenberg,
Erased de Kooning Drawing, 1953
Traces of ink and crayon on paper, with mat and hand-
lettered label in ink, in gold-leafed frame
25 1/4 x 21 3/4 x 1/2 inches (64.1 x 55.2 x 1.3 cm)
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Purchase through a gift of Phyllis Wattis

The steady stream of people in and out, Hisachika cooking, fussing, Bob constantly watching TV. I remember the kitchen very well as it was the center of activity. I always pictured the kitchen table being very big.

[Laughter]

Landry: One has to understand that the giants of the art and music world at one time or another sat at this little table. My perception of it has completely changed.

Q: Yes. Back in that time, what was on the first floor?

Landry: Paintings and the half church.

Q: When one would arrive, you would go straight to the kitchen?

Landry: Straight to the kitchen, every time.

Q: Would you be anywhere else or was the kitchen the—

Landry: The kitchen was the main place. Like in most homes, no matter how small the kitchen is, it is where everyone gathers. While I was staying there I remember going into his closet and looking at his fabulous wardrobe. Bob was always dressed with the cutting edge styles of his own making for his openings.

[Laughter]

Landry: And those huge shoes, I remember trying them on and, of course, I could not fill them.

Q: Right. Could you borrow anything?

Landry: I assume I could have, but I only borrowed a belt. I still have it.

Q: A hat, maybe?

Landry: No, no hats. I was not into hats.

Q: Was anyone else staying here at the time?

Landry: Hisachika was living on the fourth floor? Sixth floor? I would visit him every once in awhile. I would also visit David White in the archive room. I was amazed at the rows and rows and rows of filing cabinets in that room. It was amazing knowing that was all of Bob's work neatly filed.

Q: He made a lot of it.

Landry: My little archive of a few paintings and a few drawings could fit in one of the cabinets at [laughs] 381 Lafayette. I would arrive sober and would leave drunk. Parties after parties after parties, hundreds of people in all various states of mind, some very aggressive, some very passive, most of the time it was laughter and fun. Sometimes it got serious!

Q: Do you remember the first time you came here?

Landry: Yes, it is the story of coming to see if I could borrow his 16mm film camera that I recounted to you earlier. I kept the camera for about a month and brought it back, then the invitations to the parties began to follow.

Q: And when we were walking up here, you were about to tell me about the last time you were here.

Landry: It was a year after his death. I came to visit Darryl, his assistant. We had lunch in the boardroom that was once Bob's bedroom and then I went to the kitchen. That is when I realized that the table was that small.

Q: Okay. So you are in New York for your own show.

Landry: Right.

Q: So congratulations.

Landry: Thank you.

Q: Can you tell me about the opening of the show at the Salomon Contemporary?

Landry: The opening of the show was like being in a geriatric ward.

[Laughter]

Landry: Many of my seventies friends were there. Some of them I have not seen since then. Some had changed drastically. Others, not so much. We are all pretty when we are young and as we age, some age more gracefully than others. We had a dinner at Ned Smyth's girlfriend's loft. It was like a high school reunion [laughs]. It was weird, but it was fun. All the people I thought would be there were there—that is, all the living—Lawrence Weiner, Richard Nonas, Carlotta Schoolman, George Trakas and his daughter Maggie, Alice Weiner, Keith Sonnier, his brother Barry, David White, James Salomon, and countless others. Yes, it was good.

Q: Was there reminiscing?

Landry: Of course, but I was like the bee or the butterfly, going from person to person.

Q: Busy, busy.

Landry: In hindsight, I did not pay attention to everybody.

Q: Sure.

Landry: During the opening I would see people studying the photographs. I would walk over and say, "Do you want to hear the story?" I love to tell stories. The images are up 'til the 28th of March. Do you know how I started taking photographs?

In '69 I arrived in New York and I was working with Philip Glass as a plumber and Richard Serra as his helper. Through them I met a young performance artist, Joan Jonas. She invited me to her first performance. I borrowed a friend's camera and he put the film in, set the speed and ASA, and off I went on my first shoot. Joan called me the next morning and said, "I saw you there with a camera last night. Do you want to sell some of the photographs?" I am thinking, plumbing, photography, that was an easy choice. So that is how I became a photographer. At the age of thirteen I became the projectionist at the movie theater in Cecilia. That experience was another reason I quickly adjusted to 35mm film years later.

Q: So, last time we spoke, we spoke about some of the ROCI trips that you took and you specifically told me about how meaningful your trips to Cuba and Moscow were. I'm wondering if this time we can talk a little bit more about Mexico City and the show at the National Gallery here?

Q: Okay. And then so how much time passed between that conversation of you and Tina having a solo performance and her exhibit in Mexico did you guys return, approximately?

Landry: For Bob's show?

Q: Yes.

Landry: That is a hard one to—

Q: But you did come back and you played the opening?

Landry: Yes.

Q: Okay. Do you remember the show at the National Gallery?

Landry: Yes. Monstrous space. I remember going up to the top floor to perform and I could hear my sound resonate throughout the space. A critic was giving a lecture on *Barge* [1962–63]. Bob and I were standing there listening to the lecture.

[Laughter]



Robert Rauschenberg

Barge, 1962–63

Oil and silkscreen ink on canvas

79 7/8 x 386 inches (202.9 x 980.4 cm)

Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and with additional funds contributed by Thomas H. Lee and Ann Tenenbaum; the International Director's Council and Executive Committee Members: Eli Broad, Elaine Teer Cooper, Ronnie Heyman, J. Tomlinson Hill, Dakis Joannou, Barbara Lane, Robert Mnuchin, Peter Norton, Thomas Walther, and Ginny Williams; and funds from additional donors: Ulla Dreyfus-Best, Norma and Joseph Saul Philanthropic Fund; Elizabeth Rea; Eli Broad; Dakis Joannou; Peter Norton; Peter Lawson-Johnston; Michael Wettach; Peter Littmann; Tiqui Atencio; Bruce and Janet Karatz; and Giulia Ghirardi Pagliai

Landry: There were probably about thirty people in attendance. The talk ends and the lecturer turned to Bob and asked, “Bob, are all the stories that I spoke about, were they correct?” Bob said, “Not one of them.” You know you are a part of history, but you are not thinking about it.

Q: What was it like to play in those spaces?

Landry: I love to play in big space; because of the acoustics the music does not need any amplification.



Dickie Landry performing at an opening event for *Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1991. Work in background: *The Suicide of Two Foreign Clerks or The Moving Fever (Kabal American Zephyr)* (1981). Photo: courtesy Dickie Landry

Q: One of the people that I met when I went to Florida—I met Kat Epple.

Landry: Oh yes.

Q: Did you two ever—

Landry: Yes, we have played together a few times. We just performed at the [Bob] Rauschenberg Gallery on the campus of the university [Edison Community College] in Fort Myers, Florida. The party was for a celebration of Bob’s eighty-ninth birthday. Kat and I were invited to come and perform for this cocktail party. I am not good at performing in that situation. I will never ever, ever do one again, no matter whom it is for. At any cocktail party, the louder one plays, the louder they talk. Kat had the same response as I did about playing for cocktail parties: “Only for Bob.”



Dickie Landry, Lawrence Voytek, Kat Epple, and Laury Getford performing at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, Edison Community College, Fort Myers, Florida, ca. 2014. Photo: courtesy Dickie Landry

[Laughter]

Landry: Ten minutes into my performance I could not hear what I was doing. I walked off the stage and went outside. The director walked up to me and said, “What are you doing?” I said, “If they want to listen to me they can come outside.” Kat and Lawrence were all set up outside with all these incredible instruments. I went and met them and I said, “Let’s crank this stuff up and get

the people out here to listen to our music.” Donald Saff was giving a lecture in the auditorium. I waited outside the auditorium with my saxophone. When the lecture was over I led the audience, like a Pied Piper, back to the museum, walked them into the museum, and then walked out again to join Kat and Lawrence.

Q: Had you and Kat played together?

Landry: Yes, several times.

Q: When Bob was still alive?

Landry: Yes.

Q: So what were those occasions?

Landry: Parties at Bob’s house, museum shows. Bob would play with them sometimes, but we never did play music together.

Q: But you two were on some of the same trips together earlier?

Landry: Yes.

Q: I saw her studio. It was really cool to see where she works.

Landry: I am comfortable performing with her. At the concert in Fort Myers, Kat and Lawrence both asked, “What are you going to do?” I said, “I am going to follow you.” But after about five minutes, I realized they were really doing their thing, but they were holding back, so I just opened up with my playing and they started to follow me.

[Laughter]

Landry: People came out of the cocktail party and sat and were listening to us for about an hour. It was fun to try to play all those weird instruments. Have you seen them?

Q: No, I haven't.

Landry: Oh my god, all those instruments that one would either struck or bowed, there was even a theremin and electronic keyboards that made all these weird sounds. It was fantastic.

Q: And that was in Fort Myers?

Landry: Yes, at the Rauschenberg Gallery on the campus.

Q: Okay. So who was familiar there?

Landry: All of Bob's workers. I cannot remember all of their names. Bradley Jeffries, who I really adore, was not there. She had an eye infection so she could not come. Donald Saff and his wife were there. Don and I never really hung out during those years with Bob. We would see each other and say hi, but no real conversations. We had three days together and we really got to know each other. We are in constant contact now.

Q: That's nice.

Landry: Margaret Miller, who runs the print shop Graphicstudio in Tampa, was there. I had never met her. Don, Emily and Jade Dellinger were on her immediately. "You got to get Dickie's work to Tampa."

Q: Great. So interesting that Bob continues to be this connecting presence and force for people.

Landry: It is not going to end until we are all gone. With so many artists going to the [Rauschenberg] Residency [Captiva], I am sure that it is going to be a huge impact on their lives. Laurie went there and said, "Dickie, it was like being in paradise."

Q: We didn't really talk about the time that you spent at Captiva. You told me you'd been there before he passed away and then you did tell me about when you returned after he passed away. But I'm wondering what you remember about your visit to Captiva while he was still alive?

Landry: Darryl was there. I think I spent four days or maybe longer. I had all these posters from the ROCI tour that I never asked Bob to sign. He signed the prints with a thumbprint of his right hand and signed his name with his left hand. At dinner we would tell stories and reminisce about the good old days, it went on for several hours. He was not supposed to be drinking, but we killed a couple bottles of wine. [Laughs]

Q: Okay. And was Rick there? You said you—

Landry: No, no, Rick was not there. He was there for the memorial and also when I made art with Darryl.

Q: Okay. You recorded with Talking Heads. Did that overlap with Bob's involvement with them at all?

Landry: Remember the little kitchen table, the big kitchen table upstairs? I am sitting with David Byrne, who is to my right, Bob's to my left. We are about to eat dinner when David leans over to me and asked, "Do you think Bob would want to do a cover for the Talking Heads?" I turned to Bob and said, "Do you ever think of making a cover for the Talking Heads?" He said, "Well, why don't they ask me?" So I just backed up my chair and said, "You guys need to talk." That is how that happened. David was pissed that Bob got a Grammy Award for the cover [Talking Heads, *Speaking in Tongues*, 1983], as they never won any Grammys.

[Laughter]

Landry: I recently read an article by David that totally dismissed my story of how that cover happened. “Oh yes, I met Bob and talked him into it.” But I was the connecting rod.



Rauschenberg's album art design, deluxe edition, for Talking Heads, *Speaking in Tongues*, 1983

Q: Okay and you had already worked together?

Landry: I was working with Richard Serra. After a heavy day of slinging molten lead on walls, he said, “That’s a new group in town, that everybody is talking about, let’s go hear them.” So we went to the Village Gate on Bleecker. I think we lasted maybe a song and a half, Richard said, “Ah, they’re young, rough.” So I said, “Okay.” We went and drank some more. About a month later I was in Los Angeles, doing a tour with Philip Glass. The Talking Heads were at the Whisky a Go Go there the night before we were to perform. I decided to go with some friends to listen and give them a second chance. I was blown away, so when they finished, I walked into

the dressing room. As I walked in, they all go, “Dickie Landry, what are you doing here?” And I said, “Well, how do you know my name?” And they say, “Well, we have been going to your concerts since we were in high school.” So I exchanged numbers with David. Upon return to New York City, he would come to my apartment, days on end.

One interesting thing about David is that unless you instigate a conversation with him, he has nothing to say, so you always had to pump him. I would always say to him, “When will you put a saxophone into your music?” Finally he said, “Okay, come into the studio.” So I go to the studio and he says, “What do you want to do? Do you want to delay things? Do you want to do echoes?” I said, “I want you to completely change the sound of the saxophone. I do not want it to sound like a saxophone.” He said, “What?” I said, “You asked me what I wanted.”

So I did only one song, called “Slippery People” [1983]. If you go three-quarters way towards the end there is something that sounds like a theremin. That is what the saxophone sounds like in my solo I recorded for that song. All my friends know I played on that track, but do not realize that I am playing that solo. David and I have not remained friends, but Chris [Frantz] and Tina [Weymouth] and I have stayed in touch. They came to my Guggenheim solo concert two years ago. On their drive back to Connecticut, Tina told Chris, “We have got to get Dickie up here.” So I did two recordings for their EP, *Downtown Rockers* [Tom Tom Club, 2012].

Q: Okay.

Landry: Chris and Tina were just in Lafayette for Festival International de Louisiane. They are such nice people. They are just open and it is not like the star thing. All the musicians knew who they were and Chris and Tina accepted everybody's hospitality.

Q: Last time we spoke a little bit about your work with Laurie Anderson. So tell me about what happened when you got to BAM.

Landry: I went into the pit and when rehearsal started, she just looked at me and said, "Play something, but follow my music."

Q: And it was a one-night kind of deal or were you recording something or was it for something live?

Landry: It was live. *Set and Reset* was live along with pre-recorded sounds. Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. That's the bell that starts it. Yes.

Q: Okay. You had started to tell me about the conversation that you, Bob, and Trisha had at Lulu Hilliard in 2005. I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about that.

Landry: It was all about the working of the towers [in *Astral Convertible*]. There were eight towers. Each one had a cassette player, lights, movement sensors, and car batteries to make them run. Trisha wanted a piece that could be performed anywhere without using electricity. I had sixteen recorded tracks of sounds in the eight cassette players. The way it was supposed to work

was that when a dancer moved in front of the sensors, lights were supposed to go on or off and the cassette players were supposed to go on or off. At the opening night at Town Hall [note: premiered at New York City Center], even in rehearsal one tape recorder would come on and just stay on. A light would come on and stay on or off. This happened with all the towers at the premiere, I was just totally embarrassed. I remember walking out the back door trying to hide from the public. Laurie came up and was saying, “It’s great!” And I am, “Oh god.”

At the Atlantic Center for the Arts in New Smyrna Beach, Florida we did a workshop there as artists-in-residence. The person who designed the modules was there. We asked, “Why isn’t this working?” He says, “Were you touching the modules before the performance?” The answer was “Yes!” As the dancers moved around the stage they would move a module with them. He said, “Oh my god, no. You set them up, a technician turns everything on, and then you just leave them alone.”

This confirmed what I have been saying to Trisha and Bob—the piece never did work, so you cannot say that you did not like the music. You never heard all of the music. Trisha’s company performed the piece many times over the years. At some point she decided that she was going to ask John Cage to replace the music. He heard about it and he said, “No music at all.”

[Laughter]

Landry: Silence. All right, cool. I was vindicated—no music at all. Fantastic.

[Laughter]

Q: You said that when you were all talking together in 2005 on that panel—

Landry: Well, I kind of got on them—they mentioned it and I had been holding it in all these years. That is when I let it all out.

Q: And did she respond?

Landry: I do not remember. You will have to look at the tape.

Q: I have tried to find it. I cannot find the tape.

Landry: If you want I can get it for you. It is in the archives at the university art department.

Q: Right.

Landry: Trisha and I were really never friends. Bob loved her and at some point suggested to her to commission me to do a new piece for the company. Trisha: “Dickie waited too long to give me the music last time.” Bob: “Well, what does that have to do with the music this time?”
Anyway, it’s okay. Water under the bridge.

Q: Okay. Do you remember anything else you discussed that day on that panel?

Landry: No.

[INTERRUPTION]

Landry: *Set and Reset* is the performance with Laurie at BAM in the pit.

Q: Do you remember the costumes?

Landry: Of course. The costumes were extraordinarily beautiful.

Q: So you got in the pit and this show starts and you're just improvising?

Landry: Laurie would look at me and say, "Play something now." I do not remember anything of what I did. There must be a recording of it somewhere.

Q: You said you loved the costumes. Do you think you—

Landry: The costumes were printed images on sheer gauze or silk. I was in such awe that I was in the pit performing for Rauschenberg and Laurie Anderson at the same time.

Q: He was in the pit with you?

Landry: No, Bob was never in the pit.

Q: Yes, good.

Landry: So we got that straight.

Q: Yes.

Landry: Wonderful.

Q: Good. So at the end of the last conversation we had, you said that you had left a lot out and I was wondering if there was anything in particular—

Landry: Ah-ha.

Q: [Laughs]—that you were thinking of when you said that.

Landry: One of the real boisterous drunken parties—we are all drunker than drunk. There was one girl; I will not mention her name. She and John Chamberlain got into an argument. I was escorting Chamberlain down the stairs when I noticed she was behind him about to hit him on the head with an iron skillet. I remember grabbing her arm and wrestled her to the floor. They eventually kicked her out of the party.

The snake in the bottle. Did I tell you that story? Hisachika had this bottle of Japanese hard alcohol and it had a snake in it. The theory is that the snake was a poisonous snake. Hisachika had the bottle all taped up so you could not see the snake, but I knew there was a snake in the bottle. So one night, he said, “Let’s drink some.” I said, “I hear—” And he said, “No, we can handle it.” When that alcohol hit after several small swigs, it was pretty rough. It was almost hallucination kind of stuff!

Q: You told me that.

Landry: I remember shopping early in the mornings with Hisachika at the Fulton Fish Market, picking up flowers at the flower shops. Those trips were always a treat.

Q: All right, well I think I have covered all the little tidbits that I wanted to return to.

Landry: And I will try to find this tape.

Q: Yes, that would be great.

Landry: I know it is in the archives of the art department.

Q: Okay.

Landry: The head of the art department is a good friend of mine, I am sure he knows where it is.

Q: Okay, that would be great. Okay. Is there anything else you think we should talk about?

Landry: In all my traveling from '69 to his death and the thousands of black-and-white negatives, I have only one roll of film on him and the image in the exhibit is the one I have of him alone.

[Laughter]

Q: I heard that the turtle had a favorite place to sit as well; by a chair that Ileana Sonnabend had given Rauschenberg.

Landry: Right, I want to hear that story.

Q: Yes, that was a Rocky spot.

Landry: The Rocky story is that Bob started feeling guilty that he was stuck in a loft in New York City. Bob decided that he should be in Florida with the sand and the sun, so he is shipped to Captiva. They even made a little fenced in part of the yard in the shade and on the beach for him. Rocky arrives and is placed in his yard. He went to the corner of the fenced in yard and stayed there for two weeks and did not move, depressed. So they moved him back to 381. Bob also loved his dogs so when they died he had them cremated and he placed the ashes in these small urns. He had all the urns near his studio. So you got all those stories?

Q: No, I haven't heard about the dogs' ashes.

Landry: Oh yes, little urns, very touching.

Q: Okay. I wonder if they're still there.

Landry: I once asked him, I said, "Bob, why an island with no bridge to it?" He said, "I just wanted to get as far away as I could from my mother." I looked at him and I said, "You're going to regret saying that one day." Eventually he admitted he did. I use to visit his mother in Lafayette.

Q: Oh yes? You knew her? So you visited her after Bob passed or—?

Landry: No, before.

Q: How would you spend your time with her?

Landry: She had somebody taking care of her. I knew the woman, so we made coffee, but I was more interested in talking to Dora [C. Rauschenberg]. Bob would always say, growling, "Dora!" I was interested in getting to know her. She was nice, a sweetheart. She had all these paintings and drawings signed, "To Mother, Love Bob." It was a history lesson.

Q: Did your path cross with Rick's much?

Landry: Yes, in fact, I'm storing a painting of his in my house. He just had a big show in Lafayette. We see each other as much as we can. The only time I see Janet is usually at the grocery store. They are very private and I respect that. Janet and I always have great conversations. When she walks away—you know she is a Rauschenberg—and when she turns around, it is Bob. She also has Bob's dry wit.

Q: I'm interviewing Rick next week.

Landry: Here in New York?

Q: No, I'm going to San Francisco.

Landry: Oh great.

Q: To Sausalito.

Landry: Rick has a great studio.

Q: Yes. Any suggestions, what I should talk to him about?

Landry: He has more stories than I and he is a good talker.

Q: Yes, I got that impression.

Landry: Trust me, he is good.

Q: I don't doubt it.

Landry: He remembers Bob when he was a young kid. That will be an interesting story in itself.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Narrator's postscript: At a dinner after the opening of his cardboard pieces at the Menil Collection in Houston [*Robert Rauschenberg: Cardboards and Related Pieces*, 2007], he called me over and whispered in my ear, "Dickie, people do not like whiners, I tried it for a long time but it did not work." He then pulled me towards him and with his crippled hand starting punching me saying, "So I am cripple. So what?"