Carolee Schneemann Oral History Interview: George and Susan Quasha

George Quasha is an artist, musician, poet, and publisher from White Plains, New York. He has been awarded the 2006 Guggenheim Fellowship in video art as well as the National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in poetry for works that often subvert common principles within language, sculpture, sound, installation, and performance. Susan Quasha is a poet, photographer, and designer who has exhibited works at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, the Center for Curatorial Studies, and the Kleinert/James Art Center, among other venues. The recently published *Gnostalgia for the Present* (2023) is the seventeenth installment of their collaborative series of poems and photographs.

George and Susan Quasha founded Station Hill Press, an independent press dedicated to publishing experimental literature, in 1977 in Barrytown, New York. Initially connecting with Schneemann in 1978 through their mutual involvement in the avant-garde poetry scene, the Quashas remained close friends and correspondents of Schneemann, hosting her at their annual holiday parties and exchanging research on alternative medicine, dreamspace, and art theory.

Interview conducted by Erin Zona
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Erin Zona: I think we should first start with context for who the two of you are. And so if you can tell me about who you are. A short biography, a little bit to contextualize the interview. … When did you first meet Carolee or hear about her?
George Quasha: Right. So should I go?

Susan Quasha: You go first.

GQ: I'm George Quasha and I'm primarily a poet. I make visual art as well and music. My connection, our connection, with Carolee has been on pretty much all of those fronts. And also we publish Station Hill Press, both of us, which began in 1977. And so our connection with Carolee is very tied up with that fact. I don't know when I met her. The consequential meeting was probably in '77, '78, when we were building an arts center in Rhinebeck called the Arnolfini Arts Center. I had taught at Bard for a semester, and we stayed up here for a year on a grant. During that year, we hatched a plan with other people to start an art center in Rhinebeck, the building that we renovated was an old Baptist church and became a center of a lot of activity. Meredith Monk performed there … and many people. Carolee came often. I just ran across a letter of hers, and she's talking to Brakhage, Stan Brakhage. And he says, "Well, I'm off to Quasha land." And that was 19–

SQ: She said every week.

GQ: Weekly visits to Quasha land. I think that was 1980. [At that time] it had been well established. She came to those events, and we bonded in a very wonderful way. She wrote to Anthony McCall one of the times she came. That's when I first met Anthony. But she reminded me that it was great to see me again, that we had met—and I knew we'd met, but we never talked really. I think it had to have been in the '60s. I was an undergraduate at NYU and I was going frequently to the poetry readings at the Le Metro Café on the Lower East Side, which was [part of] the avant-garde poetry scene, the coffeehouse scene, and Paul Blackburn [Poet] started that series and ran it. They were friends, Carolee and Paul, very close friends. I think Paul introduced me to her at some point, but I didn't know anything about her. And we probably said hello or something, but not anything more than that. But I would have seen her around. She would have seen me around. We were familiar in that we knew each other but not really. Once we met she started coming to the arts center and we became very close. Since about '78, we were close friends.

EZ: I want you to describe the Arnolfini Art Center and also why it's named that.

GQ: Sure. We had a person who bought the property—

SQ: We found the property. He wanted to sponsor it and have a restaurant at the same time.

GQ: The concept was to make an art center supported by a restaurant, plus its own activities and grants or whatever. We had a nonprofit organization that was called Open Studio at that time, and later became what is now the Institute for Publishing Arts. But the art center itself was a profitable restaurant. We worked on renovating the church and turning it into an arts center with the architect. There were months and months and months of renovation and all of that. We finally got it going and I ran the art center program and then eventually the restaurant too, for a while. But we got grants from the CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act] program, which probably precedes your awareness …

EZ: I do know about it just because it's part of the history of our organization [Women's Studio Workshop (WSW), Rosendale, NY] and early staff members …

GQ: Absolutely. Simultaneous with what they were doing [at WSW], we were doing it in Rhinebeck because that was the only period of a few years when the CETA things was actually going. It was a democratic program.

EZ: A very significant program.

GQ: We hired, in the long run, over 47 artists, poets, music people, theater people …

SQ: Incredible.

GQ: We ran a whole theater program for a year and a half and [funded] translations of major writers.

SQ: We were the only two not on CETA. All the rest of them were.

GQ: We were struggling to get by. We weren't funded from any direction, so we were just trying to make it work. We couldn't be funded because we were the administrators. Legally, we couldn't be funded, so we didn't do it. But we were also getting grants from the State Council [NYSCA], from the NEA. It was my job to get all that money. It was a big struggle for us. But we had a property that we bought very cheaply—this property—and we had buildings that we rented to other people, so we had a small income coming in from that.

EZ: Personal income that was tied to you having a sustainable life while pursuing …

SQ: We were able to eat.

GQ: During that process we formed a print shop that was in Rhinebeck and another location. It was a very high-quality print shop.

SQ: The art center had also … Oh well, okay, you can finish. It was in another big building. Okay, you can finish, sorry.

GQ: The arts center was in Rhinebeck in what is now Terrapin Restaurant. That building was our building. There was another building …

EZ: That was the Arnolfini Arts Center?

SQ: Yes. And what I was going to say is there was another two-story house on the same property, which has since burned down.

GQ; Not during our tenure.

SQ: No.

GQ: After we left the subsequent people, we think they burned it down for insurance.

SQ: And a parking lot.

GQ: It was a beautiful house, and we were ashamed. The Station Hill Press, our publishing company, began in that site, that later was the one that burned down.

EZ: Was Station Hill Press associated with the print shop?

GQ: Yeah. That was all part of the Open Studio organization.

EZ: And was the print shop a community model, or was it commercial?

GQ: No, it was for artists and poets and art organizations. Our goal was to create a book making facility and book in all senses of the book, even small examples of it.

SQ: Chapbooks, everything.

GQ: But also big books for that artist that would be high quality at low cost, because in those days printing was usually too expensive.

EZ: So what kind of presses did you have, for printing?

GQ: We had a very high-quality German Heidelberg press.

EZ: Wow.

GQ: And we had top people doing this …

EZ: Did you run the press?

SQ: No.

EZ: Those are pretty complex machines. There's a lot going on in a Heidelberg.

GQ: I never …

SQ: It was a two color.

EZ: Oh, wow.

GQ: No, it was a one color, but we would run multiple ones through it.

SQ: I thought that one was a two color.

GQ: No, absolutely not. We did color work. It was called a KORD, which is a single color, but it's on European size. So we'd have to adapt our bookmaking.

SQ: We did posters too, for some galleries in New York.

GQ: Many, many artists.

SQ: I still have samples of some of them. They're amazing.

GQ: Artists and poets and all kinds of people. Art organizations depended on us for years.

SQ: We had actually two people running the press. One was from Rochester.

GQ: Well, Phil Zimmermann, he was involved in Rochester for a while. Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, which was the other organization that used the KORD press like ours. And the third one was in Toronto, Coach House Press. We developed [and we had] a second house up the road where Station Hill Press is now, but it was also the Open Studio typography and design project. That didn't work out. There wasn't space for that in Rhinebeck. We did it in Barrytown in this house that we had bought for $22,000. We were just stringing everything together and trying to make it happen. Seat of the pants, totally. Very little planning except when you needed to plan. And then, there we had very high-quality typesetting, which nobody could get for small presses. In those days, everybody was using crap typesetting. We wanted to change that. So we got the first really significant photo typesetting thing going. First with what was called an alpha comp, which looked like a small computer and it used these twirling font films that you would place down. And we turned it into an experimental design machine as well. We would turn the fonts over and make weird designs.

SQ: One of the early Robert Kelly [Poet] books, we did.

GQ and SQ: We had a cover based on that.

EZ: And so these machines … I'm sorry, I'm very interested in this particular history of print, being a book person and working for an organization that also started in the '70s. That machine was kind of a big machine that you described.

SQ: Yes. The one in the …

GQ: I'm not there yet. Don't tell the punch line first. We got the alpha comp and that was phototypesetting of a very high quality, but it was very limited in the number of fonts. It could do all the sizes pretty much, but not the giant sizes—that could be done desktop. We trained people to work with that. Eventually, I learned that Coach House Press had developed a renegade typesetting system, so that they could use what were called Mergenthaler VIPs. Now, Mergenthaler VIP was for many, many years what raised phototypesetting to a very high level of quality. But it was now being outdated by digital type, which was starting to come in. So that was the turning point. And we were right at that turning point after a few years of doing typesetting with a smaller machine. So I went up to Toronto and found out about it. Because they had the KORD, we had so many things in common. We were publishing the same kinds of books. They were doing the Canadian version. There were not that many small presses in those days. Now there are thousands because of digital type, and everybody has it. But in those days because you could publish …

SQ: And printing was cheaper.

GQ: Printing is a lot cheaper now that you can print on demand. That was short term and there was full printing. Short term for usually smaller printers, but it was very expensive with high quality. So we tried to keep that …

SQ: Short run.

GQ: Short run, yeah. We tried to keep the price of that down. We had grants from NEA and the State Council to make that happen. So I went to the Visual Studies …

SQ: No, to Coach House.

GQ: To Coach House. Visual Studies was the other one that we worked a little sympathetically with to find out the technical information. But I went there and I studied their typesetting system. The way it was done, they had a genius computer guy, I just forgot his name, who was an anarchist as well as doing a Ph.D. in computer science. An older, older student. And as an anarchist, he believed in subverting the big systems by claiming them for yourself. So he invented and wrote a high quality typesetting program that they could use on Datapoint computers that would also be upgraded. Therefore, they could …

SQ: You could get them cheaply.

GQ: Ones that can cost $10-15K, you could now get for $3500.

EZ: Oh wow.

GQ: And so I bought a couple of those. I found out where to get those and got the council of whoever to help me finance it. Then they gave me their program, and they tutored me in how to get it going. Then we bought one of these VIPs, which also was like an $80,000 machine. Now you could get them for a few thousand dollars because nobody wanted them.

SQ: And that's what was big. It was the size of this dining room table.

GQ: Yeah, it was big. We had to build an enclosed room with an air conditioner because the temperature had to be kept even.

SQ: And it had to be dark.

GQ: It had to be dark all the time in there. So we run the cord from there to two data-point computers and try to get it to work. I spent weeks testing their program, learning their program, doing it day and night, staying up 18 hours a day, trying to get this thing to work. I finally got it to work. I'm not a techno person, and I just reinvented myself for this period of time.

SQ: And I became the technician who would fix things. I'd be on the phone with Coach House and they'd be having me take the motherboards out and different things, and I would clean them.

GQ: At a time when long distance phone calls to Canada were very expensive, I spent hours on the phone with them as they were troubleshooting with me on the phone, making this thing happen. We got it to work, and we became, for many years, the primo of nonprofit typesetting service, as a service organization. There was one print shop in Brooklyn, but they had really minimal kind of crappy typesetting and crappy printing. It was just so-so. We were the better option in the field. So artists would come from New York and writers would come from New

York and presses from different places to work with us. For a number of years, that's what we did. And Station Hill Press …

EZ: And what were the years for this?

GQ: The print shop started in … we started working on it in Barrytown, a very small little operation up the road which actually burned down.

SQ: That was the letterpress.

GQ: That was letterpress. So we started with a little letterpress and just messing with it to make small things. But then we got into it. We thought [it was a] good thing [for] Station Hill Press, our idea for Station Hill Press was emerging in our mind, and that with the fire burning down it was very discouraging and so I said, "Look, we have an option." We can take this, meaning that we were way over our heads, let's quit while we're ahead and stop, or this is the challenge to go fully into it to make it really happen. So we chose the latter, obviously. And then that dovetailed with the arts center happening, and so it was an opportunity to use the amassing of many different projects coming together to give ourselves leverage in getting grants and getting the county … I won over the supervisor of Dutchess County and got him to make us the favored CETA program in the county. Now, even though in those days, I had a long beard, long hair tied in a knot behind me, and he was a military man. Mr. Back. Charles Back. And he would speak to me like, "Oh, Mr. Quasha, I suppose you've come here today because you want more CETA grants?" Just like that. He became fond of us and me and I was his token outsider.

EZ: I see.

GQ: But I could talk to him intelligently and I could convince him on the basis of what I knew, what I understood, and what I was doing, even though I didn't look the part.

SQ: I looked more the part.

GQ: You did.

SQ: And I went with him into every meeting.

EZ: Let's make sure we get your introduction before I ask too many questions.

SQ: It's okay. They're so intertwined. These stories, the histories, herstories, etc. Basically, my orientation originally was inside poetry, also. But then in the early days of Open Studio, I had become a potter.

GQ: Well, before that, you were studying with Charles Olson [Poet of influence to Schneemann].

SQ: I said poetry. Okay, I was studying with this poet Charles Olson.

GQ: We had common origins in poetry.

SQ: And that's how we…

GQ: That's what got us together, even though she's more art-oriented. And because I was editing a magazine when I taught at Stony Brook. I taught for five years in the English department at Stony Brook, and they were in a magazine called Stony Brook. And it was to get that magazine from me that we met because of that. She'd been studying with Charles Olson, who I'd just published. … Olson was to poetry what John Cage was to music.

SQ: And I was just going to say, Robert Kelly had a relationship to Charles Olson and we had a relationship to John Cage, George before me, and so did Carolee. So we had all these people.

GQ: Robert Kelly was a very close friend of Carolee's for many, many years.

SQ: And Stan Brakhage. You know, all these. … Anyways, a lot of friends in common already. So then I became a potter … but I had also been involved in photography somewhat from the age of 17 or something. I had a connection to photography, but just as someone who really loved to see things. But then I became a potter, did that for many years, and that's how Open Studio began, because I met this woman named Michelle Rhodes, and she and I started Open Studio and I ended up introducing…

GQ: She's in Gardiner, and she's one of the main original potters, ceramic artists in the Hudson Valley. She's very important.

SQ: Then she and I started Open Studio, and I introduced her to Chuck Stein, who is one of our closest friends, and they ended up getting married. Then we decided, Michelle and I decided, we would invite George and Chuck to be part of Open Studio and have a poetry part, because in the beginning it was all ceramics and nothing else. So then we developed the poetry aspect of Open Studio, and the rest of it sort of what George was describing.

GQ: I think Michelle knew Carolee also, and Chuck certainly did.

SQ: Oh, of course.

GQ: Chuck, Charles Stein, took some of the pictures of …

SQ: Carolee on the tracks [referring to the photo series *Nude on Tracks, Parallel Axis*, 1975].

GQ: Carolee on the railroad tracks. … So we were all close friends. Chuck was very involved also. He lives now up the road, has for many years.

SQ: And also he knew Robert Kelly from the age of 16 or something like that.

GQ: Chuck and I have been collaborating for 50 years.

SQ: Anyways, so then, just in terms of the natural kind of progression of things, I suddenly … I've loved books always. And suddenly George and I made a couple of books together first, and then we started Station Hill and I started learning book design. So that became my principal occupation in quotes, if you were to call it that. But I'm a photographer.

GQ: Chuck Stein was involved with all the projects with Carolee too, that we were involved with over the years with the arts center. Charles Stein, Carolee was very fond of him. Chuck and I formed a band called the Axial Band, and we would perform. Carolee came regularly for those performances over many years with David Arner.

EZ: Would that be upstate?

GQ: Here.

EZ: One question I want to ask is why [the name] Arnolfini? Is there a mirror component?

GQ: Arnolfini was the patron of Van Eyck.

EZ: Yeah, I know the painting, the double portrait or the famous—

GQ: *The Marriage of Arnolfini.*

EZ: With the mirror and the—

SQ: That was actually something very important to both of us. At our own wedding, Robert Kelly made this convex mirror that he painted, he and his wife at the time, for our wedding.

GQ: As a gift, a wedding present. That picture was the only artifact that we had at our wedding.

EZ: A picture of you?

SQ: No, the picture of *The Arnolfini Wedding*.

EZ: What do you mean, artifact?

GQ: We had it up behind us when we were married.

SQ: It was symbolic.

GQ: We just felt a connection to Van Eyck.

SQ: The presence. And Robert knew how much that meant to us, *The Arnolfini Wedding*. So he made that convex mirror.

EZ: What an amazing gift. Do you have it still?

SQ: Yeah, it's right there, in the front room.

GQ: Then the first book of mine, the first really full-length book called *Somapoetics* in 1973, had a convex mirror on the cover with me looking in it and holding up a kind of a curly twig.

SQ: It's right here.

GQ: Is it that one right there? Alright, so this is what it looks like. This was a pun on *The Arnolfini Wedding*.

EZ: Oh, nice.

GQ: And that photograph was taken by Charles Stein, too.

SQ: And the picture of us on the back …

GQ: On the back is how we looked in those days. That's why Arnolfini, because he had been so important to us and he was a patron of the arts. So I thought, okay, let's attract patrons by the magic of having Arnolfini as the name of the art center.

EZ: Okay. And then it changed to Open Studio?

SQ: No, it was part of it.

GQ: Originally [Open Studio] was a nonprofit corporation that sponsored the art projects.

SQ: A 501(c)(3).

GQ: But not the Arnolfini Art Center, which was a … profit making property owned by a wealthy person who was backing the art center, hoping to turn it into money through the art. But Rhinebeck, it was a little early for Rhinebeck.

SQ: The only thing …

GQ: Rhinebeck was a two-horse town.

SQ: There was only Upstate Films, which had just started, I think, the year before.

GQ: They were the first two art organizations ever, as far as we know, in Rhinebeck.

EZ: What year was it?

GQ: 1977.

SQ: '76 …

GQ: ’76 is when we started the project working. I think the art center opened in ’78 or ’79, somewhere right in there. I’m bad on exact dates, but then the ’80s were the really flowering part of the press after the Arts Center closed and we bonded with Carolee because of the Arts Center. … I’m not sure she actually performed there. I don’t think she did. She was involved in things that happened there, but I don’t think it was a …

SQ: It was too short-lived.

GQ: It was too short-lived, yeah. But the rest of it was very good. There were no good restaurants in the Hudson Valley. None. Well, there was a gourmet restaurant, that very expensive one in New Paltz. What was it called? The Canal House.

SQ: Canal Depuy.

GQ: But nobody could afford to eat there in our kind of community. And so that was the best restaurant. Bard College president Leon Botstein would come there, everybody would come there.

SQ: Robert would come—Robert Kelly—late at night, and we’d all dip into the Haagen-Dazs ice cream that wasn’t available at the time in pints or certain flavors.

EZ: I love that. … I know that art is a part of why everyone was together … what about the social scene? [Were there] any specific restaurants that you went to with her or special parties?

GQ: Well, our art center … the Arnolfini Cafe … was the main one, and that was where Paul Auster—do you know the writer?

EZ: I do.

GQ: He was our first managing editor. I had him on CETA salary. His wife Lydia Davis, now a famous writer; we published both of them at the press. We had her on CETA, and she translated the French writer Maurice Blanchot, who was a major figure, sort of like the equal of Jean-Paul Sartre and all that in the French scene. We were publishing very important books in Barrytown. And it was because we were connected to people who were doing that kind of work, like Lydia Davis.

SQ: Like Lydia was translating.

GQ: She’s the major translator of Blanchot.

SQ: I was going to say that in terms of restaurants, one of Carolee’s—and it’s funny because I just found some paraphernalia from that—one of her favorite restaurants was Boitson’s in Kingston.

GQ: Right in downtown Kingston.

SQ: I remember the first time she told us she had discovered it and loved it. She loved to go there.

EZ: It's not there anymore, is it?

SQ: No. It closed just last year or something.

GQ: The pandemic killed it off.

SQ: But I just found one of the things from one of the times we were there: the menu. I'm trying to remember what she ate. She loved going there. I'm trying to think what other places. A lot of the time we would be here. Every Thanksgiving for, you said, 37 Thanksgivings.

GQ: I would say for thirty-some years.

EZ: Talk about that.

GQ: Carolee came to Thanksgiving here every year. As a matter of fact … when she was about to die, she called us up and said that she was pretty much at the end, but she wanted to make another trip to Barrytown. But she thought she'd probably miss Thanksgiving. She died in what month?

EZ: March of 2019.

GQ: She said, "I'm not going to make it to Thanksgiving this year." But she said, "I'd hope to, but I want to get to Barrytown." She died actually the next day, but she was still projecting, coming to Barrytown one more time and wanted to make an appointment with us and make sure we cleared the way for it. And we got a call the next morning saying that she wasn't going to make it through the day. So we headed over there and we stayed until she passed, with her in the room. But she was at every [one]. … She missed probably one or two where she had to be out of the country or something.

SQ: Now, one time she was at someone else's house, remember?

GQ: Oh, the one time she went to a different one, she said, "Because you didn't tell me in time, unfortunately, I made another appointment."

SQ: We were very spontaneous, often we wouldn't decide till a week before, because different things were happening, and we'd end up with 40 people.

GQ: Big meal, turn this space into long tables. It was a bit festive.

EZ: Was it a sit down where everyone sat down and ate all together?

GQ and SQ: Yeah.

SQ: I have a whole slide thing to show you. Obviously, it can't be …

EZ: I'd love to see. One thing that Bruce [McPherson, publisher and Schneemann's former partner]] and I did at Carolee's house was that we walked around and he talked about certain things and we pulled books off the shelf, and stuff like that …

GQ: It would be very powerful.

EZ: Which was really nice. So we can look at and go to anything as we're talking.

SQ: Actually, one of the things that I pulled out that I want to show you was a collage she made for George's birthday in, I would say it was … I have to show it to you.

GQ: So this will give you a picture because we had parties here and it's usually mid-summer, which happened to be my birthday because July 14th was a perfect time to do that. We'd have as many as 80 people here. And it got smaller over the years when we got tired of having so many people. But we'd have parties in the summer, New Year's, and Thanksgiving. They were the three big events we would throw here every year for …

EZ: And she came to Thanksgiving 37 [times]?

GQ: She came to all of them.

EZ: Wow.

GQ: And other times, too.

EZ: And would you cook the meals for 40 people? Would you cook all the food?

SQ: It was a potluck.

GQ: We'd have the turkey.

SQ: This is interesting, though. I'd have a big turkey and stuffing and potatoes and sweet potatoes and whatever, and then other people would bring things. Almost all the time, she insisted on making her own little turkey, too. She would always bring that because she wanted to have it for the cats. It was just very sweet. She'd bring a little of her own turkey.

GQ: We'd go to all her performances and showings of films, and things that she would do. We went to many of her things over the years.

SQ: But we were all so busy all the time.

EZ: Would you primarily communicate, if you weren't seeing each other for events, would you talk on the phone and write letters?

SQ: We would talk on the phone.

GQ: There were letters.

SQ: There'd be letters and emails and all that.

GQ: We had so many friends in common that we would see each other at a lot of different events. Here's one stream. In the late '90s, there was a thing organized by Linda Weintraub [Art writer and curator] …

SQ: And Raquel Rabinovich.

GQ: Let me just put it in context. Raquel Rabinovich is an Argentinean artist who's lived for many, many years in this country and is very well known. She and Linda founded this sequence of events that happened monthly that were called …

SQ: The Peñas.

GQ: P-E-Ñ-A. A peña is like a soiree or a salon, but it's Argentinian and Chilean. They were famous things that people would do where musicians would come, and art poets would come, and they would read, and it was a way of regularly sharing these art forms. The idea was we would all come once a month and show our work, talk about our work. So there were composers, poets, artists, all kinds of things. And Carolee came fairly regularly for those for a while.

SQ: It started in Rhinebeck because that's where Linda Weintraub lived at the time.

GQ: It was at her house, yeah.

SQ: And then she built the house that I'll show you some pictures of, that she and her husband built that held a lot of events in Milan [NY].

GQ and SQ: In Milan.

GQ: They had many acres and they built all new houses, thanks to themselves, [that] are an ecologically sound way of building. And Carolee was very often there. We did many events with her over many years. Linda sold that a couple of years ago. … They moved now to where their daughters are …

SQ: In Ithaca.

GQ: … We first all met [Linda] because she was the curator of the gallery.

SQ: The Blum Center at Bard.

GQ: Which ended when they decided to build the Center for Curatorial Studies …

SQ: And the Hessel Museum.

GQ: The Hessel Museum, yeah. And Linda was no longer involved with them. But she's done many important textbooks on contemporary art and things that are quite amazing. And Carolee's talked about in those books quite a lot, and they interacted and collaborated on many things.

SQ: There was a lot of that. Different people would have events, like Ellen Levy and David Levy would have things, and we'd both be invited and she'd be invited.

GQ: We'd both be there together. … Pauline Oliveros, the composer. They were close, and we were all close together.

SQ: And there was Linda Montano [Performance artist], too.

EZ: That's [another question]: Any memories of Carolee and Pauline? Memories of Carolee with Linda [Montano], Larry Miller, Sara Seagull? … Is there anything at the front of your mind that would be a significant interaction?

GQ: We have stories with all of them but not necessarily that involved Carolee at the same time.

SQ: And you can see from that picture, Pauline would be at some of our parties and …

GQ: For some years, Pauline came fairly regularly to our parties.

SQ: And Linda [Montano], we're still very close to. …

EZ: I haven't met Linda, although she's done a couple of books at the studio and is friends with the co-founders of WSW.

SQ: I love Linda. We're like sisters. … There's a heart sister in us.

GQ: Linda and Pauline Oliveros were partners for a number of years, and when we first visited them in California, they were partners at that time. That's how we met Linda.

SQ: We did Linda's book *Art in Everyday Life* [1981].

GQ: Yeah, we produced that book.

EZ: What year was that?

GQ: Somewhere in the '80s.

EZ: I need to reach out to Linda, actually. Maybe this is a good point to do that after meeting you. Because we have the 50th anniversary of the studio coming up next year, and so we're putting together all these exhibitions and I need some of her work. I need to meet her.

GQ: The Peñas were very important in a lot of different ways. For me, personally, I would read … when Chie Hasegawa [Artist] was living here.

EZ: Does she live upstate?

SQ: They have a place upstate.

GQ: She and David Hammons [Artist, partner to Hasegawa] have a property here upstate now. She was just visiting last night, actually. And they had a place in Yonkers, and in the Bronx, and in Japan, because she's Japanese. But she lived here for 12 years. And she's been married now to David for almost 20 years. And Carolee knew her all during that time. They loved each other's work and were very close and during the last years of the Peña, Chie and I were collaborating on a series of poems. She had started telling me her dreams, and she'd been here for a few years. She started painting her dreams, her magical dreams. And Carolee recognized that too, when I told them to her, because Carolee's a magical dreamer—major—and Chie and Susan are all magical dreamers. So we started collaborating. I would write the poem of her dream, but she had to tell me the dream while I was writing and she would have to accept the line. She was the source of the thing, the muse. That's the book. I'll give you a copy of that, too. … Carolee heard these when they were first read at the Peñas, so she and I would quickly get some in order for the next Peña, and Carolee was very, very into this.

EZ: Explain the process again.

GQ: [One day] Chie … told me this dream, I said, "Look, you never told me a dream." She'd been here three years … maybe five years, and she said, "Well, I don't dream." I said, "But you just did, and you told me this dream is a magical dream. You have to dream." And so I bought her a notebook, I bought her a tape recorder, and I said, "Record them by any means possible as soon as you wake up." Then the next day she came again and said, "I had another dream." And she told it to me, and I wrote it down as she told it to me. It's the first poem in the book. I said, "I think we have a project. You dream, I write." I was doing other kinds of work, and I thought this would be wonderful. I had done years of my own dream writing sort of thing. And so we started and we recorded hundreds of dreams over the next five years. I got it down to 80 poems, which constitutes this book. Carolee was a major force in that because she would talk to me about the dreams afterward and then give reciprocal dreams. She was one of the people who said they would sometimes dream off of that poem. Jackson Mac Low, the poet artist, was another one. They would actually read the poem and then it would affect their dreams. This motivated me to keep going with the project because I felt that this is a kind of community thing happening here.

EZ: You are a magical dreamer also, using your words?

GQ: Oh, absolutely.

EZ: What does that mean?

GQ: Well, it's interesting. That's a whole question.

EZ: … I'm curious. I think it's related to the topic of Carolee in a way, because you said she's a magical dreamer.

SQ: It's like there's something that happens in the dream space that also opens up and opens out. And often, I get these incredible lines of, you could call them poetry, whatever you want to call them.

GQ: It comes into my work. I steal them.

SQ: They have a certain kind of wisdom in them. And then there's also the aspect of lucid dreaming, awaking in the dream.

GQ: But also, lucid dreams …

SQ: That happened last night, but not only the lemonade, but the vipers. There were all these green vipers in the road in my dream last night, and somebody said "Don't worry about them, just put them in a bucket," and someone put them in a kind of Chinese takeout container and put it on my lap and everything. It was just an aspect of this dream. I don't need to talk about it, but it was interesting how suddenly George was driving and I'm in the car with this viper, this bucket, and you came to a very short stop. You slammed on the brakes, and it sort of jumped out of the bucket, and put its head on my thigh. And I said, time to wake up. Anyway, that's not a good example, but …

GQ: Magical dreaming means a couple of things. One is that kind of dream that's very powerful. And another one is that it is somehow addressed to other people as well, and it affects them. And when you tell the dream, it has consequence because either the other person dreams off of it, or writes off it, or thinks about it, or has an experience because of it.

SQ: Or gets it.

GQ: Just gets what it is in a certain way, and you know that a communication has occurred. We proved that for ourselves. For instance, there was one magical moment that Carolee loved in particular. It was already 2:00 in the morning and [Chie and I] hadn't been able to finish this dream poem. And Chie is sitting there with me and I said, "There's something wrong here. The poem won't go on." I have all the details of the rest of the dream and it won't move. And I said, "Are you sure you remember the whole dream?" She said, "Sure, I remember." I said, "Okay." Another ten, fifteen minutes go by. And I said, "No, not right, it's not right." I said, "Close your eyes. Go back to the dream and tell me what happens. Tell the dream again." She closes her eyes, and she starts right into it. "Oh, yeah. There was something I didn't remember," and she

tells it, and the poem went on to conclusion. So the poem knew the dream wasn't complete. I didn't and she didn't.

EZ: Okay. I love that.

SQ: What about the other time when she told you the dream and you were putting it into clear poetry language, speaking? And she said, "That sounds amazing and great, but it's not …"

GQ: Where a line would go and she'd say, "I love that line, but it's not my dream," so I'd have to take it out.

EZ: Oh, wow.

GQ: And that was painful, to sacrifice what you think is a good line, but I was completely obedient.

SQ: And true.

GQ: She was the authority on the dream, not me.

EZ: That's such a good exercise in editing and artistic practice, to recognize the painful … discomfort.

GQ: It's my whole modality and the way I've been writing for many years now. … It took a turn. I'd already done it for years, but it took a turn, which is being obedient to what is given, whether you like it or not. That's hard in a work, because you may think, "Oh, I don't like that." Then you realize it has a status independent of your liking it or not liking it, and you have to accept it. I think that's a big part of Carolee's work. The way she confronted historical events and personal events almost without prejudice. …

EZ: What's an example of a personal, as you said, event? Do you have examples of what you mean?

GQ: I talked to her about how hard it was to look at the pictures of people falling from the World Trade Center [referring to *Terminal Velocity,* 2001-2005], or *Viet-Flakes* [1965] and those kinds of works. And she'd say, "I know. I couldn't do anything about that." That's what the work is doing. It's making us see that, [without taking] your likes and dislikes into consideration, in relationship to the fact that it's not going away or changing because we want it to change.

SQ: I was going to say I have a little anecdote, I hate to call it that, of her integrity, as George just spoke, in terms of political things, but this is a health issue. Do you want to save that for a health question?

EZ: We can go to it, if it feels like a natural transition for you.

SQ: I don't know what year it was. It must have been early in my meeting Carolee. It must have been sometime in the '80s, early in the '80s when my mother got breast cancer. Carolee was very upset and worried, and she was always kind, and involved, and asking how things were going. My mother had a choice of being kind of observed or having a mastectomy. And my mother chose to have a mastectomy. And actually Carolee was very upset. She said, "How could you let her do this?" And I said, "I know my mother. And I know that if she was just being observed, her life would be consumed by it all the time. And that's not who she is. That won't work for her." And I said, "Honestly, if it ever happened to me, I don't know what I would do either." And we had this very honest, beautiful, true conversation. And I knew her relationship to her body, and her relationship to a woman's body, and men doing surgery, sometimes just more automatic.

And I was very much into, as much as I could be, alternative medicine. We had a very close acupuncture practitioner in our lives. So I could see the whole picture, but this was about someone else, right? And in my mind, I just thought I hope she never has to go through this, because no matter what, it's hard. Like I was saying, I don't know what I would do. Well, lo and behold, I don't know how many years later, this was 1993, I got breast cancer. It's interesting, I just went into a very deep place of knowing what was right for me. And I had Tibetan teachers and one said, "You have to ask this [other] Tibetan teacher what to do." And I didn't want to bother him or burden him, so I chose not to. But unbeknownst to me, this high rimboche asked this other rimboche for me. And the weird thing, which was exactly what I was feeling, was listen to your doctor. And also, the background for me, was that I had been seeing this acupuncturist, who is one of the greats, and she's the one who said, after I had an initial biopsy, she said, "There's something old there. Have them do it again and a better one." The first one was like an aspiration and nothing was there. On the next [biospy] … it showed up. … I ended up having a mastectomy. I want to just read this thing that Carolee [gave me] when I was recuperating. This is her generosity and her openness and her amazing presence. She gave me this *A Natural History of the Senses*, the Diane Ackerman book and she wrote …

GQ: They were friends, [Carolee] and Diane Ackerman.

SQ: "Susan dear, you always keep the blissful"—oh gee, I can't read this—"You always keep the blissful senses alert and alerting between us all. And now your courage becomes a sense as well." You see. "With buckets of light and buckets of love, Carolee '93." So, fast forward, then she gets breast cancer and it was such a moving—I'm getting chills now—but it was such a moving experience to see that she was doing what she had wished that I could have done for myself maybe, or for my mother, but that she was willing to be courageous and do that for herself because that's who she was.

EZ: Do what?

SQ: Alternative medicine.

GQ: Gerson [Therapy]. Do you know Gerson?

SQ: Go to Mexico.

GQ: Gerson was a doctor who developed a theory of cancer, and he called it the cancer cure, which involved diet. But it meant going on such an extreme diet, there would be a period of weeks where you would just drink carrot juice and other kinds of things that had to be made with a certain kind of blender to make sure it was pure and it didn't take the vitamins out. Carolee did this, and eventually she went to a clinic in Mexico that did it. And the weird thing was that we were publishing Gerson's book [*Censured for Curing Cancer*, 1991].

SQ: I thought she might have even discovered it from you.

GQ: That I can't verify.

EZ: And so she did the treatment?

GQ: She went through it and it worked. But when she came back, she had to hire somebody to help her because [she was] doing this stuff at home for a period of months, this kind of extreme dietary intervention.

EZ: What time period was that?

GQ: God knows. Again, she had breast cancer over a 20-year period before died.

SQ: Didn't she have a lumpectomy then, maybe?

GQ: That I don't know.

SQ: She might have. I don't remember now exactly. But we knew that she had to do something further. She was seeing this doctor who started the Fern Feldman breast clinic at Benedictine. And she loved him. His name was Feldman. And then he left the area and went to New York. I think she still may have seen him in New York. I'm not sure.

GQ: It may have been in the '90s.

EZ: Can you, for me and the recording, speak a little bit more about … going back to her perspective on your mother and the choice that she made in surgery, and talk a little bit about what that means when someone is pursuing alternative medicine versus what they see in a surgeon in Western medicine …

GQ: Well, her issue was not to maim the body.

SQ: Right. It's kind of the mutilation, like taking your breast away is a mutilation.

GQ: And she did everything to resist that.

EZ: And inside of that, why would it be considered a mutilation?

GQ: Well, Carolee had a very particular feeling about that. I'm sure she's written about in her letters …

SQ: The precious body, and the precious female body. And also, if you see all of her incredible political statements against mutilation of young women in certain countries. She would send those articles a lot. That was in terms of the clitoris and different issues, but still, it was men choosing to … that's part of the picture.

GQ: It definitely was part of her entire way of addressing that question from the earliest days. She was never in any doubt about what the cause of it was. It was the imbalance in power in the culture, for men and women.

SQ: I have to admit that there was a moment when I talked to my breast surgeon, who was a very kind and wonderful man, and said he would do the same thing for his wife and or his mother or anybody. And he was very thoughtful and present. But I have to admit that he said when he was in medical school, maybe it was NYU medical school or something, he had a professor who felt that all women should, after a certain age, have their breasts removed so that they would so that they would never have to go through this. Because there were many women dying. My aunt died of breast cancer and there were many women dying at that time. … So I thought, why shouldn't all men be castrated too? I would joke with my doctor, why was it so one sided?

GQ: That would balance things out pretty fast. …

EZ: I think hearing you all who knew her very well speak to things like her everyday existence and her health and her body is important. And another extension on this would be her home and the way she spoke about her home. What are your observations of … her relationship to the house … old stone house? Things happen there and it has its own personality in a way.

SQ: It was like a dream space.

GQ: It was.

SQ: A physical extension of her dream space.

GQ: She had sublet the house and these sort of hippie types had been in the house and destroyed everything at one point. And it was a great tragedy for her. It was a fairly early event, at a time when…

EZ: She would talk about it as an act of violence.

GQ: It was, absolutely. It was incomprehensible. … Carolee's a person who lived magically. What that means is everything was meaningful. Everything spoke to her. The cat spoke to her, the environment spoke to her. She lived in an interactive way. I have a word for it. I call it eco-proprioception, which is sensing things as though they were your own body that are around you. And she read everything as an extension of body awareness in some kind of way.

That's one of the things that we shared. I do body work as a kind of subcategory of what I do, based on what I call axial theory and practice, 50 years of Tai Chi are behind that.

I worked on Carolee a great deal over the years. It was one of the bonds between us. We talked about medical things, health things. That was a big part of our conversation, some of it in correspondence, most of it in person or on the phone or whenever she needed something. She would ask me to help her find out what works. And the Gerson thing was just a coincidence that we were publishing Gerson when she was doing that kind of thing. But we turned her onto whatever we knew about, and the body working was very important because I made her pictures. I'd been doing body work on her until a couple of years before she passed, when I had the opportunity, even at the Stephen Holl house, when the architect Stephen Holl had given her space.

SQ: At 'T' Space. She had a show there [*Flange 6rpm*, Rhinebeck, NY, 2014].

GQ: He's a friend in common of all of ours. And while we were at that event, she was in a lot of discomfort. I would take her aside and work on her, do this kind of work. And that principle was a principle that she was interested in, as I was, in terms of the whole picture. In other words, there was not a separation between art, the theory of art, how art works politically and historically, and the way in which you performed it.

Just today, I read again a piece that we had together in this PAJ [*PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*] on performance drawing. I have a piece on axial drawing in here, and she has drawing as a venus or a venous system in which she tries to talk. The issue she talks about is interesting. I don't think I quite remember this, but she talks about how when drawing, which she was specifically talking about her great piece *Water Light / Water Needle* [1966], the way that you had to learn to balance yourself and to get feedback from the body's balance and weight as you would make these events happened. That was a kind of drawing, but also the drawing that she did ahead of time would kind of embody the principle of the work. I'm translating it into my language when I say this. But my piece is all about the axial principle, in the simplest terms, everything has an axis. When you're in your axis and surrender to your axis, and not into your body's muscular, or otherwise supported. You lean on the table, I lean on the table, we all do. But then there's a moment where you discover, and you might cultivate the discovery, that when you're centered on that space, your body is actually—that's a true free moment when by not citing gravity and using your body to impede gravity, you are freer, more flexible, and have more power. That's what Tai Chi is based on, this insight. We shared that understanding of things. These are all axial drawings, these big ones on the wall here.

EZ: Are they yours?

GQ and SQ: Yeah.

GQ: And they were all done by coming from that center and cultivating the awareness that arises out of that. That happens in body work and it happens in that work. It happens in the language that I write. It happens in the music that I play. There's one principle for all of it. But it comes out differently and is done differently. She was such an artist. Carolee and I understood each other to be artists who had an insight that would take many forms in your life. But it was always this integrity of knowing that you had to stick with that and had to come from that. That

you didn't do things to accommodate the taste of the environment, the taste of critics, the taste of curators, the taste of historians that would therefore classify you one way or another, because she had this experience. If you look at her earliest paintings, these are magnificent artworks, pure and simple, done when she's like 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. That becomes the aesthetic of her whole life. That was not done in imitation of abstract expressionism. It was done as an embodiment of its principle.

So when she's in this big discussion with Clayton Eshleman—I knew Clayton almost as early as she did. She knew him actually before, in the '60s in London. I knew him from the late '60s also. And I knew this whole period and we all were into psychedelics together and all of that at a certain point. Clayton is interpreting her, laying his trip on her, about things she's doing and she's coming back full force and saying, "You're not getting it. You're looking at things as though this was your work, therefore your interpretive values work in that way. But you're missing the whole point. You're not seeing—you say the body slimes. I say the body embodies its energy and love of the activity." … When she's doing these crazy things that you wonder, "How could anybody do quite that with that chicken next to you?" She's saying you're in a state of awareness that is consistent with this awakened value that you've discovered through the artwork and through your own imagination, your own participation in that.

So the drawing is a preemptive moment of embodying that insight. She'd say, "I would sometimes draw with my eyes closed, and I would discover what this work was trying to tell me." She's working by this feedback from the environment all the time. And from the work and from the actual feeling of the body in that instance. And so it's all feedback. When she got to the health issues, she wanted to work with that principle. And it kept her alive for another 20 years, even though they warned that she might not live a few years, initially, if she didn't do all the nasty things that they wanted to do to her, and she didn't want it. Eventually she had to surrender to more and more of that because she was in terrible pain. But she did win for a number of years. And it's just that the kind of method that you develop for that kind of treatment is extremely difficult to maintain. The integrity of that over years. So she would go back to eating things. Eventually, should get well, and then she would go back to her normal life. Then it wouldn't be quite enough or something, nobody knows. Nobody will ever be able to say exactly at what point the principle broke down on the health level for her.

Integrity was at the heart of it all. What is so remarkable about her letters, and with any interaction I ever had with her, was that if you say something, she would give you the absolute honest response. It could be very sharp. It could be very powerfully focused on just that moment, but she didn't accommodate. She was generous, in that she wouldn't say things to hurt people, or she might hold back if she felt that the issue was that they couldn't handle what she was saying. But with someone like Eshleman who's aggressive in his thinking … You don't get away with it.

EZ: … Did you ever speak about death and the bigness of what that means?

GQ: Carolee and I shared the view that death was not the end of anything. It was just very difficult for us to work with. Paul Blackburn, who I think was actually, physically, the first contact between us, the poet, died in 1971 of throat cancer. We were all enormously affected by this. Susan and I, in fact, came back from four months living in our van, traveling around the country to be at Paul's memorial at St Mark's. Carolee was there. That's, possibly, where we most vividly saw each other, actually, because she was there. I think she was there, if she

wasn't in London. That was a period where it was hard to tell where she exactly was, but I think she was there, too. Anyway, she may have missed it, but I may have seen her in that context. Paul appeared to her as a famous … There's an essay in here ["A Wake for Ken Dewey, 1972." Carolee Schneemann: Uncollected Texts, published 2018], a piece of previously uncollected writing. But anyway, it's about Paul appearing to her in her kitchen, and we talked about that many times. I don't think she commonly saw ghosts or anything, but she did see Paul in her kitchen.

One of our connections was that we live in relationship to those issues as somewhat intuitively clear that we can't make an absolute determination about any particular thing. The possibility of that, and the importance of knowing that is at the heart of her work. She's a true mystic in that sense, but an integrated one. One who didn't see, in any significant way, separate from the body. Her cats come back to her. Her cats reincarnate, from her point of view. If she meets the cat again, that has happened. So this is at the heart of Carolee's way of thinking. … All of us were into psychedelics in the '70s. Then most of us stopped for many years, just for various different reasons. And then there was about 12, 13 years ago. We got back into it and had a shaman come here who did the ayahuasca, but she did the San Pedro, the cactus [referring to huachuma, a ceremonial plant]. … Carolee loved those kinds of ceremonies. But she was into everything from very early. Not that she needed it, she just was that already. But it so intensifies your understanding … and when you do it in a sympathetic kind of environment like that, a lot is shared. That's another thing about it.

It's like the magical dreaming. It's part of magical life in the true sense of that. It means that you are taking your cues from what you're hearing and knowing interactively with your life, with others, your dreams, whatever else you come in contact with. It often can be quite strange what you come in contact with. But if you're centered in that knowledge, these things are not frightening to you. They're part of your education. I think Carolee was very clear about death. She didn't want to die. She did everything to prevent it. But whenever friends were dying, Susan would help me go back over the correspondence, at least for the last 20 years, which I had on this one computer. And a lot of the exchanges are about who's just died.

SQ: Like Anselm Hollo.

GQ: Hollo, the poet.

SQ: Franz came in and your cousin, John Magner. She'd wished they had one more dance.

GQ: Because they used to dance wildly at our parties.

SQ: And she loved to go dancing.

GQ: That was a big part of her.

SQ: She loved to go dancing.

GQ: Carolee was out for enjoying everything you possibly could enjoy. And whenever she was in pain, and reporting on her pain, she was placing that against, "Oh, I wish I could be doing this with you instead, but I just can't move or it takes me 3 hours to get out of bed, but I wish I

could be there for your performance. It would be so much fun to do this thing together." They were always posed in terms of really loving life and living it to the full. So when Clayton Eshleman [Poet and translator] would pick at her, oh your body's in a sling …

SQ: Or you want to show your body—that was a big one.

GQ: Oh yeah. He said, "You have the need to show your body." She says, "I don't show my body. I embody my joy. Show my body. What do you mean? You think I'm some kind of exhibitionist, that I'm getting off on having people see me this way? This is your fantasy."

EZ: I had a question. I should have typed it.

SQ: After death? I'm kidding.

GQ: I've definitely had [after-death] experiences with Carolee.

EZ: You have?

GQ: Totally. Very early. After she died, there was a period where I had a very vivid experience of her. I don't remember the details, oddly enough, right now. I'm a little disappointed that I don't because I know I wrote it down somewhere. But it was very, very vivid. Unmistakable. And I knew that would happen actually, because of all the people that you would expect to be living up to their own experience in life, she'd be part of that.

EZ: I had a dream about her last night. I don't remember the details, but I wish that I did. I woke up sort of in a not normal state. I don't recall the details as vividly as I would if I had woken up normally. I'm thinking about her a lot this week just because I had the interview on Tuesday and then meeting with you.

GQ: There were very few people who lived with such absolute commitment to getting the most to be true about life in every moment. Diane di Prima [Poet] was another one. You know who she was? We were good friends from that same period.

SQ: Carolee loved to go out with girlfriends too. There was a group of us. Margaret De Wys [Author and sound artist], and Linda Weintraub, and at one point Susan Ray [Author and filmmaker], a number of us. She loved to go out. We'd go to a restaurant or whatever. And I did with Linda Weintraub, and sometimes it would just be the three of us. She loved to go out dancing, as I said too. I always said, "Oh yeah, next time I'll come," but somehow … life was so busy. I loved dancing also, but I was always too busy. And another death. Do you know about Emily Caigan [friend and colleague of Schneemann]? …

SQ: That was another death that was very heavy on Carolee.

EZ: You were [with Carolee] when she died? … You went to her house?

SQ: Yeah. We stayed there.

SQ: … Back to the house [and our love of a house]. We had that in common. I love this house. And this house feels like an extension of my life. I've lived here since '76. I don't remember what year she got that house. Do you know?

EZ: We were just talking about this at the studio yesterday … maybe '64, '65 was when she first started going there. [Schneemann rented two rooms on Springtown Road in 1964, she and her then partner composer James Tenney purchased the house together in 1965].

SQ: In the '60s. All the stories about the dreams that she got. Those are also magical dreams. Dreams that she got to take a hammer or a crowbar. Have you read them?

EZ: I've read some, yes.

SQ: Just incredible. … Go take a crowbar and hit the ceiling, and they thought maybe we're not up for this. But [it was] magical, like the house was talking to her. And again, it's like an extension of her own body, of her own being. I feel like that about this house. This house has had some very magical things happen to us. Like this man that we met on retreat. It turns out he used to bring Sufi masters here to the person …

GQ: And Gurjit people …

SQ: And Gurjit people to the person who owned it a long time ago, Dustin Rice. And then when I was down in the basement doing something, I found this old frame with a map board, and it has this person's signature on it.

EZ: Wow.

SQ: You know what I mean? Lots of things like that. … [What's] interesting, too—she was making herself in the image that she wanted.

GQ: That's the point. Carolee knew that she could create her own destiny, her own life, her own being. That was the fundamental human right. For a woman to do [that] took a little extra push, a little extra crafting. So she took the crafting, though it's not an integrity issue. … The integrity issue is what she's really about and sticking to the principles that she really knew to be the case.

SQ: And think about all the consensuses that she wanted to break. All of her life, everything she wanted to do was …

GQ: There was a risk involved in that that she was willing to take. There are several risks. … She foregrounded the body. She had to work with that risk. It wasn't like it was a completely one-sided advantage. She hazarded an aggressive approach to claiming the right to create her own life and being … self-portrait. Life is a self-portrait. It really is. You know, we're crafting ourselves all the time, one way or another. This is now accepted. So I will do it my way, but I'll do it within the acceptance. I'm not going to wear a tie to an easygoing beach party.

SQ: But the toll was that she was kind of not acknowledged for who she was until very late. Very late. That was a toll.

GQ: And let's put it this way. It's not only the male culture that she was up against, it's the female culture.

SQ: You have to tell that story, which was about the feminists.

GQ: Well, she used to say, "I had my heaviest problems with women." Women historians, critics, artists who just couldn't buy her self-presentation at the level of directness that she did. They couldn't buy into her sexuality because they hadn't owned their own. And that was her point. You see, they're showing that they are not owning their own desire to be who they are or their own right to be who they are, 100%. She claimed it at such a level. When you think how early, how direct, how willing she was, they would think maybe they would be part of this inherited male dominated consensus that women are showing off their bodies if they have good bodies and they want to show it off, they showed off in a way that is not acceptable, but which is desired by the men who are putting her down or limiting her mobility in the in the culture.

EZ: Well, is there a specific story that you have that … You said it was the feminists or just [in] general?

SQ: You even used the word "feminists."

GQ: Oh, feminists. The biggest problem was with feminists. That's on record, I'm sure.

SQ: But I was thinking of other women like Hannah Wilke and other women that were …

GQ: Well, she had a compatriot and a compadre in Hannah Wilke, for sure. When I met Hannah Wilke, I spent an afternoon with her, the first time that I saw her, I thought, this is an amazing, together, powerful person, you know? And she was doing body things as well. So it was hard to know the status of that until you saw that she was willing to keep that going even after she got cancer. The way she stayed with the issues of the body …

SQ: She had integrity, too.

GQ: She had incredible, profound integrity as well. And Carolee knew that about her. It's very difficult to make the body the center of your work in a culture that simply doesn't, it just basically pays lip service to …

SQ: All the puritanical aspects. … I wanted to say one last thing. You sort of touched on it, about her appreciating everybody for who they were and not wanting them to be just like her.

GQ: Or like anything.

SQ: Or be like anything other than who they were. And I just watched. … I get chills thinking about that, too. I watched it with so many different kinds of people. And if you had a minute, I just wanted to show you just a few pictures. … Have you ever been to 't' Space?

EZ: No, I haven't.

GQ: Stephen Holl's a great architect, and we were involved with him probably … 10 years ago, he founded 'T' Space, which is a gallery. He brings very big artists there. Carolee did a show there. I wrote the catalog for the *Flange* piece. I wrote the essay on that.

EZ: [I meant to ask] about your writing for Carolee's exhibition catalogs or other publications. If that relationship or those things were …

GQ: The only thing that I wrote. Oh, you found it?

SQ: Of course. I know where everything is, sort of.

GQ: 'T' Space.

SQ: Carolee Schneemann, *Flange*, George Quasha "Proprioception by Field."

EZ: Tell me more about this.

GQ: Well, it was a separate little building that Stephen built on his property outside of Rhinebeck. And this was about her show.

EZ: And then what is this book that you … Tell me more.

GQ: Back around 2001, I got the idea that … I was doing video art as one of the art forms that I spent a lot of time doing, and I collaborated with Gary Hill, but he's a major video artist. He and I have collaborated since the late '70s, same time. And he was close to Carolee, too. He was in Seattle, and in Europe now. I decided that I wanted to … I was fascinated by how hard it was to get people to think on the spot. Everybody has opinions. And so you talk about a subject, they bring together their best thinking and opinions that they've already thought. It might evolve slightly in how they talk to you, but essentially it's building on this foundation of already established thought. And I realized, I started noticing every once in a while, you would catch images of people who were actually thinking and you could tell they had gone into a space of not knowing in order to allow themselves to think as they might think. *Now*, really right now. So it was actually performative thinking, not constructive, or reconstructive thinking. And I even saw one video with Jacques Derrida, in which it was very clear he thought on the spot. People had very much the wrong idea about how he thought, who hadn't noticed that. And so how can I catch people doing that? And I thought, well, the best way to do it on camera is to get them to think about what they can't not think about because of the nature of what they're doing. And somehow get them to do that in a new way with the acknowledgment that you can never define this. So I said, okay, for an artist, that's art. For a poet, that's poetry. For a musician, that's music. And so you ask, well, what is it that? Not what do you do, not what's

your theory of art and all that in relation to your work, but what is it? I think sometimes I had to work them into that because they would have a spiel. And so we get past the spiel and then I sort of work them through personal ways and develop techniques for doing that. In the end, I filmed over a thousand artists, poets, and composers in eleven countries in many different languages, but finally in English, and Bonnie Maranca from *PAJ, Performing Arts Journal*, wanted me to bring them out. These are quotes from the video. This is a single frame of the video.

EZ: Okay. And then with a single frame you would select?

GQ: Yeah. And what I wanted from the frame was where they look like they're most excitedly embodying the best I could get of them embodying their thought. Not is it a good portrait of the person, and not is this a good representative statement, but is this the moment when they're most embodying the thoughts spontaneously and authentically in the moment? So that was my goal in the project. So it's still going. I don't do it as much now. The pandemic sort of was a big interruption.

EZ: Unless there's anything else, I feel like … this is great. Thank you so much for your time.