

Carolee Schneemann Oral History Interview: Lauren Pratt

Lauren Pratt is an arts administrator and educator based in Canada. Pratt was the Associate Producer for Music at REDCAT and an in-house producer for many CalArts music events, including the Wild Beast Concert Series beginning in 2010. She worked as an archivist and project manager to Schneemann from 1984 to 1989. Through Schneemann Pratt met experimental composer James Tenney; Pratt and Tenney were married in 1987, and the couple maintained a close friendship with Schneemann. Following Tenney's death in 2006, Pratt assisted with a variety of publishing projects as executor of his estate.

Interview conducted by Rachel Helm
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Rachel Helm: It's great to speak to you. Well, why don't we talk about Carolee and animals first? That's always such a fun [icebreaker.] You met Carolee in 1984?

LP: About.

RH: That would've been when she had Cluny, Cluny II, who she was collaborating with on *Infinity Kisses*. [Do] you have any memories of dogs and cats over the years?

LP: Well, there was this dog Bucket. I think its name was Bucket.

RH: It's a great name.

LP: Or Buckle, or something like that. It was a little sheep dog. She took in a lot of animals. Animals just turned up on her doorstep. But what I have been thinking about, in regard to her animals, is [how] she cooked for them all. And I was thinking about this in the context of Carolee's own cooking, which was a bit haphazard, I would say. ... I'm talking about sustenance cooking, which I think about a lot now because I'm living alone. It's a major part of my existence, cooking and eating, which it wasn't when I was at CalArts—[then] it was very peripheral. And as a result, I got very sick,, as so many people in academia do, working all the time. Honestly, it was frightening to me watching colleagues at CalArts just go down from exhaustion. And it's still happening. And the grad students ... In any case, I got really sick. And it's one of the reasons I quit, and I'm really glad I did. [Now] I focus on food a lot. And Carolee, she also focused on food. She was very health conscious about what she ate, more or less. You know, she worked at a health food store up near Bennington when she and Jim lived up there. But on the other hand, she relied heavily on takeout, which Jim did too. I must say, Jim was not a good cook.

RH: Yeah?

LP: No, before I moved in with those two little kids, Nathan and Adrian, he struggled. I mean, he got food on the table, but he struggled with it. And he was very relieved when I showed up. But, you know, Carolee was not really able to put three squares on the table either. It was not really her thing. But she fed her animals by cooking for them. And she had a lot of animals, and that is very hard to do. It just takes a lot of time. ... It was amazing, I thought.

RH: When I worked for Carolee, I would make her eggs and a little steak and some fruit, and then she and [La] Niña would sit together in the bed and she would let Niña just share the plate with her. It was always like that. She had Bucket? I feel like she had dogs with Bruce, too.

LP: Yes.

RH: Because there are lots and lots of photographs of her at the house with Bruce with this beautiful black and white dog.

LP: That would be Bucket. .. You know, I'm not going to swear to that.

RH: Oh, that's totally fine.

LP: Didn't Michael Jackson, didn't he name one of his children Bucket?

RH: Bucket? Blanket.

LP: Blanket, yeah.

RH: Yeah. Blanket Jackson. It's another good name. You know, I love the names that Carolee gave her animals. Wicca and Psyche and Shadow and who else? Cluny I, Cluny II, Vesper. They're just these fabulous names.

LP: Yeah.

RH: I have a cat ... and sometimes I think about the depth of Carolee's relationship with her cats, and I feel sort of bad. Like I'm not showing up enough, you know?

LP: That's kind of Carolee in general, right? ... Jim was that way too. That's why when they met, I'm sure it set off these sparks of—it just engendered art, for one thing, and action and movement and getting things done. Because that's the kind of person Jim was. And that's the kind of person Carolee was. I wasn't that kind of person. I can sit around and read all day.

RH: Yeah. Well that's the thing with Carolee is that she was constantly producing work, but she was also just constantly taking in information.

LP: Yes.

RH: I was always [impressed with] her ability to really connect with the people around her where they are. ... I think a big part of that is that her interests were so vast. That you could kind of talk about anything and every person [felt special] with Carolee. It's very interesting.

LP: We all felt it. It's a particular ... social skill that she had, which was that she was kind and gracious. I mean, she could be mean and cutting, just like the rest of us. But if you were in a

social situation, she wasn't there to disrupt. She wanted people to get along. She would get along with people. She was there to oil the wheels, you know. And I really respected how gracious she could be with people that she really didn't ... I mean, many years of going to openings and you've got to be nice to people ... no matter what. I think about these things with Carolee. For instance, I only went to one Saturday gallery run. She religiously went to the galleries in New York on Thursdays and on Saturdays. And she was always looking for a gallery and a manager, somebody to represent her. I don't blame her. It's what she needed to do. But I remember going with her once, and it was fine. I know what to do [in those situations, but] It's not like I'm going to horn in on Carolee. But still, I never went again because I realize now it would've been pointless. She needed to do whatever she had to do on those gallery runs by herself, presenting herself. I would've been completely extraneous, and a weight, and not helpful at all.

RH: Let's talk a little bit about when you met Carolee. ... You had been getting into doing arts administration, and it seemed to me like you were working primarily with musicians. Am I correct in that thinking?

LP: Yes, that's true. I was working for Pauline [Oliveros, composer]]. And Pauline recommended to Carolee that she hire us, Stidfole and Pratt.

RH: And so you went to meet Carolee in her loft, and you said that you started working for her immediately.

LP: Right.

RH: Describe a little bit to me what that was like. What was the loft like? How was she presenting to you? What did she need and want in that moment?

LP: I'm sure you've been there many times, right?

RH: No. By the time I was around, she had sold the loft.

LP: I see. It was great. It was just a big, long space going off the street, and then a couple flights of stairs. I don't even think there was a freight elevator. If there was, it never worked, and I never saw it. You walk in and it had these huge, amazing paintings of Carolee's in it. You know, the big ones. *Maximus At Gloucester* [1963] was in the living room. There was the kitchen and the bathroom at one end. There was a little dingy window that looked out on a courtyard there, and a table and a big counter. And then you go into the living room, and there was *Maximus At Gloucester* over the couch. And a big coffee table there. Other big pieces just all over the place. There was a bedroom that was kind of closed off in a corner, had its own enclosure. And then the workspace, which faced the street and got the most natural light ... in the loft, which was great. But it was just stuffed full of everything you can imagine.

RH: I can imagine.

LP: Carolee made tea for me and talked about what her projects were and what she was working on. And, and at the time, she had a number of things going. I think she had already made some [plans to exhibit] *Venus Vectors* [1986–88]. ... We were discussing her upcoming projects, and she said what she really needed was something that I had already done a lot of for

Pauline, which was [make] lists of things and eventually some kind of promotional kit, what used to be called a press kit. She needed somebody to do the writing and the listing and all of that stuff. And I had done a lot of that for Pauline. Organizing and making CVs and making resumes, making lists of performances ... and lists of works, because if you're promoting one kind of work, you can't just give them a huge list of everything Carolee has done. You have to give them some kind of evidence that she can do this again. And so I remember going back uptown on the subway with a whole folder full of written things that Carolee had done with her scrawlings all over them, and inserts, and things that had changed and stuff like that. And I just started inputting everything into ... a computer that Pauline had given me. One of the early—I want to say it was one of those box Macs, but I don't think it was. It was like an Apple 2E. Yeah. And I just started inputting everything. I had set up databases already where I could input. That's one of the things that I'd done with Pauline at New Music America [nomadic experimental music festival running from 1979–90]. I set up a whole database center in Philadelphia with networked computers.

RH: Wow.

LP: This would've been '84 or something like that. That was my area of expertise. She was exciting and beautiful and thrilling and had a lot going on. So I just started working, and she said she could pay me \$300 a month. And at that time minimum wage was something like \$7. I think I figured that's something like 10 hours a week. I could do that, you know? But of course, you never keep track of hours. You just do what needs to be done, and then you take your \$300. I was working for a number of different people. ... It was later that I took on more clients because I started working [less] for Pauline, working a lot more with Carolee. We arranged weekly meetings where I go down to her place from uptown, and she'd be there. She was very punctual and prompt. In any case, I started meeting with her, and it was fun. She was engaged, and she knew what I was talking about. She's, of course, extremely literate. She knew and appreciated what I was bringing, which was the organization. I'm a proofreader and editor. That's basically what my area of expertise was. I just kind of fell into contemporary music through meeting Pauline at a party.

RH: Oh, wild.

LP: But before I had worked for restaurant companies, editing menus and things like that. I had done all kinds of editing. But she had exciting projects, which were complex. Like *Venus Vectors*. There was a ton of fabrication that went on there. Boxing it and shipping it was a nightmare. ... Coming up in New York in the '60s, she understood what many artists don't understand, especially visual artists—and they suffer for it in the end—that it has to be collaborative. And she nurtured relationships with all kinds of people, not in some kind of Machiavellian, “maybe I can use this person someday” way. I actually learned that from her. I was young. I was in my mid-twenties. That's one of the things I learned: It doesn't hurt to be nice to people and express interest in what they're doing, and try to find connections, no matter what finally ends up happening. You're better off for going in on that high road and asking people nicely to do something for you before you start insisting that's what they're going to have to do.

She was a master at that social interplay because she had to be. It was a survival instinct in the art world of New York. And so when she needed an electrician, she had one there that she'd been nice to, she'd paid on time. She didn't come up with bullshit excuses for why she couldn't pay them now. She was honest and she kept relationships going. She needed that

for her work because it got more and more complex, with more and more things that she didn't really know too much about. Computers were never really her thing. But she had such great collaborative networks that she could call on. It was inspiring. It really was, because it showed there was a way to work in the art world. Musicians know that already. No music happens without collaboration. You can be there with your bamboo flute in the wilderness, but other than that ... but a lot of art happens with no collaboration, and that's a lonely road.

RH: Yes. ... We were talking about *Venus Vectors*.

LP: Oh, right, *Venus Vectors*. We shopped that around quite a bit. I think that was probably the first project that I put together a promotion package for her on. She would do the pitch, which is appropriate. She didn't want me pitching for her, ... but once she had developed a relationship and got the gig, then it would be my job to kind of follow up on what do they need for promotion? *Venus Vectors* was exhibited in upstate New York, maybe Buffalo, something like that?

RH: It was in Syracuse.

LP: In Syracuse, yeah.

RH: At the Everson Museum [referring to the 1987 exhibition *Sacred Spaces*].

LP: Yes. So we went up for that. I would've been in charge of a lot of the details of that production although Carolee was very hands-on with the work itself: how it needed to be shipped, whether you could take it apart, or if it had to go up flat on a truck. And since I was a fairly productive producer of music, of all kinds of music, I have a lot of appreciation for Carolee's skills and understanding [of] production and the physical aspects of it. She was very, very knowledgeable. ... I [also] helped produce if she did performances. I was in a couple of performances.

RH: Oh, really?

LP: Yeah. One at the Limelight I remember particularly, and also one out at C.W. Post University on Long Island. We went out for that and we did a little performance in class. Then the other one was a benefit at the Limelight. But that wasn't a huge part of my time with her. I traveled a lot with Pauline, but not with Carolee. Carolee—during that time and up to the point where she sold the loft—struggled financially. \$300 a month would've been a lot for her.

RH: I know that time period was one where she was facing a lot of financial and professional frustrations, and the fact that she was putting money aside that was already scarce for this kind of work—I think it's so telling. I think Carolee took such great care with the less fun parts of art, you know? Like documentation, maintaining her archives, and things like that.

LP: Oh my God. Hours of work. She absolutely recognized the worth of it... all art artists do, though. I've been working in arts administration for almost 50 years, and all artists, they want somebody to do that work for them. They all want it. I'm also a grant writer and they want that too, because it just takes time away from their work, which they cannot afford. They have limited time, too. But on the other hand, they know that if you don't get your promotional materials together, if you don't get out there, if you don't go to gallery night, if you don't go to gallery Saturdays in New York, you will never meet anybody, and you will not make those connections.

They have to put the time into it. And like I said, that's something that only Carolee could do for herself, but I could bring some semblance of organization to the way she presented herself in text. ... So I did that. But she valued it without question. She was a good writer. She was very careful. Very well educated, very careful, very literate. It was very important to her that everything be accurate and correct.

RH: Yeah. ... She wanted to have such control over the language and the way that she was being presented. Just editing, editing, editing, always.

LP: It was very important to her because it's really all she had.

RH: [Before] the period in time that you were coming into Carolee's life, she had been with Max Hutchinson and had done a couple solo shows with the Max Hutchinson Gallery. Did she not have gallery representation through the time that you were working with her?

LP: ... Do you know what happened there? Because I don't.

RH: All that I really know is—she never really spoke about it to me—that she did a series of solo shows with them. ... It seems she didn't really work with anybody [after Max Hutchinson] steadily until maybe showing with Emily Harvey? She showed with Emily Harvey Gallery a lot.

LP: Yes, that's correct. She was in the wilderness there for almost 15 years, right? And she was desperate about it because, like I said, every artist wants a manager. And I've managed artists before, again, mostly in music. But I managed some visual artists as well. I had Anthony—Tony—Martin [artist]. I represented him for a while when I was working with Carolee. Do you remember him?

RH: No, I'm not familiar with him.

LP: He's an interesting guy. His work, now that I look back on it, was fairly conventional, but he was out in San Francisco in the '60s, and he worked the visuals on the trips, festivals in the '60s. He was still kind of tapped into the experimental music world. He's still around, I think. Tony Martin. But in any case, representing visual artists is very, very time consuming. ... I knew at the time, and this is always the plight of the freelance arts administrator; I felt bad about it because I knew \$300 at that time was a lot. \$300 was rent for me, my month's rent. I lived in a room in an apartment. So I knew what it was taking out of her, and yet ... That's what I mean by gracious. She was always gracious. When I told her, "this is what I can do this month for this," what kind of hours, she never expected me to work more, you know? Unlike my late academic masters, who would just drive me until I dropped. They would ask me to do more and more and more things. Sit on more committees. Fuck. But not Carolee. ... She handed me a check every month. No explanations.

She was a very dignified person, financially. I know she had a lot of financial problems. Much of them were [because] she was funding her own work. ... When it's just paints and paint brushes, that's one thing, but if you have ropes hanging from things. The more visionary and the bigger, the grander the work, the more expensive it is and the more expertise you need. She funded her own work for decades. Occasionally, she'd get a commission for a piece, but she had nobody to pitch commissions. And that's what managers do. Managers know when there's going to be something coming up in three to five years. And that's what I would tell artists always; I can't be your manager because I don't have those connections. I can't be your

publicist because I don't have the databases. I can't. I won't say that I'll be in charge of press releases for this and that, because I just don't have the database and, again, the connections and the pull that real publicists have and the ability to make things happen. I had none of that. So she knew what [that] entailed because she did it herself. And at great personal cost and cost to her relationships.

Jim [Tenney], he was a working artist too. That's what he did. And for hours every single day. Both Carolee and Jim had the capacity to just immerse themselves in what they wanted to do for hours at a time without resenting it. They were in a flow state. They had the capacity to access flow almost at a moment's notice. They had this ability, and I was in awe of it. I really was. It was astonishing to me. The two of them together, as they were for I guess 13 years—the capacity of that connection must have been just an explosion of creativity.

RH: When Carolee would speak about her early years with Jim, it just seems so miraculous, especially in that period of time, for them to have found each other. ... [Their relationship] seems so equitable and so without the kind of professional competition that I would imagine could happen within a relationship with working artists; it seemed quite harmonious in aspects.

LP: Well, they were fundamentally decent human beings. Which honestly, I can't say for all artists who have great ideas and are super creative. Jim specialized in having male white artist friends who could do nothing but talk about themselves and would never ask Jim a question, "What are you working on? What are you thinking about these days?" Never. It was always them, them, them. And I'm sure you can guess who those people were. Carolee and Jim were not like that. They always asked other people about their work. They were decent people to each other. It was not a competition to them. It was collaborative, enriching both of their lives for each other, and for the world.

RH: I think it's amazing that Carolee maintained such a long friendship with you and with Jim through the course of her entire adult life. She would come out to California and visit, and you all saw a lot of each other.

LP: Quite a bit. I'd try to see her as much as I could. And it wasn't [always] easy [because of] the relationship with Jim—there were long periods where they didn't talk to each other because of Jim's subsequent wives. I'm his fourth wife. Carolee was threatening to [other wives] in a way that she wasn't to me, because I knew Carolee first. Obviously, I trusted her. They would not, for instance, trust Jim to be alone with Carolee. They said ... I won't say they forbid it from happening, but they were pretty strong about it. And I didn't have that relationship at all. It was good for Jim to be able to be in contact with Carolee again because they never stopped loving each other. That was never it at all.

RH: I always think with relationships [that] two people who love each other very dearly for a period of time, it just makes sense to me that that same [love] can transform to something new and different that still has that kind of depth. ...

LP: Totally.

RH: As long as nobody screwed anybody over too badly, ... I don't see any reason why they wouldn't sustain.

LP: That's right.

RH: One of the things I was curious about ... is Carolee's relationship with Ana Mendieta. I know that her death had a profound effect on Carolee and that she made *Hand/Heart for Ana Mendieta* [1986] after, but I was curious if you knew anything. If they were friends or just in the same social circle, if you had any memory of Ana?

LP: Well, I met Ana. It's funny you should ask because a friend of my daughter's has got an installation up, and she was giving a talk on Ana Mendieta in L.A. So Adrian just the other day asked me to send my version of *Hand/Heart for Ana Mendieta* to her. I have it on my wall here. I'll show you. ... There it is, right over Henry's dog dishes, which I'm sure Carolee would appreciate. I'm glad it's in this little interior wall because it's very intense, obviously. ... Carolee gave me the *Hand/Heart for Ana Mendieta*. Actually, she gave me some work instead of the \$300 a couple of times, which I was fine with. She did that for lawyers' fees. You know that, right?

RH: Yes, I do.

LP: Ana Mendieta: I met her at some opening or something. I don't think they were that close, but I couldn't really say. I think Ana Mendieta was not as social as Carolee was. I think she was kind of enthralled with Carl Andre, and she had her own work to do at the same time. So she had this relationship with this extremely competitive, dominant man, and I remember he was big and strong and she was diminutive and delicate. ... I do remember seeing [Carolee and Ana] together. And so that's why I think it was probably an opening or something. I don't think they were all that close.

RH: People are always very interested in Carolee and Ana Mendieta's relationship.

LP: Yeah. Was there anything that you were aware of?

RH: No, ... the only thing I really know of Carolee saying about Ana [and Carl] was just their height difference [that] when they would be together that she would be very aware of their ...

LP: Yes. He looked like a professional wrestler to me. You know, just strong and macho and assertive in the negative. ... [There were some] desperate years before she sold the loft. ... Once she sold the loft, I think everything cleared [up] for her. But again, that was painful for her too, because of the many, many years that she spent going back and forth. She had her feet in two very different worlds. One world was ... absolutely crucial to her own professional promotion and career. She couldn't stay in upstate New York the entire time, or her career, such as it was, would just die completely. I think you can see that with other people. So to sell that New York place, it put her in a position where she didn't have to make those [choices]. ... You can see already, we've talked about disagreements and struggles that Carolee had. These things seem to be going on, more or less, all the time. ... There are certain people, I found out as a long-term arts administrator, there are certain people that these kind of disagreements and upsets, they just glom onto certain kinds of people. There's always some kind of controversy. Carolee was one of those people. There are some people to whom that gets pretty obnoxious. But Carolee was always able to kind of smooth it out, because of her exceptional social skills. But still, she had a lot of conflict.

RH: Yeah.

LP: For various reasons. Some of it generated by her, some of it generated by other people. But there was a lot of conflict ... I'm the kind of person, I'll just back off. Carolee was not that person. ... She was very, very persistent in everything. Everything. What made her life possible was her own persistence, as well as many other things. ... I was saying, I've been intimately connected with at least three truly, truly exceptional people in the world: Pauline Oliveros, Jim Tenney, and Carolee Schneemann. I don't know how I got so fortunate. I [met] Pauline at a party. It was Charlie Morrow's Solstice party. Do you know who Charlie Morrow is? He's a longtime downtown person. I think he's based in Vermont and Finland right now, or something like that. But he did big events, big pieces. And he did, for instance, solstice celebrations on the lawn of Central Park and things like that. I was in New York. I came to New York at the begging of this guy who dumped me within a month or so. I was on my own in New York. But he had introduced me to Wendy Chambers. ... She also was a musician, and she specialized in multiple instruments. Fifty trumpets, things like that. She had the car horn orchestra.

RH: Oh, wow. Oh, I'll have to look her up.

LP: I think she's still alive. She wasn't doing very well physically last I heard. Anyways, this guy, he was in the book publishing business. ... We both worked for Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, and that's how I met him. Wendy took me to this party that Charlie Morrow—for the wrap up of the solstice party / festival thing that they had in Central Park. And that's where I met Pauline, because she also had a piece for multiple instruments that they played in Central Park. I met Pauline, and she, of course, was very engaging and asked me about what I was doing, not telling me about what she was doing. She eventually said, "Do you know anything about computers?" Well, I had used a computer once. And this was actually at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. ... We had yearly meetings where we'd all go to San Diego or Florida or something and look at new college textbooks that we were going to be selling. This was the early eighties, '81 probably. I went down to San Diego and there was a computer there with floppy disks in the back of a financial textbook. And so we insert the floppy disc and check this spreadsheet thing out on this giant computer. So when Pauline asked me that question, I said, "Yes, absolutely. Yes, I do know some about computers." And then she said, "Maybe we could have a meeting and you can do some work for me." And then I started working for Pauline. That's when I'd been kind of struggling in New York working. I worked for the restaurant company and then from there I met all kinds of people.

I traveled with Pauline to Newfoundland and Texas. We went to two or three New Music Americas. It was under her sponsorship that I set up the New Music America information station in Philadelphia. She was, of course, the hookup to Apple. She got me multiple Apple computers to work on. I traveled out to meet her when she had this speaker company with—I forget what his name is, out in California. Pauline and I did a little California tour. And then eventually she gave my name to Carolee. And then Carolee introduced me to Jim. So I would've had a completely different life, obviously, if I hadn't come to New York.

RH: Where'd you come from? Where were you before you came to New York?

LP: I was in Chicago. But before that, I had been at Michigan State. ... I grew up in Massachusetts. My father was born in the house that I grew up in. I mean, we were long-term Massachusetts. But I went to school at Michigan State. I wanted to get out of town, I wanted everything new and different, so I went to Michigan. I went halfway across the country to Michigan State and I stayed there for 13 years. And then we eventually went down to Chicago,

because my partner at the time, we had a restaurant and a music bar. I was involved in music then; I helped produce festivals and bar bands and that kind of thing. He eventually went broke with the restaurant and had started working for Marriott. So he got a job in Chicago and we moved down there. And that's when I was managing a restaurant down there for a while.

Then I got tired of the restaurant business and started applying for jobs with tech for textbook sales. I interviewed with a lot of people... Little Brown, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. And that's when I got into the textbook business, through which I met this guy from New York. We had a long-distance relationship for a while. And then I hurt my back picking up books in an Illinois motel room. I picked up a box of books and my back just went out the wrong way and I had to be carried out to the hospital. It was really bad. My boyfriend came out and drove me back, ended up driving me back to New York, and then I finally got disability, and he convinced me to come out to New York, and I did. And then he dumped me about a month later. So I met Pauline and then started the trajectory that eventually led me to Jim. Essentially, that was an opportune, very fortunate moment for me. I'm grateful that I had that wonderful life in my mid-20s to mid-30s. It was absolutely unique. That party where I ended up meeting Jim...

RH: Carolee loved to tell that story, and I'd be so curious what the story actually is.

LP: Oh, well, Carolee had it pretty right. Jim had been through, at that point, lung cancer himself and lost one lung. He had two children at the time, [who] were one and a half and three and a half. And then his wife—his third wife—died of colon cancer, which had just spread everywhere. Which is thanks, may I say at this moment, to the incredible sexism of the American healthcare system and probably healthcare systems everywhere. [Ann] had Adrian before Jim knew he was sick. It all happened in one year. Through the summer, she complained that she had pains in her abdomen, and the doctors would say, "Well, every woman is different." You know, postpartum pains. Meanwhile, in October, Jim has pains in his lungs, and they take him in right away and x-ray him, and it turns out he has lung cancer, gets the operation. Ann is still hurting. And then in January, they finally take her seriously. She's got a six-month-old baby at that point. It's gone too far ... the cancer has gone too far. They try radiation, [but] it's just too late. So in the spring, you've got Jim still recovering from his lung operation, and he had a wife who's dying; she died the following September.

Jim took a leave of absence from York University and decided that he was going to drive around the country with his two little kids, one and a half and three and a half. This is the point when I told my mother this story, she said, "That man is crazy. Don't marry him." I mean, it was crazy. It was. They weren't even toilet trained. He bought a van and packed the kids in car seats in the second seat of the van and started driving. He drove down to Boston. He planned it all out. He knew where he was going to stay. Drove down to Boston to visit Ellen Band [composer and sound artist], who was an old friend of his, former student. Then he planned to go down to New York City, where the kids' godparents are. Winston Roeth is the godfather, he's a painter. And the godmother is Susan Osberg, who is a dancer. And so they have a big loft down—it's right down there by Central Street.

He got in touch with Carolee, of course, and Carolee put on a party for him. She said, "Oh, wait till you meet Jim. He's wonderful." And my role was calling people up and asking them to this party. I was calling up, you know, all Jim's [friends]. ... [Stan] Brakhage [filmmaker] was in town and Phil Corner [composer] and Jackson Mac Low [poet], everybody that she could think of that knew Jim. [Jim] said later his reason for having taken this trip was when people hear you have lung cancer, and there was of course no Facebook or anything like that back then, and the next thing they know, they hear you died, because that's usually what happens when people have lung cancer. And he said, "I want people to know that I'm still alive." So he

drove cross country with these two little kids in this van. ... [Carolee] threw this party for him and it was great. There were probably, I would say 20, 30 people there. It was a big party. And that's where I met Jim. And he was a very charismatic, dynamic person. And I don't know if you've ever seen him. There's quite a bit of YouTube up where you can actually see Jim teaching, for instance.

RH: Yeah. I've watched footage of Jim.

LP: He was a dynamic guy and very attractive, although skinny as anything. He probably weighed 140 pounds at that point, because he was still recovering. So I ended up staying the night there at the apartment with Jim, who couldn't really do anything but wanted to. He [had] drunk a ton. He was an alcoholic, as I'm sure you're aware. ... The next day he left on his way to California. He kept calling me. I'd be working down at Pauline's and he'd call me. And he finally went out to California, went out to Hawaii, and [at one point] he was in the Chicago area and he called and asked if he could come back and visit me on his way to Toronto, which was complete bullshit because New York is not on the way to Toronto from Chicago. I said yes, and so he did. He came back and that was the beginning of it. For a while there were very cheap flights from New York to Toronto Island. You could do a round trip for \$90 or something like that. So I'd go up every once in a while and he'd come down, and he came down to New Music America when it was in Philadelphia. Finally, I went up and stayed and it was great. It was really terrific. I mean, he was an alcoholic. That was a huge part of our lives, which I'm not going to diminish. He probably was with Carolee as well. And he came by his lung cancer honestly; he smoked three packs of unfiltered Camels a day in the height of his smoking.

RH: Oh my gosh. He's smoking all day long.

LP: In some of the old pictures, you can see these just stuffed ashtrays. When he got lung cancer, he quit smoking and never smoked again. He didn't smoke weed; he didn't smoke anything. But he had the attitude about smoking, which he later had about drinking, which was, "if I quit drinking, am I still going to be creative?" He believed [it was] part of the work that he did, and the flow; there's been books written about this, of course. What's her name? Olivia, something like that, about alcoholic writers [*The Trip to Echo Spring* by Olivia Laing, 2013]. He just was so afraid of losing whatever he had. He never missed a deadline, not one. And once he got up to Canada, you get commissions up there, which you don't in the States, or commissions are super infrequent.

But Carolee really was not into drinking the way Jim was for sure. I don't think she really had any addictions at all, except maybe to sex. ... A healthy addiction ... which doesn't have too many side effects. But one side effect that I think it did have was how infernally lonely ... she was... in her later years. ... Carolee had a functional sexual drive, shall we say. ... It was a huge part of her vision of herself and her identity, it was very, very hard for her. Thinking about even working with her, now looking back on it, she wasn't that old in her fifties. The two times we performed together, she was extremely anxious about her appearance, what she once called mutton dressed as lamb. Uh oh. She and I were in Filene's Basement once. I don't know if you'd ever been to Filene's Basement.

RH: I'm familiar with Filene's Basement.

LP: Yeah. She and I were up there. That could have been when we were up there for the modern art piece that... I was functional in helping her get placed [in] that. [referring to *New*

Rituals in Contemporary Art, Museum School of Fine Arts, Boston, MA in 1988]. We went down to visit my home place in Marshfield. We were looking for clothes in Filene's Basement and she referred to something that she thought she couldn't wear at the age of 55. "Oh, Carolee," you know? And she was anxious about how she would appear.

I remember once—and this was not good. Sometimes I was not great. I was in my twenties. I was stupid. I talked about Rachel Rosenthal [performance artist], who at that time was beginning her *Crone's* series ... and I didn't actually use the word "crone" to Carolee. But I said, maybe part of the work could be you're aging into a different ... your understanding about aging into a different kind of work. ... I didn't say the word crone. I didn't say aging. I didn't say, "Carolee, stop taking your clothes off." I didn't say any of those things. I was smart enough to know that would've been offensive to her, but she was offended just that I brought up [aging] at all. She taught me that as well, in terms of working with artists, which was extremely useful to me in my long-term career as a concert producer and event producer, working with many different kinds of artists: I do not have opinions about their work. I just don't have them. I don't think about it. I don't think about ways that they could do it differently, even if I hate it. Technically I will make suggestions about people's work and the way they can do it better or in a different way that might work better for them. But aesthetically, I just stood back. I was not a creative producer. My job was to make sure the thing got up on stage the way they wanted it, to the best of my ability. But I had no opinions. And that made it very easy for me to produce. I think I picked a part of that up from Carolee, too, because she wasn't really interested in my opinions or anybody's opinions about how her work should look or should be. And that's good. I respect that now. Her expressing anxiety about it is just a way of ... she's showing me the process and how she was working through it herself. You have to begin by acknowledging what you're really feeling about it. And she was doing that and ... it wasn't my job to tell her how to fix her work.

RH: It seems like withholding your opinions is kind of the only way you can really maintain those kinds of relationships, you know? I can't really imagine telling Carolee how to treat something conceptually, or to change this or to change that.

LP: I needed to learn that because ... I find this to be the case mostly when artists go into arts administration, they want to pick at other people's work. I think it's one of the things that all three of those people—Pauline, Carolee, and Jim—appreciated about me, which was I was not an artist. So I offered no threat to them in any way. And not that they would've thought about that. They didn't have to respond to my work for one thing, which is another delicate situation, which I think was an issue with Jim and Ann [Tenney's second wife], who was [also] a musician. And she felt, I mean, I've read her diaries. She felt judged by Jim as not being a very good musician. And maybe she was, maybe she wasn't, but that's what she felt was coming from her partner, and that's never helpful. The other thing I did for all three of them was I treated them like human beings and not like minor gods, which was absolutely an issue for Pauline. I know, I heard later that somebody was on her board for a while and then resigned because she said there's been a kind of a cultish thing that's built up around the personality cult of Pauline. And it was difficult for Pauline, she said she felt that people were just sucking her energy out of her. They wanted her wisdom. They wanted to be in her presence. And I wasn't that way. I was like, here's Pauline, she's got a job for me to do.

RH: I relate to that.

LP: Yeah. And I think Carolee had difficult relationships in a similar sense, in that for some people she was this goddess of feminism. For some people, she was this person who they perceived as an idol breaker, and therefore she had to be edgy and idol breaking all of the time. And they needed normalcy in their lives, not worship. And I think I helped bring that to their lives, which I appreciate now.

RH: Yeah. That's a gift to just treat someone like they're anybody else and not... I think somebody like Carolee did a lot of sort of self-mythologizing, you know.

LP: Yes. You know how old she is? Do you know when she was born? I've got a good story about that.

RH: Yeah, I want to hear the story... She was born in 1934?

LP: Correct. ... She was born in 1934, which is when Jim was born. However, by the time I was in the picture, she had bumped that up to the degree that when I met Jim and figured this out and looked at everything ... it looked like Jim had actually married a child bride.

RH: ... When you really look at it, it does get really confusing.

LP: It kind of jumps out at you immediately if you look at her chronology. But the thing I do have a story about is: I was sitting with her in her loft at the kitchen table and she had just gotten her mail and she opened it up and in it was her new passport. So she opened it up and immediately took out a razor and on her passport started razoring off 1934, and she was going to change it... And I said, "Carolee, don't do that." You know, it's illegal to do that. And I said, you're going to be traveling, and you're going to be using that passport. She inked in the new date with her ink pen. And she says, "Oh, they'll never notice this." And I mean, this was before they had that special lamination.

RH: Yeah.

LP: It was just regular old paper. But still—she had no qualms about doing it.

RH: How funny. Well, at some point in time, she was able to get everything reflecting that 1939 date.

LP: Right. Why do you think she did that? I never really understood that. Why that calendar age was so crucial to her? ... Carolee was ... very sensitive about being perceived as a serious person. Because she was very serious. She and Jim were two of the most serious people that I know. Yet nobody ever called Jim unserious, but plenty of people called Carolee unserious and it was damaging to her. It absolutely was. Because it was demeaning and diminishing [to] her mind and her work. ... And I must tell you that the reason I finally ended up more in music than in visual art, or theater for another thing, is because I feel like musicians, especially musicians in unpopular music as my husband used to call it—

RH: [*Laughs.*] Unpopular music.

LP: They're doing it because they love it. They do not care about the money. They literally do not care. And Carolee was the same way about art. She was going to do it no matter if she was

making [money]. She would've liked to have made some money, but she was not going to compromise her work in order to make it more commercial so it would be easier to sell. And I respect that so much. I respect artists so much. And musicians, for the most part, that's all there is, you know?

RH: Oh, totally.

LP: It's even worse than it was because now you can't even make money from recordings, which at one time you could. Now you can't. But they do it anyways. And that's why I work for them. I'm writing grants for the Partch Ensemble in LA.

RH: Harry Partch [composer and instrument maker]?

LP: There's an ensemble dedicated to performing. They've rebuilt a number of the instruments and they're performing.

RH: Oh, very cool.

LP: Oh, yes. They're wonderful. Well [grant writing] is hard and it's time consuming. But it's easy for me and I've got no investment in it, so it's not as difficult. It's like doing your own taxes, you know? But I'm working for them for nothing because, for one thing, the musicians in that group, they worked for years for nothing. They got no payment simply because they wanted to play the work. They wanted to get the work out there. And I'll work for people like that. They need the support. You're doing it too. And it's crucial that we do this work. It really is.

RH: ... [I have a question about an exhibition] in '84, so maybe you wouldn't have been around quite yet, but they were doing a big show at the Whitney called *Blam!* [*The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance, 1958–64*] ... And she wasn't included in it and had to get—I think Allan Kaprow plus [Claes] Oldenburg lobbied on her behalf to the museum, [saying] it's absolutely essential that Carolee be in this show. And then when she wrote the curator, she said, "It has been my lot as an artist to be marginalized." And that was in '84. I was just thinking how you were entering into that period of time when things were just happening over and over. She's getting written out of the history. She's not in the catalog. She's not in the exhibition. It took her a long time. ...

LP: Yeah. It was hard for her to watch younger artists. I remember that in the '80s, younger women performance artists were just starting to come up at that time. And many of them [were] building on her work. How could they not [acknowledge] it? And [they were] getting big shows and big installations and, "Oh, this new thing," women including their bodies in their work, you know? [*Laughter.*] And she felt so burned. She felt used and burned. Where were they 10, 15 years previous when she had done these extremely groundbreaking things, you know? She felt like she was riding the wave for a while, and then it just moved on and left her behind. And she felt that others were reaping the benefits of her work. And yet, she understood ... and she was supportive of younger women. She was not unsupportive. It wasn't like, "Fuck all y'all. I don't care," you know? No. She was supportive and she worked for younger women. But it must have been so galling for her to see how they were lauded for work that she had pioneered. It was hard.

RH: Being a vanguard like that and being ahead of your time, that's kind of part and parcel of that experience. You build all these roads that people drive on behind you. ...

LP: And again, both she and Jim were in a similar position. But they were both very gracious about it in a way that some people just cannot be. ... Like I said, I'm glad that Carolee got it in the end. It was very important to her, but in the meantime, she endured a lot to get to that position. And you wonder what it would've been like if she had gotten a full-time teaching position somewhere, for instance. She often said that she wanted to, but I just don't see her working in that. ... She was an inspirational teacher. But, you know, four classes including figure drawing or...

RH: Meetings.

LP: [*Laughter.*] Meetings.

RH: Could you imagine?

LP: No, I can't. Carolee would've been constantly endangering her position. And the stress of that would've been very difficult for her. Even Jim, when he got retired from York University, and that's how he was able to take—well, we needed this job at CalArts, and it happened to come up. And he applied for it and got it. But at CalArts, there's no tenure. You're on a three-year contract. All academics are on a three-year contract. And when Jim came to the end of his, we went down there in 2000, and when Jim came up for review in 2003, he was super nervous. He said, "I hope they renew my contract." He said, "I hope I don't get let go." He said he was anxious about it. And for Carolee to constantly feel that anxiety about where her next dollar was coming from, essentially. It must have been so destructive to her. It's an absolute tribute to her physical constitution that it didn't take her down the way overwork took me down. My body just couldn't take it, and hers could. But of course, she was doing yoga and dance classes well into her 70s.

RH: Yeah. She knew.

LP: She knew that she had to stay physically fit because the stresses on her were major at all times. ...

RH: Lauren, thank you so much for your time. This has really been an absolute pleasure to speak with you today.

LP: And a pleasure, likewise, on my end to speak with you. And I'm so grateful that you're doing this work on behalf of Carolee.