



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

**Interview with Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint  
Phalle**

**Contact Information**

Reference Department  
Archives of American Art  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560  
[www.aaa.si.edu/askus](http://www.aaa.si.edu/askus)

# Transcript

## Preface

This interview is part of the *Dorothy Gees Seckler collection of sound recordings relating to art and artists, 1962-1976*. The following verbatim transcription was produced in 2015, with funding from Jamie S. Gorelick.

## Interview

JEAN TINGUELY: I make one time a series of paintings, I called this concert for seven pictures, and the public have the choice, this was a construction, of one or two or six different visual parts [inaudible]. It has sounds and people have to choose the sounds and make the sounds in relationship to this picture, just like a piano. People come into the show and has to play all this. It was nothing on when no participation was.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In other words, the concert didn't work. It was in seven different pieces, the concert, with different machines made by him which had a unity. And they didn't work if the people didn't press these buttons to make it work? In other words, people made it alive. They made it move.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes. I make this 1955.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: 1955.

DOROTHY SECKLER: '55, yes. Where is it now?

JEAN TINGUELY: In my studio.

DOROTHY SECKLER: You have it?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, I have it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Has it been used since then?

JEAN TINGUELY: I have used this sometime and the movement show in Amsterdam, Stockholm, and Copenhagen. I showed this at [inaudible] Gallery at 58. And I showed this so many times, this one, just this one part.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: And then, the other part, I started to make Méta-Matic.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. Before we get to that, in this other one where it was involving sound, when you saw the audience actually doing it, did you have a feeling of something, getting across something, a really communication, or of it being important that they should do this?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: It only worked with the participation of the people. So, in other words, if the people didn't make this work or if they weren't there, then nothing was there.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. But how did they seem to feel about it or did you get any impression of whether it was—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Well, each spectator had his own reaction, and each spectator did what he wanted with it, since there was this multiple possibility of making it work in these different ways.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Was the spectator's participation to any extent creative or entirely mechanical?

[Mr. Tinguely and interpreter speak to each other.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Only creative.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Only creative?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, because, in other words, he had the choice. He could make what he wanted, the sounds he could make.

JEAN TINGUELY: It was a base. It's like a base. You can make it what to do, nothing or all.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: You can begin to play, and the possibility to make these different sounds was really something.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Were they markedly different effects according to different selections that were made?

JEAN TINGUELY: Absolutely, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's fascinating.

JEAN TINGUELY: It's so many sounds. The effect was in the sounds. That's what is the important thing. All this was a concert, with seven picture. Within the surface it was visual, and it was visual.

DOROTHY SECKLER: What was visual?

JEAN TINGUELY: You have a picture, construction.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And you made the construction?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, I made the construction.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And seven different constructions?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. They were all in block.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And as they were played, they each made different sounds. So, you see,

two could be played at a time or all together or one. They were played with—

JEAN TINGUELY: The speed, you can change the speed.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, you can change the speed. This was all done with—the spectator did this with his hands, and it was a series of control, like a control panel.

JEAN TINGUELY: It was a control panel in the gallery.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And were the visual elements, these block shapes, were they things that were also sound-producing?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Sound-producing and moving, that's right, at the same time.

JEAN TINGUELY: Sound and moving at the same time.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: It was in the same time.

DOROTHY SECKLER: What were they made of?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Some of them went so fast that it gave volumes that were more or less, you know, small or large because of the rapidity of movement.

JEAN TINGUELY: Wait a minute. The playing was way fast. You don't see it. You see this ultimate movement.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: I walk like this, but the materialization of one object.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Hold just a sec. I want to see if we're getting this down. I'm going to play back a moment.

[Audio break.]

JEAN TINGUELY: Okay. The other thing was the [inaudible] machine. This was the object that in this time I have—I tie an—I'm learning from this first experience, this concert, and try to make an object that the people have to touch, to go in, to have emotion. This was, anyway, technological construction. It was constructed while people—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: For the people, and measured for them.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

JEAN TINGUELY: It reflects [inaudible].

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Using also their conditioned reflexes.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In the beginning, one had to put money in these machines to make them work. That was the first thing that had to be done.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: Was that symbolic or fun or what?

[They laugh.]

JEAN TINGUELY: This was not fun. This was not fun, too. This was a real mechanism, a technological mechanism to bring the people to go into it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: The people would be more likely to do it if they had paid for it? Is that part of it?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: To engage themselves in it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, yes.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: I wondered if it might have done as a kind of reference to the fact that everything in our society, you know, is paid for? You know, it's a kind of gadget and you put your nickel in—

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —and something happens.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes. Yes, that's true.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It had a little bit of kind of money in it.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes. After this, I make at the same time a sculpture for me. This was my work. I gave in this work all the dimension about participation. Everybody makes different things. We have different choice, different tastes—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: —and have a different attitude about yellow or pink or hot or the high [inaudible] of a flute, let's say.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. Soft. It was all these possibilities. Each one could make—no two drawings of this Méta-Matic were ever the same.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, and there was a real chance for them to register an individuality?

JEAN TINGUELY: Absolutely.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, that's very different from the attitude of this man, who is not—he doesn't—

JEAN TINGUELY: We gave the chance to take this project.

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's very limited.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, it's limited. The participation in my case I think was absolutely.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It was complete?

JEAN TINGUELY: It was completely.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, Jean was really the first person to bring—and I think all this interest has happened afterwards.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He was the person to break this enormous barrier—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —and make people interested. If artists today are interested in participation, I think that Jean is in a sense responsible for it by his drawing machines and by the movement.

JEAN TINGUELY: And plus, they're important.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Because with movement, he was automatically when the people come into a gallery and they see one of Jean's machines working, let's say not even a Méta-Matic, but an ordinary machine, they have to press it and make it work.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. Yes, I remember.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: So, in all of his work there's participation.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. I remember—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: I think it's better.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He says participation doesn't exist without movement.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And in this case, in this limited participation, the participation only exists when you put this ball in here.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: At the moment.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And since Jean's work is concerned primarily with movement, he feels that his work is primarily one of participation.

DOROTHY SECKLER: In this case, Mr. D'Mario's [ph] construction would seem to have an element of in it of mockery of reference to culture in a sardonic way which seems to be rather different from your work—

JEAN TINGUELY: Oh, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —where even if you had started with that idea in the Méta-Matic machine, the fact that you took pleasure in what they did, and they took pleasure in it, would seem to have made it into a rather different kind of experience.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. But there's also an element of joy in all of Jean's things.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: There's an element of liberation.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: The machines are completely free. They are freer than any person could ever be. And this is one of the reasons why there is such contact with the people. In any case, in the drawing machines the people have been able to participate in this freedom. It is a very positive, joyous type of thing.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: It's not against anything; it's for a lot of things.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, that's an interesting point. There have been a number of comments on your work that assumed, since the *Homage to New York*, that you were making a kind of gesture against our own society, against this machine age, and the fact that our lives—

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —are in the hands of machines so much. This is not from your point of view?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: That's one side of Jean. But Jean's work is very complicated to understand because there are so many facets to it. It is so open and he is always changing and going on. He can't ever stay. Because of the fact—

JEAN TINGUELY: That's the idea.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —primarily that he is involved with movement, it keeps on going on.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And so, one person may have seen the *Homage to New York*, just what you said, and I think that is accurate, but, then, that's just one part of Tinguely's work. There are a lot of other parts.

DOROTHY SECKLER: When people went to your opening in the Staempfli Gallery, it was a wild, riotous night, and everybody was having a great time.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And then, I read later on—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: We know only that the whole show only worked when there were people there. And as soon as there was no one there, nothing was working.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. We were all pressing buttons and—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, that's right. Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes. This was really participation.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It was a wild feeling. People felt an exhilaration and sort of like it was a great, good time, even though some of them, obviously, did not take it seriously in terms of traditional art forms.

But the point was that I understand that from something that was in the *New Yorker* profile that some of these machines were to you, Mr. Tinguely, really frightening in their quality and not just funny.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And I wondered if this disturbs you at times.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He says no. He says he lives with them, and he doesn't—being a certain part of life—

JEAN TINGUELY: There is nothing of the machine. I make it; that's all.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He just makes it and he goes on to another one.

DOROTHY SECKLER: So, if they get a different reaction, it doesn't bother him?

Let's see, as far as how you came to arrive at this kind of expression, you know, a critic must always be a little bit interested in the history—



JEAN TINGUELY: Mm-hmm.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —and what is the background of thought.

JEAN TINGUELY: The background is the impossibility to fix, the impossibility to fix *quelque chose*...

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

JEAN TINGUELY: The surface on the [continues in French].

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: The only way of making something which has stability is to make it in movement.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Because all other, let's say, works of art, paintings, sculptures become a sign of their times, and then, they're in the past. But the movement keeps it alive and actual.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Well, movement has a little bit of a history, Calder and constructivism, and so on.

JEAN TINGUELY: Sure. Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Did they have an importance in your thinking originally?

JEAN TINGUELY: Not so much, no.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Surrealism involved people getting in and out of things in exhibitions. Did that influence you?

JEAN TINGUELY: No. No, not so much.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Or something like Kessler and his *Galaxy*?

JEAN TINGUELY: Nothing. No, no, no.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Nothing like that?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

JEAN TINGUELY: Tout le influence de Bauhaus.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: By the Bauhaus.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Duchamp?

JEAN TINGUELY: Not too much, no.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Nothing much from Duchamp.

JEAN TINGUELY: Actually, Schlemmer

DOROTHY SECKLER: Schlemmer. Really?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, Morianacci [ph].

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's interesting.

JEAN TINGUELY: And Moholy-Nagy in the beginning a little bit.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: Not influenced, but, just knowing.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, it is important was that Calder existed. So, this was important.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

JEAN TINGUELY: This idea of his, his work of combines, it is really positive, you know, to know this.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

JEAN TINGUELY: And they just give me the confidence to make something and not in this direction.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: With the movement, it gave him more liberty because of—Calder.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Calder relaxed him.

[They laugh.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: He has that quality on everybody, doesn't he? He has that effect on everybody?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: But if you were influenced by Schlemmer and Moholy-Nagy, your own spirit seems very different—

JEAN TINGUELY: Oh, it is.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —from that of the Bauhaus.

JEAN TINGUELY: It is. No, no.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No. No, he's just talking about in the beginning—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —who were his interests when he was starting.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And then, after that, he got completely involved with his own world, and, obviously, it's not—it may be hard to see it now, the connection.

DOROTHY SECKLER: To back to the audience participation angle, which is the primary theme of my article—

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —it would strike me—I remember, Niki, you said, of course, that one pragmatic or practical way of thinking about is that audiences art had become very limited and that you preferred not to have your art, your work, seen only by a coterie or a few collectors.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: But I would think that there would always have to be something more basic to one's outlook to actually make this audience participation a very important element in the very conception of the work. And I wondered if it had a kind of symbolic quality, that the audience taking part in the work of art is a kind of, well, it is a kind of maybe symbol of a civilization in which we don't contemplate and we don't analyze, but we act, or something of that sort.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Well, in my case, I can't answer you because, I mean, I don't think that much. Mainly, for me, it's all instinctive. So, if these things are there, I don't think about it a little bit more and tell you.

DOROTHY SECKLER: But you wouldn't start anyway from that?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: I wouldn't start from that point of view.

DOROTHY SECKLER: No.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: I would start, in my case, I came to the Shooting because before I had done paintings where I threw or I made a head of a man with a target, and then, the body was made with a shirt and tie, and it was painted. When for the first time I saw people—I had one of these paintings in a show—and I saw people throwing the darts. Something happened that I liked. Something very important happened to me when I saw the people getting involved with what I was doing, even on such a primary level as shooting the dart, using what I had done as a game.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And after that, in my case, came the Shooting.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I wonder how it happened that people shot at your targets and they never shoot at Jasper Johns'?

[They laugh.]

Was Jasper Johns at all in contact? I mean, you were doing things, of course, before we ever heard of Jasper Johns, I would imagine—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —as far as that is concerned.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: But, of course, all kind of art is a type of participation in a sense because you want a reaction from the public.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: But I think in this case it is a new kind. I think that, for instance, these pictures that you were showing me here, this is in this case a much more classical type of participation. What we have seen, this is what Picasso and other people have done.

I'm not saying that the work—

JEAN TINGUELY: And Giacometti.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And Giacometti.

I'm not saying that the work of art is the same, but I mean to say that it is more, it is a type of participation that we have been used to. Whereas, I think the Tinguely has made a completely new kind of participation.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

JEAN TINGUELY: Giacometti at first—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, Giacometti did these particular things.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Really?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: When?

JEAN TINGUELY: Well, 30 years ago.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Thirty years ago?

JEAN TINGUELY: Oh, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Well, where were they shown?

JEAN TINGUELY: It was first shown at—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In the Movement show which was in Stockholm.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Really?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: You should have a catalogue of the movement show.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Where could I get it?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Do you have one, Jean?

JEAN TINGUELY: No, I don't have it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I'd love to look at it.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Also, I mean, for me, it was very thrilling. You know, we worked on this dynamic labyrinth this summer, and that there were how many—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

JEAN TINGUELY: Forty thousand.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —Forty thousand in one month that came into the museum to see this particular show. And there was an enormous contact, a great enthusiasm. Obviously, there's some people who hated it. I mean, that doesn't matter.

There was this involvement with a new kind of spectator, not the culture spectator, who is often a very unique spectator.

DOROTHY SECKLER: You feel that this actually brings in a different kind of audience? That's an important point in my article.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. Oh, absolutely. Because in the Stedelijk, Sandberg was absolutely delighted with it. He said people came to the museum who would never come otherwise. People come in the street to see Tinguely. And this is where I feel we differ a great deal, let's say, from the Happenings and things like that.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: This is on a very popular level this functions. And Jean thinks people come in from the street as soon as they see it. Anybody who walks by it in the street will come in and watch it. In the Stedelijk in this labyrinth, as soon as the newspaper wrote about it, crowds of people, millions of children came in.

JEAN TINGUELY: Not millions.

[They laugh.]

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And another person who has been working in this that you should have for your article is Ultvedt.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I'm going to write that down.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: The *Shooting Gallery*—the three elementary things, and the participation has been Ultvedt, the drawing machines, and my *Shooting Gallery*.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Was he also in this same show?

JEAN TINGUELY: No. Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, he was.

DOROTHY SECKLER: He was? Where else could I get information about him? I've never heard of him before.

JEAN TINGUELY: Ultvedt? At the Stedelijk Museum.

DOROTHY SECKLER: At the Stedelijk? Okay.

JEAN TINGUELY: In Amsterdam.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Or the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. And you probably have more.

DOROTHY SECKLER: First, we started off with the idea of this being an artist in America having this participation thing, but I think we just have to broaden it out because there aren't that many in this country.

One artist, one American that I've talked with is Len Lye, who admires you enormously, and he's been a little bit—in a way, it isn't exactly audience participation.

JEAN TINGUELY: It's not the participation. No, it's more than Calder. That is with Calder.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In Ultvedt's case, the people are used as motors.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Oh, heavens.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: I mean their energy, their energy is used to make things happen.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: And Lippold has done something recently. In a building he's just designing, I think, he has it so that when people walk along certain ramps, they break—I think it's an electric beam, and it starts off certain patterns of music, and their movement controls the kind of music.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He says, in the case of these three artists that he has mentioned, himself, Ultvedt, and Icis [ph], the whole weight of each artist is behind this participation. It isn't just an idea

—

DOROTHY SECKLER: An occasional thing?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —or an occasional thing.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: It is not something that's occasional.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: The whole artistical quality of a person comes out.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Much more than in my case, because, as you saw, I had other paintings.

JEAN TINGUELY: I started with it. Yes, I started with it.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: Where could I see it, the Giacometti?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In the catalogue of the—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Oh, yes, it's here. It's here.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: I'll just make a note here, so I'll know what I'm looking for here.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: It would seem to him that if—of course, the happening being another thing in itself because there isn't an actual work involved, if you see what I mean. He would think that Kaprow would be the one who would be the most involved in all the participation.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Kaprow, yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Because, for instance, in the Oldenburg happenings that we saw, it was something very shut, and the audience is outside and you watch this going on.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: But Kaprow's involves people in much more.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. He has something on right now, hasn't he? I want to see it.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, in Philadelphia.

DOROTHY SECKLER: In Philadelphia.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Because, for instance, in Kaprow's case, they threw some cream on the

visitor.

JEAN TINGUELY: No, no.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No?

JEAN TINGUELY: Oldenburg.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: The Oldenburg. Excuse me.

But Jean thinks, is that really a participation, to throw some cream on somebody?

DOROTHY SECKLER: I was at one last June where we had moved around a good bit, shuttled back and forth.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It was very uncomfortable. And it was said that this discomfort was supposed to be, the idea of making you hot and uncomfortable gave you a certain psychic—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Jean calls that "violation."

[The laugh.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: You don't like to make your audience uncomfortable?

JEAN TINGUELY: I just see it as a different thing.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Because there is no choice. He says it's a different thing entirely. And it's not that he's against this at all, but in this case the audience has to do this. In Jean's case, there's always the choice.

DOROTHY SECKLER: A choice. That's an important point, yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And so, participation doesn't exist where there's no freedom.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It's a freedom, yes. Yes, yes.

I think that the thing that I never quite understood before about machines like the Méta-Matic, that there was a real freedom—

JEAN TINGUELY: Oh, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —a real freedom of choice.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, you can make what you will.

DOROTHY SECKLER: So, it was not exactly like a robot thing?

JEAN TINGUELY: No.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It was almost the opposite?



JEAN TINGUELY: Oh, no.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: I think that it's impossible to have participation without freedom. Really it's something else then.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: If you want to take somebody and make him do something that you want to do, you can't call that "participation."

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: And this thing is so limited in what you can do, that it sort of dissuading, isn't it, to the audience to say that the only thing you can do is put this in or push it back?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, I agree.

JEAN TINGUELY: Oh, no, it's nothing—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

JEAN TINGUELY: Bob Rausch [sic] made the same thing. Bob Rausch made a painting that moved, where the movements show.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Rauschenberg?

JEAN TINGUELY: Rauschenberg.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes?

JEAN TINGUELY: And that's why the painting like four panels. And you have to write, and you can make what you like for these things. That was real good. This was a real good participation.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: And you can bring in more on the output and you can take away.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: You can make something. You have to—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: —make the decision—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: The decision yourself.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, I would say I would agree with Jean that this one painting of Rauschenberg in question—he can tell you about it—involves participation, where let's say this does not.

And the happening in which you said about the people being moved back and forth—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —would not involve, that's not participation, either, because the choice isn't there.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Very good.

My microphone has just fallen over, and I want to go back a little to see if we if we missed something.

[Audio break.]

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: It sounded wonderful, but I couldn't catch it.

[The laugh.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In this case, what he would do in this case is that he would steal the ball himself.

[They laugh.] And this is what happens often in this case, and this is what happened in Giacometti's case, where the ball was assured for numerous millions of France because people had this reaction; they wanted to steal it. They didn't want to put it in.

[They laugh.]

And so, it was a great problem with the museum of leaving the ball out. Should they or shouldn't they?

DOROTHY SECKLER: Wasn't it made in some unusual material?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No, it was made of wood.

JEAN TINGUELY: Made of wood.

DOROTHY SECKLER: A wooden ball like that.

Was it this kind of action on the Giacometti?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, it was kind of a circle in which one could put the ball at various places.

JEAN TINGUELY: In different places if the ball changed.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: Did the weight of the ball make things happen or something like that?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: There's someone called Brecht who works to a certain decision, still with participation.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: It's called Brecht.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. And where is he located?

JEAN TINGUELY: New Jersey, I think. Watts and Brecht. Two young Americans. He used the block participation.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. They were also in his movement show in Amsterdam and Stockholm.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Are any of the groups involved with the magazine zero audience participation from your point of view?

JEAN TINGUELY: No, no. No, I don't see that.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I thought some of them might be just sort of—

JEAN TINGUELY: No, no. I know these people.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

JEAN TINGUELY: It might have been in a [inaudible]. I know these people. I never see them. I never heard about participation.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And as far as you know, in this country these would be the ones that you would consider most involved?

JEAN TINGUELY: Oh, yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: More that [inaudible].

DOROTHY SECKLER: Watts and Brecht?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And did you say there was one other? And Kaprow, of course, we've already —

JEAN TINGUELY: That Kaprow happening was—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: The show that he has on right now, apparently, involves something, pressing buttons or pulling levers. I don't know exactly what else about it. Do you? Have you seen any of it?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No.

JEAN TINGUELY: Mm-mm.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I must find out about that, too.

JEAN TINGUELY: I heard about it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. Because he would be—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He said, in the sense of a work of art, considering a work of art is a limited thing, not theater or not, you know, something outside, but in the scope of work of art he thinks that the work that has been the most answers to participation that's been done so far, because he can see them now with a certain distance because it's been several years since he's made them, are the drawing machines. And I would agree with him.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Is there more than one drawing machine now?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes. I make 18.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: 18.

DOROTHY SECKLER: 18?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Good heavens.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: There is one marvelous situation in the museum in Stockholm. The museum bought a small one, a drawing machine. And it wants to buy the very big one that Jean made for No.—

JEAN TINGUELY: 17.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —17. And so, the little one, all the money that's being put by the spectators into the little one is buying the big one.

[They laugh.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's really audience participation on several levels.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It's a very good feeling, actually.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: This is the director of the museum who decided this, that the little one is going to buy—

JEAN TINGUELY: That's very smart, yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: It's very smart. It's paid about one-third of the big one already.

JEAN TINGUELY: It makes 50 coins, okay, like \$10 in the day.

[END OF TAPE 1.]

JEAN TINGUELY: One project was there was an object, and I don't remember what this was called. He was to destroy it. And to give this a show, and he wait on the moment the people, they can destroy the subject.

DOROTHY SECKLER: They were supposed to take it and destroy it?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes, it takes 30 years for only two years in a show in Paris; someone make it and destroys it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I read something about it.

JEAN TINGUELY: That's a main participation.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: It's an important one.

[They laugh.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: It's the biggest participation.

[They laugh.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Someone finally destroyed it after all this time.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Well, I was reading about that somewhere. Do you remember reading about it in the last week or so?

JEAN TINGUELY: I don't know. I know that I heard this in the paper—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: —the newspaper and—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, just very recently.

JEAN TINGUELY: —I was just laughing at it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I'm so glad you reminded me because I had forgotten about that.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And someone just took it and threw it in the street.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Some boys, they took it out and did it.

[They laugh.]

JEAN TINGUELY: The gallery was very frightened, and then, I said, "No, that's okay."

[They laugh.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: What gallery was it?

JEAN TINGUELY: I don't really remember.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Was it [inaudible]? Were there other people who did shows [inaudible]?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Certainly he says it could be researched, but you could make among the dadaist [inaudible].

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: There was probably a certain audience participation.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Probably others, not only Man Ray.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. You know, I only have until Thursday to do all this, and I'm teaching all day tomorrow. Isn't that ridiculous?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Call up Duchamp and he'll tell you.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I could? I'm so afraid of anyone like that.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: Did Duchamp himself make anything? I can't discover anything in Duchamp where he actually made the audience participate, but there are many things that are like it, you know—

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —where things happen, like the—

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In any case, he could tell you about, if he doesn't have anything which involved direct participation, he would certainly know of—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

JEAN TINGUELY: I think he knows good.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I'm sure he would know. I just didn't hardly dare to bother him about it.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No, I'm sure he would be delighted. Jean will give you the number.

JEAN TINGUELY: That's his phone number.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Oh, wonderful.

JEAN TINGUELY: 84-8692.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: 84-8692. Very good. Well, that's a great idea.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, this is working.

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's alright. I was trying to get a little more behind why the movement thing led you into audience participation. And I thought that there must have been behind it some sort of sense of its corresponding to, well, corresponding to a philosophical position in a certain way.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes. Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: People, by doing something, are acting out what our life is really about and this time. Is part of it like that?

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He says his reasons were basic reasons, but that he personally had to do his art with movement because he could no longer fix anything.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: But you could have pressed a button.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He says that the only stable thing is movement.

JEAN TINGUELY: In all, in life and this world and all things.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He says this comes from people have always tried to fix things because we're all afraid of dying.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Jean says the only chance we have of fixing anything is making it move from the beginning.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It would seem to be particularly friendly to the attitudes in this country in a sense.

JEAN TINGUELY: Today.

DOROTHY SECKLER: We have a philosopher, a religious philosopher, named Paul Tillich who had said of the American people that we have no real philosophy or religion except to keep moving and to keep acting.

JEAN TINGUELY: That's a good, one.

DOROTHY SECKLER: So, would you feel in that sense that New York is perhaps—

JEAN TINGUELY: Not New York; maybe the American people.

DOROTHY SECKLER: The American people? Do you find that you work here better than anywhere else or do you find that it is the same everywhere anyway?

JEAN TINGUELY: No, it's not the same. It's very different. It's too early for me to speak about this.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: He hasn't been here long enough.

DOROTHY SECKLER: You haven't lived here very long?

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes. I can't speak.

[They laugh.]

DOROTHY SECKLER: How long have you lived here now?

JEAN TINGUELY: Only now maybe one year.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Oh, well, of course, then it's a silly question.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In my case, I see the participation in a different sense. For me, it involves a ritual, a ritual that perhaps I don't really understand myself. But in the case of the *Shooting Gallery*, where there is a participation of the people, first of all, I go through this elaborate structure that I make and I want the people to color my world, what I've made. In other words, I don't give them a choice. It's not shooting bags of paint, let's say, at a canvas.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: They have to color this enormous construction that I've gone to a lot of—it's my world.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]

Jean has to go to the dentist.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Oh, yes, that's very important.

JEAN TINGUELY: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Thank you so much.

[Mr. Tinguely and Ms. de Saint Phalle speak to each other in French.]



DOROTHY SECKLER: Tell him that, when I'm writing it, if there is any question of using it or any parts, well, I'll check with him.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: But I assume that he has said what he meant and that—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —I should be able to use—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, yes, yes, absolutely.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —long quotes without any feeling of doubt about it.

Now that I have you for a minute—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —and I thought you might be running off first—In your work there is, of course, a reference to the destructiveness of machines. I mean, you know, bombers and things shattering—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —and a kind of reference to the destructiveness of our society, along with many elements that are, well, affirmative and even nostalgic or, you know, beautiful in the sense of what we have considered beautiful in the past.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, yes, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: You jump from one association to the other.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, but I also say that, for instance, in my case I feel that there's such a thin line that separates the destruction and the construction, that the two are very closely mingled.

And as I was saying before about a ritual being involved, when I make people color this world that I have built, this complicated world out of different objects, but which I have then later transformed and made my own, I paint it all white before they start.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In other words, it's sort of purified before they start shooting at it. And I don't really know whether—it is very important to me that it not be colored before the shooting starts.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm. So, the color should come from action?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: As you say, kind of ritual action, too.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And sometimes the objects that I have found and made in my construction

are very beautiful, the different colors.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, they are.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: But even if they have pleased me, I have wanted to give them this white bath before the shooting.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Did the whites come in reference to the *Shooting Gallery* activity or was your work white for many years?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No, never at all before when I was doing oil paintings, it wasn't. But, since I've started with the shooting, all of them have been white at the beginning, even all, for instance, all the cathedrals that were here—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —well, they all start off being given a white bath. And then, they go into action after that.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm. Gee, that's fascinating, and that makes it much more poignant. I mean, the audience participation comes in a much more integral fashion into your work since the color is really—I had wondered, when I was actually seeing it for the first time, to what extent the color was just a byproduct of action or to what extent you really wanted it there, or whether at some point you would say, "Well, now that's enough color and no more." How does that work? Do you ever feel that this is—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, yes, that this is—not in the *Shooting Gallery*, because I feel that it is such a marvelous possibility that it can go on. It could be worth it going for 100 years in the sense that, once it's all colored, then one can put white back and make it all white again or anyone can make it all pink, or there are infinite varieties that can go on and on.

But in the other works where there isn't audience participation, well, then, I feel that there is an end when I'm satisfied with it, and I'll stop shooting at this point.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Of course, my work has changed, because in the beginning the shooting was much more destructive than it is now because all the paint was inside of the work itself. So, in other words, a lot of the things got destroyed during the shooting. Now, as you saw, in the *Shooting Gallery*, the bags of paint are on the outside—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —and the color, but it is no longer—

DOROTHY SECKLER: There were actual color sacs inside—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: That's right.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —certain of the objects?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And you'd shoot at them and break those?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I noticed there's a beautiful spatter of black over one of them. That isn't done by shooting, is it?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Is it?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: All, everything in the show is done by shooting.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Everything in the show is done by shooting?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I didn't realize that. Well, that's a very interesting point, too. I wonder how many people do. I mean, is there something to tell them that somewhere?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: You know, because you think of the *Shooting Gallery* as being more of a separate thing from the others.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. Well, I think I don't know whether—I mean, I've never brought it up in a conversation. So, I don't know whether people realized it or not.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And you began by doing the shooting yourself?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And then, thought the idea would be very good.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No, I didn't begin by doing the shooting myself. That's what's interesting. I began by not shooting myself. I began by having other people shoot at them. In other words, I almost couldn't bear the idea of shooting at them myself. [They laugh.] So, I had it started that way, and then, I started shooting at them myself afterwards, when the results were—oh, maybe I wanted to bring it back more to myself—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —after a certain point.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Well, in the case of that beautiful black spatter, was that done by you?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: That was done by me, and that was done by—they were paint shooting at Coca-Cola bottles or in one case in the sun; there were plastic bags behind the plaster which I shot at. And there were also these compressed air paint cans, you know, that one sprays one's car with —

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —which made the sort of black. All of that was done by shooting, yes.

But, for me, the shooting, as I said, I also go back to this ritual part, that here I have brought what I can do up to a certain point. In my case, the work involves—I don't know if this is the right word in English: artisanal quality?

DOROTHY SECKLER: The quality of being an artisan, a craftsman?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, a craftsman. And so, I know, more or less, everything that I'm doing. To me, the shooting part brings in a whole other surprise.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: That's right.

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's interesting.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And at the same time, I limit it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm. You mean you limit the amount of accidents?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: That's right.

DOROTHY SECKLER: So, you couldn't completely destroy it?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Exactly.

DOROTHY SECKLER: There is a play between—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —what is established and what can happen

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —as a surprise. And even all of them, there are some of them, of course, that look so—you know, you would think that you must have had to practice for ages to find exactly the one way to put some black that would be just so completely right.

So, this, of course, is an idea that originally came, I suppose, from surrealism, the idea of, well, Dada first, wasn't it chance, and then, into surrealism.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And used also by the abstract expressionists, also—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —in the sense of throwing paint on the canvas is also accident.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, although in their case—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Of course, it's a limited accident because—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Well, there's always, I suppose any accident in a sense is limited.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. Because in my case I choose the colors.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: So, you can't say that it's complete accident—

DOROTHY SECKLER: No.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —because, after all, there's the choice of the colors involved. But exactly what the result will be, that's why I still stay completely fascinated when I'm about to shoot at a painting because I never know exactly—I know what I've done so far, but I never really know exactly what it's going to look like afterward.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Has it ever seemed to be completely unsatisfactory, whatever happened?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Then, what do you do, just reject it?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I mean, do you start again?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And do something else? So, there is a kind of criterion—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —as to some aesthetic standard or an expressive standard—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Oh, absolutely, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —which will be met?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Because even though it's a surprise to me, it doesn't mean that I have to—I mean, some of them I dislike and others I will be pleased with the result.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I often wondered about those beautiful things that Art made by dropping papers according to the laws of chance, you know, how many he must have thrown away because each one of them seemed such an absolute gem.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: But in your own development, what things touched you or what—well, I don't know; "influences" is sort of [inaudible]. But what did you come in contact with that sort of drew you toward this, well, the idea of using the action and the idea of using the people both? Can you trace any of it?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Well, I can trace the things that have, let's say, influenced me the most, that I've been the most touched by, are things like Ferdinand Cheval, or people who have been completely outside of the cultural world, went on and built their own—or like Rodia or Gaudi. Well, Gaudi in a sense was more inside the cultural world.

DOROTHY SECKLER: But who were some of the others?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Ferdinand Cheval is this man who built this fantastic castle in the south of France.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, now I know. Of course.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And Rodia built the Watts Towers in—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, yes, yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: In a sense, these people were completely isolated.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: They built their—

DOROTHY SECKLER: There's a kind of audience participation in that, too, in the Towers—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Absolutely. Because you can wander in.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: They were completely isolated, but they were inside the participation, too.

DOROTHY SECKLER: They weren't in a museum, and they were in an old neighborhood.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And people would come from anywhere. I think that is a very interesting point. I'm so glad you mentioned that.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: For instance, in Castle Cheval people wander in and they become part of the thing.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Also, I've often felt that, I mean, with my cathedrals, that I just didn't go far enough, and that they are just—for instance, the cathedrals that were in the show, I feel that really in a sense my meaning in the gallery world is all sort of cheating because where I would belong would be in doing something like that, cathedrals that people could actually walk into—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mm-hmm.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —and be right inside of them. That's always been a block for me, the fact that I have become part of a cultural world.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Were you ever able to do anything about it in any other way?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Well, for years, you know, I've only been involved—I've been painting for about 10 years. And it's only the last three years that I have gotten involved in the commercial aspect of it. Before I worked completely alone. I never went to art school. I mean, I just wandered.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Really?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: My art school was the primitive museums in like Italy or Spain, the churches, whatever.

DOROTHY SECKLER: That wonderful Catalunya Museum in Brussels.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. I always went to the Catalin Museum.

DOROTHY SECKLER: To me, that was the greatest experience.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I mean, everything else that I had seen just didn't, you know, touch that in Brussels.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No, it's fantastic.

DOROTHY SECKLER: No, I think that's a very good way to start, not to have all this art school stuff and the layers of sophistication that really keep you—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: I think that's one of the reasons why I really hate the art world. I personally hate the culture we're in, and I hate gallery reviews, and I hate my critics. Excuse me.

[Seckler laughs.]

And I feel very strongly about this because I feel in a sense it is such a false position that everything is in once we become so involved. The Museum of Modern Art represents a normal fiscal responsibility.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And so, it is very nice to talk to you, somebody that one can talk to. But many people are involved either in cliques or in this or in that.

I would much rather—I mean, the thing that I remember the most about my show was not such-and-such a critic or an important collector saying, "I like it." There was one woman who came in and say, "I'll remember this for months. It was a marvelous day."

DOROTHY SECKLER: It's a shame that young people have to get trapped into this whole art world, you know. Even here I am doing it, but, I mean, I sort of feel there's something about even the publicity channels, which if you want to advance, then you have to get mixed up with them. But they are sort of—I don't know—like sort of contaminated or exhausted in a certain sense.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And I really think it's a shame what's happening to young artists today. For instance, they're doing so much harm, that they aren't letting people have their natural evolution that they want to make.

They feel that the best commercial thing that they can do is to make groups, is to make movements. And the only thing that's ever been done in art, to my estimation, has been by individuals. And the only groups that have ever remained are because of the individuals that have been in them, like the cubism because of Picasso and Braque.

I feel like today it is a very dangerous situation; I really do.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I think dealers are really promoting the groups.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Particularly, I suppose, since the sort of success of the pop art thing. Now they will go wild on that.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Well, I think that probably there are two or three individuals in this group that really have something to say. But to take anything, I mean, this is to me, well, to me, there's always been one fight, family, school, society. And then, to come back and to find art as a group is something that I personally can't—I have always thought of art as a manifestation of an individual expressing the time in which he lived. And the people in the primitives that we're talking about in that museum expressed the time when they lived. The cathedrals and the religious element was the most important. And I feel that the artists that are the most important today are the ones that are expressing the time in which they lived, like Jackson Pollock or Tinguely with the machines.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Well, that's what I was trying to get at.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And I feel that no group can ever do that. I feel few individuals can do that.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Well, actually, the groups are mostly fabricated. I mean, when I talk to most of the people that were in this group of they so-called Pop—I don't like the word "Pop art."

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It actually seems like an insulting thing.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And I called the Commonists; I thought it was sort of fun. But they really weren't a group so much. They didn't know each other so much or they didn't work together. They got to know each other and had a certain respect for what each other was doing. But they sort of started off really vitally from some personal thing.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. Oh, I agree with you. But the trouble is that the galleries cut this short.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: When I talked to Duchamp—and apparently, the Dada, that was something which was marvelous and purely poetic and no financial interests involved. Now—

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: —an artist gets too rich today much too early.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I know it. I know it.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: And all these same people that are involved in the pop art, I think it is very sad for them. And I'm thinking about I'm involved in this as well as they are, and I think it is a very unhealthy situation.



DOROTHY SECKLER: I do, too. I've been painting for many years. Of course, I don't show at all. I just felt like I couldn't get in that rat race, you know.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Mm-hmm.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I mean not that it probably would have mattered to anything anyway, but, still, I don't know; I just wanted to keep something to do for myself, just to look at, I guess, [laughs] put them around the room and look at them, you know. So, they're kind of like company.

But I think it is a frightful situation really, and I wish I could get out of it. I wish I could get out of being involved with it.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: I know because I have exactly the same problem. On the other hand, I want to do my work and I want to show it. And on the other hand, I wish I had all the same work that I have but nobody had ever seen it sometimes. I understand exactly how you feel.

DOROTHY SECKLER: It would be so wonderful if there were some way of getting it out of the gallery system, you know.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Well, maybe Tinguely's and your things are making a sort of start. I mean, at first when you were talking about the great crowds in the museum, the first thing, of course, you think is, well, maybe numbers aren't so important.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Mm-hmm.

DOROTHY SECKLER: But it would be if there's also a real participation, something different.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Mm-hmm.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Are we occupying your office space? [Speaking to someone who came into the room.]

Well, I think what you have given me has been very, very helpful.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Good. I hope so.

DOROTHY SECKLER: We've almost used up our second tape, too, but I think there's a great deal there.

I know Kaprow a little, and I've wanted to talk to him. I have been waiting too long because I kept thinking, you know, really, I've got to sort out my ideas and see what I want to find out before I contact people. And then, it got so late. And now, I have to do everything else, but this is what always happens.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: When do you have to have your article by? What are we today?

DOROTHY SECKLER: This is Monday—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Monday?

DOROTHY SECKLER: —and I have to teach all day tomorrow. So, it's only really Wednesday and

Thursday morning, and maybe tonight yet I'll get something done.

So, it won't be a definitive work by any [laughs] means on audience participation, but what I do want it to be at least is a clear and simple statement, and to take away from it the atmosphere that it might be just, oh, you know, novelty for its own sake; you know, to see that there is a seriousness and a wish to communicate something that is involved. I think that is the important thing to say.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: And I probably will use a lot of this—I'll probably, you know, winnow out my own questions—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: —in some of the parts where I can't understand the French too well.

[They laugh.]

But I will try to keep very close to what you and Tinguely have said.

Have you been working together at all in the last—

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes. Yes, we've done a few collaborations together.

DOROTHY SECKLER: All right. But I can say you are friends and collaborators?

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: Yes, yes.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I mean in introducing the fact that—I don't see why I just shouldn't do it. As far as I can see, I could do it as a three-cornered interview, maybe even just keeping the question and answer or maybe just letting it be more of a flow of what you said and what he said. I'll see how it will work out best. Anyway, I'll go home and get to work on it. [Laughs.]

But I really appreciate it very, very much.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE: No, it was very nice. I liked talking to you because I think we said a lot of things.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes, I do, too. You know, it has been a very illuminating thing for me. When I actually started, I wasn't at all—

[END TAPE 2.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]