



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Patty
Mucha, 2024 May 10

This interview received Federal support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative Pool, administered by the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum.

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions
www.aaa.si.edu/

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Patty Mucha on 2024 May 10. The interview took place at the artist's home in Saint Johnsbury, VT and was conducted by Michael Lobel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Patty Mucha and Michael Lobel have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

[00:00:04.15] MICHAEL LOBEL: Okay, this is Michael Lobel interviewing Patty Mucha at Patty's home in Saint Johnsbury, Vermont, on Friday, May 10, 2024 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. And this is card number one and interview session one. Patty, I want to thank you for being interviewed today.

[00:00:42.40] PATTY MUCHA: Thank you, Michael, for coming and doing it. Come on.

[00:00:46.09] MICHAEL LOBEL: So, Patty, I'm going to start with some basic information—

[00:00:50.48] PATTY MUCHA: —okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative]—

[00:00:51.42] MICHAEL LOBEL: —because probably the most basic information is your name.

[00:00:56.02] PATTY MUCHA: Is my name?

[00:00:57.07] MICHAEL LOBEL: Yes. But your name changes over time. So I want to ask you about this. So first of all, myself as an art historian, I know that when you were working in the art world, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, sometimes you were referred to as "Pat." And sometimes you were referred as "Patty." And for the purposes of this interview, do you have a preference now? But did your first name change over the years?

[00:01:35.87] PATTY MUCHA: Well, it did. Of course, as a child, I was Patsy, [laughs] which I hated. I was baptized as a Catholic—Patricia, Patricia Joan.

[00:01:47.35] My last name was Muschinski, which is a Polish name. My grandfather's name was Mucha, and he changed his name from Mucha to Muschinski. Go figure. I don't know why, but that happened.

[00:02:03.65] So his sons all changed their name, except for my father. My father kept Muschinski, which is why—that was the name I was when I got married, you know. It was Muschinski and Oldenburg. I was always named as—Claes called me Pat. It was a very harsh way of calling me, but I was Pat Oldenburg in the '60s. Towards the end of my relationship, I think—I think because of Andy—our relationship with Andy for some reason—

[00:02:34.16] MICHAEL LOBEL: —so just to interrupt you for one moment—

[00:02:37.32] PATTY MUCHA: —yes, of course—

[00:02:38.00] MICHAEL LOBEL: —when you refer to Claes, you're referring to Claes Oldenburg, of course.

[00:02:42.57] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, of course.

[00:02:43.59] MICHAEL LOBEL: And when you're referring to Andy—

[00:02:45.46] PATTY MUCHA: —is Andy Warhol. Yeah, and for some reason, I think I became Patty during that time, but I don't know why. But by the time I was divorced, I was Patty.

[00:02:59.93] But then, of course, I had a Sufi name. But so anyway, yeah, that's true. I had a lot of names.

[00:03:05.45] [Laughs.]

[00:03:07.25] But I was always the same person, I thought. I mean, I don't know.

[00:03:11.38] MICHAEL LOBEL: So getting back to your last name, you talked about it a little bit. And that gets us back to your birth and your childhood.

[00:03:21.79] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, yes.

[00:03:22.67] MICHAEL LOBEL: So could you set us up a little bit with, um, when and where you were born?

[00:03:29.82] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, all right. I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 26, 1935. Uh, my parents were not very educated. They came from the farms in one way or another.

[00:03:48.05] My father was 10 years older than my mother, but they met each other in Milwaukee. Yet, they grew up very close to each other in northern Wisconsin on various farms, which is quite interesting. But they didn't know each other at that point.

[00:04:03.47] My father was a jeweler, and that's how he made his money. And it was okay because he was able to buy the house, you know, the house we grew up in for \$8,000. I remember them saying that, which was a big deal for him to be able to do that.

[00:04:19.28] During the Depression, he didn't lose it. He kept it, you know. So we were not very—you know, we didn't—we weren't very rich. But somehow, it was okay.

[00:04:29.52] I had two older brothers, Joseph and Ralph. And then about, uh, six years later, my older sister was born, Mary. And then I came. So there were the four of us for a long time. My mother was very proud of her four kids. Until, uh—in 1948, she produced another child. So I was 13 when she had her last child, and we became very close, my younger sister. I named her. I named her Colleen, an Irish name: Colleen.

[00:05:06.09] And I told Colleen, I named her after a movie star. There was a movie star named Coleen Gray. And we'd seen a lot of films. You know, as kids, we'd go to the movie house. And I thought this woman was very pretty, and I liked her name, which is completely insane, with a Polish background. So she'd been stuck with this all these years.

[00:05:27.84] MICHAEL LOBEL: And speaking of a Polish background, can you say a little bit just about your—both of your parents' heritage in that way?

[00:05:36.10] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah. Um, well, my father was—let me see. I'm having a hard time with it. What do you want to know about my father?

[00:05:52.01] You want to—I don't know where he was born. I think he was born in—well, my grandma lived in Wausau, Wisconsin. But that's already a town. That's after they left the farm, so I'm not quite sure the actual farm thing.

[00:06:09.26] He had several brothers. He was in the First World War. He was in the First World War. We used to have a picture of the ship in our house, and I don't remember the name of it.

[00:06:22.55] But he left the Navy when he was alerted to the fact that two of his brothers had died. They lived—farm kids can't swim at all. And one of his brothers tried saving his brother, and they both drowned. Right.

[00:06:42.25] So he came back from the Navy and they allowed him just to not go back, you know. So that was a big issue. He was a sweet man. I really loved him. You know how it is with families. People have these—the dynamics of the families are so interesting.

[00:07:02.71] My mother was sort of a harsh woman in the sense that, um, she scared us a lot. And I think also, she was bipolar. She wouldn't have been called bipolar then. But I know, when we came home from school, we never knew what kind of mood she'd be in.

[00:07:21.85] She'd either be as sweet as pie when we came in, or else she'd be at the door and with that look on her face. And we said, Uh-oh, now what do we do. So that was a problem. Yeah?

[00:07:32.83] And of course, in those days, you know they were simple people. Nothing ever happened with it. That was the way it was. That was how Anna was, you know.

[00:07:40.61] But on the other hand, she was an amazing—what they called a housekeeper. She did beautiful embroideries, and all that Eastern European background. So she could do all these things beautifully. You know, she was awarded a lot of blue ribbons in the local, uh, state fairs and all that.

[00:08:01.66] And we all inherited many quilts. And I grew up sleeping on percale sheets. They were hand-embroidered and crocheted my entire life.

[00:08:12.70] And when I was married, she gave—it was like, we received them. And of course they were much too fancy. For Oldenburg, it was a joke in a way. So I ended up—I still have a few, you know, that are left over from there. But of course they go, but that's amazing.

[00:08:29.69] And they were always ironed. The sheets were ironed and cleaned. So it was like, yeah, and she learned how to cook. And she was a great chef. She was a fabulous baker.

[00:08:41.24] MICHAEL LOBEL: Now, speaking of sewing and embroidery, because obviously one of the reasons you and I are talking today is because of your history of sewing, which we will get to—

[00:08:59.16] PATTY MUCHA: —right—

[00:08:59.49] MICHAEL LOBEL: —at some point. But can you—because sewing was so important to your artistic life in your collaborations with Oldenburg, can you step back for a moment and talk about—I was very curious, where and when did you learn to sew? What was your childhood and young adult experience with sewing?

[00:09:25.92] PATTY MUCHA: Right. Yes, okay. Well, it was, um—let's say that in those days, you know, my mother would not buy a dress for us. She made them. We grew up with handmade sewing—but they were beautifully made.

[00:09:41.29] And my older sister and I always dressed the same. We had matching dresses, beautifully done. And the sewing machine was one of those that you sat at, at a cabinet, so that cabinet thing sat in our kitchen. It was right there next to the ironing board. [Laughs.]

[00:09:58.66] You have to iron between—sewing and ironing are connected, you know. So you don't sew a seam without ironing it nice and clean and straight. So she was really good at teaching us that.

[00:10:09.53] My brother—and I always talk about this because it was so interesting—my brother Ralph, when he was in high school, in the zoot suit era, my mom would peg his pants because that was important to the kids. But he also learned how to knit, and he could knit his own Argyle socks.

[00:10:29.98] Now, I can knit a lot. I learned how to knit. But to do a sock [laughs] is very difficult. And then to put patterns in it with different yarns—outrageous.

[00:10:42.61] He was 15. So he made his own socks, which I think is kind of extraordinary. So we all learned how to sew almost right away.

[00:10:50.45] But truthfully speaking, my godmother, Aunt Marie, taught me. I was at the machine the first time with my godmother. And I was probably, oh, maybe nine years old.

[00:11:04.52] I don't know at that point. It was very simple. It was just following something.

[00:11:08.27] Then after that, my mother, of course, taught us. We all learned on that sewing machine. And there were always moments where I'd freak out, you know.

[00:11:19.48] You got to the point where you just couldn't handle something. And then she'd sit down and correct it and show us how to do it. So we all learned how to sew very well. Not my other brother, but Ralph did.

[00:11:35.77] Let's see, what else? And of course, once I learned how to sew, like, in high

school, I would chop up dresses that I had actually bought and take them apart and re-sew them. And sometimes they didn't fit anymore.

[00:11:50.22] I couldn't do it. So I started to sew my own clothes. So at the point when I left Milwaukee to New York, all the clothes that I was bringing, I had made, because at that time, the small size—

[00:12:11.03] MICHAEL LOBEL: —petite?

[00:12:11.92] PATTY MUCHA: Thank you very much. The petite sizes weren't even popular then. There were no petite sizes. The dresses were too big and I'd have to alter them. So I would start from fabric, actually.

[00:12:24.64] And then in the old days in New York, Macy's had an amazing floor just for fabrics, you know. There were places in New York you could buy gorgeous fabrics. And so that's what I would do. I don't think you want to go that far into mine, but maybe you do. I don't know.

[00:12:40.26] MICHAEL LOBEL: Well, so I just want to get this down. So basically, all throughout, as early as your childhood and young adulthood, and then early adulthood, you were sewing?

[00:12:51.85] PATTY MUCHA: I was sewing, yeah. And my sister was sewing, too, of course. Yeah. She learned to do other things.

[00:12:59.15] And my younger sister learned how to do tatting, which is another very delicate, lacy kind of technique. I never learned to do that. But I did learn to knit. Um, so, we—you know, we had homemade—we knitted our sweaters. We had beautiful sweaters.

[00:13:16.85] MICHAEL LOBEL: And do you know, would your mother have learned how to sew from her mother and her family?

[00:13:23.53] PATTY MUCHA: Well, I'm not sure of that, actually. The thing is, my mama, she lived on the farms. And her mother died when she was 10.

[00:13:33.50] And I just recently, about a couple of years ago, received a picture of my grandmother, because I never saw her. She was a beautiful woman. But I have a relative who's doing genealogy, so he sent me this picture.

[00:13:47.49] Well, would she have learned there? I'm not sure. Perhaps. I mean, farm people can do everything. So if she did, she could have learned from a neighbor or her stepmother, because then my grandfather married a second time and produced a bunch of kids as well.

[00:14:04.21] MICHAEL LOBEL: And do you recall, did you also learn how to and do sewing in school, like in home economics? Or was it mostly at home?

[00:14:14.83] PATTY MUCHA: Well, let's see. We did have a home ec silly thing. And so what year was that? I guess it was eighth or ninth grade—seventh or eighth grade. I don't know.

[00:14:26.32] We had to learn how to cook. I remember that. [Laughs.] We messed it up. Yeah, no, let's see. Yeah, I think we did have it. Yes, thank you very much.

[00:14:36.07] [Telephone ringing.]

[00:14:39.61] MICHAEL LOBEL: Is—

[00:14:42.41] PATTY MUCHA: —what's happening?—

[00:14:43.61] MICHAEL LOBEL: —hold on.

[00:14:48.43] MICHAEL LOBEL: Okay, Patty. So we were just interrupted by a phone call. So we'll restart. So you were talking about home ec.

[00:14:56.57] PATTY MUCHA: Home ec. Yeah there were two classes, I think, in home ec—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track01_m.]

[00:00:00.00] PATTY MUCHA: —or maybe two years or one year. It was rather, uh, insignificant in the sense that I already could sew. And I do remember just sewing down lined pieces of paper to see how good the [laughs] machine needle struck the paper and the line. But it was foolish.

[00:00:23.54] And then it was just something we didn't have to do. I mean, the boys did—they did shop or something. I don't remember that. That wasn't important in my background because I already had my mother at home, who was a great seamstress. And she would, you know—she instructed us.

[00:00:43.48] MICHAEL LOBEL: So speaking of school and your family, and home economics—in a similar vein, what I've been very curious about is that you, very—relatively early entered the world of art—I mean the art world.

[00:01:03.61] PATTY MUCHA: Yes.

[00:01:03.87] MICHAEL LOBEL: And you've been involved in art much of your life. And so for the purposes of this interview, I wanted to take a step back. And I've been wondering, do you have a sense where that came from? Was your family involved in art? Do you remember childhood or young adult involvement in art?

[00:01:24.49] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, very much so. My older brother Joe was an artist in high school. And so we were very close, he and I. And he encouraged me to, um, make paintings. So as a child, I could take the streetcar, number 37 streetcar, down in downtown Milwaukee and then transfer to a bus and go to the Milwaukee Museum and take art classes. And I was like, in second grade. I could do that alone. That's how safe it was in those days. Can you imagine?

[00:02:01.87] It was like an hour travel, going alone, and then doing the little classes. And I can't remember. They were Saturday morning classes. And then coming back, I'd visit my daddy, who was in his office up near Michigan Avenue there, and then come home. So I did that. And then Joe, when he was in high school, did a lot of paintings.

[00:02:24.19] We did it in the kitchen, or he did it in the kitchen, and on that table that's in my kitchen. That was my kitchen table. And I would watch him paint, and then he would encourage me to do that. And so gradually, when I became a high school student—and Colleen was little. At one point, she was four years old. And I may not have been living there at that time. I'm not sure.

[00:02:46.81] But I did set up a palette with paints, you know, watercolor paints and paper for her. And my point about how talented she was, was children usually grab the paintbrush and dip it in one color. And then they slop it in the other one. She never did that. She'd go to the palette, and she'd start mixing. She'd start mixing these paint colors.

[00:03:11.53] And then when she got the right color, she'd put it on the page, which I think is extraordinary for a four-year-old. And she became a fashion person, not a fashion, but a costumer. But anyway, so yeah, so art was very important. My grandfather, who I never met because he was my father's father, had died before we met him.

[00:03:32.90] [Object taps microphone.]

[00:03:33.59] Oh, sorry. He had a self-portrait of himself in my grandma's house up in Wausau. It was very beautiful, pencil drawing. And nobody knows what happened to it. So obviously, it was a little kind of an art thing going on there, too.

[00:03:52.69] Considering that fact, they were very uneducated people. My parents were both very uneducated. My mother went to eighth grade, maybe. I'm not sure.

[00:04:02.10] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you had involvement in art early on. You finished high school in the Milwaukee area. And then what do you do after high school?

[00:04:16.21] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, but I do have to talk a little bit about high school because I had this amazing teacher named Miss Lassen. I went to a high school that was called Pulaski High School. It was six years old, brand new, public school. They had an amazing art department: Miss Lassen, one class, and there was another, uh, male teacher who taught. So it was like two different kinds of painting classes.

[00:04:44.19] And one could—well, what I did is I took a lot of art. Towards the end of my high school, I took a lot of art. And there was a competition in Milwaukee. The Milwaukee Journal had a competition in the local high schools in the city. My brother Joe won the top, one of the top. It was a—they brought out a calendar, six colored pictures. And then the rest of the kids who were smaller and they were the incidental photographs. Excuse me, I'm getting difficulty finding the words for this. So the other kind of kids that didn't get on to the—six pages were in the back, kind of in black and white, but they were still little acknowledgments of their paintings.

[00:05:40.42] So Joey got one in his year, and I got the other one. And thought when I was—yes, because I took art. And I was also on January. So January was the best one—January. So we both had January—so it was very important.

[00:05:54.64] And then I did get a scholarship to—and I want to say Maryland Art Institute. And I'm actually not sure of the school. I don't know if it was—I don't think it was RISD.

[00:06:06.87] MICHAEL LOBEL: There is a school now that's called the Maryland Institute College of Art. I don't know what it would have been called at that point.

[00:06:15.16] PATTY MUCHA: I don't know if that's what it was, but it was a one-year scholarship. But my parents didn't have enough money to—for me to go because it was only one year, so we couldn't do it. So as a result, I stayed in town, which was the smartest thing in the world because it was Wisconsin State Teachers College. They had a fabulous art department.

[00:06:37.66] And so actually, that was the most important thing in my life, all those teachers and things. I met Claes because of that, because my girlfriend, who I'd been to high school with, who was also—and she was a year ahead of me—had been an old beau. Claes and she were—had a relationship.

[00:06:58.18] MICHAEL LOBEL: So let's step back for a moment—

[00:07:00.44] PATTY MUCHA: —yeah, we have to.

[00:07:01.21] MICHAEL LOBEL: So the person—your friend you're referring to who had dated Oldenburg, what was her name?

[00:07:07.36] PATTY MUCHA: Her name is Louise Martin. She's still alive. And we still communicate at Christmas every year.

[00:07:14.02] MICHAEL LOBEL: And—

[00:07:16.87] PATTY MUCHA: —she met him at Ox-Bow because what happened with the Wisconsin State Teachers College in the summertime, students from the Wisconsin, as well as students from Chicago Art Institute combined and became scholarship students at this place called Ox-Bow Summer School of Painting in Saugatuck, Michigan, which was a fabulous place—a fabulous place. It was art 24/7, you know, the whole day.

[00:07:44.36] So I was a scholarship student the year after I entered college. Louise had been there the year before, and that's when Claes was there. So they had combined their friendship at that point.

[00:07:56.57] MICHAEL LOBEL: And around what year are we talking about?

[00:07:59.53] PATTY MUCHA: It was 1954. I was there in 1954 because I went into college in 1953.

[00:08:04.98] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you go to Ox-Bow in the summer of 19—

[00:08:09.33] PATTY MUCHA: —two months in Ox-Bow, yeah—

[00:08:11.37] MICHAEL LOBEL: —the summer of 1954?

[00:08:13.36] PATTY MUCHA: That's correct.

[00:08:14.43] MICHAEL LOBEL: And when do you meet—so you're now an art student. What were you—what kind—

[00:08:20.46] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, I was painting. I was doing these paintings a la Matta, you know that Chilean painter. I made these beautiful things. That's what I was painting when I saw Oldenburg for the first time. Or he saw me, because he came the year after he had been there as a sentimental thing because it was such a great place.

[00:08:39.52] MICHAEL LOBEL: So right now we're in the summer of 1954. You're at the Ox-Bow School of Art in the summer.

[00:08:46.24] PATTY MUCHA: Yes.

[00:08:46.38] MICHAEL LOBEL: And that's when you meet this person named Claes Oldenburg.

[00:08:49.42] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, I was painting, you know, against my easel. And up on the hill, there was this guy, and people called out his name, "Claes." And that was it. I mean, it was a very slight relationship—meeting, actually. Then afterward, he came to visit Louise in Milwaukee for a while, and I got to know him. And then Louise and friends of ours visited him in Chicago because he was still in Chicago with his group, his Chicago artists.

[00:09:24.12] MICHAEL LOBEL: And so was the relationship—did it happen very quickly?

[00:09:31.20] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, with Claes and me? Oh, no, not at all. We were friendly. Oh, no. Because, uh, the reality is I came to New York in '57, April 1st. And before that, I was living with Louise, who had just gotten married to this guy, Joe. Can you believe living with newlyweds? But that's what I did for a week. For a month, I slept on their couch.

[00:09:58.29] And I was going to New York, as I saved a lot of money to get there. And Louise said to me, "Look up Claes Oldenburg. He's there." And I thought, I'm not going to look up anybody. Screw that. And I didn't. I arrived in New York not knowing a soul, which I think is kind of interesting given how daring it might seem to be. [Laughs.]

[00:10:19.21] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you arrive in New York City from—

[00:10:23.17] PATTY MUCHA: —Milwaukee—

[00:10:24.67] MICHAEL LOBEL: —in early April, 1957.

[00:10:28.09] PATTY MUCHA: April 1st, yes. And I stayed in a, um—the first day I checked into a YWCA, whatever it's called. And then I walked around the city with a woman I met in the plane who was from California. She had never been to New York either. She was on her way to Europe. So we walked around and looked at the big buildings, like complete tourists. Can you believe that?

[00:10:55.22] MICHAEL LOBEL: And Patty, what was your plan?

[00:10:58.32] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, I wanted to become an artist. I mean, I was an artist anyway, I felt. Here's what I really wanted to do, because that summer I had to raise money to get there, you know. The summer before, I worked in Allen-Bradley, which is a factory; I worked in a factory.

[00:11:15.32] I would go at nighttime. I mean, not night. It was like seven o'clock in the morning. It was still dark—it was in the winter, you know, it seems dark—and return home dark. And I had this money, so I made up a lot of money. And I thought originally I would first go to Chicago. That was what I was going to do, because Chicago was the big city at the time to Milwaukee. We used to go there a lot as college people.

[00:11:38.56] And then I thought, No, that's ridiculous. Why should I go to Chicago? I should go to Paris. So I thought, I should go to Paris. And then I realized I really didn't have enough money to go to Paris. So, okay, you know—so the second choice was New York. [Laughs.] So I went to New York that way. That wasn't the first choice.

[00:12:01.87] MICHAEL LOBEL: And did you think you would study more?

[00:12:05.12] PATTY MUCHA: I have no idea what I was doing. I'm trying to think about that because I was overwhelmed by it. But I do remember there was this wonderful museum in Lakeshore in Milwaukee, where I'd seen a show of abstract expressionists. And I had seen the Franz Kline for the first time in my life. And that blew me away! I mean, it was

incredible.

[00:12:27.54] So I thought, Oh, okay. So when I came to New York, I went to a lot of galleries because I suddenly saw this hot off the press, these painters. Yeah? It was quite wonderful.

[00:12:38.63] MICHAEL LOBEL: And I know we're talking about stuff that's almost 70 years ago—

[00:12:44.11] PATTY MUCHA: —yeah—

[00:12:44.45] MICHAEL LOBEL: —but do you have any recollection of going to the galleries when you first got to New York?

[00:12:50.34] PATTY MUCHA: Well, I did go to the galleries, but I also—oh, I forgot two very important things about before I went to New York. At one point, because the college was on the other side, north side of Milwaukee—I lived in the south side. So for the first year in college, I took the damn bus there every day, took an hour to go.

[00:13:14.45] I'd come home. My mother would have heated up the meal, which was very unattractive to me. It was a pain in the ass. So I decided to move away from home and move closer to the college, which I did. And that's when I lived with Louise alone. She and I lived alone for a while. And later I lived another friend named Katye Krueger, who was a wond—so we were very close artists.

[00:13:38.01] We were all artists. We were studying at the college. But because I was away from home, I had to make a little bit of money just to survive. So I had these two jobs that were important to me. One was at Charlie Netzwow's music shop. Now, he loved classical music. It wasn't a lot of this crappy stuff.

[00:13:58.50] He had some of the modern, small discs. We sold small discs and LPs, you know, those big heavy discs. That was it. We played classical music throughout the day. I learned a great deal from him in terms of music. I left the place owing him a lot of money for all the records I was buying.

[00:14:18.31] Is it all right to continue?

[00:14:20.36] And the other job I had was on weekends at the Downer Theater. Now, there were two theaters in Milwaukee that showed foreign films. So I saw all these foreign films, you know, for the price of nothing—my first French movies and Japanese films. And, I mean, it was an amazing experience. So those were both really educational things for the price of nothing, just working—very important.

[00:14:48.33] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you arrive in New York—

[00:14:51.13] PATTY MUCHA: —so that's why I went to the opera house. Yeah. And saw, um, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track02_m .]

[00:00:00.23] PATTY MUCHA: —at a concert, you know, Lieder songs. I mean, I was into the music thing, too, because I knew about these people.

[00:00:08.11] MICHAEL LOBEL: So this is the opera house in—

[00:00:10.94] PATTY MUCHA: —yeah, the one in Manhattan—

[00:00:12.78] MICHAEL LOBEL: —in New York.

[00:00:13.53] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, yeah, it was fantastic.

[00:00:15.74] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you arrive in New York on April 1st, 1957.

[00:00:21.81] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah.

[00:00:23.52] MICHAEL LOBEL: Can you tell us—

[00:00:25.20] PATTY MUCHA: —what I did?

[00:00:26.46] MICHAEL LOBEL: Can you tell us what you did, but also how you got reconnected with—

[00:00:31.62] PATTY MUCHA: —with Oldenburg? Okay, well, I didn't see him right away. What happened was I was there for several weeks because I had enough money to go to all these things and go to museums and go to the Met. You know, I saw a lot of the art. I went to museums. I'm trying to think. I think I was on 10th Street and saw some of those—yes, of course, I was on 10th Street.

[00:00:55.70] In fact, I met this guy. I don't even know what his name was. He was a—probably a second-rate abstract expressionist. But he gave me a job one time in a gallery for a day. Brata? Was it Brata Gallery, one of those galleries? But anyway, I have to go slowly now because I'm trying to think.

[00:01:18.33] What I'm trying to say is I was there until my money ran out. And then I had to get a job. I had to get a job. It was very easy in those days. You just went in the New York Times, you'd go, Office job, crummy jobs. But they were okay. They hired you right away. And I got a job at ASCAP, the American Society of Composers and—because of my music thing.

[00:01:40.84] So I could—I worked with the classical department. It was just office-y, kind of paperwork. But that's when I met my dearest, oldest friend, Olga Adorno, who worked in the popular thing. So we spent, um, our lunch hours in Central Park. We'd be sitting there eating sandwiches. And we became very close.

[00:02:04.84] When summer came, June, I thought, Well, everybody in New York goes somewhere in the summer. They don't stay in New York. That's what I understood. So I got a job teaching at a camp in Vermont, Lake Dunmore, teaching art to kids.

[00:02:24.04] Now, I had never done the art classes. I had never done the teaching classes in Wisconsin. I just assumed because I know how to make art, I'll teach it, what the hell. It was a Jewish camp. It was a, you know, totally Orthodox.

[00:02:42.49] Go on.

[00:02:43.16] MICHAEL LOBEL: And is this still 1957?

[00:02:45.26] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, this is June. This is June, July or whatever in the summer. It was terrific. I loved it. We had the—I had the kids. It was women. Of course, the women were separated from boys. Boys had their own camp. This was the girls' camp, and "Baruch Atah Adonai," we'd sing the Jewish prayers, you know?

[00:03:04.48] And they were terrific because they were like 11 to 13-year-olds—crazy age. The girls were totally crazy. Because they'd say, [singing and imitating the girls] "Baruch Atah Adonai, cha-cha-cha." I mean, they were just hopeless, you know? I couldn't control them at all. But I loved them because they were kind of like, um—you know, they were like hippies. [Laughs.]

[00:03:26.69] So anyway, so that was summertime. So when I came back after that, I moved in with Olga and lived with her on 49th Street and 1st Avenue, near the United Nations. And I lived with her for a couple of years, a year and a half.

[00:03:45.41] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you moved in with her Fall of 1957?

[00:03:47.93] PATTY MUCHA: Yes. Now, let's see. Now I'm trying to think of when I met Claes. It was either when I came back—I don't think I met him before I went to the—it was either, no, I think I met him after I came back, when I was living with Olga. Because I know I told him about her.

[00:04:07.60] But I met him at the—there's an art supply store that still exists on Third Avenue and 10th Street or something, New York Central Art Supply. That's where I met him. I was buying supplies, art supplies, and he was behind me. And he recognized me from Michigan, you know, or somewhere there. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:04:32.02] And then, well, we were just friends. And we were friends for a couple of years, you know. And I modeled for him. And in those days he did all these paintings with people,

wonderful paintings. He did quite a few nudes of me. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:04:48.37] MICHAEL LOBEL: So let's talk about that. So first of all, Patty, I brought some images to show you.

[00:04:57.11] PATTY MUCHA: Yes.

[00:04:58.15] MICHAEL LOBEL: And because we're on an audio recording, we'll have to describe them.

[00:05:02.36] PATTY MUCHA: Right, okay.

[00:05:03.12] MICHAEL LOBEL: So the first image I want to show you, is dated—it's a drawing from 1959.

[00:05:09.25] PATTY MUCHA: Right.

[00:05:09.70] MICHAEL LOBEL: It's now at the Whitney Museum.

[00:05:12.26] PATTY MUCHA: Isn't that lovely?

[00:05:13.01] MICHAEL LOBEL: And it's a drawing by Claes Oldenburg, and it's called *Pat Reading in Bed, Lenox*.

[00:05:19.94] PATTY MUCHA: Right.

[00:05:20.40] MICHAEL LOBEL: So would that have been Lenox, Massachusetts?

[00:05:23.26] PATTY MUCHA: That's definitely Lenox, Massachusetts. And I'll tell you why we got there: Lenox, Massachusetts. Because, I was working for Claes for some of these drawings that were predating these. I got a job working at the New School for Anthony Toney, who was a painter. And he had a summer shtick in Lenox, Massachusetts, at the festival house. And he hired me as a model.

[00:05:55.11] However, we were not married at that time. But I said, "Well, I have this boyfriend." And so he said they'd figure out a job for him. The job they figured out for Claes was to be a bartender because it was in a fancy little resort there. So there were several, you know, weeks we had to teach him how to make certain drinks. [Laughs.] So it was very jokingly. And luckily, that job fell through so he could run the gallery there. It was much better—

[00:06:28.03] MICHAEL LOBEL: —who?—

[00:06:28.37] PATTY MUCHA: —for the artists that came to Lenox.

[00:06:30.95] MICHAEL LOBEL: Who, Claes ran the gallery?

[00:06:32.88] PATTY MUCHA: Claes ran the gallery—of art he hated. It was ACA gallery. I mean, it was all these realistic tchotchkes. I mean, they were well known in that world, but they weren't any kind of art that he cared about. But he was a good person.

[00:06:48.63] And so this drawing was obviously, if I'm there, I'm reading in bed in Lenox. That's what happened. I was there. It's a nice drawing, isn't it? I mean, he did lots of beautiful drawings of me, some of which I still own, but most of them I sold.

[00:07:04.22] MICHAEL LOBEL: And so the two of you finally sort of became a couple when?

[00:07:10.46] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, we became a couple because I was modeling for him. And then, like I said, like in a French novel, there I was nude, and why not? So we became lovers. Yes, what can I say? [Laughs.] And then about a year later, I moved in with him. I lived with him, yeah, yeah, before we were married.

[00:07:29.13] MICHAEL LOBEL: And so you—it was a regular practice for you to model for him?

[00:07:35.42] PATTY MUCHA: Well, truthfully speaking, I had never modeled, except for Claes. And then I learned about all the places in the city. Because I was a good model. And I

write about that. I say it was for three reasons.

[00:07:50.27] One was I had a cute body. Second, most important, of course, I came from the art world, so I had drawn a lot of models. I knew all the—I could go into a Degas—I could go into all these various classical poses. But the third reason, which was very important, was I was prompt.

[00:08:11.77] Modeling, those people that modeled, you know, they were hopeless. They would sometimes not show up. The minute the bell rang in the class, I was on the model stand, dropping my thing, getting it, doing it. So I was a very good model. I got a lot of work.

[00:08:29.61] MICHAEL LOBEL: Now, I never really thought about this before. But you were from a relatively traditional Catholic—

[00:08:37.63] PATTY MUCHA: —right—

[00:08:38.49] MICHAEL LOBEL: —Midwestern family.

[00:08:39.93] PATTY MUCHA: Right.

[00:08:40.30] MICHAEL LOBEL: And now you're in New York City and you've become a nude model.

[00:08:44.39] PATTY MUCHA: Right.

[00:08:46.41] MICHAEL LOBEL: To what do you ascribe your willingness to—

[00:08:49.49] PATTY MUCHA: —to do that? Well, truthfully speaking, I was not exactly a virgin. And I was not a virgin in Milwaukee either—I mean, my boyfriend was when I was in college. So I slept with enough men to know—or young men, to know that it was okay to be nude. And because in the college, we had this one model who modeled all the time and she was so bad. I mean, we all hated her.

[00:09:16.72] So I thought, I'm not going to be a model like that. I'm going to be a good model. And I was a good model. So no, it wasn't a problem. I think the first—I'm trying to think of how it was. I think to me, it was the most fun to go to, like, Pratt Institute or Brooklyn Museum School. I taught at a lot of really wonderful schools.

[00:09:39.57] And I also thought that if I were coming to New York and I wanted to study art, what a great way to learn where you'd want to learn, teach—you know, study. Because you could just model at all these various schools and figure it out, which I did. I had Frederick Kiesler in Brooklyn Museum. He was a great teacher, you know? And there were people at Cooper Union who were wonderful. So all these wonderful schools, and Pratt, of course, was more fashion, but they still had a lot of class.

[00:10:11.75] There was only one school that was really funky, which I really enjoyed, and that was on the top floor of the Flatiron Building. Can you believe that? So at the model school, on both sides, you could see this—[laughs] you could see New York City, you know? It was yours. But it was run by a really square kind of class. I mean, this guy was really—but it didn't matter. I didn't care because I loved being up there.

[00:10:38.83] MICHAEL LOBEL: So it's the late 1950s. You're in New York City. You are still taking some art classes and you're modeling as well?

[00:10:46.34] PATTY MUCHA: I'm trying to think. I don't think I took any art classes. No, I never took art classes. I thought originally if you wanted to, that would be a great way to do it. But no, no, no, no.

[00:10:55.97] I was really just—I was working—

[00:10:57.88] at that point when I was modeling, it was survival for Claes and me. Because I made not very much money, but it was a lot more money—he worked at Cooper Union shelving books. You know, and that was great for him because he could look at all this Japanese porno.

[00:11:15.10] MICHAEL LOBEL: Was that at the Cooper Union Library?

[00:11:17.66] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah.

[00:11:18.54] MICHAEL LOBEL: And can you just go back. What did you say, that he could look at what?

[00:11:22.36] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, well, he—[clears throat]. Well, I think he had a great relationship with—he loves—he was so intellectual. And he also loved—I guess they had a good collection of Japanese porno. I mean, I say it's porno. Probably it wasn't. It was just beautiful drawings. But he talked about it on-and-off. And he had a show at Cooper Union of some of those drawings.

[00:11:43.22] MICHAEL LOBEL: And so do you think he was looking at Japanese erotic prints?

[00:11:47.79] PATTY MUCHA: Well, he was everything. I mean, it was the Street period, which I loved. That Street period was rather loved. All the junk crap that he'd pick. I see my old notes and some of my journals, I refer to it as his cardboard people. [Laughs.] He picked up his cardboard people.

[00:12:07.46] MICHAEL LOBEL: So I think that's a really good place—let's bookmark that because I want to just talk a little bit more about your modeling.

[00:12:14.15] PATTY MUCHA: Of course.

[00:12:14.70] MICHAEL LOBEL: So another picture I brought you—

[00:12:17.36] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, yes, thank you—

[00:12:18.42] MICHAEL LOBEL: I brought you, Patty, a picture of a painting by Raphael Soyer from 1959.

[00:12:24.70] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, right.

[00:12:26.46] MICHAEL LOBEL: It is now in the collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC.

[00:12:32.59] PATTY MUCHA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:12:33.05] MICHAEL LOBEL: And it's titled *Farewell to Lincoln Square*. It's subtitled *Pedestrians*. And I believe the female figure in the center front is you.

[00:12:47.04] PATTY MUCHA: Correct, it is. And this is Raphael Soyer. He put himself in the painting, too. You know he is a twin? Yeah. He was such a sweet man. So I worked for him quite a few times. But it was always clothed, never, you know—never nude and often walking like this.

[00:13:06.93] I mean, he was so cute. He'd be this close to me. [Laughs.] I mean, I don't know how—he'd say, "Move it just a bit," and I'd have to move just like that. [Laughs.] But he was such an adorable man. I loved him. And, um, where was his office? I don't remember where his studio was. But obviously I think it was walking distance.

[00:13:26.13] But, um, I did that for a while. I worked for Raphael Soyer. And I also worked for Jacob Lawrence, on some various—we went to Long Island, some of those women's—you know, he had those shitty jobs teaching. Well. [Laughs.] What can I say? That's what people did. They wanted to make art.

[00:13:50.20] So he—I mean, he was too good, he was too talented to be a teacher for them, I think, in retrospect. But he was a sweet man, too. And I also worked for Mercedes Matter. I don't know if you know who that is. But she was a neat lady in the Village. So those were the three other kinds of people that I think I worked for, you know, that have sort of a name.

[00:14:14.79] Raphael sometimes would say, at one point he said, [imitates Raphael] "Who is this Larry Rivers?" [Laughs.] And at that point, Larry, I just knew from—I forget why. But he was—he wanted to know about the young artists, obviously. And now getting to know Mimi Gross, she was very close to Raphael Soyer. I didn't know that.

[00:14:40.62] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you mentioned Jacob Lawrence. And just for clarification,

you were modeling for his art or for his classes?

[00:14:48.57] PATTY MUCHA: For his classes. Oh, yeah, no, I didn't work—because he painted mostly Black people anyway, I think. Yeah, no, this was in [Woodmere], Long Island. I don't know what the—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track03_m.]

[00:00:00.00] PATTY MUCHA: —the name of it is—we had to take a train or something to get there. And I actually don't know how I even got to work for him, if you want to ask. I don't remember the possibility of how it—there was sort of a camaraderie between models, you know.

[00:00:14.67] So we would help each other out, get jobs. I think that's probably how it happened. I don't know.

[00:00:20.37] MICHAEL LOBEL: So this is—I'm very pleased with this because this is one of the things I wanted to set out, that you had a pretty significant period of time when you were involved in the art world as an artist's model and a teaching model.

[00:00:35.82] PATTY MUCHA: Right, and yes. And, then of course, there was that scary moment, which I wrote about; I don't know if you've read it or if it was even in my memoir. It has to do with—well, there was a sketch group, I think, up in 57th Street, for some reason. I don't even know where the hell it was. But it was one of those—you had a choice of doing—to work for a group of people, which is what it was. It was elderly people, dilettantes, making these drawings.

[00:01:07.76] And in that class, there was a person that said, oh, he had a sketch group that met so-and-so many times in Brooklyn, and it would be more money. It would be twice, three times more money. So why not? Of course.

[00:01:22.94] So I arranged—we arranged to go there. Or I went. And I didn't even know Brooklyn, but I got there. It was really far away, I found myself.

[00:01:33.23] But so here's the situation. It was a scary situation. I arrived at this place.

[00:01:39.34] It was a—kind of a beat-up building somehow. It was in a private area. I can't tell you where it was.

[00:01:46.22] And when I arrived, there were lots of boxes and things in a living room. It was kind of a mess. But we were waiting for the rest of the people in the group to show up. Well, of course, nobody showed up.

[00:01:56.62] After about a half hour, he suggested that I just model for him. And I said, Okay. So I did some poses, you know. And then, traditionally, modeling, you would work for 30 minutes, and then you take a five-minute break, and you go back. So on the break, I put a robe on, and I walked around.

[00:02:13.94] And I walked around, and I saw the paintings, drawings on his easel. They were hard, tight, little ballpoint drawings of, I guess, my body. But there was never a head on it. And there was like a disk cut off—there was absolutely no heads on any of these things.

[00:02:33.72] And I said to myself, you know, I said, "You know, I'm really tired, and I think I have to go back," you know, blah, blah, blah, blah. And so I dressed. And he said, "Okay, I'll walk with you."

[00:02:45.60] And we stopped off in a place that had knishes. And this is so clear in my mind because it was just an open place maybe two blocks away from the subway stop. I have no idea where it was. We sat down.

[00:03:00.23] And I write, as I bit into my knish and he had his, I bolted out of the place and ran two blocks to the subway without looking and got into the train. And Claes said, Never again. I mean, he could have killed me.

[00:03:16.62] I mean, that's how creepy it was in retrospect. But I have a survival to me. I sort of know about those things. Can you imagine?

[00:03:27.41] MICHAEL LOBEL: Now, you've mentioned a couple of times writing in your memoir. And just for the purposes of the recording, we should underscore that you have written a memoir.

[00:03:38.09] PATTY MUCHA: Right.

[00:03:39.86] MICHAEL LOBEL: Um, and right now, its status is?

[00:03:42.62] PATTY MUCHA: Well, the status is—I mean, I keep [laughs]—I haven't written it in so long. The status is it's in my archive in NYU, uh, in Fales, you know. But, um, I still change it. So I want to send them another version. It's endless.

[00:04:00.30] It's about 400 pages. And I've had a situation with several, um, editors. The first one, I got rid of. The second one, I got rid of, except she managed to publish part of it in one magazine, which I think is a disaster. But anyway, so yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:04:20.61] But now—right now, what I'm doing is—I don't know how far we're going to go in the future. Yeah, I can? Or no?

[00:04:28.57] MICHAEL LOBEL: Sure, you can—

[00:04:30.04] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, no, I just want to say about my writing because, for the longest time, I've been writing, you know. And I have pieces of writing every which way. But some of it's been published from the memoir. Certain aspects of my memoir have been published in four different places. That's why I brought all those books.

[00:04:48.46] But now I tend to enjoy poetry a lot, so I'm taking a writer's group with Reeve Lindbergh. Charles Lindbergh's baby teaches a writing group here. She's a local.

[00:04:59.47] She lives here. She's a friend. Can you believe that? Her name is Tripp, her married name. But so I go once a month, and we just hang out with these people.

[00:05:08.65] And the writing is all varied. Some people are, you know, primitive. Some are kind of interesting writers. But I do that just for almost a social event because, up here, there's nothing happening. [Laughs.]

[00:05:20.26] MICHAEL LOBEL: And you started writing poetry when?

[00:05:22.80] PATTY MUCHA: A long time ago. I'll tell you when. Well, when my marriage was falling apart—

[00:05:27.80] MICHAEL LOBEL: —which was around when?—

[00:05:29.72] PATTY MUCHA: —which is exactly 1967. Sorry about that. Uh, by '68, it was really over. But '67, um—I don't know if you want to go into that.

[00:05:41.97] MICHAEL LOBEL: —we'll—

[00:05:42.23] PATTY MUCHA: —but I needed to explore. As a teenager, you see, I never wrote poetry the way a lot of writers do when they're poets, and that's when they do it. I was making paintings. It was Van Gogh in my mind. It wasn't—you know, Van Gogh and Picasso. I didn't know Frida Kahlo. I just didn't know her at that point.

[00:06:03.43] But, um, so the writing part happened in '67. When I was living in 14th Street, I would go to the Saint Mark's poetry event—all those wonderful poetry—I got to know all the poets. But I also took classes with Bill Berkson. He's dead, I think, now. He lived in California for a while—sweet man.

[00:06:26.58] So he was my only real teacher. And I was so shy because I was writing these things. When you write poetry, you're really exposing yourself right out there. And I thought I was very open.

[00:06:38.61] So we were to read our poems. I never could do that. But he'd read our poems. He was a good guy. So anyway, I got to know all those New York poets, which is really special.

[00:06:49.07] MICHAEL LOBEL: Which poets did you get to know?

[00:06:50.58] PATTY MUCHA: Well, you know, at that time, it was—it still is Ron Padgett—Ron Padgett and Larry Fagin and—hmm. I'm having a senior moment here—but that group. Of course, Allen and then, of course, Anne Waldman ran the scene. She and—help me.

[00:07:12.80] See, I'm having my senior moment here. And she published—printed a lot of—because they had these quick, uh, off-the-press mimeograph flying thing, which I sold now, you know. Now my whole collection is in New York for money. [Laughs.] I'll think of her name. I'll think of it later.

[00:07:33.86] But anyway, so they're really sweet. So I'd see them. They would have readings on Wednesdays and on weekends. Plus, the most important thing was the New York New Year's Day 100-artist poet's reading.

[00:07:48.68] And I got to read in those big events that have this big audience. And you got two minutes, and I would measure my fucking thing right down to two minutes. Some people didn't.

[00:08:00.28] Allen got five, 10 minutes because it was Allen Ginsberg. He was really good. But those were great events. I love—they still do it.

[00:08:08.71] MICHAEL LOBEL: Around when would this have been? Late-'60s?

[00:08:11.16] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, it was—well, yeah, it was '60s, '70s. Well, yeah, '60s, yeah, yeah, yeah, because my marriage—it's sort of an interesting marriage that fell apart that way. But we don't want to talk about that yet. No, no, no, no, no. We still love each other.

[00:08:25.92] MICHAEL LOBEL: So maybe it would be good to move from the end of the marriage. We haven't really gotten to the beginning of it.

[00:08:34.78] PATTY MUCHA: No.

[00:08:34.98] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you and Claes are together for a while, and then you got married when?

[00:08:41.25] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah. Yeah, we could talk about that. Yeah, you know, so I lived with him for a year before we were married. And I wrote about it recently because I always read these things to my class, you know.

[00:08:55.69] I moved in in '59 with my cat, named Charlie, who was named after Charles Baudelaire. Okay? Good name. Claes didn't want cats because, you know, he's an artist. And at that time, he's making pastels, and he's doing drawings, and the paper's on the floor, and he's worried about the cat.

[00:09:14.05] But he's—okay. It turned out the cat was an extraordinary cat, actually, because he did two things that were very un-cat-like. One is he taught himself to retrieve bottle caps like dogs do.

[00:09:30.62] Cats don't retrieve. This guy did. We'd drink our beer out of a quart bottle with—the cap would fall on the wooden floor. And Charlie would come up and pick it up and give it to us, and we kept—we'd go endlessly.

[00:09:46.79] But the other thing he did, which was really important—and he did this when I still lived with Olga, because I lived with Olga for a year and a half on 49th Street. She had a lot of cats. That's where I got him. She was a cat person.

[00:10:00.32] I came home one day from work. It was not modeling. It was an office job. And I saw Charlie balancing on a galvanized pail, pissing. And he was doing it, why? Because the cat litter was so dirty. [Laughs.] He couldn't stand it.

[00:10:15.90] So from then, he continued to learn how to pee in the toilet. And he did that for two years. Now, I didn't have to buy any cat litter.

[00:10:27.39] How wonderful. I had just a little metal thing for his poop with toilet paper, which I could flush. I mean, what a cat.

[00:10:35.15] He stopped doing it when I was living with Claes the year—we had a pull-chain

toilet, which he did it. And when he would do that, he'd come off, and he'd walk on the perimeter of the tub. And we'd bat the pull chain.

[00:10:56.52] We'd play. It was a whole little game we did. It was all the time.

[00:11:00.30] But that one day, the toilet broke, and they replaced it with a flush variety. So he never did it again. He couldn't do it with a flush toilet.

[00:11:10.00] And I told this to people up here who were psychics. I got involved with these dowzers. And one dowser said to me, "Oh, he probably didn't recognize. He was from a soul from another period. He didn't recognize a flush toilet."

[00:11:22.79] Hello. [Claps hands.] Anyway, that's my story.

[00:11:25.40] But don't you want to know about the wedding now? Yeah. Okay, so now I'm living with Oldenburg. Claes falls in love with Charlie, does a lot of drawings of him, actually. And it was all fun.

[00:11:37.66] But it's clear, you know, he's had his relationship with a lot of women, and I've had a relationship with a lot of men. And getting married is a big, big deal. So there was a little apprehension.

[00:11:52.10] And so I write about this. At one point, I say, he—I quote him. He says, "So now you want to get married. First, you move in with your cat, and now you want to get married."

[00:12:06.19] [Laughs.]

[00:12:07.32] "Yeah."

[00:12:09.12] So we decided to do it. But it had to be—well, we were still so poor. And our friends were very—we had a few artist friends. At that point, Nancy and Jim Dine were really close friends and, I think, Tom Wesselmann. So Nancy Dine suggested handling some kind of, you know, party for us. That was even overwhelming to us. Everything was too overwhelming. The whole idea of doing a wedding was just too much for us.

[00:12:41.52] At one point, I see in my writing that I suggested, why don't we just elope? And Claes was so relieved. [Laughs.] And so, yeah, suddenly the die was cast. So we would do our own wedding, which we did.

[00:12:55.63] And Claes figured it out. So it was terrific. What we did was Olga would be my witness, and Dick Oldenburg, Claes's brother, would be his best man. So it would be the four of us. And we would go to the Lower Manhattan and get onto the ferry boat and go to Staten Island and get married in the New York Civil Service, which we did.

[00:13:20.18] And I write about it. It was a wonderful day. It was a wonderful—and our—the minister, I don't think is a minister, but whatever his job was—his name was Milton Rich. He directed our ceremony, which, such as they are, the legal part.

[00:13:39.82] And at one point, I couldn't get through without crying because he started lecturing about how important it was, about marriage, and young people don't take it seriously, and blah, blah, blah, blah. And I was feeling very old. I was 25. Claes was 31. Hello.

[00:13:56.08] But, and Claes had to finish it. And then—so our first wedding pictures were taken in those machines, you know, four for a quarter. [Laughs.] And Claes and I, and then Dickie and Olga.

[00:14:09.07] Then afterwards, we went to—Dick Oldenburg had a little apartment on 34th Street, or something, in Manhattan. We went there and had cake. Wait a minute. Is that how we did it? Maybe we—no. First, we went uptown, and we had this—I want to say Shelbourne.

[00:14:30.92] That's incorrect. It's a Swedish restaurant. It's a Swedish restaurant, which Claes's parents paid for. So we had a nice, little fancy meal at a fancy place just bordering the Central Park.

[00:14:44.90] It was a very lovely restaurant. And Lisa Turnure, who was Dickie Oldenburg's

girlfriend at the time, joined us. So there were five of us in the celebration. That was it.

[00:14:57.42] MICHAEL LOBEL: So two things I want to just get—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track04_m.]

[00:00:00.14] MICHAEL LOBEL: —first of all, do you remember the date of the wedding?

[00:00:03.10] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, yeah, April 13th.

[00:00:04.80] MICHAEL LOBEL: April 13th, what year?

[00:00:06.72] PATTY MUCHA: 1960.

[00:00:09.00] MICHAEL LOBEL: April 13th, 1960—

[00:00:10.07] PATTY MUCHA: —it was a Wednesday—

[00:00:11.59] MICHAEL LOBEL: —Wednesday, April 13th, 1960. You also—I do have this question, which is kind of a broader question, which is—you mentioned that you and Claes were, you know—didn't have a lot of money, but you also mentioned his parents. And I had this sense that he was from this—

[00:00:30.49] PATTY MUCHA: —he was. He was. He went to Yale, and his brother went to Harvard. But when Claes was in New York, he was living in the Lower East Side, I think intentionally, just to live like an artist. I know Papa Oldenburg gave us, when we were married—I don't know if when before. He gave us a hundred dollars a month. Now, that was a lot of money to help us.

[00:00:53.26] Meanwhile, Claes was still working at Cooper Union, and I was still modeling. I mean, art supply—the money wasn't that great, you know, but it was helpful. But we never felt as if we were rich. No, no, no, no. We never were. I mean, he would lecture me. I see in my notes, too, about how he tells me not to spend too much money. I go to the A&P, and I go there, and five dollars could buy a lot of food in those days. You bought, you know, two bags, three bags, big—and then I'd come back, and I'd spend all the money anyway, because I would—many, many times, he lectured me not to spend all the money, but I—but it was mostly because on food, you know? And yeah.

[00:01:39.36] MICHAEL LOBEL: So, I mean, this might be a little indelicate to say, but—

[00:01:43.64] PATTY MUCHA: —no. That's okay. Go ahead.

[00:01:45.74] MICHAEL LOBEL: So Claes was a child of a relatively well-off diplomatic family, correct?

[00:01:54.14] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, yes.

[00:01:54.65] MICHAEL LOBEL: He had gone to Yale. He was getting monthly income from his father.

[00:02:00.81] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah.

[00:02:01.34] MICHAEL LOBEL: But there's a sense that he was kind of playing at being a starving artist?

[00:02:08.29] PATTY MUCHA: I don't know if it was play—I don't know if you could call it playing because we lived together for a couple years, and we didn't have much money. I don't know if that's called "play." He just didn't take any more, I think, you know?

[00:02:21.68] Um, let's see. When Dickie came—Dick was in New York, when he worked, he worked at Doubleday. No, wait a minute. He worked in a publishing—I think it was Doubleday. I'm having a—anyway. Um, so I don't know what kind of money he made. I don't know what kind of money that Claes made at Cooper Union. It couldn't have been much, you know. It couldn't have been much.

[00:02:46.04] [Recorder stops, restarts.]

[00:02:50.13] Yes, I'm ready.

[00:02:51.16] MICHAEL LOBEL: Good. Okay. So, Patty, you and Claes get married in mid-April 1960. The next sort of area that I want to really talk to you about are the Happenings—

[00:03:12.11] PATTY MUCHA: —the Happenings?—

[00:03:12.77] MICHAEL LOBEL: —are the Happenings, because my sense of your involvement in Claes's work and in the broader art world is that you were extremely involved in the Happenings.

[00:03:25.98] PATTY MUCHA: Yes.

[00:03:26.57] MICHAEL LOBEL: So why don't we just start—can you just say a little bit—like, do you remember when—

[00:03:33.02] PATTY MUCHA: —yeah, of course—

[00:03:33.86] MICHAEL LOBEL: —when this all started?

[00:03:34.82] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, for sure. I would say, the first Happening that I saw, that I attended with Claes, was Allan Kaprow's at the Reuben Gallery, which *18 Happenings in 6 Acts [Parts]*, or whatever the name was, which sort of blew me away. The thing about it is, was that was the first time I saw Bob Whitman and Lucas Samaras. And you'd hear the voice, you know. The gallery was situated with these various areas cordoned off by plastic, and one moved your seat throughout the whole event.

[00:04:14.30] I'd hear this wonderful voice, and it was Lukey's voice [laughs], his Greek voice. And then Bob Whitman showed up, and I joined them because I thought, Oh, this handsome guy has got this amazing voice. But no—but it was interesting to see those two people together. So they became friends. They were part of the gallery, actually. But I didn't know that at the time. But, evidently, I mean, reading up about the Happenings, you know, Red Grooms had done one in Provincetown earlier, a year before, maybe two years before, at The Sun Gallery in Provincetown.

[00:04:51.36] But my first Happening was done before, um, I was married, and it was in Bob Whitman's *Small Cannon*. And Olga was in the Happening, too, but she didn't get reviewed. Her name wasn't in this book by mistake. That's too bad. But it was a swing—Bob's Happening—Bob was—gave me a few roles, and I enjoyed him. He was kind of—his movements were a little volatile. I mean, he was kind of aggressive.

[00:05:25.05] At one point—this was in the Reuben Gallery—he had constructed a swing that I could swing on in the middle of the audience every which way. I was sort of over them swinging. And, um, at one point, he wanted me to say something, but I was much too shy to even speak. So Olga spoke this one line, which to me is amazing, because she did it, because she was just right off the street, too, in a sense.

[00:05:53.76] But at one point, he's hitting the wall with a—I don't know—a sledge hammer or something, you know, really volatile. And then he comes with an ax, and he starts chopping away at the rope that controls my swing, which he does. And then I fall out of the swing and kind of almost into the audiences' feet or whatever. So that was kind of his thing [laughs], you know, but it was this powerful—I love that role. I mean, love swinging, and I love—I didn't hurt myself at all. But at another Happening of his later on—and I'm gonna go just a slightly bit in time, and this was at the Green Gallery where we did—

[00:06:34.22] MICHAEL LOBEL: —do you remember what year this would have been?

[00:06:36.22] PATTY MUCHA: Would have been in '62, I think. '62, '63 tops, not even that far. And we can figure it out. But he picked me up 13 different times, and he would just drop me. So I would either be piggybacked on him, and I'd fall, or he'd hold me up in his arms, and I'd drop. So yeah, for 13 times.

[00:07:01.37] And Sally Gross, who was a dancer at the time, advised me—she said, Patty, just be limp. Be limp, and you won't—and I was. But it was kind of an interesting problem because I would fall into, like—there were tools on the floor, I thought, like, who knows? But I never got hurt. But so that was Bob. So Bob actually gave me my first Happening role, and I

thanked him because I saw him recently before he died. And that was very nice that he could have done that.

[00:07:30.25] But *Snapshots from the City*, which was Claes and my classic experience at the Judson, that was a month—that was in February of '63. So that was before we were married.

[00:07:45.28] MICHAEL LOBEL: No, February of 1960?

[00:07:46.88] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, excuse me. Yes. Thank you. February of 1960. It was a month before we were married. And that was just a 15-minute event. We just moved around, and Claes said, say, yip, yip, yip, yip. So that's what I was saying. Yip, yip, yip, yip. And he was growling. And, you know, he was this terrible person that was wounded with all these things hanging down, his bandages. We were street people.

[00:08:12.29] It was a beautiful, uh, set. It was big. It was—his cardboard people came to life there. But it was in the basement of the Judson Church gallery. It was just, like, one room. And the audience was at the door entering into that room. So there couldn't have been more than tops 10 people seeing it at one time, maybe not even that. And Lucas Samaras was turning the light on and off like in a strobe idea. That was very popular in the '60s, you know, the disco places. So the lights were going on and off like that. And I was saying, yip, yip, yip. And Claes was, [imitates an animal's growl], growling. [Laughs.] And it was, like, 15 minutes, and that was it. I love the photograph of it.

[00:09:00.90] MICHAEL LOBEL: So just so—for the purposes of the recording, we're looking at a photograph of *Snapshots from the City* from 1960. So Patty, I know you've talked a lot about your involvement in the Happenings—

[00:09:15.37] PATTY MUCHA: —right—

[00:09:15.58] MICHAEL LOBEL: —and in Claes's Happenings. I want to just step back for a moment from a kind of more historical or art historical perspective.

[00:09:24.19] PATTY MUCHA: Of course.

[00:09:24.62] MICHAEL LOBEL: And I kind of want to know, first of all, how did you see your involvement? Like you said, Bob invited you. You were in many of Claes's Happenings. Like, were—I know this may sound a little silly, but were you paid for any of this?

[00:09:42.82] PATTY MUCHA: Was I what?

[00:09:43.39] MICHAEL LOBEL: Were you paid for any of it?

[00:09:45.00] PATTY MUCHA: Paid? [Laughs.] Nobody paid anybody. No. No. I mean, it was no problem getting people to be in Happenings. They love being in Hap—in fact, we had more people volunteering than we could use. You know, in the Store Days, people wanted all—and each time, like in *The Store*, there were 10 different Happenings one week apart from each other with totally new cast, totally new. Claes was so brilliant because he produced the whole thing within a week, completely different from the other one, in the same space. So everybody wanted to be in it. No, no, no, no. We had no problem. I can't imagine paying. What a great idea. Why didn't I think of that? [Laughs.]

[00:10:27.48] MICHAEL LOBEL: Well, that's sort of my thinking. And when you did all of this work, I mean, you were working with Claes on his artwork—

[00:10:36.28] PATTY MUCHA: —right, right—

[00:10:36.73] MICHAEL LOBEL: —in the Happenings, and we'll get to the soft sculptures. But do you have a sense, like—do you have a sense of what your motivation was? Were you just going along? Did you see yourself as a collaborator?

[00:10:50.33] PATTY MUCHA: No, I don't like that word "collaborator." I know it's very popular now. Very popular, very popular. No, no, no, no. That word wasn't around in the '60s. Unh-uh [negative].. I was his wife. I come from a very square background, as you know, as I kind of pictured it. And yet I was kind of a hippie—not a hippie, but a beatnik. Not a hippie, a beatnik. I was a hippie later.

[00:11:14.18] But the thing is, um, it just seemed so natural to be with him. I mean, I really loved him. I really respected his art. To me, after all, quite frankly, when we lived together for a year, I was making paintings, and then I suddenly wasn't. Okay, that's very important to know.

[00:11:33.24] And Oldenburg talked about being an artist all the time, and he didn't quite complete—put me into that category. I mean, I was a wife. I was a muse. That was a joke. You know, so—a model, model. But it was never—it was an artist's model. It wasn't—then I write about that. It's more important to be on one side of the painting rather than being the model. Hello. Are you doing it or are you being observed?

[00:12:03.21] So, yeah, I mean, there was—before the women's movement, it was—Gloria Steinem showed up later on, you know, and I was terrified of her. You know, hello. That's not who I am. I was a wife. My whole—all of our friends were married. Tom and Claire Wessellmann. Nancy and Jim Dine. Segals, Helen and George Segal. These were married couples, married couples, married couples. That's what we did. And then Olga and Billy, eventually, you know, Klüver. But that goes later.

[00:12:42.52] So the story is, um, that was my framework. And the thing about—I'm going to have to try to—yeah—thank you. I was going to talk about how I wanted—I didn't speak anything. I want to show you the thing at his memorial, but I found a thing that I would have read which would have been perfect. But it didn't matter because I felt okay about it.

[00:13:07.38] But what I was going to say was about his drawing ability. What I loved about him was his drawing ability. I mean, nobody could draw like him, you know? Don't you want to quote that? That's important. Yeah. Are we doing it?

[00:13:25.37] The drawing of—I wanted to talk about his drawing of the monument drawings, because what he forced you to do when you looked at these drawings where you had to get inside of his mind and focus and get weighed down and see the magnitude of those images, which he could never do, traditionally. There's no way you could paint—make those things that big. No big—teddy bear couldn't be that big. And there's this wonderful thing on the, uh, road on—oh, help me out, this place—[laughs] uh, Park Avenue. Park Avenue. This big, giant—

[00:14:08.53] MICHAEL LOBEL: Oh the melting Good Humor.

[00:14:10.50] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, the melting Good Humor. And you see the bite of the Good Humor is a big, open space where the cars come through. And then you look down at the bottom left of that drawing, these little, tiny, scratchy things. And you realize those little, scratchy things are limousines and cars. I mean, that's the scale of it. It forces you into his imagination and the way he visioned things. To me, that was just quite amazing.

[00:14:36.94] MICHAEL LOBEL: But just a few minutes ago—

[00:14:38.39] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, yes—

[00:14:39.19] MICHAEL LOBEL: —but just a few minutes ago, you said something about me quoting you, and I wanted to—you said something about me quoting you.

[00:14:49.75] PATTY MUCHA: I was quoting you?

[00:14:50.92] MICHAEL LOBEL: Or you said that—did I want to quote you? I don't know what you were referring to.

[00:14:54.71] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, I don't even know anymore. [Laughs.]

[00:14:55.97] MICHAEL LOBEL: Okay, that's fine. So at that time, it—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track05_m.]

[00:00:00.02] MICHAEL LOBEL: —it seems that you're suggesting that you were just fulfilling these roles. And do you—do you think you might have had any sense at the time of—because you did say you gave up your painting.

[00:00:14.19] PATTY MUCHA: I did. I did. I mean, in Lenox, I was doing lots of huge, you know, landscapes, kind of beautiful landscapes. And, um, I'm trying to think. And then, let's

see, after Lenox, then we got married, blah, blah, blah. And then we went to Provincetown. And I was still drawing in Provincetown. I think I had some things.

[00:00:38.19] But I noticed in my old notes somewhere where I'm saying—that's where Claes did these great, um—help me out—his flags, his flag series with all the driftwood he'd pick up. Those are beautiful little things. He [laughs] had beautiful little things.

[00:00:56.92] MICHAEL LOBEL: This was in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

[00:00:58.92] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, that was after—1960, our two months in Provincetown we spent doing there. And I was modeling there. And then he was making these things out of wood. And we just sort of hung out. It was a wonderful summer. But I think that was the last time I made any art.

[00:01:17.38] But I remember making oil paintings on newspaper. And I say, Oil on newspaper? How ugly could that have been? God, that must have been very—I can see them. They were really ugly. [Laughs.]

[00:01:29.85] But so I don't know. I don't know why I gave it up. I think that it was okay. I can only say that it was okay. I wouldn't have given it up if I had thought it was really horrendous. Do you know what I'm saying?

[00:01:44.43] You know, because when we lived on 4th Street in our little walkthrough—five-floor walkthrough, five-floor walkthrough where he lived, with Charlie and me, I did paint in one room. And he did in the other.

[00:02:02.90] But, um, I don't know. I think that I would love to say that we were calculating completely with each other. No, we didn't do that. But if we're going to get into the sewn stuff, is that what we're talking about? Or no, not yet?

[00:02:21.36] MICHAEL LOBEL: The what stuff?

[00:02:22.64] PATTY MUCHA: The sewn—

[00:02:23.13] MICHAEL LOBEL: —oh, let's—

[00:02:23.46] PATTY MUCHA: —not yet, no?—

[00:02:23.82] MICHAEL LOBEL: —let's get to that in a moment.

[00:02:26.64] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:02:26.91] MICHAEL LOBEL: First, I just want to talk a little bit more about the Happenings.

[00:02:30.16] PATTY MUCHA: Okay, oh, good. That's more fun.

[00:02:31.89] MICHAEL LOBEL: Because part of the reason why I wanted to do this interview with you is that what really strikes me—so what I'm showing you is the cover of *Claes Oldenburg's Store Days*, which was published by Something Else Press in 1967—

[00:02:50.61] PATTY MUCHA: —right—

[00:02:51.01] MICHAEL LOBEL: —and you have a copy—

[00:02:52.44] PATTY MUCHA: —yeah, I was gonna bring it—

[00:02:53.09] MICHAEL LOBEL: —I brought an image of it. You have a copy of it. But you and Claes are together on the cover. And it just seems to me, Patty, that you were really—

[00:03:03.90] PATTY MUCHA: —I was important in that—yeah, well, I mean, I was a star in all those Happenings. The thing about Claes was he was so brilliant. You know, when—those Store Days Happenings were a week long, as I said, with new people. What he would do was Monday, the people would show up. And he'd look at them. And then Tuesday, he'd sort of figure out what they might do. And he'd ask them to move certain things.

[00:03:28.13] By the time—Friday was our first performance and we had two on Friday and

two on Saturday. Thursday night, I'd say "Claes, I'm working on props for—those are props that I'm making, that freighter and sailboat. What kind of role am I going to have?" And then he'd just think for a while. And then he'd tell me. And it was always brilliant. [Laughs.]

[00:03:52.05] And then Lucas was so much part of it. So Lukey, you didn't have to tell—he was—uh, he had theatrical background. So he knew all about acting anyway. He was very special. So yeah, so I always got really wonderful roles. And I was kind of a ham. So I mean, that was a very high period of my life, the Happenings. You know, I loved doing them.

[00:04:14.67] MICHAEL LOBEL: So it sounds like you did this, in part, just out of sheer creativity, inspiration, that this is something you wanted to do.

[00:04:25.95] PATTY MUCHA: It was just easy to do. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, yeah, what can I say? I mean, those were my favorite Happenings. And then the several that he did, *Circus* and that at, um, Reuben Gallery, those are more—because his were really—because the photographs that you see are already so great. They're like paintings. All of his Happenings are like paintings. I mean, he was producing images that were really long lasting.

[00:04:53.14] A lot of the Happenings like that were—like Allan Kaprow's were kind of, hmm.

[00:04:59.01] MICHAEL LOBEL: Yeah, and so speaking of which, I've noticed when you were talking about *Snapshots from the City*, and now we're talking about some of the Store Days Happenings.

[00:05:07.69] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah.

[00:05:08.34] MICHAEL LOBEL: There are beautiful photographs of them. Do you remember being photographed in these cases?

[00:05:15.24] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, absolutely. Well, they're all by Bob McElroy, Robert McElroy. I have some, a lot of slides. In fact, years ago, I went to Coosje and I got copies of them because I'd give those little talks. Yeah, I do remember the photographs.

[00:05:30.45] MICHAEL LOBEL: And I'm assuming that the photographs were staged, that you went—that Bob McElroy didn't photograph—

[00:05:38.22] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, okay, yes, thank you. Well, for the Store Days thing, I guess for all of them, we would redo certain events. And then he could photograph them. Of course, because he couldn't do it while we were doing the performances, that would have been obstructing the audience. It wouldn't have been good for the audience at all.

[00:05:54.31] But so he was a fabulous photographer. And he worked for Jimmy as well. You know, he took wonderful pictures of Jimmy. That whole book is Jim—this is all McElroy's photographs, the entire thing.

[00:06:07.60] MICHAEL LOBEL: And just to clarify for the point of the recording, the book you're referring to is—

[00:06:11.67] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, this is Millie Glimcher's book that she did on Happenings. And it was down in Pace, in the Chelsea area, that Pace Gallery thing. They had a wonderful show.

[00:06:23.88] And she did a thing on Happenings and using Bob McElroy's photographs, who is, I think, at this point, he was already dead. I can't remember, when she did this show, I mean, is what I'm saying. But, um, I know there's another thing I want to say relating to it.

[00:06:44.97] MICHAEL LOBEL: Well, let me ask you this. Do you think that Claes had a sense that he wanted to preserve this for posterity?

[00:06:52.81] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, absolutely. I think he was smarter than a lot of those guys, he and Allan Kaprow. I mean, there was a point where Claes and he were just at each other's throats in terms of what was really the thing, the world, you know. [Laughs.] And like when Claes was in his Store, he had this typewriter that he'd walk up to and type constantly, his notes. So they competed in certain ways.

[00:07:22.36] But the thing about it is, I had a book of Kaprow that now is in New York to be sold. And I went through it. And I thought, Gee, wow. How come we didn't go there? Or how come we weren't there? Oh, we didn't see this. And then you look at the dates. And you realize that, Oh, we were in Florida. Or we were in California. Oh, we were in Sweden.

[00:07:46.95] Of course, we couldn't see it.

[00:07:48.18] That's the thing about art historians. They think that once the whole time is everybody's there. Everybody sees everybody. They don't. We don't experience it all. You see what I'm saying?

[00:07:58.71] And with Allan's, I didn't really care about it actually as well. But I'm not sure I even saw him. I must have seen a few of his things. But you know what I'm saying?

[00:08:10.28] Now, Jimmy, yes, I saw—Jimmy Dine, he didn't do that many. He was more a vaudeville kind of a crazy guy. He was so much fun.

[00:08:19.16] MICHAEL LOBEL: Speaking of vaudeville and Jim Dine's work, when you first started seeing the Happenings, and then when you were participating, was there a sense that this was just an offshoot of theater? Or was it something completely different for you?

[00:08:36.03] PATTY MUCHA: I don't remember. I was amazed by it. I called it artists' theater. But in some of my old writing, I refer to it as plays—[laughs]—artists' plays. I mean, so obviously, I mean, I wasn't making them. But I was in them, you know? So if you're in something, and it garners an applause, it's sort of like a play, isn't it? [Laughs.]

[00:08:59.06] It was artists' theater is what I called it. But the artists never wanted to—they didn't like Happenings. Bob Whitman called it theater—it was a theater experience or something. They all had a different—Claes called it Ray Gun Theater. Well, okay, that's still theater.

[00:09:18.05] Didn't call it Happenings. But I called it Happenings. To me, they were all Happenings because they were just different.

[00:09:23.73] And then, of course, the dancers did all kinds of interesting things at those. We were involved with the dancers at that point too. You know, Claes would say, "Poopy, get ready. We're going out."

[00:09:34.83] It was 6:30. We're going out at 7:00 downtown somewhere. And we'd see Yvonne Rainer throw mattresses at each other or something. She'd call it a dance. [Laughs.]

[00:09:44.15] MICHAEL LOBEL: You need to explain for the recording, who's Poopy?

[00:09:47.37] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, I'm Poopy. [Laughs.] I'm Poopy. He called me—it was a term of endearment, Poopy. And in that book, it says, "To Poopy." Did you see that? Inspired? Somebody said, who's Poopy?

[00:10:00.17] MICHAEL LOBEL: Oh, in your copy of Oldenburg's Store Days.

[00:10:04.00] PATTY MUCHA: Hold on. Isn't it here? To Poopy. And Poopy is poop, of course, too. So it works both ways, I guess.

[00:10:12.70] MICHAEL LOBEL: The dedication page.

[00:10:14.48] PATTY MUCHA: But I called him Poopy. And he called me Poopy. And Lucas would then start calling me Popsie. Lucas Samaras, because he was so much part of that world, you know? He was really an amazing performer.

[00:10:31.45] MICHAEL LOBEL: There was something you wanted to say about your wedding dress in one of the Happenings.

[00:10:37.61] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, I wanted to show you that picture. Well, I can talk about it? Because I'm so amazed. I'm so amazed that I was walking up a ladder, using clothespins to hang the soft versions of New York's skyline.

[00:11:04.45] And it's spooky the way I'm wearing high heels, and I'm wearing my wedding dress. And I would have to have gone one more step up and reach up. And I'm surprised I

could do that. I'm just amazed now at my age to say, I could have fallen off.

[00:11:18.50] But no, I was agile.

[00:11:20.48] I was a young woman [laughs] wearing high heels up a ladder [laughs] with nothing—because the ladder ended there, you see? There was nothing to hold on to except that. But I can't find it now. Anyway, I'll show it to you later. And I don't even know where it is anymore. We're going crazy here.

[00:11:38.30] MICHAEL LOBEL: That's okay. So you're looking through Milly Glimcher's book on Happenings.

[00:11:44.38] PATTY MUCHA: Look at this great shot, though. This is a great picture.

[00:11:46.88] MICHAEL LOBEL: So actually, I brought that same picture—

[00:11:48.91] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, good. Oh, good—

[00:11:49.72] MICHAEL LOBEL: —so, I mean, I think we can—

[00:11:51.58] PATTY MUCHA: —we can talk about who they are, those people. Or you don't want to—

[00:11:55.25] MICHAEL LOBEL: —well, it's a big photograph of Oldenburg's—what was it called? *Circus Ironworks/ Fotodeath*.

[00:12:02.93] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah one of those.

[00:12:03.45] MICHAEL LOBEL: And that was at the Reuben Gallery, February 21st to 26th, 1960.

[00:12:07.02] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, there's a lot of famous people in this group.

[00:12:08.96] MICHAEL LOBEL: So can you just talk about who you—

[00:12:10.56] PATTY MUCHA: —well, Claes is sitting in the bottom, you know, sitting with his crossed—with a smile. To his right, on our left, it's Max, who was Anita Reuben's husband. And then Henry Geldzahler is to the right of him, Geldzahler. Lucas is standing there next to Chippy, Claire Wesselmann holding the umbrella.

[00:12:34.01] There's me a little bit further on and Olga Shortell. Look how beautiful she is. Carl Lehmann-Haupt? He worked for the New York Times. Carl Lehmann-Ho—

[00:12:41.89]

[00:12:45.04] MICHAEL LOBEL: Lehmann-Haupt.

[00:12:45.85] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, he was there. Gloria Graves is back there. And then Tom Wesselmann is underneath Claes, you know. It's a nice little picture anyway, yeah. Yeah, it was like a cast photograph. I'm glad it's there. And it was on the back of the cover, too.

[00:13:07.80] MICHAEL LOBEL: I think we can start wrapping up on the Happenings.

[00:13:11.35] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, okay, sure.

[00:13:12.60] MICHAEL LOBEL: But I want to know if there's anything more you want to—

[00:13:15.28] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, yes, I want to say a few more things. First of all, there was the one in Chicago. We did these Happenings that we did out of state. We did one in Washington called *Stars*. That was wonderful. We had all these gigantic—I sewed a lot of Washington Monuments out of plastic cloth, you know, huge ones, eight feet tall.

[00:13:36.70] And they were being dragged over through—and then this woman was ironing a certain one. She was ironing teensy tiny ones with a baby iron. It was all very cute. So it was a very—it was very politically involved. It was—Alice Denney arranged it at her gallery. Yeah. And so there were a lot of these Washingtonians there.

[00:13:58.54] And Olga Adorno—I don't know what her name was at that point—she came

down as Miss Washington, looked beautiful. She wore this big dress made out of red plastic garbage bags that were stuffed with newspaper so it made this crinkly sound. And she'd take off her long gloves as a stripper might, you know. But she didn't take off any—she was so beautiful.

[00:14:22.46] We had to make her up because here's this Puerto Rican woman, didn't know anything about makeup. And she had this beautiful face. So we'd put lipstick on her and make her even more exotic. So that's when Billy Klüver saw her, I think, and fell in love with her. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes, indeed, because he was down there.

[00:14:39.46] And, um, so that was that one. And then we did one in California called—um, on the parking lot, uh, derelict parking lot, where all the cars came in. And the audience was in their cars. And they surrounded the entire—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track06_m.]

[00:00:00.14] PATTY MUCHA: —periphery of that space with—their lights were on, the light bulbs. Some of their cars went dead. The batteries went dead at the end. [Laughs.]

[00:00:07.82] But so all the performers were cars. We had a limousine. We had an important—a cement mixer, that was an important object. A lot of—so it was black and white, mostly, the imagery. It was always black and white.

[00:00:24.68] Judy Chicago was one of the performers. That's before she was Judy Chicago. She was Judy Gerowitz. And, uh, so there were California people, you know, that came from the art world there. It was a wonderful—it was very—yeah, it was a good performance.

[00:00:40.14] And then the one in Sweden was my last performance, called *Massage*. It was in the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, you know. Pontus Hultén arranged it. So that was part of when Claes had a show there.

[00:00:55.95] But I forgot the Chicago one. That was the important one. That was when I think Bob Dylan was—they told me Bob Dylan was in the audience, and I thought, Oh, boy.

[00:01:07.00] But anyway, so that was in the—having to do with the Chicago—the University of Chicago, a very huge building area. Um, we had a huge cast, Chicago people. There was a big platform, and I did a stripper—kind of my stripper role. It was a very sexy role.

[00:01:30.49] MICHAEL LOBEL: Do you remember what year that would've been?

[00:01:33.33] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, I will, but I'm just going to have a—I've got to think about it. I won't have a problem with it. I'll just look at a newspaper, not at a paper I wrote, because mama has this brain that's getting crazy. Yeah, well—hmm.

[00:01:48.42] MICHAEL LOBEL: That's okay. We can—

[00:01:50.28] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, well, I mean, I can just tell you right away. [Laughs.] This is a wonderful piece of paper here, but it doesn't say—I mean, it might say it. *Gayety*. It was called *Gayety*, 1963, in Lexington Hall, University of Chicago. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And Vernon Zimmerman made a movie of that.

[00:02:11.21] Now, Vernon Zimmerman is the name of—Dylan's real name. I think this was his nephew or something that made a movie of it. So we had a lot of people from our past, you know, our Chicago people. You know, my old friends were in it, some of it.

[00:02:31.15] I think the movie was okay. *Scarface* and *Aphrodite*, I think he called it. It's an okay movie. It doesn't show much.

[00:02:41.13] MICHAEL LOBEL: Patty, it occurred to me when you were talking, and talking about the *Happenings*, that basically all of Oldenburg's *Happenings* have Claes Oldenburg as their author, right?

[00:02:58.16] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, yes—

[00:02:58.74] MICHAEL LOBEL: —as their creator—

[00:02:59.61] PATTY MUCHA: —yeah, yeah.

[00:03:01.46] MICHAEL LOBEL: And I was wondering if there's anything you want to say about how you would want people to know your involvement and participation in the Happenings.

[00:03:13.05] PATTY MUCHA: Well, hmm, hmm, hmm, I don't know. It's so hard. I would say, like, Lucas—I would say, certain things about Oldenburg and his Happenings, he gave it—there was a certain looseness about them, and there was a form. You were kind of instructed or told what he wanted to do with your actions, but you had a certain amount of freedom in how you did it.

[00:03:39.03] For instance, with Lucas, there was this one Happening where he was given a lot of, um, cheap metal forks and knives, you know, those whatever you call them, whatever you call them, you know, the dinnerware. And he sat at this table. Now, I don't think Claes told him what to do with it, but Lucas produced this amazing—like, a giant sunflower out of this silver, you know.

[00:04:11.34] It took forever for him to do that. That was quite—that was incredible, you know. Now, I'm sure Claes didn't tell him to do that. Lucas did it. So one had this freedom to do it.

[00:04:23.83] And then at one point, because we had those Happenings at The Store—there was Friday and Saturday—by the time you did your Saturday, that meant that was, like, maybe the fourth time you were doing something. Some of the actors would get a little snippy, and they'd start inventing stuff that was a little bit too much.

[00:04:42.34] So Claes, the director, would say—and I write about this—and this is sort of an imaginary thing, but he'd say, You know how you stood in front of the audience and you made faces? Well, instead of doing that, make a pyramid out of these cardboard boxes and turn your back to the audience instead. So you had to suddenly change your entire thing just because he had to have control about some of the aesthetics of it, yeah?

[00:05:08.41] And so the—so the performers could have freedom, but within a limit. You didn't go over the red line. You know what I'm saying?

[00:05:15.95] MICHAEL LOBEL: But what about you?

[00:05:17.27] PATTY MUCHA: What about me? I don't know, I think I just did it. I just did what I had to do.

[00:05:22.58] And I did—I mean, I—like that one when I danced, he didn't tell me how to dance. I just danced. I mean, you know what I'm saying?

[00:05:33.70] Yeah, I mean, I'm trying to think of my other roles. My favorite role—oh, yeah, there was this wonderful role in *The Store*. It was the second Store Days, number 2, where we had this platform that was built over an area where—the audience was different each time in different locations.

[00:05:51.92] So in this case, they were all standing in this hallway, close to each other, and above was this platform that he opened up and put a plastic across, a heavy plastic. And I was up there with a clear glass plate and forks and knives and fish and water, and I was throwing the fish onto this plastic plate. [Laughs.] And I know that the people beneath were a little bit apprehensive, looking up and seeing all this water and these dead fish, you know, and then at one point, I'd throw the fish down. But, so I loved that.

[00:06:33.84] Now, he didn't tell me what to do. I mean, basically, I just did it. So one did have a little bit of freedom. I suppose I can say that. You know, when you had the prop, you figured out what to do with it.

[00:06:44.22] And there was one where we were all mice. Lucas and I and Claes were mice in the city. We had these long burlap tails.

[00:06:51.50] And so we were just in the city doing stuff, and it's not funny for you now, with all the rats in the city. But I was eating a piece of wood, and I love that photograph of me, it looks like I'm chomping this piece of food in a dirty city. That was a great Happening.

[00:07:07.98] But, I mean, I don't know, I suppose I could think of more things but—I know, I

think, in a way, you want me to be—no, you don't want me to be a whatever, a double—you know, like a companion, where we figured things out like that. We did not do—we did not figure things out. He was inspired constantly.

[00:07:30.39] He was inspired constantly by what he saw in the city, who he talked to, blah, blah, blah. And perhaps I inspired him without—I mean, I guess if I could figure out about—I suppose I could figure it out. I don't know. I mean, [laughs] I really don't know. [Laughs.] We'll go on to it later.

[00:07:50.29] MICHAEL LOBEL: That's fantastic. And I just want to go back, so to *Snapshots from the City*. Were you supposed to be playing a particular role? Because I've read some things which said that you were the street chick?

[00:08:03.81] PATTY MUCHA: Yes. Well, "street chick" was his name for women on the street, but I could describe this costume. This is a mask that he made and attached to me, but the hair is an underwear. It was a pink underwear and then stuffed with newspaper and made so it looks like a large braid, yeah.

[00:08:28.31] And then I'm wearing a long, kind of booties that he—I don't know, we made out of cardboard or something. It was just, like, terrible. Yeah. Yeah, a street chick, yeah, and he's—well, yeah, some of those early street drawings, there was a lot of street chicks and mama gangers. He called them "mama gangers"—I love that word—with their talk balloons over their heads, you know, pushing tra—you know, Lower East Side stuff was very inspiring to, I think, a lot of the artists there, yeah, not only with the stuff they could use in their art, you know, the burlap and the cardboard, but imagery, the imagery.

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track07_m.]

[00:00:03.85] MICHAEL LOBEL: This is Michael Lobel interviewing Patty Mucha at Patty Mucha's home in Saint Johnsbury, Vermont, on Friday, May 10th, 2024, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Card Number One, Session Two. We just had a break for a little lunch.

[00:00:31.60] PATTY MUCHA: Good. [Clears throat.]

[00:00:32.89] MICHAEL LOBEL: And we're back. And I think this is the point—I mean, actually, it's funny, Patty, that we just had a little something to eat. Because we're sort of going to talk about sculptures—some sculptures of food.

[00:00:48.08] So, um, we talked a lot about the Happenings, and now I want to talk to some extent about the soft sculptures.

[00:00:58.78] PATTY MUCHA: Okay.

[00:01:00.12] MICHAEL LOBEL: So, I brought a lot of images. But right now on the table I have two photographs, um, of a show of artworks at the Green Gallery in New York City from the fall of 1962. One of them is just a general installation view of the exhibition. And it has some painted plaster works, but it also has some stuffed soft sculptures.

[00:01:34.57] And then the other photo is of Claes Oldenburg in the middle, I guess, of installing the Green Gallery show. And in the foreground is the soft ice cream cone [*Floor Cone*]. In the background is the soft cake slice [*Floor Cake*]. And, I guess, he's painting the bun of the, um, *Floor Burger*.

[00:01:58.40] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, he is.

[00:01:59.47] MICHAEL LOBEL: So just by way of starting, can you just talk about your viewpoint or memories of what we're looking at?

[00:02:10.31] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah. Really—well, I would say, though, that the first soft sculptures were done for the Happenings. So you know that the *Freighter and Sailboat* that went over—I guess they went to Whitney or something eventually—became a work of art. But so those were just very simply sewn out of muslin. Some of the props for the Happenings were made, were sewn. But—

[00:02:36.64] MICHAEL LOBEL: —do you remember which Happening the *Freighter* was made for?

[00:02:43.29] PATTY MUCHA: Um, I think that was *Store Days II*. I think that's correct. Yeah.

[00:02:49.35] Yeah, so this is—so he's—so this is not an installation yet because he's still painting it. That is, of course, the big one.

[00:03:01.17] There were three pieces. Those three pieces—we did it with the hamburger first, because it was the simplest. There were no patterns or anything at that point. Heavy, heavy muslin. Um, canvas, really. And Claes walked around. Let's see, I think he attached, I think, a safety pin to the middle of a cloth with a long string. Or maybe one of those wooden, uh, measuring things, measuring sticks. And he walked around, and it sort of made a circle, you see, by doing that. And that's how we—and then we just cut around it. I mean, it was very crude, but it was easy because it was round.

[00:03:49.81] So the meat was done first and then the top and the bottom of the bun was—must have been pie-shaped pieces that would turn into a circle out of the, out of the canvas. And for the cover, for the top bun part, it had a disc on the bottom. And then the top part was larger because it had to be stuffed full.

[00:04:20.61] So it had, like, triangular kind of pieces, as well. But on the bottoms of each of these pieces, I installed a dressmaker—or the zipper, those copper heavy jacket zipper things—with a very nice placket, which is a thing that covers over the thing so you don't see the zipper. You know, it's a cloth piece that covers the metal part so it doesn't show and it also protects it. And you do that in regular sewing. If you're going to do a pants or whatever, a jacket, you know.

[00:04:53.76] So they—and that enabled, you see—that enabled us to then, once the piece was sewn together, you could unzip it and stuff it. Otherwise there would be no way of stuffing. And then you could zip it up and it was closed and it was finished, you know? Very, very clever, in fact.

[00:05:13.14] So the cake, the cake is mysterious. Because—not in this picture, it doesn't show. It shows in this one. You see there's a light. It looks like a dough underneath it. I don't know why it's there, but it's there. Now each piece was separate, you know, they just sat onto each other. And these cake things are wonderful. It didn't look like that after a while. It got faded, you know. It looked like it became a different kind of flavor.

[00:05:43.72] This round, green thing on top of the cake is actually the pickle that sits on top of the hamburger. That was the smaller piece. And then these two little objects were as if it were a decorative frosting that's cut. You know, this one is actually more of a tube.

[00:06:06.59] And this looks like a strawberry, a little strawberry decoration, which is also interesting, because I see that this is red in the middle. That must have been a strawberry level, as well. But it's not strawberry there. So I don't know what this means. It must—he must have painted it white after a while. You see what I mean? Because it's very different.

[00:06:28.28] Now, the cone, I was never happy with the cone. I didn't do a good enough job in making it globular. To my way, it didn't work at all. But it was okay for him, you see. It should have been more subtle in terms of the pieces to make it more globular. But we took this for a little ride on 57th Street in an open truck one day. And the children on the street loved it because they could see it was—they could see it was a big ice cream cone. Pistachio. Pistachio ice cream cone.

[00:07:00.69] So those two, the hamburger and the cake, I think, were more successful in terms of the geometry of the pieces, you know. They were very perfect.

[00:07:10.16] Yeah, it was good. The thing about it is I sewed these on the same sewing machine that I sewed all my clothes with—a portable Singer, which in retrospect is the dumbest thing in the whole world. I mean, because the amount of fabric for each of these sections were so much and pulling it through the bloody machine was completely stupid. Completely stupid.

[00:07:37.47] And eventually, after the show happened, and we were finished with that, and Claes fell in love with vinyl, then somebody—oh, it was Raymond Saroff, who worked in the fashion industry or something in New York—who advised him about the fabrics and everything. And I think he said, How about an industrial sewing machine? And you say, duh—well, that's a good idea. That's what we had when we moved into the loft.

[00:08:09.11] But these were done when we lived on, you know, on 4th Street. We had no big apartment or anything for industrial. And I should have known about it because I worked in the Garment District at one point before I moved in with Claes. I saw the people, yeah—

[00:08:24.17] MICHAEL LOBEL: —wait, you worked in the Garment—

[00:08:25.83] PATTY MUCHA: —I worked in the Garment District in Margot RK Fashions. That was before I moved in with Claes. I worked there a few months. I can't remember, actually. It was an office job. It was an office job, you know. But it was an interesting job because it was in the Garment District right near Macy's. And I, you know, hung out. You'd see these people moving these big carts with clothes in the street. It was terrific energy. I mean, it's terrific energy. And you found out that the designers would do—there were these designers in the place. And, I mean, I had an office job, what can I say? But, uh, the pressers were the men and the cutters were the men. And the people who sewed were women. That was how it worked.

[00:09:15.40] MICHAEL LOBEL: Now, you just mentioned Raymond—you just mentioned—

[00:09:18.34] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, Raymond Saroff—

[00:09:19.61] MICHAEL LOBEL: —can you spell his name? Do you remember how to spell his name?

[00:09:24.93] PATTY MUCHA: It's S-A-R-O-F-F, I think. Two f's. He was one of Claes's first collectors. He bought some of his Street pieces. Very sweet man. And for the Happenings at The Store, he shot in Super—I want to say Super 8, but it probably wasn't. It was something else. He wasn't a great photographer, [laughs] but he was a sweet man. And he died rather recent. I mean, I saw him not long ago when he was 96 in New York, such a sweet man. Yeah, yeah.

[00:09:59.04] MICHAEL LOBEL: Can we step back a moment.

[00:10:00.73] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah.

[00:10:01.83] MICHAEL LOBEL: To me, this is something I want to focus on a little bit.

[00:10:06.00] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, yes.

[00:10:08.31] MICHAEL LOBEL: You were sewing the soft sculptures for Claes. And I know that we're talking about something that happened 60 years ago or a little bit more. Do you have any recollection or thought about whether making them came out of a kind of conversation between the two of you? Like—

[00:10:32.67] PATTY MUCHA: —um, well, the thing is, he had this show. Well, after his show at his studio on 2nd Street, where all the Store pieces, the plaster pieces, were, then Bellamy of the Green Gallery offered him a show in the fall at his gallery in '62, right? Well, we would go—and it was closed for the summer.

[00:10:58.31] We would go up to the gallery and walk on 57th Street. And there was one moment where we looked inside this window, and they had all these beautiful cars. Maybe there were limousines or some kind of cars inside of this window, you know. And it was clear that those pieces had to be the size of those cars. And of course, his plaster pieces in that gallery would have been lost, because look at the size of it. I mean—so we had to make it big.

[00:11:29.75] And I don't really know why it happened. But I'm sure he said, How about sewing something? And it was no big deal. So I did it because I was a good seamstress and a good wife and it was fun. It was fun.

[00:11:45.82] So we sewed them there. But I think now, historically it is, in retrospect, it is quite interesting that although Bob McElroy took photographs of everything of people's lives, there is no picture of me sitting in front of that sewing machine making those pieces.

[00:12:05.48] MICHAEL LOBEL: At the Green Gallery.

[00:12:06.86] PATTY MUCHA: That's quite interesting, isn't it now? Because there's a picture in one of the books that I wanted to show you and—and it's actually mislabeled in Sid's book

—where it shows me sitting at, in our loft and it talks about the hamburger, but actually I'm working on the raisin bread. It's completely wrong.

[00:12:31.74] MICHAEL LOBEL: I think we may look at that photo soon.

[00:12:34.41] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, yeah.

[00:12:34.86] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you sewed those three large soft sculptures at the gallery?

[00:12:42.24] PATTY MUCHA: At the gallery. We'd go up every morning. Yeah, yeah.

[00:12:45.61] MICHAEL LOBEL: You brought the sewing machine?

[00:12:47.55] PATTY MUCHA: No, no. It was there. We left everything in the—it was like, you know, you'd just leave your stuff there. Yeah, it was fun. You know, we got to know Bell—I got to know Bellamy. I loved him. He was so wonderful. So he'd be there, and, um, yeah. That's it. It took all summer. I think it took all summer. It took a while.

[00:13:12.68] MICHAEL LOBEL: At least for these first soft sculptures—I mean, not the first ones, because you said the first real soft sculptures were part of the Happenings—but these first major soft sculptures, you were mostly sewing them out of canvas and then Claes was painting them afterwards.

[00:13:29.10] PATTY MUCHA: Well, he didn't paint them until they were completely sewn and stuffed. You see, that's already stuffed. These were all ready to go, as they say.

[00:13:42.83] MICHAEL LOBEL: So one thing I wanted to make sure to get down on tape, if you're open to talking about it.

[00:13:49.44] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:13:50.45] MICHAEL LOBEL: Years ago, you came to talk to at least one or two of my classes. And the students really loved the story you told about how after the sculptures were done, you and Claes sort of christened or inaugurated the *Floor Burger*. So can you tell that story?

[00:14:13.56] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, I told it once. It was in the hamburger. And yeah we just made love in between the hamburger and the bun. And it was really hot because [laughs]—you know, it's stuffed with foam rubber chunks and cardboard boxes. And it's just hot. It was just something to do. It was kind of cute.

[00:14:31.23] But some newspaper—who knows what?—they picked it up and they said we used it as a bed. No, no, no. We didn't use it as a bed. We fucked in it once. That was it, you know? It was just, you know—

[00:14:43.07] MICHAEL LOBEL: —I mean, not to get too over-analytic, but it is sort of funny because, when you think about the burger, part of the burger is burger-Oldenburg—

[00:14:53.66] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, it's a make—

[00:14:54.68] MICHAEL LOBEL: —and another part of the burger is Patty.

[00:14:57.89] PATTY MUCHA: Right. [Laughs.]

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track08_m.]

[00:00:00.26] PATTY MUCHA: Well, I don't know which one I was. The thing is, people refer to him as, well, Burger is the name. Yeah, his girlfriend from Milwaukee, Louise, one Christmas—we only went back to Christmas twice in our relationship, in our marriage, you know, for a visit to my family.

[00:00:21.47] And so we went and visited Louise and her husband, you know. And she introduced him as Claes Oldenburger. [Laughs.] And it was like, kind of a slip, which I thought was very cute. Yeah but, I mean, people think about him. Yeah, he was like a burger.

[00:00:36.74] I mean, my feeling about him is the burger was—of these three, of course, it was the most important. But why is it the most important? Because he's Swedish. And what do the Swedes eat? They eat Swedish meatballs. And to me, the burger was a substitute for the meatballs. That is that. That's how that goes. [Laughs.] Yeah.

[00:00:58.36] MICHAEL LOBEL: So, you know, we've been—part of the reason I wanted to do this interview, and we've come back to, is the idea of collaboration.

[00:01:05.36] PATTY MUCHA: Yes.

[00:01:06.08] MICHAEL LOBEL: And what I've always been very curious about, in terms of this idea of a partnership or a collaboration between you and Oldenburg, is the poster for the Green Gallery show. And I have it, either the poster or the invitation.

[00:01:26.29] And Patty, what I find very interesting—

[00:01:28.68] PATTY MUCHA: —that's the poster [coughs]—

[00:01:29.37] MICHAEL LOBEL: —we're looking at it right now. So it's got an Oldenburg drawing of a biplane.

[00:01:34.92] PATTY MUCHA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:01:35.88] MICHAEL LOBEL: It's got the date above. And it says in black, "Claes Oldenburg." But then on the right, it has a little, in green—

[00:01:46.71] PATTY MUCHA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, that was a tribute to me.

[00:01:49.57] MICHAEL LOBEL: —text that's upside down that says, "Pat."

[00:01:51.85] PATTY MUCHA: Right. Well, it was his way of tributing me, for sure.

[00:01:57.17] MICHAEL LOBEL: So there is some extent to which, even early on, this is 1962, your contributions are being highlighted.

[00:02:07.24] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, well, because there was a big show, yeah? Yeah, I like that. Yeah. I don't have a problem. I thought it was sweet, you know. That was it. And it's also very sexy because, you know, because male, female or two lovers, one on top of the other. That makes sense to me, you know, the fact that—if it were just not upside down, I think it would not be so interesting. I don't think so. Yeah.

[00:02:38.70] MICHAEL LOBEL: Okay, so maybe—and we can just talk a little bit more about sort of—I don't know if there's anything to say about this. But what I'm showing you is a photograph of you and Oldenburg.

[00:02:50.20] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, this is beautiful. This is a classic Ugo Mulas photograph. He was such a good photographer, Italian, you know. And, uh, it's taken in the Howard Street loft that he wanted me to move into that—Christo lived below or above, I forget. It was way dark. It's before SoHo was SoHo.

[00:03:14.34] There was nobody. Nobody lived there. And it would have been—it was just a long, narrow building, light on one side, and that was it. And I'd say, No way, José. So this was almost like a storage place before we went to California. So we had the art. We used the place before. And the people were very sweet, you know.

[00:03:34.82] The landlords were very sweet. And I love this scarf. This scarf is something I made in college. I got a C minus for it. But I loved it. It was really long and beautiful. And these fake glasses were things I made for the Andy Warhol painting that he made for me that you saw through. Yeah, anyway, so I like that picture.

[00:03:56.91] MICHAEL LOBEL: And here is a photograph of you in the—

[00:04:00.74] PATTY MUCHA: —yeah, this is the movie, I mean, the *Happening Sports* in the Green Gallery while the show is on. I've got huge—what do you call them—gigantic stuffed boxing mitts. I don't know why my face is blue. But you'll see these black things.

[00:04:21.34] This is black cloth attached to each leg, symbolizing my shadow, my shadow.

And that's part of the hamburger. And there are lots of people here—Bob Breer, Allen, um—help me out. I can't help it. Billy Klüver. These are all famous people. They're all dead. They're all artists. [Laughs.]

[00:04:46.26] So they were in the audience. And we had a very nice Happening there. But it had to be cleaned because it was during the show. So at the end, it ended up with, you know, those plastic—what do you call them—help me out, those things that people stuffed things with, modern day stuff. Anyway, we could sweep it up. There's a good picture of it somewhere in here. Is it there?

[00:05:13.54] MICHAEL LOBEL: No.

[00:05:14.37] PATTY MUCHA: But you know what I mean.

[00:05:14.97] MICHAEL LOBEL: Yeah.

[00:05:15.39] PATTY MUCHA: Anyway, it was a nice—it was a good Happening. I think we did it—could we have done it more than one day? I have the feeling we didn't even do it more than—I think we only did it one day because there was such a mess. Yeah, because there were a lot of trays that Claes used as fake food and stuff. I mean, it turned out to be a real mess. [Laughs.] Where is it?

[00:05:38.59] MICHAEL LOBEL: Well, we have some other photos—

[00:05:40.92] PATTY MUCHA: —okay, tell me more.

[00:05:41.80] MICHAEL LOBEL: So another part of, for me, this interview is to correct the historical record.

[00:05:49.43] PATTY MUCHA: Yes.

[00:05:49.77] MICHAEL LOBEL: And in preparing for today, I found this photo of you and someone else preparing for a Happening. But I think it's been mislabeled.

[00:06:00.46] So I'll tell you what it says. The current caption says, "June 14th, 1962, American sculptor and pop artist Claes Oldenburg makes himself up for a performance in Greenwich Village, New York City. His wife, Pat, watches the proceedings with a bored expression." But I don't think that's—

[00:06:23.91] PATTY MUCHA: —that sure is me. But who is this guy? That looks like—that's not Claes. That's, um, Domenick Capobianco in one of the Happenings. Look how cute I look. Look at that hair. Whew, I wish I had that hair. Yeah, no, [mumbling] "bored expression." [Laughs.] Yeah, are they assuming that this is Oldenburg? No.

[00:06:50.25] MICHAEL LOBEL: Yes. They think that that's Old—

[00:06:51.84] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, that's so wrong. No, that's one of the players, one of the, uh—that was Domenick. That was in one of the Happenings at The Store. And his role was wonderful. And I have pictures somewhere where he's winding up with a baseball bat.

[00:07:11.26] And he swings. But he stops in front of this ceramic pot. And then he goes back again and again and again and again. And then finally, he hits it. And it all goes out. It was just a beautiful motion. So it could have been a later Store—one of The Store Happenings toward the end, I think it was. I'm not sure which one. But that's not—what paper was that?

[00:07:36.59] MICHAEL LOBEL: That's just online.

[00:07:38.14] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, too bad. See, don't we hate technology? It's all wrong. [Laughs.]

[00:07:43.57] MICHAEL LOBEL: So getting back to the soft sculptures, so starting at the Green Gallery in 1962, you now spend quite a number of years sewing soft sculptures for—

[00:07:54.14] PATTY MUCHA: —yes, I did. I did. I did. I did. I mean, it ended up—my last one was really, that was one of my favorite. I didn't even put that in here. But this went into Expo 67 in Montreal.

[00:08:07.29] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you're referring to the *Giant Soft Fan*.

[00:08:10.56] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, the black vinyl. But there was also a ghost version. So we'd often do two versions of these major pieces. The first one would be made in muslin, which is okay, because if you make a mistake sewing, you can pull it out. It doesn't matter with muslin.

[00:08:27.67] With vinyl, you can't make a mistake. It's got to be absolutely perfect. And the shape has to be perfect where it has to be—sewn once, you see. So that was a beautiful piece. That hung in Bucky Fuller's dome in Montreal, the top, at the apex of the—

[00:08:43.39] MICHAEL LOBEL: —so let's slow down because I want this—

[00:08:46.09] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, okay—

[00:08:46.48] MICHAEL LOBEL: —on the record. So you mentioned the process of making two. So was the muslin one always called the ghost version?

[00:08:55.04] MICHAEL LOBEL: Yes, It was always the ghost.

[00:08:57.74] MICHAEL LOBEL: And how would this process work? Claes would come to you with an idea?

[00:09:02.47] PATTY MUCHA: Well, well, no, yeah, sure, what he wanted to do. I mean, I think that, let's just take a look at all this shit here. [Laughs.] Yeah, I mean, I would often have to make a pattern because you can't do it without a pattern. And sometimes, he did a pattern.

[00:09:20.58] My very, very favorite—I have some really favorite pieces, the *Typewriter [Soft Typewriter]*, the *Telephone [Soft Pay-Telephone]*. The wall telephone is truly a—because it's so subtle, the sewing is very difficult in it. It has several pieces, you know, different kinds—silver, matte silver, and then the shiny black. And it has very complicated sewing in it, which I love.

[00:09:45.69] And also, I used to give these talks, you know. And the students wouldn't know what the hell it was because it was a public, free, you know, pay telephone. What does that mean? More towards the end, recently, I have to really explain what a telephone was, you know.

[00:10:01.58] But so that piece is really beautiful. Unfortunately, I saw it in Vienna when I was there in 2012. And it was a little tired. Vinyl doesn't last forever.

[00:10:12.44] MICHAEL LOBEL: So how would this work? So it really depended—sometimes, Claes would create a kind of plan? Or you would create it? Or it would be—

[00:10:22.63] PATTY MUCHA: —well, I never told him what to do, if that's what you want to know. No, because he had an idea of what he wanted to make. For instance, like when we started making the *Airflow [Profile Airflow]*, the Airflow car, you know, had all these various parts to it, internal, you know, the carburetor and the wheels. They were all separate pieces at one point.

[00:10:49.62] He wanted to make the major—the real big car. And we couldn't figure out how we would—I mean, it would have been too big. We would have had to have a physical structure to hold it up. But basically, we just zapped it. We didn't do it.

[00:11:05.48] The *Drum Set [Miniature Soft Drum Set]*, of course, was very easy to do. That was one of my favorite pieces too. Do I have it here? The *Drum Set* was done in—outside of, um, Aspen in 1967. My marriage was falling apart. Well, that *Drum Set*, you know, was Walter. I was relating to it symbolically. The really—reason for it. So I put a lot of love in that sewing. [Laughs.]

[00:11:33.46] I didn't want, in some cases, you see, because there were so many pieces. And you know, Oldenburg would say, you know, he's going to have a show in two weeks. And he'd like another piece. Oh, yeah, really? I mean, you run out of time. So we did have a couple of people help us toward some of the pieces. Like Letty Lou helped for little, small things.

[00:11:51.97] MICHAEL LOBEL: Letty Lou who?

[00:11:53.11] PATTY MUCHA: Sorry, Letty Lou Eisenhower, yes, who was a Happening star and a good friend of ours. And she could sew, but small stuff. But there was a woman who was my assistant. We hired somebody who was actually an assistant, Liz LeBlanc, Liz LeBlanc.

[00:12:09.45] MICHAEL LOBEL: And do you remember at what point you hired—

[00:12:12.14] PATTY MUCHA: —when we were doing the bathroom sets and the toilet and then and the sink. So she helped doing that. Yeah.

[00:12:18.56] MICHAEL LOBEL: But that means that you were sewing most of the soft sculptures for quite a while.

PATTY MUCHA: Oh, a long time, yeah, especially when we went to California in '63. All those pieces I had done, you know. Some pieces I hated, just because the vinyl was stiff.

[00:12:34.02] Like, there's one piece everybody loves. And I just hated it. It was the *BLT* [*Giant BLT*] with the stick going through that Artschwager made. And it was beautifully made. And it was laminated bacon. That was quite beautiful. But the actual sewing of it, because the white part was so hard and stiff, I hated it.

[00:12:53.97] But no matter, you can't love them all. The *Toaster* was cute. It was old-fashioned looking toaster with soft, crinkly vinyl. So it looked really like that crappy kind of, you know, aluminum. I mean, the pieces were wonderful.

[00:13:10.25] I'll tell you something, it was fun turning them inside out. First of all, we knew what it was going to look like. But when you're sewing, you're always on the backside most of the time—most of the time. So when you turned it over, it was like giving birth.

[00:13:23.95] Claes referred to them as his kids, his children. So yes, there was a collaboration. Those were our children. Funny, huh? What can I say? But yeah, so that part was okay. Um, hmm, what else?

[00:13:44.43] MICHAEL LOBEL: But it sounds like you were doing a lot of work.

[00:13:48.54] PATTY MUCHA: I was doing a lot of work. There was a lot. Oh, there was one incident I could talk about, too. It's a little anecdote. At one point, I don't know what part of the year it was or when it was. It was probably in '65, in fact, which is, you know, we were soft—I don't know what we were doing. It wasn't so bad, with the *Dormeyer Mixer* [*Soft Dormeyer Mixer*], yeah, the *Airflow* already was '65, '67.

[00:14:13.74] So '65, I was so tired of doing it. And he said, "Okay, Poopy, I'll do it." So that's when we had that industrial sewing machine. Now, listen to this. Well, I said, "Okay."

[00:14:26.33] So he knew how to turn it on. But I did not tell him a very amazing, basic thing you have to do. You have to lower the presser foot. It's so simple. You got to lower it, or it's not going to cut it. So he didn't lower it. And he tried with a piece of fabric. And it went every which way [laughs] and made all these knots underneath and stringy. It was just hopeless.

[00:14:48.45] And I just watched him. I just watched him do it. And so then he realized that he couldn't do it. And I wasn't going to show him how to do it. But I had a day off. You know —

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track09_m.]

[00:00:00.63] PATTY MUCHA: —yeah, but I think so. Did I hate—the last piece was—do you want to go back to the last piece right away? The last piece was a soft Picasso, which was the image that they had this Picasso sculpture in Chicago.

[00:00:18.81] And, uh, Bill Copley had arranged for a series of them, you know. So I did the maquette for it—the only one version, which would then be sent out to a company to do the whole thing. But I did that.

[00:00:36.18] But my marriage was really pretty much over at that point. But I thought, Well, I still know how to sew. So that was interesting.

[00:00:44.73] MICHAEL LOBEL: And that was, what year?

[00:00:46.11] PATTY MUCHA: 1969, 1969.

[00:00:49.35] MICHAEL LOBEL: So at that point, the marriage is deteriorating.

[00:00:52.23] PATTY MUCHA: Yes. And there weren't very many pieces in between there. Well, the *Drum Set* was '67. That was the big, major piece.

[00:01:01.92] And *Drainpipes*—those were easy. Yeah, the next year, in between *Soft Picasso*. I talk about the marriage. I don't think I'm worried about that.

[00:01:12.92] MICHAEL LOBEL: I have a lot of questions and a lot of different things to talk about.

[00:01:16.92] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, of course.

[00:01:17.21] MICHAEL LOBEL: But I don't think you and I have talked a lot directly about the deterioration of the marriage. Is there, like, a little bit you could say about it? Like, what really happened from your perspective?

[00:01:30.46] PATTY MUCHA: Well, it happened with—I think the way always relations sort of happen. You just sort of start drifting apart. But I will say that there were a few affairs involved. Claes had a few.

[00:01:49.37] And it was Hannah Wilke. Of course, she was a big beauty in his life, you know. So I would say Hannah broke up the marriage. But Hannah, unfortunately, didn't marry him. She really wanted to marry him, and he wouldn't do that.

[00:02:01.26] And meanwhile, I had an affair with Walter, and I loved him. But it wasn't as long as it could have been—Walter De Maria. Yeah. So he was great.

[00:02:09.90] And Claes, hated [laughs] his art. He couldn't understand, as if I was going—you know, give me a break. We're talking about bodies here—[laughs] bodies, and temperament, and subtleties and—

[00:02:24.83] MICHAEL LOBEL: —how did the relationship with Walter De Maria get started?

[00:02:28.43] PATTY MUCHA: How did it—oh, okay. Well, I'll tell you. Here's the story. I mean, until that happened, it was, like, seven years into my marriage. It was totally—we were faithful with each other.

[00:02:42.26] We'd go to these parties. I mean, there were so many parties. And we'd often flirt with each other the way we did. People flirted.

[00:02:49.83] We drank, we flirted. That was it. That was sort of a thing.

[00:02:53.20] And at one point, I know I was in that band with him. I'm trying to think of when it happened. Was I in the band before I had an affair? I don't think so. I think the band happened—yes, it happened before. The band was before. What year? Do you have a year for me?

[00:03:08.76] MICHAEL LOBEL: I do. So—

[00:03:10.29] PATTY MUCHA: —anyway, do you want me to go into the band or to the affair?

[00:03:13.87] MICHAEL LOBEL: Why don't you talk about De Maria and the relationship, and then we'll go back to the band?

[00:03:18.70] PATTY MUCHA: Okay. All right, so here's the story. I'll tell you exactly when it happened. It was quite wonderful. E.A.T—remember E.A.T.

[00:03:26.91] Well, there was a huge auction. Oh, no. I have to even go back further. George

Manupelli, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, was a teacher friend of ours. We got to know him.

[00:03:43.65] His students in Ann Arbor made mockups of airplanes—the kind of kits that children get to make airplanes out of, you know, out of balsa wood and everything. Only, they were 18-foot [wing span -PM]. So E.A.T had an auction at Bob Rauschenberg's Lafayette place one evening—huge evening. And his building is three stories, levels high.

[00:04:16.95] And these planes were placed in one of the areas. It was like a—because it used to be a Salvation Army place, so it was in the churchy part. So there was enough room for these planes to be up there. And Christie's—I think it was Christie's auction—were auctioning off these planes to raise money for E.A.T.

[00:04:40.02] MICHAEL LOBEL: Do you remember what year this would have been?

[00:04:42.97] PATTY MUCHA: Exactly '67. It was June, '67. It was an amazing event. Everybody was there.

[00:04:51.86] The whole art world was there, you know, and they were bidding. And the bidders were—because there were so many rooms, people were in two different rooms. So we were all bidding.

[00:05:03.26] And at one point, they were bidding on these planes. And I didn't realize that Claes was bidding for the plane in the other room. [Laughs.] So we were both bidding against each other.

[00:05:14.48] We got this wonderful plane for \$1,400. I remember that—\$1,495. It was a biplane, a biplane. The plane was so beautifully made. It had a large, um, inner tube from a bicycle that would make the propeller go around and around. And there was this little plastic man in the driver's seat. It was terrific.

[00:05:34.36] So anyway, but that was the party. And there was a lot of drinking, of course, and a lot of dancing. I don't know why—we had music somehow. And at one point, Claes was dancing with Anne Wehrer, who was one of the Michigan people.

[00:05:55.27] Was I jealous? Probably. I don't know. Anyway, I wanted to leave. I wanted to go, and I couldn't find him, or I couldn't find the keys.

[00:06:06.39] What kind of keys did I need? Probably to my apartment. I have no idea. But I insisted I had to leave.

[00:06:12.81] So I remembered Walter's phone number. I called him up because in those days you had to use a phone number. And Billy Klüver wanted me—because he was worried because I was doing nutty things, right? [Laughs.]

[00:06:25.80] He wanted me to go to New Jersey, and they were going to take care of me that night. I said, "No, take me to Walter's." So I went to Walter's. That's how it started.

[00:06:34.05] And so I would visit him often in his place. And at that point in my life, because we had so much money, I was taking ice skating lessons from Pierre Brunet, who was a gold medalist in 1930 or something. He and his wife—two years in a row, he got a gold medalist in pairs.

[00:06:54.24] He was my teacher. So I would go to ice skating in Manhattan. They had this indoor rink, beautiful rink. So I could use that as an excuse.

[00:07:04.65] Very often, I said I was going ice skating. I'd grab my skates, but I'd go down to Walter's. So basically, that was that.

[00:07:11.82] We did have one experience at George Segal's, which that wasn't so nice. I mean, I went to a party with Walter and not Claes. Well, I wanted to. Walter had this beautiful car, a Triumph.

[00:07:27.13] MICHAEL LOBEL: And the relationship with Walter lasted for about how long?

[00:07:30.58] PATTY MUCHA: It wasn't long. It was several months because that was the summer that we went to Aspen. Fuck that. I had to go to Aspen, and Walter was in New York. And it was clear that—I mean, he had been divorced from his wife, who was very beautiful,

Susanna.

[00:07:47.32] And I think he still loved her. And of course, it was okay with me because I didn't expect love, you know. I sort of loved him though. I think I did.

[00:07:54.76] I would like to have continued. When I came back, I was very depressed from Aspen. Go on.

[00:08:01.34] MICHAEL LOBEL: So speaking about Walter, um, I thought it might be helpful and interesting just to talk about some of your connections to the New York art world at that point.

[00:08:14.68] PATTY MUCHA: To the art world?

[00:08:15.55] MICHAEL LOBEL: To the New York art world at that point. And so here's the first question or point.

[00:08:20.72] PATTY MUCHA: Okay, yeah.

[00:08:23.50] MICHAEL LOBEL: On Wikipedia, online, there's a short entry for a band or music group called The Druds, D-R-U-D-S. And I'll read you at least part of the entry. It says, "The Druds was a short-lived 1963 avant-garde noise music band founded by Andy Warhol that featured prominent members of the New York proto-conceptual art and minimal art community." And it lists "Walter De Maria on drums, Larry Poons on guitar, La Monte Young on saxophone, artist and poet Patty Mucha—then Patty Oldenburg, as she was married to sculptor Claes Oldenburg—was the lead singer. Jasper Johns wrote Neo-Dada lyrics, as did Warhol." So could you—

[00:09:18.02] PATTY MUCHA: —that's it—

[00:09:18.75] MICHAEL LOBEL: —so this is supposedly 1963.

[00:09:21.32] PATTY MUCHA: It was 1963.

[00:09:22.54] MICHAEL LOBEL: And you were in this band with some pretty prominent members of the New York art world.

[00:09:26.85] PATTY MUCHA: They were good. And they were good musicians because La Monte was a composer. So he was amazing.

[00:09:33.52] And Larry could play the guitar very well. And Walter was a great drummer. I mean, they were actually musicians besides doing their other things.

[00:09:42.73] There's one name that's not mentioned. There was Lucas, because Lucas—I was the main singer [laughs], such as it was. And Lucas and Andy were my backup singers. They didn't sing at all. They just said a few words.

[00:09:58.59] The words were stupid. And they were Jasper's words. Does it say Jasper Johns? Yeah. [Laughs.] We met at Walter's house, his loft, you know. And we did it a few times, which was very good.

[00:10:10.73] And the thing about it is, Walter did tape it on his reel-to-reel, but he ended up erasing them, which is just as well. There is a tape of it, which is really horrendously bad. And it wasn't from a rehearsal.

[00:10:28.55] And Billy Klüver was in charge of it, and he made it—he either did it at our loft—I mean, our building on Fourth Street. Or he did it in Washington when we went down to the *Stars Happening*. But I mean, Walter wasn't part of it. There was no drum in there.

[00:10:48.42] And I don't know. It was just a mess. And to me, I hear it, and I'm really embarrassed about it. I refuse to—you know, it's just horrible.

[00:10:57.04] MICHAEL LOBEL: So what you're saying is that you don't like the existing recording.

[00:11:00.56] PATTY MUCHA: It's not a recording. It's a recording of a bunch of drunks, and we're talking. We're all drunk at the time.

[00:11:06.49] And Lucas is giving some stupid, little things. And, oh, It's just—I think it's horrible that it's out there in the world. Anyway, that's what I can say.

[00:11:17.98] And I can say one more thing about it. There was a show of Andy's work in the museum in Montreal while I lived up here, having to do with his concept of music—his decorations for his albums and, you know, those big, soft things that floated, but anything having to do with music. So they had that tape up there, playing in one of the rooms.

[00:11:45.50] And I spoke to a local woman who was going to go up there. And I said, it's really horrible. Don't even.

[00:11:53.32] I apologize. Well she came back from Montreal, and she said, you're right, Patty. [Laughs.] It is horrible.

[00:11:59.93] So sound-wise, it's just very offensive, is what I'm trying to say. It's a drunken party. It isn't music.

[00:12:06.60] MICHAEL LOBEL: So to clarify, the existing recording, you don't like and you think is a misrepresentation. But there were other recordings.

[00:12:14.75] PATTY MUCHA: There were, but Walter had it on his reel-to-reel, and he redid it, you know, because he was kind of—I won't say miserly, but he was careful with money. So he probably thought, because he's a musician, why wouldn't he use his machine?

[00:12:28.39] MICHAEL LOBEL: But how did this all get started, The Druds?

[00:12:31.08] PATTY MUCHA: Okay. Well, it was Andy's idea, Andy's idea. And I don't know where those people came from. I mean, he must have chose them. I mean, Lucas and—I mean, I have no idea.

[00:12:46.95] But I know we hung out at Walter's house most of the—you know. We did—not that much time, but we did it a few times at Walter's thing. And, um, I know there's something else I want to say about it, but I can't think about it.

[00:13:01.94] MICHAEL LOBEL: And did The Druds ever perform publicly?

[00:13:05.27] PATTY MUCHA: Never. No, we didn't. It was just before the Velvet Underground, which is too bad. But of course, then Andy had these amazing people singing, you know. I mean, I think I screeched. [Laughs.] It was okay.

[00:13:17.81] MICHAEL LOBEL: And I think the most curious thing I find about it is Jasper participating.

[00:13:22.77] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah. Well, his words were so—"no more apologies, no more astrologies." [Singing] "No more apologies for me. No more those good time bets. No more the sweet regrets. No more, but please take me"—or something like that, you know.

[00:13:38.09] Really dumb things. They were cute, and we kept doing it. [Singing] La, la, la, la, la, la, la. It was really dumb.

[00:13:45.24] But to start off each time, Andy would say, "Oh, Patty, I'm sorry." And then I'd [laughs] do this. And I forget what Lucas said, but it's on the tape. Yeah, no. And then Lukey is dead now, and so is Andy. It's not worth it. But it was fun. Let's just say, it was fun. Now, you have to read my thing because I talk about this one.

[00:14:08.84] MICHAEL LOBEL: So, Patty, speaking of Andy, what we're looking at now is a 1962 silkscreen painting by Andy Warhol called *Patty Oldenburg*.

[00:14:20.04] PATTY MUCHA: It's wonderful.

[00:14:20.85] MICHAEL LOBEL: Now, did you ask him to make this painting of you?

[00:14:24.57] PATTY MUCHA: No. I think he asked for a photograph, and he was going to do it. This is before the Liz and all those big, paint—just before, right? '62.

[00:14:34.31] I'm not sure when he did that. Yeah, no, but you saw it. It was like this. I don't own it anymore. You know I auctioned it off?

[00:14:41.10] But listen to this. Now, if you read that paper that I'm giving you, you'll see that last year—I get up early, just like you, and I listen to VPR, mostly. So I'm listening to—6 o'clock in the morning, I'm listening to VPR.

[00:14:56.78] MICHAEL LOBEL: Vermont Public Radio?

[00:14:57.71] PATTY MUCHA: Vermont Public Radio, yes, which it was a—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track10_m.]

[00:00:01.30] PATTY MUCHA: —and there's a voice on that, saying—there's two women talking—says, "And we have a connection with someone in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. There's a woman named Pat Oldenburg who was married to Claes Oldenburg."

[00:00:13.34] And this painting, what they're talking about is a show in Reading, Vermont, that's called *Small is Beautiful*. And it's a show of Andy Warhol pieces. The collectors in Vermont own that piece, much to my surprise.

[00:00:31.00] Because when you give stuff in an auction, I never know who buys it. So it was interesting. So it's in Vermont.

[00:00:37.43] So last summer, the day before I went to the Memorial for Oldenburg in New York, some of us went down to Reading to see it. And my friends were quite impressed, actually, because there were these people, you know, just tourists coming through in front of this painting.

[00:00:55.96] And so I posed in front of it, and I talked about it and everything. There was this woman that had tears in her eyes, because she was so impressed that she could meet somebody that knew Andy Warhol. [Laughs.] I thought that was so sweet.

[00:01:07.59] MICHAEL LOBEL: So speaking of which, first of all, um, did Warhol just make the painting as a kind of gift for you?

[00:01:15.65] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, we were friends. We used to friend—Olga—that was good. Olga, [laughs] how's that for a Freudian slip?

[00:01:22.52] Andy and I used to have little—sometimes we'd go out to have luncheons, things together—quiet, you know? I didn't hang out with him at his Factory things. And as I point out—and it's probably just as well, because at those times, days I was drinking—and who the fuck knows what was happening there, you know? I could have taken off my clothes and I could have been in those movies, yah, yah, yah, yah. So I did not hang out with him that way.

[00:01:51.69] But we related to each other because he's Czech. And I think I'm Czech. Because Colleen, my sister, and I went to Vienna in 2012 to talk about Claes's show. And while there, I said, Oh, we're going to Vienna, Austria. Let's go to another few other countries.

[00:02:10.17] So we connected to Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and we ended up in Poland. We went to Auschwitz. Hello.

[00:02:20.56] But we also went to the Mucha Museum in Prague, and it was fabulous. To me, it was wonderful. Because, first of all, it's all this decorative stuff that's so beautiful—that we all know him about, Alphonse Mucha.

[00:02:34.21] But they had another show of all his paintings having to do with historical, political paintings about the Czech Republic. You know, huge, gigantic paintings. Very different from his decorative ones. Alphonse Mucha, we're talking about.

[00:02:49.22] MICHAEL LOBEL: And are you saying that there might be some kind of fam—

[00:02:52.15] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, we wanted to be related. Yeah, yeah, yeah [laughs]. I don't think we are.

[00:02:56.33] MICHAEL LOBEL: So let's step back a moment. So do you remember, when would you have met Andy Warhol?

[00:03:01.25] PATTY MUCHA: When did I meet him? Oh, I don't know. I think I can remember how we met him. I'm not sure the year.

[00:03:09.06] I think people were—at that point, Oldenburg was trying—I guess people were being made aware of each other and the pop world, but very early in their lifetimes. And we went up to Andy's house in Madison Avenue to see his art. Claes was not impressed.

[00:03:34.39] They were going to exchange. He didn't want to exchange anything, because I think at that time, what could he have been doing? Could he have shown us his commercial pieces? I'm not sure.

[00:03:45.41] You know, I don't remember. But I think that might have been the first time. So what would it be, '61, '62? It was really early on.

[00:03:53.95] MICHAEL LOBEL: It would have been '60, '61 maybe.

[00:03:55.93] PATTY MUCHA: But, I mean, I always liked him, because we always had a good time together. And I found him very sweet.

[00:04:02.96] Now, I know I've read stuff about him that people ended up hating—a lot of women, they hate—it was difficult working with him or something. I never—I mean he was always very sweet, and we were very sweet.

[00:04:15.79] MICHAEL LOBEL: So can you just say a little bit more about that? You would go out for meals. You would just talk.

[00:04:20.23] PATTY MUCHA: Well, one specific place we went to, there was this restaurant, a fancy restaurant that had these big chandeliers of—what's his name? Anyway, he's the father of some woman up here who is well known. Some gay guy, what's his name? Decorative, beautiful stuff.

[00:04:45.07] But anyway, what is the name of that place? I'll think about it. Anyway, we would just have chocolate. We'd just have—we'd have dessert. We'd go for dessert.

[00:04:56.21] And he would say to me, "Patty, you should be doing your own thing." I know he often said that to me, which was lovely. Because at that point, I was just doing sewing. Yeah, I was just doing art with Claes. And I'm not sure I even talked about my own art, because I had such a history of art background. But it doesn't matter.

[00:05:17.54] Yeah, he was sweet. And of course, he'd come with this entourage in these parties. You know, he'd come with Gerard. Gerard and I got to be friends, too, because he was a poet, you know.

[00:05:29.65] MICHAEL LOBEL: And that's Gerard—

[00:05:30.55] PATTY MUCHA: —Gerard Malanga, yeah, yeah. I mean, we could talk about Long Island, but that's later on. I mean, I don't know where we're going with that. My world, so interesting. The Long Island was towards the end of my world. I guess—oh, '68.

[00:06:02.36] Can we go up at '68? That's too far? Yeah, '68—I always say I started that chapter in '68. That was when the world fell apart with all the demonstrations, and the people in Chicago, and blah blah blah, blah.

[00:06:14.04] No, where I was, was in Long Island. Because that was the summer of '68, and Claes decided it would be nice if we had a little place in the Hamptons. Because his brother had a place in Amagansett, you know, so it'd be a nice connection to visit him in Amagansett.

[00:06:30.98] Well, so I rented this place. Now listen to this. I don't know how I did it, but sometimes I just did it. I rented this place. It was a barn—kind of a barn situation, next to Lee Krasner.

[00:06:45.34] Pollock's barn was right within my eye view, you know? So I got to know Lee Krasner, because we were neighbors. Meanwhile, I was a crazy woman. At that point, my marriage was falling apart.

[00:06:57.10] Every weekend, Gerard Malanga would come with poets and we'd stay on the

weekend and we'd have sexy events and lots of food. He always made, I don't know, some kind of dish that Gerard would always make. But he was fun.

[00:07:10.30] And Gerard always said, "Write a poem every day." That was the instructions to me—write a poem every day. Well, I didn't follow him. I should have. But I sometimes have.

[00:07:18.28] But anyway—so okay, so I'm living in that place. And, of course, before that I had gotten to know Ruth Sansegundo who was Pollock's, you know, Ruthie Kligman. So that was an interesting thing.

[00:07:36.20] Meanwhile, Oldenburg would come once in a while to Long Island. Because what did he do? It was 1968, he went to Chicago.

[00:07:45.29] He was having a show in Feigen's, you know, having a show—having an affair with this strange woman that I found out about. I talk about that—Jennifer, her name was. [Laughs.] Nobody knows about her, Jennifer. Hello, Jennifer!

[00:07:58.69] She was a hair salon person, or something. Some horrible lady. But I'm sure she was nice.

[00:08:06.07] And he was also at the demonstration. And he came back thinking that he had these stories about Lincoln Park on how he got beat up and everything. And I'd always look at his head, which was bald, and I was looking for a bruise. I couldn't find anything in his head, so I think it was fake.

[00:08:21.68] But he had people like Paul Carroll, his poet, a friend of his. So he had connections in Chicago, too. Anyway, that was '68.

[00:08:34.14] MICHAEL LOBEL: You've talked about Warhol. I'm also curious if you could say a little about—you also knew both Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg pretty well—

[00:08:44.94] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, absolutely—

[00:08:45.53] MICHAEL LOBEL: —and how did you get to know them?

[00:08:47.55] PATTY MUCHA: Well, we just knew them because they were part of the scene. But I will say, when my marriage was slowing, getting thin, I saw Bob more often. Bob Rauschenberg was, I thought, a really good friend of mine. Although I find stuff, I don't ever see me mentioned anywhere. But he'd have these amazing parties.

[00:09:06.39] And there was one that I talk about.

[00:09:08.03] Oh, look, the little hummingbird is out there. So sweet. I love them.

[00:09:12.44] Um, Bob had a party for Dame Margot Fonteyn's 50th birthday party. Did you read that? Did I tell you? Anyway, it was at his loft.

[00:09:23.89] I had to embellish a little bit about the situation. Because what it was in those days, and it was typical, you'd have a dinner for a group of people. It would be official.

[00:09:36.07] And even I did it. And at a certain point—when you got to the dessert point, then another group of people came in and had the desserts. Isn't that weird?

[00:09:45.89] That's so New York. You'd never do that up here. It'd be so insulting. But it was traditionally that's what they did.

[00:09:51.74] So I think that's kind of what happened there. Because at one point, there were a lot more people coming in. But Dame Margot brought in some of her young, handsome dancers, the guys. I thought they were amazing. One of them was Rudy Nureyev.

[00:10:08.72] So I always talk about when I danced with Rudy, and how he couldn't dance. [Laughs.] He couldn't dance because he was so—he was so proper. He couldn't loosen up, you know.

[00:10:19.19] We were all twisting, moving our hips, and he wasn't. But it was cute. So I used to talk to Rudy.

[00:10:26.03] But that was a very fun experience. Because what happened then, there was this big Chamberlain couch—almost the size of this room. Chamberlain made these wonderful, big couches. Lots of people could sit on them—maybe five, six people, you know, all different ways.

[00:10:41.42] I woke up in the morning, well, I guess it was, like, four or five in the morning. It was five. It was light. Light was coming in on the couch.

[00:10:52.02] The Italian was not there. None of the dancers were there. I was there alone.

[00:10:56.43] But I heard somebody upstairs walking up and down the stairs. And it was Marian Javits, who loved Bob Rauschenberg. She was trying to wake him up, but he couldn't. He was with somebody, he wouldn't answer.

[00:11:09.23] So she came downstairs and we looked at each other. We decided it was time to leave. You know, what else are you going to do?

[00:11:15.87] So we went out on Lafayette Place, trying to get a hitch. There were no cabs at all. No cabs at all. There was very little traffic.

[00:11:27.93] And I think it was May. A beautiful, warm early morning. We could look it up.

[00:11:34.27] MICHAEL LOBEL: What year would this have been around?

[00:11:37.74] PATTY MUCHA: Um, help out. Um, it's probably—I almost want to say '69. I think it's—we can look it up, but I think it's '69. Yeah, I think so.

[00:11:52.54] So anyway, what happened was there was a bagel truck that stopped, this guy delivering bagels. And so we both got in. We sat in front. He was so friendly.

[00:12:02.59] So he gave us each a bagel and, uh, he stopped at 14th Street and whatever. And I got off and walked to the loft. And Marian continued on North to her Senator husband. [Laughs.] It was a very fun experience.

[00:12:18.33] MICHAEL LOBEL: Now, I was once talking to you about Johns and Rauschenberg. And you said something very interesting, which is I had asked you—you know, now people are very interested in same-sex relationships.

[00:12:33.04] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, yeah.

[00:12:33.84] MICHAEL LOBEL: And what I was confused about is that it seemed that—people knew the two of them were together, but didn't really talk about it?

[00:12:46.27] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, you mean Bob and Jasper? Now, let me see. So when did they separate? Was it because of Cy Twombly or somebody? Who is it?

[00:12:56.77] MICHAEL LOBEL: No. So Twombly was with Bob before Jasper—

[00:13:00.01] PATTY MUCHA: —oh, okay. So it was Steve maybe, Steve Paxton. Well, you know, they were when you say—what was your question, that they didn't talk about it?

[00:13:09.00] We didn't really—you know, it

[00:13:11.25] was a different time. Of course, they were gay. But, you know, I look at some of my notebooks, and I used the word "fag." And that wasn't evil, it was just people said that.

[00:13:27.73] MICHAEL LOBEL: In your notebooks from that time period?

[00:13:30.35] PATTY MUCHA: Yes.

[00:13:30.66] MICHAEL LOBEL: And you would use it to describe someone?

[00:13:34.06] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah. But, like it wasn't—I would never use that now. But then—I was maybe naive or something, I don't know. But yeah, I loved them both. They were so different.

[00:13:50.77] When Claes moved away—he moved away in May '69, that was really when

that party was—so I had the loft to myself and I had this huge party. I always had these parties. And, um, Bob and Jasper were both there, I think. And I think they just, you know—um, let's see, did Jasper walk nearby?

[00:14:10.84] It was probably—

[00:14:13.39] Bob was more of a troublemaker. He probably walked by Jasper and said something nasty, you know, and that was it. So they didn't talk. I was so sorry, because why should people—if you break up, you've got to—look at me and Richie. We're friends many years.

[00:14:29.34] MICHAEL LOBEL: Richie who?

[00:14:29.99] PATTY MUCHA: Hell. But anyway, uh, that was a fun party, because at that party—you want another anecdote? I remember it.

[00:14:41.03] I had the poets there too. Allen Ginsberg was there, and so was Taylor Mead. And I had decided that—I don't know if I decided or if Taylor did, but we both decided we would get married to each other. To me, it was perfect because he was so strange. And I figured we wouldn't have to sleep with each other, but—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track11_m.]

[00:00:00.05] PATTY MUCHA: —we could go out at night and have fun together in bars and stuff. I mean, because it would have been a perfect relationship. And so Allen anointed us, or made the ceremony. We had this fake kind of marriage celebration, me and Taylor Mead. [Laughs.] That's all. It's funny.

[00:00:17.36] Anyway, Taylor is dead, too, isn't he?

[00:00:19.61] MICHAEL LOBEL: So, Patty, I have a few more questions about some photos.

[00:00:22.86] PATTY MUCHA: Okay. Okay.

[00:00:23.60] MICHAEL LOBEL: There's a photo from 1968 of you, Lucas, Claes, George Segal, and Bob Rauschenberg.

[00:00:32.16] PATTY MUCHA: [Laughs.] Yeah, that's it. I think that's at the, um, the Scull house. Yeah. That's when I ate the [inaudible]. Isn't that a great picture?

[00:00:40.64] MICHAEL LOBEL: It's from the Archives of American Art and it's of all of you. So, I mean—

[00:00:45.72] PATTY MUCHA: —I think—isn't that in Bob Scull's—Robert Scull's archive?

[00:00:49.99] MICHAEL LOBEL: It's from Robert Scull's archive. Although the caption says that you were actually on George Segal's farm in New Jersey.

[00:00:58.54] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, really?

[00:00:58.90] MICHAEL LOBEL: But who knows if the caption is right.

[00:01:01.01] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, well, maybe. I don't know. How interesting. I don't know. I can't tell you where it was, but that definitely is me. And that's Claes, and that's Lucas looking handsome and beautiful. And Bob is holding everybody up. Hmm.

[00:01:17.35] But it said that it was where? George Segal's? Well, maybe it is. And Bob Scull maybe was there and took the picture.

[00:01:28.22] MICHAEL LOBEL: So a few more photographs, and then I think we can be done with the photographs. I had never—in preparing for today, I had never—I've seen a lot of photographs of you from this period, but I never knew that Diane Arbus photographed you and Oldenburg—

[00:01:42.80] PATTY MUCHA: —that's a great picture, isn't it? That was on the internet the other day. I have a copy of this, too. I love this. Now, this is in our loft on 14th Street in the back studio part. And that's part of the bedroom set that he made in California. And we're

just hamming it up.

[00:02:00.18] MICHAEL LOBEL: But do you remember, was there any situation that led to Arbus photographing the two of you?

[00:02:07.61] PATTY MUCHA: I don't know, but I love what I'm wearing. God, look at those shoes. [Laughs.] I love looking at my old—look at that dress. Isn't that pretty? Yeah.

[00:02:17.64] I liked her. I'd see her from once a time, once in a while.

[00:02:23.89] She died. She committed suicide, right?

[00:02:27.00] But anyway, yeah, I remember seeing her in Times Square one time. She was gawking at the trees. Her camera, she's sort of walking like this. And it was great. She was taking in the scene, you know, that bizarre—that's when Times Square was still ugly and weird and kind of more interesting, maybe, from her point of view.

[00:02:47.70] MICHAEL LOBEL: So you actually knew her?

[00:02:49.98] PATTY MUCHA: Well, I mean, I knew a lot of people that I knew, you know? But when I think about it, I was thinking—I talked about all the couples that we had, and I had a series of these dinners. And it was almost the same people, but on that table there has a few more leaves that can really stretch out, and I had all these benches that I made pads with.

[00:03:09.40] So we'd have these dinners—I'd have these dinner parties. I would say, "Claes, we should have a dinner party." So it would always—Clarice Rivers because they lived upstairs, Clarice and Larry, and it was Marjorie and Michael Kirby. And it was Lucas, of course. And Jasper was one of them.

[00:03:29.30] I'm not sure about Bob, for some reason. Olga and Klüver. I mean, it was like the same group. And I'm not sure, I think maybe Tom and Claire. I'm not sure, actually. Nancy and Jimmy already had moved to London. Yeah.

[00:03:45.18] MICHAEL LOBEL: So this would have been around when that you were having —

[00:03:47.85] PATTY MUCHA: —that's when we had the—in '65, '66, yeah. '67 in Saint—14th Street. Yeah. This is me.

[00:04:03.41] MICHAEL LOBEL: So, Patty, you've mentioned 14th Street frequently in our conversation, and I just wanted to go back and make sure that we have this recorded. And we're actually looking at a photograph of you at a sewing table. I think you're sewing the soft *Raisin Bread*. Could you say a little bit, both about the photograph, but also about 14th Street?

[00:04:32.40] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, sure, I would love to. Well, we were in Europe a few times, you know, for shows, and when we came back—I'm having a moment here. I'm trying to remember why we—what was this? Oh, I know. I think it has to do with after the Biennale. We came back in '64. You know what? I have to focus, and I'm sort of—I'm not clear in my head suddenly.

[00:05:09.85] MICHAEL LOBEL: That's okay. Maybe I can ask you a question to focus you.

[00:05:12.31] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah, no, I want to know why—I know we moved in there in '65.

[00:05:17.08] MICHAEL LOBEL: So did you go to the 1964 Venice Biennale where Rauschenberg—

[00:05:22.64] PATTY MUCHA: —yes, of course, we did. Yes, of course, we did. Yes, because we were in—we were in LA in '63, Kennedy's assassination. We stayed in spring, '64. Claes had a show, Dwan Gallery there. And then we came back.

[00:05:38.46] And then, at that point, later on, we went to the [Venice] Biennale. Well, we were there for a long time. And that's why it happened. We were in Italy for the Biennale, but we were there for two months in Italy. We traveled through. I saw Italy. It was fabulous.

[00:05:55.14] And at one point, we drove up after Venice, then we went into Roma, and we visited Cy Twombly at one point in Florence. But we also went up to Milano where Claes had to do some repairing of his plaster pieces and stuff for Panza di Biumo—Count Panza di Biumo who owned a lot of Oldenburg pieces at that point. That was a very exciting moment.

[00:06:20.67] So we were up there for a while. Then, after that, we flew to France and Claes had a show at Ileana Sonnabend, and we stayed in Paris for two months. That was the story. Then, after the Paris place, we came back, but we had no place to live, because we had stored the stuff at Howard Street. So we moved into the Chelsea Hotel and we stayed in the Chelsea for a few months. Yeah.

[00:06:47.19] Until after—maybe after, I don't know, spring, or maybe January or something. But there was this man named Jack, um—and I have a mental block about him. He was kind of a shyster. But he was great. Because what he did was he figured out about loft living for people and he would find lofts for people to live in, artists, you know, and he'd take a commission.

[00:07:14.61] So he found this place on 14th Street and First Avenue in this big, derelict building. All the floors were empty except for the bottom, which was the cleaners. It was owned by the Bloom and Krup down the road on First Avenue. So we moved in there.

[00:07:32.64] Not the very first, because the very first was somebody upstairs, these young guys who were cooking with a wood stove or something. They couldn't afford it. And there was a bit of money needed. So that became empty.

[00:07:46.93] And Claes did not want the upstairs because the roof was such a strange situation where it was low at one point and really high in another, sort of like an airplane hangar or something. And he worried that the roof would leak. He was practical.

[00:08:05.57] What he really wanted was the third floor, where the machinery of the freight elevator was stored. And it was so loud and dirty and yucky. And I said, No way, José. So he chose the fifth floor, which was one below the top floor. And Larry Rivers and Clarice moved into the sixth floor—the top floor. We became very close friends to them because of that. It was a wonderful building.

[00:08:32.05] Yayoi lived beneath us. Because, at that point, the buildings were—was from—one from 14th Street to 13th Street, a full length of the block. And then, as 30 feet, or as narrow as the building was for the two top floors, because it was artist in residence. You could live on—if you had that sign

[00:08:53.35] and the city knew about it. People could come and save you in case there was a fire. But then, the rest of the floors were cut in half so that they were half the size. So that meant that Yayoi was beneath the kitchen, and Chamberlain took—John Chamberlain took the place on 13th Street side.

[00:09:11.51] MICHAEL LOBEL: So what you're saying is Larry Rivers and Clarice are above you, then it's you and Claes.

[00:09:18.31] PATTY MUCHA: Yes.

[00:09:18.73] MICHAEL LOBEL: Then below you is Yayoi Kusama.

[00:09:21.47] PATTY MUCHA: And Chamberlain is on the 13th Street side. And underneath Yayoi, I think it was, um, this Japanese artist. And I wrote about it, but I can't remember his name. But somewhere. He would come in every day and paint the date, white paint on a black surface. Do you know who that might be?

[00:09:42.77] MICHAEL LOBEL: Was that On Kawara?

[00:09:44.03] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, On Kawara. So he lived there. But he didn't—I mean, he was just sort of there, but not really, you know what I mean. You never saw him. And I don't know who was on the other side on 13th Street at that point. I don't know.

[00:09:56.93] Then, underneath On Kawara was Herb Aach, who was this guy who was very involved with paint or something. That's all I knew. And then, underneath was a cleaners, which was the entire block.

[00:10:12.21] And the cleaners' boys, they were the Moskowitz brothers, Hilly and Dennis and Maury. Maury was—I guess Maury might have been the older. He kind of worked in the back with the machines. Hilly was always in the front at the cash register. Sort of the middle, same size.

[00:10:30.75] Dennis was the youngest and very cute. I used to love flirting with him because he was so handsome. So they were a sweet family. And they called themselves Dubarry Cleaners. Moskowitz [ph], but Dubarry. And we had a real—when Claes left, I mean, I had still had a relationship with those people. They were helpful at one point.

[00:10:50.35] I mean, they were like family. They were very sweet. That whole neighborhood was wonderful. Because now, we had come back from Europe, and then there was—kitty-corner, there was this great Italian store that had these tins of olive oil, and all the Italian stuff, way right from the country.

[00:11:10.04] And then there was a restaurant we always went to when we were drunk. I forget what it was. [Laughs.] But it was beautiful. And then, of course, the Japanese restaurants, but there was also Italian restaurants, Italian in that whole area. So it was a beautiful area. It was like family. It was like home-style, you know what I mean?

[00:11:29.06] MICHAEL LOBEL: And speaking of Claes leaving, so the two of you are separate or separated by when?

[00:11:37.77] PATTY MUCHA: '69. May, '69. He moved out and went into a hotel on Madison Avenue or something. I forget. And then he went up to New Haven and lived up there for a while to be close to Lippincott.

[00:11:52.45] MICHAEL LOBEL: Which was the foundry which—

[00:11:54.19] PATTY MUCHA: —the foundry. See, Hannah is—his relationship with Hannah kind of dissolves when he goes up to Lippincott, because there's Roxanne, this woman who works there. Not so beautiful as Hannah, but clever.

[00:12:07.12] MICHAEL LOBEL: And when did the two of you divorce?

[00:12:09.99] PATTY MUCHA: '70. Actually, it was a week before we were married 10 years, which really pissed my Social Security guy off because I would have gotten twice as much if he had just stayed one more week. But we all decided that he didn't know that. It was just a mistake.

[00:12:28.21] MICHAEL LOBEL: So speaking of the two of you being separated and then divorcing, I mean, this is maybe a little bit more delicate.

[00:12:38.81] PATTY MUCHA: I don't care.

[00:12:39.35] MICHAEL LOBEL: But I found some photographs that I thought were interesting. So I found these photographs that, actually, the photographer, Garry Winogrand took at Frank Stella's exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970.

[00:12:54.86] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, I bet I wasn't there.

[00:12:56.36] MICHAEL LOBEL: No, you were.

[00:12:57.47] PATTY MUCHA: No.

[00:12:58.12] MICHAEL LOBEL: There's a photograph of you.

[00:13:00.32] PATTY MUCHA: I was there?

[00:13:01.01] MICHAEL LOBEL: And Julie and Bob Rauschenberg.

[00:13:05.14] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, I do remember this picture, too. Where did I see—and this is Frank Stella's thing? And you know who's behind Bob Rauschenberg? That's Dick Oldenburg and Lisa, his wife.

[00:13:15.85] MICHAEL LOBEL: But then—

[00:13:16.95] PATTY MUCHA: —look at my beautiful hair. Fake, of course.

[00:13:20.40] MICHAEL LOBEL: In a different—so are you wearing a wig in that?

[00:13:23.02] PATTY MUCHA: No, no, it's bleach. It had a bleach. Yeah, I would have it done in bleach.

[00:13:27.01] MICHAEL LOBEL: But then, there's another photograph from that same exhibition.

[00:13:30.94] PATTY MUCHA: Yeah.

[00:13:31.41] MICHAEL LOBEL: And look at the bottom.

[00:13:35.72] PATTY MUCHA: So that is Hannah. But now, who's that young girl? Oh, this is Frank, huh? Is that Frank Stella?

[00:13:43.07] MICHAEL LOBEL: Yes.

[00:13:43.98] PATTY MUCHA: Then I don't know who that is. This is Hannah?

[00:13:46.83] MICHAEL LOBEL: Yep. So there was—

[00:13:50.05] PATTY MUCHA: —so I was there. Yeah. Well, I mean, I had been in the world, you know, with him. It was very painful for me to go to these openings and things. But it was my world, too. Because he had had a show at Sidney's.

[00:14:04.30] And that was at one point that we had this experience. And I guess it was—I don't know what show that was. But she was in the office, you know, the back room with the Janis boys, which is what you do if you're part of it. And Claes grabbed me by the arm, and he took me into the room and he says, "I think you two should talk."

[00:14:29.54] And I was just devastated. You can't do this. I mean, I was totally devastated. People thought, Hello, do I have that kind of stripe? No, I don't think so. So the guy who worked there, Manuel, a wonderful man, Manuel worked there, he said, "Patty, let me buy you a drink." He grabbed me and we went down the elevator and went outside and had a drink.

[00:14:48.06] MICHAEL LOBEL: Wait, so Claes, wanted you and Hannah—

[00:14:50.48] PATTY MUCHA: —to speak. To be nice. Listen, I've had a few—I'll talk about relationships with you about that, that are so similar, so similar with arrogant—

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track12_m.]

[00:00:00.08] PATTY MUCHA: —men, they want you to be part of the whole scene. They want everything to be okay like that. It isn't quite like that. You know, it takes a while. Now, Sidney, at that point, Sidney Janis, was a very sweet man. He thought that I should be writing a book already at that point.

[00:00:17.37] I mean, I was a basket case. I was on the surface okay. But I was a basket case. I couldn't possibly have written about it. Because he kept referring to—whoever her name, anyway, I'll think of her. But anyway, so, well, what was I going to say? Now I'm getting confused.

[00:00:37.76] Oh, I did want to say things—recently, like—no even with Rip, I mean, I had an affair with Rip Torn. That was really a long one, actually. That was interesting. That was because he was a friend of Larry Rivers when we lived there. And Larry would have these parties. And I got to know him that way.

[00:00:55.49] My first visit to Mexico—and I went four times. The first visit, I knew *si* and *no*. And I went on a bus to visit Rip in Sonora because they had a house in Sonora, Rip Torn.

[00:01:09.13] MICHAEL LOBEL: So when was this, when you were with Rip Torn?

[00:01:11.82] PATTY MUCHA: Well, it was before Richie, so [laughs] whenever it was, '69, '70. I guess it was '70. Wait, hold on a second. No, it was after Richard, I guess between

Richard and Jay. I slept with a lot of people. But I did have an affair with Rip.

[00:01:28.39] But the story I want to tell you about having to do with these big, macho guys is one day, I went over to his house. And he lived in the 20s or something. And there was Geraldine Page making dinner. So I was invited to dinner to his house with Geraldine Page. Now, isn't that terrible? She must have known that I was having an affair.

[00:01:49.25] I mean, you know, they want to have everybody happy together, happy together, happy together. And I think that's pushing it a little bit, you know? Anyway.

[00:02:00.34] MICHAEL LOBEL: So around this time and after your divorce from Claes Oldenburg, you have a relationship with Richie Hell.

[00:02:08.47] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, almost right away.

[00:02:10.30] MICHAEL LOBEL: Almost right away. And then—

[00:02:12.92] PATTY MUCHA: —and we stayed until he was 21, whenever that year was. It had to have been—It had to have been—yeah, I'll tell you exactly when it was. It was probably '71 because in the spring of '72, I was working for John and Yoko, because John had a hard time with his immigration, his green card.

[00:02:40.05] And he had a bust in London having to do with cannabis, you see, which is a big joke. The real problem was he and Yoko were making these political records, which are quite wonderful. So that was the story.

[00:02:52.38] So Richard, at that point, I know, because then there was this artist named Geoff Hendricks, Geoff, Geoffrey. So Geoff asked me if I wanted to help in work for John and Yoko. What we did was we called—it was great. We went to the—they had this Apple recording company on Madison Avenue.

[00:03:13.31] And I would go there every day. And they'd give us all these numbers. I called the celebrities. I called people in, um, California, you know, the movie stars. And Richard called all the people in academia and, you know, the presidents of colleges to write a petition and the story, basically. So we're collecting all these letters. It was a fun trip. It was like that.

[00:03:43.03] And at that point, that's when Jerry Rubin called Yoko because they were friends and invited me to go to Miami to do the work with the Yippies. And that's where I met Jay Craven. My life was all connected with all these events. Isn't that something?

[00:03:59.43] MICHAEL LOBEL: So finally, you moved to Vermont in what year?

[00:04:03.60] PATTY MUCHA: Okay, so I moved to Vermont in 1975, May Day. I came up with Jay. I brought Jay. Jay, I met in Miami. He was very, um, politically astute. He was young and beautiful and very cute. I have pictures of him.

[00:04:19.80] So we lived for a while. I got pregnant with him, blah, blah, blah, lost a—we came up here in '75, buying this place, which was a complete dump. You can't believe what a dump it was.

[00:04:33.76] MICHAEL LOBEL: But why Vermont? Why did you move here?

[00:04:37.06] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, good question. Okay, Vermont. Well, first of all, I thought—well, when I was pregnant, I thought, you can't have babies in New York. You have to go in the country. So that was what my thinking was. And then when I had a miscarriage, I thought, Oh, consolation prize, I'll go to Vermont.

[00:04:52.28] Why Vermont? Because Kenward Elmslie, who I also had a thing with, who was very gay. You know, we screwed. The whole world was surprised by that one.

[00:05:01.52] But he has a house in Calais, Vermont. And Deborah Hay, dancer, and David Bradshaw were a couple at the time. And they had land up in Island Pond, up north of where we are. So it's like both equidistant, quite a distance. And that's where Steve Paxton also lived there. And Simone Forti also built a little house on that land at one point.

[00:05:30.92] So I had these two connections with Vermont. Yeah, why not? And we stayed.

We stayed with Kenward for two weeks because he has this wonderful house on the lake outside of Montpelier. Actually, it's very close. Calais is close to Montpelier. Every day, we'd go with, um, realtors.

[00:05:51.51] And then we drove up here. And I remembered this place sitting on the hill as an old lady. I remember the view, and I thought, Oh, we're here. We're home. It was a wreck. It was a wreck. It didn't look like—it doesn't look like this at all. So that's why Vermont.

[00:06:10.58] And then, of course, when we came up, we rented an 18-wheeler. And Jay drove it with John Giorno who came up. John's a Buddhist. And there's this Buddhist community four miles away, which was called Tail of the Tiger at the time. Now it's Karmê Chöling. It's Rinpoche's place, yeah.

[00:06:31.92] So I got to know the Buddhists too. I mean, this area was quite interesting in a funny way because it's still country. But it's interesting, you know. And the dowzers, I went to the dowzers because on Danville, this little town here, was the national headquarters of all the dowzers. I mean, international people came once a year for a week for their convention, which was a mind blower, you know.

[00:06:56.50] And because of the dowzers, I heard about the Sufi. So one thing led to another. You know, we're all connected. It's all connected. Help. I'm exhausted. Are you? You're exhausted from my too many words.

[00:07:12.78] MICHAEL LOBEL: I don't think you've had too many words. I do think probably we've been talking a long time. So, I think we can start wrapping up.

[00:07:21.72] PATTY MUCHA: Yes, let's wrap it up. Yes.

[00:07:23.19] MICHAEL LOBEL: Before we wrap up, I want to ask you—you know, we've talked about a lot. But, um, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you'd like to talk about? And maybe take a moment and think.

[00:07:40.99] PATTY MUCHA: Oh, I don't know how to do that. I don't think so. I like to write. Now I'm writing poetry. That's what I like to do.

[00:07:48.57] MICHAEL LOBEL: But with the idea, Patty, that this recording is for posterity—

[00:07:54.45] PATTY MUCHA: —I understand. And now that scares me. Too bad I only have one thing I could read. I could read a poem to end it.

[00:08:01.86] MICHAEL LOBEL: But I guess, to some extent, putting things on the record—

[00:08:05.67] PATTY MUCHA: —I understand. That scares me. I don't know what to put on the record. We can't ever add it any more, huh? Hmm, look at those birds. Well, I just know—I mean, I think that, um, life is so interesting, isn't it?

[00:08:23.98] MICHAEL LOBEL: I guess, Patty, given what we've talked about today, it's clear that you had so many connections in the art world.

[00:08:35.69] PATTY MUCHA: Right.

[00:08:36.30] MICHAEL LOBEL: And you were so deeply—particularly in the '60s, you were so deeply enmeshed in the art world. How would you like people to understand or come away from your involvement and experience in the art world?

[00:08:54.04] PATTY MUCHA: I have no idea. Can they just figure it out themselves?
[Laughs.] I don't know. I mean, it was so visual. I mean, I just—yeah, I mean, I think I loved painting. And I loved looking at art. And that was it, you know?

[00:09:10.53] Some artists that were famous I thought were really kind of crummy. And that's okay. Somebody said to me the other day—oh, this woman, she's so nice. It was lovely, she said. "All artists—all really good artists are really wonderful people." And I said, "No, they're not!" [Laughs.] I've known a lot of people who make beautiful art that are real assholes, you know.

[00:09:39.50] They're awful people. But that doesn't take the beauty away from the art

because, come on. So you know, I don't really know how we're all going to deal with art. Now, it's so interesting, isn't it? I don't even understand it. I see it. It's so technological.

[00:09:59.69] Sometimes, it's not very visual. And sometimes, it's amazingly visual. And I don't even know what it means. And it's okay because I don't need—my point, I'm going to be 89 in June. I mean, you know, I've done my whole period of art for a while. I don't care.

[00:10:15.53] My godch—not my godchild but my executrix, who is a big friend of mine, asked me about art. And I said, "I don't even know why people make it. I don't even know why they make it." Now, what a weird thing for me to say. I love art. But it's okay.

[00:10:34.50] It's like, I don't have to make it. I don't have to make it. So what does that mean? I think we're getting—you know, I think in a way, we become much purer when we get older or something or we get more transparent. [Laughs.] We become part of what we are. And that's it. That's enough for me. I don't know what to say.

[00:11:00.88] Claes—Claes, in a way, I'll tell you what I will say about his work. I mean, um, some of these pieces that he made after my life with him, you know, some of them, I loved. I thought they were really well formed and good. My favorite ones were okay.

[00:11:21.43] I saw one in Florida, and I hated it because I thought they should have been oranges and not apples, though—the monument in Miami with a fountain or something. It doesn't work. I've seen it. It doesn't. And some I think are just stupid. I actually think they're stupid.

[00:11:38.21] Like, there's this ice cream that's upside down on top of a building in Europe. I don't know where that is. But what does that say about the world? I don't get it. I mean [laughs].

[00:11:49.93] Plus, when I went to Vienna that time to give that little talk, you know, with his show and everything, they were having 150th anniversary of Gustav Klimt. I love his work.

[00:12:04.65] So they had shows all over the museum and all over the city and everything. And I asked Achim, who was the director there, if Claes had experienced it because he had been there recently. And he said, "Oh, no, Claes just stayed here all that time. Like, he stayed in a gallery." Well, of course, he would because he was so—he—his vision was Oldenburg, you know? His vision was Oldenburg.

[00:12:28.74] And I thought, what a pity that he didn't see all those maybe art historian things that would have been great. And you know, I don't know. What can I say? And I saw so much in Mexico and India, and I mean, things like in India that he didn't experience because it wasn't Oldenburg.

[00:12:51.93] And it's okay because my little sister is like that too with her costuming. She does that world. That's why she's professional. That's why she does it well. And that's why you do your writing. You're doing this writing thing. But I can't get into that.

[00:13:06.86] Now I'm into the political thing. What can I say? I don't know if that answers your question or even answers it. I mean, I wish luck to all the people who listen to this and tell them I love them for [laughs] for listening to me. Thank you so much.

[00:13:24.81] MICHAEL LOBEL: Thank you, Patty—thank you so much for taking the time. We are ending the recording.

[00:13:29.65] PATTY MUCHA: Okay, yeah, that's it.

[END OF TRACK aaa_mucha24_sd_1of1_track13_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]