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Oral history interview with Tom Marioni,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Tom Marioni on December 21 and 22, 2017. The interview took place at the studio of Tom Marioni in San Francisco, CA, and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Tom Marioni and Mija Riedel have reviewed the transcript. Their 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

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art with [Tom] Marioni at his studio on December 21, 2017. And this is card number one. So, I thought we'd just start with the early biographical material, get that out of the way. You were born in Cincinnati in '37?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Which date?

TOM MARIONI: May 21st.

MIJA RIEDEL: May 21st. Okay.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And it seems that a lot of the seeds of your work were planted really early on, that they have long roots in your childhood. I'm thinking of sound and music and—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —Catholic ritual, Catholic objects. Does that seem accurate to you?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah, sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, okay. You said you had a really musical household. Your mother sang opera around the house.

TOM MARIONI: She played the harp and the piano. We had a Steinway baby grand, and I used to use the key to tighten things on her harp to tighten my roller skates when I was a kid.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: It was the same kind of key.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sounds like an Italian household.

TOM MARIONI: Very Italian, very Italian. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: You also—you studied violin, right?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Through high school, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: How old were you when you started?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, like, eight years old, maybe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. You also said that early on there was no television, but that you really loved listening to radio. And I just—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: It seems like very early on, you had a real curiosity and interest in sound—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —and in the invisible and what you could imagine from that.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. Well, there was a radio show called *Big Jon and Sparky*. And the guy who had the radio program—it was national but it came from Cincinnati. And he had tape recorded his own voice speeded up, so it sounded like a chipmunk. So, that's who Sparky was. And he told stories and stuff. And that really, like, inspired me a lot because I learned about tape recording and stuff like that, and tricks. [00:02:03] That inspired me. And then studied violin and music. And then later, I was interested in jazz.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And played in a youth orchestra when I was in grade school at the Conservatory of Music. And then in high school, I played in a dance band.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so you really were playing in groups from the very beginning.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. But I never was very good. But I got by.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And I stopped playing after high school. I didn't play the violin after that, yeah. I wanted to be a drummer then, after that. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: When did you start the drums?

TOM MARIONI: Well, when I was high school, I used to—I was interested in jazz, and I used to drum on the backs of LP covers with drum brushes. And then, I noticed the back of the LP got all gray from the metal.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh.

TOM MARIONI: And that later led me to making drawings using the drum brushes on big sheets of sandpaper, yeah. That's where I get the sound and the image at the same time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's extraordinary. I mean, I really have been struck just in reading the material—all the material that's available about you, and then looking at the work—at how many roots go back to things you had discovered so young.

TOM MARIONI: Well, I always thought that if you—you make art based on your own personal experiences, it's going to be original because nobody has had the same experiences you have.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

TOM MARIONI: So, I grew up in a German beer town, and I studied music and was a Catholic altar boy and all that stuff, and the church influenced me to make sculpture and ritual performance art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

TOM MARIONI: It all came from that, all those experiences, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I think we're done.

[They laugh.]

That's extraordinary. Did you attend public school or Catholic school?

TOM MARIONI: Catholic school. Boys. Catholic Boys School.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Was it K through 12? [00:04:00]

TOM MARIONI: Grade school and high school. And then the first time I was in school with girls was in art school, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And when did you become an altar boy?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, like, in sixth grade. Grade school.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you're 12 at that age, or 10, maybe?

TOM MARIONI: Let's see. 12, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Twelve. And were you that through high school?

TOM MARIONI: No, no, no. Just for grade school time, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was that an influential experience?

TOM MARIONI: Well, I mean, like, you read my book, *Beer, Art, and Philosophy*. And in there, in the beginning, I talk about how all the stuff in the church had later seemed to me had, like, sexual references, even. So, the business of the priest—and the altar boys are wearing dresses, basically. And then the priest is giving communion to people when they come down and open their mouths and sticks the body the Christ in their mouth. And while the altar boy holds a little gold dish under their chin, and even reflects light on their face, like, makes them glow in a way. So, all of that had a big influence on me, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so, you've used a lot of yellow light in your installations. And I always thought that was a reference to California light—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —but it also seems like it might have been in reference to the golden dishes and that sort of thing going way back.

TOM MARIONI: It relates to the intellect and enlightenment in a lot of traditions. That's what the yellow represents. And for me, it represents California light. I was in Canada about 20 years ago a had a show installation with the yellow light in it. And the next day, in the newspaper in Alberta, the art critic said that I brought California light with me. Because it was the middle of winter, it was in Canada, everything was white. So, there was this warm space, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So. [00:06:01]

MIJA RIEDEL: It's true, the light here is not like anything else. Or maybe a few other places.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But it is —

TOM MARIONI: Well, it's what everybody talks about California light in the paintings and everything. Especially the painting. I always refer to that.

MIJA RIEDEL: How would you describe your home environment? Your dad was a doctor.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: What was his name and what was your mom's name?

TOM MARIONI: Well, originally his name was Sereno, but then he became John D. Marioni. He was a general practitioner and a Sunday painter. His best friend was the most famous artist in Cincinnati, Harry Gothard who was the restorer in the Cincinnati museum. And he painted murals in the airport in Cincinnati. And he was one of my father's friends. So, I knew a real artist as a child. So, that was an influence too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. And what was—you had four—three brothers?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And two of them have gone on to be artists. Paul—your brother Paul Marioni and—

TOM MARIONI: Joe's a painter in New York. Paul's a glass artist in Seattle. And another brother, Don, was an aeronautical engineer. He's retired.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So, what you do attribute that to? Three artists out of four boys?

TOM MARIONI: It goes every other generation.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: So, if you're an artist, your children know that that's no kind of life. It's hard. So, they become doctors, engineers, or whatever. And doctors and engineers and everybody, their children have this romantic idea of being an artist. So, it goes every other generation, like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, your grandkids—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Any takers yet?

TOM MARIONI: None of my kids are artists, so. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. You have three boys yourself? Right? Yes.

TOM MARIONI: Three boys, right, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, what was it like growing up at home? Was it just—did you spend a lot of time playing music? You mentioned roller skates. I mean, what was childhood like?

TOM MARIONI: [00:08:00] It wasn't like in the movies like Italian families, you know? All emotional and everything. It was all very quiet and ordinary—and not—no drama. No drama. Very—kind of uneventful. So, I never—and I always joke with my brother that I was abused as a child because I didn't get a motorbike for Christmas one year.

[They laugh.]

That's as much abuse as I ever had.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's interesting, though, there is a car theme that runs through your life and Paul's life. There's a real love of cars, you were—

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: You worked on those for a while, too. But it was the '50s, that was probably just part of the time as well.

TOM MARIONI: Really, yeah. I was into custom cars because it was like art to me. Custom cars were—you change a car, you rebuild it, whatever. The body and everything. It's like sculpture in a way. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. And I know some of your earliest objects referenced that.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: I was just thinking about the Cincinnati Conservatory—when did you start there? With music?

TOM MARIONI: Oh yeah, in like a couple years in grade school. Like seventh and eighth grade.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And played through high school?

TOM MARIONI: And then—yeah, I played in this band in high school. I couldn't play in the marching band because I played the violin. They don't have violins in the marching—for football games stuff like that. But the school had a band that played for events. And then George Nagley formed a dance band that I played in. Me and another guy played violin and then they had a piano player, and he was a trumpet player. And he had a—I don't know,

like a small dance band,, like six people or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that also came back years later. You referenced that piece in terms of what you did for the radio piece in Cologne in Germany in '91, right? [00:10:03] That that was—

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah, well that was a collection of—John Cage recommended me to this—called Radio Play in Cologne, Germany, it was called. They would invite composers. I never considered myself a composer. I was known as a sound artist, actually. Performance artist and sound artist in the old days. And so, I made up a collection of my different sound performances that I'd done. And I put steps in, opening and closing a door in between each piece, which was only like half a minute long. So, like you're walking down the hall opening a door and you see something going on in there. And that was inspired by the conservatory music where people were practicing and learning their instruments in different rooms—practice rooms. So, you could walk down the hall and hear an opera singer and then you hear a piano player as you're walking down the hall.

So, I used that idea to make a 30-minute radio play, they called it. And then it was commissioned by the Cologne Public Radio. WDR. And then they would sell it to other radios, public radio stations. So, it was played in Australia, and it was played in Austria and in Germany. Those three places that I know of.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. You know, we—when I think about your work, I certainly think about you know, sound, I think about invisibility, I think about action. But it seems—do you think of memory as being an important part of your work at all?

TOM MARIONI: I don't know.

MIJA RIEDEL: No? Not necessarily.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But so many of these things have such—there's, in my mind anyway, connected to memory. I mean, this piece done in '91 has to go back 30 years to things that you heard.

TOM MARIONI: Oh yeah, it's from '69 up till '91 when it was done. So, it ended up to be 30 minutes of different short sound pieces, yeah. And a lot of them were making drawings that the sound of the drawing was recorded, you know? Like a microphone behind the paper.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. When did you first get interested in jazz?

TOM MARIONI: My older brother was interested in jazz, but he was interested in older jazz, like Dixieland and Boogie Woogie. Up to Boogie Woogie. But then by the time I came along I was interested in modern jazz which was be-bop.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: That came right after World War II, so just when I was like 14 years old or something like that. And that influenced me to—I always thought of my performances I did as similar to jazz because everybody starts together. And then, in the middle everybody improvises one at a time, usually, and then they finish together like that. So, I always thought that was the basic idea of jazz, you know? One of the basic ideas of jazz.

And then I had three bands myself. I had the MOCA Ensemble which was the Museum of Conceptual Art. And that was a free jazz group, we played in the Edinburgh festival. And then, that was in 1973. Yeah. And then, in 1996 I formed The Art Orchestra and in the beginning of '97, we performed out at the Legion of Honor museum here in San Francisco. Just a one-time concert, but we practiced for several months before that here in my studio. And that was made up of about 15 people.

MIJA RIEDEL: All artists, yes?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, all artists. All sculptors, who invented their own instruments.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And so, Stephen Goldstine who was the conductor, was a real musician, a pianist. [00:14:04] But it was all based on the time clock because nobody read music.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: It wasn't about that. But they were just—but he would indicate when people play and which part these people play and like that. So, the first piece was a *Beer Drinking Sonata for 13 Players*. And that was about

an eight-minute piece. And then the main piece was *Unity Without Uniformity*. And that was like my artist club. It's like we're not uniform but—there's unity, but we're not all the same. We're all individuals. And so, they all invented their own instruments and that was a big success.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what was the third group?

TOM MARIONI: The third one was The Buddhist Band. Yeah. I was involved in this Buddhism project that Jackie Baas, who was the former director of the Berkley Museum, started. [Jacquelynn Baas, Director of Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, 1988–1999 –MR] She got a grant with another person.

[Phone rings.]

Oh no.

MIJA RIEDEL: I'll pause that, no problem.

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MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: Okay, so then that—and we went to Green Gulch, which is like a center for that, in Marin County. And every week—not every week, but like, once a month for a couple of years. And it was mostly made up of curators, yeah. And I don't know, coincidentally, they were 90 percent Jewish women curators.

[They laugh.]

Anyway. So, then, I—that led to me having a show over at the Yerba Buena Center. Because one of the curators was from that Yerba Buena Center. And so, the idea was to get these curators to organize shows based on some kind of Buddhist ideas or something. So I built the *Temple of Geometry*—and then I had created *The Buddhist Band*, which I invited four or five artists to make instruments that made a low sound. Like a Buddhist chant. That was the idea of it. So, it was like, improvised. It was new music.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so, the exhibition at Yerba Buena came out of the band, and not the other way around?

TOM MARIONI: No, no. The exhibition came out of this Buddhism project at the Green Gulch. The show led to that, yeah. And the band was part of the show, *The Buddhist Band*.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the group of women, the Jewish curators—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —primarily Jewish curators, they were all part of the Green Gulch Buddhism project?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And what was that project? Was that a music project as well?

TOM MARIONI: No, it had nothing to do with music.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay, this was just a completely different project?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. It was about art. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Just about—and curators meeting to discuss —

TOM MARIONI: Art curators, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —exhibitions, and—okay.

TOM MARIONI: Art curators, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And were you attending that because of MOCA?

TOM MARIONI: No, I was invited to be because I was a kind of Zen artist or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: I see. Okay, so it was a group of curators and artists, a few artists?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, like, Laurie Anderson was there. Jim Melchert was there. [00:02:01] She was there as a guest just one time, but she was invited to come be a guest one time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, that was the second time your paths crossed with hers? Because she went to Ponape, too, right?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you were aware early on, it sounds like, of the whole concept of structure and improvisation in jazz.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: That was one of the draws—one of the things that drew you to it.

TOM MARIONI: Yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Even as a young person, that was one of the things that was pulling you, it wasn't simply just the music or the musicians, but the whole idea of structure and improvisation?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I saw all the great jazz musicians play in my life.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And I just listened to jazz all my life, basically.

MIJA RIEDEL: You said that you grew up in a very European household. Everything was from the old world.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, this seems like a total deviation from that?

TOM MARIONI: Well, yeah, like I said in my book, I wanted to be very American—even though both my parents were Italian and all my relatives, too. And like, three of us became artists. My mother was a musician and my father was a writer and a doctor and a Sunday painter. So, it was like all—we had a library in our house. So, it was about culture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. What did he write?

TOM MARIONI: He never wrote any books or anything, but he wrote, I don't know—he was always writing in journals and stuff, but I don't know. I don't remember what he was writing, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting. I mean, it's fascinating he was a doctor, and a painter, and writing as well. Yeah. Sounds like a very cultured background.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you think that European background made you feel very comfortable about heading off to Europe when you did in the early '70s and spending all that time in Eastern Europe? Or was that just part of the zeitgeist and a completely separate thing?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, I always wanted to go to Europe, and I even enlisted in the Army, because I could be guaranteed to be sent to Europe. [00:04:06] Yeah, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. We'll definitely get to that.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. And then, getting to Germany meant I was able to go to all the other countries in Europe. And that time, early '60s—'61, '62.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah. Just a couple more questions before we leave the early things.

TOM MARIONI: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: I just—I read in one of the publications that you have some form of colorblindness. Is that accurate?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I'm red/green colorblind.

MIJA RIEDEL: Red/green colorblind, okay.

TOM MARIONI: Like Jasper Johns.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, okay. So, and did that have any influence on your choosing art school over—no, it wouldn't—I mean, why did you choose art school over music school when you decided to go school?

TOM MARIONI: I wanted to be an architect. And then, I got a scholarship to go to art school from high school. And I decided I wasn't smart enough to be an architect, so I went to art school, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: We've disproved that.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you must have been, then, doing a lot of art in high school?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, they had art classes in the high school I went to, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But you were still studying at the Conservatory of Music. Were you taking art classes outside of high school?

TOM MARIONI: Actually, I didn't study at the Conservatory of Music through high school. Maybe just the first year. Grade school and then the first year. And then I played in the high school band—but I didn't go to—study violin after that. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, did they have—did you do a lot of art, then, in high school? You must have; you drew, painted, and sculpted?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. I mostly drew cars, yeah.

[They laugh.]

Most kids draw airplanes. I drew cars, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I wanted to talk about that mural by Miró that you mentioned in Cincinnati.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that that was also an inspiration for wanting to be an artist. That he was getting away with something.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I told this story many times. But in the sixth grade, we went to this Terrace Plaza Hotel in Cincinnati. And they had two murals in there. One was Miró on the top in this Gourmet Restaurant, it was called. [00:06:00] And the other one was by—who's the guy that did the famous poster of New York City and the rest of the country?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

[Cross talk.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. Stopping after sort of Ninth Avenue and the Hudson.

TOM MARIONI: That's it. Yeah, right, it only went as far as New Jersey or something, right?

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. I can't remember [Saul Steinberg, *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, 1976 -MR]—

TOM MARIONI: The map of the country, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Exactly.

TOM MARIONI: Anyway, there was a mural by him in there, too. And it turns out that the murals were commissioned by Pierre Matisse, who was the son of Henri Matisse. And then— We were taken as a class—

because it was a private boys' school, we got to go, like, on a trip to Washington, D.C. in the eighth grade. And they used to take us on field trips and stuff, like that. And that was, like, great to see the world a little bit. And so, we went to see this new hotel and saw the mural, and I thought—and this was all bold, bright colors. Abstract. My first modern art. And so, it just—

MIJA RIEDEL: And how amazing that Miró was invited there to paint this.

TOM MARIONI: He painted it in New York City. He went to New York City to paint it. It was painted on canvas and then glued on the wall

MIJA RIEDEL: I see.

TOM MARIONI: And it's in the Cincinnati museum now. Because that restaurant doesn't exist anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the name of the restaurant was the Gourmet Restaurant?

TOM MARIONI: The Gourmet Room, it's called.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, Gourmet Room, okay.

TOM MARIONI: It was on the top; you could see the whole city of Cincinnati from the top of this hotel— restaurant—it was a round restaurant.

MIJA RIEDEL: How fantastic.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Especially back when you were in sixth grade.

TOM MARIONI: And Sol LeWitt, who wrote an endorsement on the back of my book— In the Cincinnati Museum—they took the Miró mural down and moved it somewhere else, and Sol LeWitt did a wall drawing on that space. And so, he refers to the Cincinnati mural as "my Miró."

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: It seems like there's a spirit of, an irreverence that's been an elemental part of your artwork from the start. [00:08:01] Does that feel accurate to you?

TOM MARIONI: Well, I'm an amateur comedian, so that's right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay, okay. Yeah, because that seems to have been there from the beginning.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. I mean, people used to laugh at what I did, even if I didn't mean it to be funny.

[They laugh.]

Because it was irreverent, you know? Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, exactly. Yeah. I wanted to ask also—you talked about first and second-class relics and learning about them in grade school.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And that that influenced your art, especially sculptural documentation.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: What was presented to you in grade school that provoked those—or inspired those kinds of thoughts?

TOM MARIONI: A bishop came and then we all went up and kissed his ring like they do. Like we do with cardinals or the Pope. And he had a little piece of wood in a little glass container, which was a second-class relic of the true cross of Jesus. And that's when I learned that a second-class relic is not the piece of wood from the actual

cross. A piece of wood that touched the actual cross. So, that made it one time removed. So, that's where I got the idea of first and second-class relics from.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: So, then I thought I might drum-brush drawings, or photographs of performances kind of as a second-class relic of it. Yeah. And I even gave that idea to Chris Burden who did a whole lot of sculptures that were relics

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I don't think I've ever talked with somebody who traces so much of their influence back to such early experiences. It's really extraordinary.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, I don't know, I assume a lot of artists do that. But I don't know. I never asked them

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Or nobody, perhaps, has talked about it as clearly and directly as you have. So, in art school, were there particular classes or artists that were really influential? Is that where you became aware of Duchamp and Yves Klein, or did that happen later, earlier? [00:10:02]

TOM MARIONI: I knew who Duchamp was in art school; I was in art school from 1955 to '59. And my—it was a kind of a conservative, classic museum school academy in Cincinnati. It was connected to the Cincinnati Museum. So, that was nice to be able to visit the museum so easily. Next door. Anyway, so—I forget what the question was now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Just if there were—what was your art school experience was like. If there were classes that were influential, a professor —

TOM MARIONI: Oh, right. Well, my teacher, Allon Schoener, who organized the *Harlem on My Mind* show at the Metropolitan Museum, in 1970—he was curator of the contemporary arts center. And I worked for him as a preparator. That was the beginning of me being a curator. So, anyway, I was influenced by him and Noel Martin. And Noel Martin was a famous graphic designer. And so, I was very interested in graphic design, and that's why when I was painting, my paintings were all hard-edge, like, design-y kind of things. They weren't expressive, like—and so, and my work has always been clean that way, like clean, like, Hard-edge or something. Or no fussiness about it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Very simple.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Minimal.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, minimal. Right. Yeah. And so, those two teachers were an influence on me. And I learned about Duchamp from Allon Schoener. Because he taught art history, contemporary art history. But then—

MIJA RIEDEL: Was there an immediate affinity?

TOM MARIONI: No, not really. Because it was a time of Abstract Expressionism and so — and most of my teachers made fun of the abstract expressionists, because they were—I was the new art and they were behind the times, really, the teachers. [00:12:09] So, I never—well in my last year, they had some paintings by de Kooning and stuff in the Cincinnati Museum, so I got to see them there. And I took everything they offered because I didn't know what I was going to do or—I wanted to be well-rounded or something. I studied photography, printmaking, painting, and sculpture, and drawing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have a sense of what you were going to do with that?

TOM MARIONI: No. In 1959, when I graduated there was a very small art scene. There was no art scene in San Francisco. None. None at all. One art gallery: Jim Newman's Dilexi. That was it. It was the only art gallery in San Francisco when I moved here.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, what was the reason for—

TOM MARIONI: So I thought—in those days, you thought when you graduated from art school, there was no job for an artist. We didn't know that you could maybe have a career as an artist. What you did was—like, you had two choices from Cincinnati. You could go to Detroit, Michigan and work for one of the automobile companies as a car designer and do the clay models or whatever. That was a job for an artist, yeah. Or you could go to Kansas City where the Hallmark card place was and design greeting cards. As far as I know, those were the only two jobs available to an artist. And I moved to San Francisco because I had been here when I was 15 with my family on a vacation. And I loved it. Loved it here. The whole city, the feeling and everything. And also, not at that time, but

later, I realized that Italians have status in San Francisco.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yes.

TOM MARIONI: Moscone and what's his name? The mayor in the '70s. [00:14:08] His daughter's running for mayor now. Alioto. And then there's Ferlinghetti and there's Francis Ford Coppola, and so they're all, like, prestigious Italians. So.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you hadn't had that experience before?

TOM MARIONI: No, it was a German beer town I grew up in. I didn't live in a neighborhood. We were like the minority ethnic family where I lived.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: I had the complete opposite experience, so it's—

TOM MARIONI: Is that right? Yeah. Why, are you Russian?

MIJA RIEDEL: No, German. My father's German, my mother is from here. But I grew up with a lot of Italians and a fair number of Irish outside of New York City.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you came here in '59 and then immediately you drafted in '60, right? But you chose to enlist rather than—

TOM MARIONI: In order to guarantee I'd go to Europe and not Oklahoma or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, exactly.

TOM MARIONI: Or Korea.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And so, you—

TOM MARIONI: It was peace time, too—so, I wasn't worried about any danger.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, you went to Germany?

TOM MARIONI: I went to Germany in Ulm, U-L-M. Where Einstein was born. And it's where Rommel is buried. Where he had to commit suicide because he was part of the plot to kill Hitler. And he's buried there. So, I used to drink wine in a bar that was the same site of where Einstein was born. The house wasn't there, but there was a *weinstube* there. And it was a great—a beautiful town on the Danube River, and yeah. And so, I became an army artist and—

MIJA RIEDEL: You were the battalion artist.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, out of the—for beautification of the whole thing. [00:16:03] And I convinced them that I was—well actually, I wrote a letter to the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper. They had done a little piece on me because I had painted a mural already in one of the company's rooms, one of the big rooms, the meeting rooms. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: What was it a mural of?

TOM MARIONI: It was a bunch of Army personnel carriers, like tanks that carry troops in? Charging up a hill with a bunch of soldiers charging up the hill. It was all done in a kind of Impressionist style. So, then there was a picture of me in *Stars and Stripes* newspaper. Which was—comes from Stuttgart, which isn't that far away from Ulm. And then—so then I got the idea, well, maybe I could get a job, there. So, I found out I could—I wrote a letter to the *Stars and Stripes* with my resume—because I'd graduated from art school already, before that. And said I'd like to work on your—and they wrote me back and said, "Apply through normal channels and show them this letter, too," the letter that they want me. And I did that, and then they decided, oh, the colonel in charge of the battalion said, "I had no idea we had somebody so talented here. And so, I'll put you in charge of the beautification of the battalion."

So, I had a small crew of people and we painted all the buildings different colors. And I painted murals in the mess—in the officers' club and the dining halls and the library. And then I was sent over to another site to do the post office, Army post office mural, so. And that's what I did for two years in Germany.

MIJA RIEDEL: How great.

TOM MARIONI: It was great, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And the colonel won an award, didn't he? For the beautification [laughs]? Yes?

TOM MARIONI: Right. He did, yeah. Because it was peace time, it was hard to get advanced in rank. So, he was a colonel and it was hard for him to get advanced to—well, full colonel, I guess was the next thing he was. He was maybe lieutenant colonel. [00:18:00] And he got an award for that, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you also said that your first conceptual art piece dates back to a mural that you did there.

TOM MARIONI: My first conceptual painting. And I don't believe that there are such a thing as conceptual painting, but I think this one was, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yes.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. And the paint was peeling on the wall, and I scraped it with a putty knife, and so it came off in little pieces. Because in some parts it sticks and, in some parts, it doesn't. And then, with a black paint and a brush, I do a real neat line around each part of the paint that exposed the raw plaster underneath. So, it ended up looking like continents or countries or a map. And that was it. It was abstract, but it was a process—the process of how I did it. And that just occurred to me as I was getting ready to do the painting that, "Oh, I'll make this the painting."

MIJA RIEDEL: And that was a huge deviation from anything you've done before, though.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: How'd that go over?

TOM MARIONI: I was already painting abstract paintings, and that one was Impressionist was only one like that I did. The rest of them were all like—except in the post office, it was like a progression of how the post office changed from horse and buggy up to the jet planes, like that. In panels like that. But otherwise they were all, like, abstract paintings, like, Mondrian or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And the Army was okay with it?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Extraordinary.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Oh, because I was the special—beautification [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you knew what you were doing.

TOM MARIONI: Right, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And did—I thought about Miró and this idea—did you have this idea that you were getting away with something when you did that conceptual painting, or?

TOM MARIONI: I didn't think of it as getting away with something, I just thought, well, I'm lucky I can do what I want. And they'll accept it. Because they think I know what I'm doing. But I learned when I was in Eastern Europe in the '70s that when it was all Communist, that the government had no problem with abstract art— [00:20:09] Because it wasn't critical of the government or anything. It was like realism that was political that was the problem. You couldn't do political art in a communist country. So, abstract art was fine, so that was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that your experience here, too, or is that in Eastern Europe?

TOM MARIONI: What, about abstract art?

MIJA RIEDEL: Abstract art.

TOM MARIONI: I never thought about it being accepted here because it's been going on since Cubism or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. But even as a student, you said, in Cincinnati, your teachers were not interested in Abstract Expressionism—

TOM MARIONI: Oh, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, this was a change in position to get to Eastern Europe—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, in the '50s in Cincinnati, yeah. But it's conservative in Cincinnati—in general, everything is. It's like a Republican city, even.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And that was—the '70s was quite a bit later, Eastern Europe.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you also traveled—where did you travel when you were in Europe? I know you went around to hear jazz in different places.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you go to see art as well?

TOM MARIONI: Well, when I was—

MIJA RIEDEL: In the military, still.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, when I was in the Army, I drove, with my new wife at the time, and a friend of mine that I met in the Army, Bob Moon, who became an artist because of my influence; went to the Art Institute. Anyway, we—and his German girlfriend. We drove in my Volkswagen to Paris. Went to the Blue Note and saw Bud Powell play the piano in the Blue Note. And it's the—whole *Round Midnight* movie was based on Bud Powell and the Blue Note bar. So, that was a thrill. And went to the Museum of Modern Art, there.

MIJA RIEDEL: In Paris?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. I didn't even know who Yves Klein was at that time or I would have tried to find him.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, when did you become aware of him? Was that in Eastern Europe, or through— [00:22:00]

TOM MARIONI: Oh, there's a movie made in the early '60s, around '63—no, '62, when he was—he died '62, so it was like the same year he died, or the year before. Called *Mondo Cane*. I saw that. That was the first time I knew who Yves Klein was. And I was really impressed by that. Where he did his paintings. So, "living brushes" of the women who pressed their bodies—on the canvas paper with blue paint on them.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, in '63, you came back to San Francisco, but you stopped painting and you started making objects, yeah?

TOM MARIONI: I painted when I was in the Army because I always figured you started out as a painter because you didn't have a studio. You'd paint on your kitchen table kind of thing. And then once you got a studio, then you could work bigger or become a sculpture.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, that was an obvious transition.

TOM MARIONI: I mean, I always thought of myself as a sculptor but there was a period when I was just a painter. Like, even when I first got back to San Francisco for a couple of years—until I got a real studio.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And then you started working on the minimal, the lacquered wood pieces, the language pieces, the refrigerator graphics.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Then in '69, you decided you weren't going to make objects anymore, you were going to make actions. What inspired that shift?

TOM MARIONI: I got a job at the Richmond Art Center in 1968. And that broadened my horizons. Saw the art world differently and everything. And then I created a fictitious name, Allan Fish, so that I could have a way to be a curator and be an artist at the same time. And I chose Allan because of my old art teacher Allon Schoener.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that's great.

TOM MARIONI: And Fish because it was a Jewish name and I thought I'd have an advantage as a Jewish name in the art world at that time. [00:24:05]

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Interesting.

TOM MARIONI: And I did several things as Allan Fish. And so, I did some shows and I put myself in, or I had other people do things that were really my—Like, I was the architect of the pieces that were done.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Was it as a curator that you came up with that first definition of conceptual art? "Idea oriented situations not directed at the production of static objects."

TOM MARIONI: Oh, I wrote that when I started my MOCA space. Yeah. That was 1970.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, so that came with MOCA. Yes.

TOM MARIONI: 1970, yeah. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Yeah, before we—

[Phone rings.]

TOM MARIONI: Oh.

MIJA RIEDEL: We can pause this.

[Audio break.]

MIJA RIEDEL: So, before we move into—well, maybe we should talk about Richmond Art Center briefly, and then I want to talk about *One Second Sculpture* for sure, but—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, I mean, Allan Fish came out of your experience at the Richmond Art Center, yeah?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah, being a curator, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you did a number of significant exhibitions there. I'm thinking of *Invisible Painting and Sculpture*. *California Girls*. You did Terry Fox's *Levitation* there.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Did one or more of those exhibitions shape your vision for the Museum of Conceptual Art? Or was it just a natural progression?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, it led to it. Yeah, right. I mean, I was a curator, so I thought of myself as a museum man, in a way. And somebody said to me one time, "Why'd you call it a museum? What were you trying to impress your father or something?" Somebody said, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: I said, "Because I was a museum man," I said. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: What were the—well, I know that there was a real rift between what you were trying to do and the administration at the Richmond Art Center, but what was the—

TOM MARIONI: Not at first.

MIJA RIEDEL: Not at first, right, but as you got progressively interested in doing more avant-garde things. And they were progressively less interested, it seemed.

TOM MARIONI: I was doing the far out shows right from the beginning.

MIJA RIEDEL: And they were fine with it at the start?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, because then I got a new boss. See, the Art Center came under Parks and Recreation.

MIJA RIEDEL: I see.

TOM MARIONI: And so, Parks and Recreation, like, after I had been there a year and a half or so, hired a new director of Parks and his wife was a Sunday painter and she was always on him to do something about the Art Center having all these crazy shows. Because she was like, painted little pictures of flowers or whatever. And

she didn't like the shows. And so, he was on me all the time. Trying to fire me for a couple of years. Even fired my director, because he wouldn't fire me. Because in civil service, you have to build up a paper—records, every six months on an employee to show that they're derelict in their duty or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And how could he say that? Because you were—what made the work—what was derelict about the duty?

TOM MARIONI: Well, he didn't like the—he couldn't fire me because he didn't like the things that I was doing. But finally, in the beginning of 1971, I organized a show called *California Girls*. And I knew Judy Chicago at that time and I invited her to be in the show. And she was teaching this feminist class in Fresno at the time. And she sent up one of her students to do a performance for that. So, the guy who was in charge of the education-department part of the Richmond Art Center, who was a ceramic artist—Ernie Kim was his name—[00:28:00]he went and told Joseph Salvato, the Parks and Rec director, that there was going to be a performance at night that was going to be something bad.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

TOM MARIONI: And because he asked—he had quizzed me before, and I had no idea he was going to go and squeal to the big boss— about what was going to happen. So, then this student of Judy Chicago's did this performance where she rolled a big piece of—a long piece of paper and then she crawled on her hands and knees where she was like wearing a bathing suit or white—looked like brown panties—with a milking machine on her stomach, dragging blood—cow's blood—on this piece of paper. And I got fired the next day for that. And then years later, Judy Chicago wrote a memoir, and she described something completely different than that piece. And she doesn't know I got fired, even, because I never saw her after that.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think of you also performing the *Birds in Flight* piece there—or Allan Fish performing that. Was that one of the first pieces that Allan Fish did?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, the first one that was visible. The show I did, *Invisible Painting and Sculpture*? Was really a historic show. It even gets mentioned in shows about Yves Klein about invisibility and stuff. And that was a really good show. It was the first time Larry Bell was seen in the Bay Area with one of his glass boxes. And a lot of really interesting pieces were in that show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, William Wiley was in that, I think, and Bruce Conner.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, and Wally Hedrick did a giant—he was doing all black paintings then, against the Vietnam War at the time. And a lot of things like that. They were like things that were invisible for political reasons or different reasons, but sometimes physically invisible—or they—yes, something like that. Anyway. So, the catalogue, it's alphabetical. [00:30:02] And there's two pages that are blank where Marioni would have been. So. Actually, I put myself in that show but nobody knows it. Because it's just two blank pages.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it wasn't even attributed to Allan Fish, the pages?

TOM MARIONI: No, no. It was just—

MIJA RIEDEL: Totally blank.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. It was even before I invented Allan Fish, yeah. Right after that, I invented Allan Fish for the next show, the *Return of Abstract Expressionism*. And there's where I did the *Birds in Flight*, as Allan Fish.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did invisibility for—I think about different installations or body works or things where ideas seem to really have crystalized for you or just come into full form—did that *Invisible Painting and Sculpture* show do that for you for the concept of invisibility? Or did it just enable you to bring in a broader view of the concept through the artists you were working with?

TOM MARIONI: I think I was—at that time, I was influenced by—who's the guy that does the string—he defines space with this?

MIJA RIEDEL: Fred Sandback?

TOM MARIONI: Fred Sandback, yeah. I knew about Fred Sandback. And I also knew about Robert Barry—Who was doing invisible stuff, so those two things influenced me to do this show.

MIJA RIEDEL: I love that Sandback. So, I wanted to talk about *One Second Sculpture*.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Because that was so seminal. That was in '69. And you said it was a profound piece for you, because it did a lot of the things that you were interested in in one piece, in one second.

TOM MARIONI: Right. It had all the things in it that ended up being things that I did later. It was like the beginning of my work as a drawer and performance artist and stuff like that, so, and certain things I learned about it later. Because a lot of times some artists do things by instinct. [00:32:00] So, I didn't know all the different meanings in it, until later. And later I was thinking, "Oh, this is an instrument that's used to measure space." But I used it to measure time as well. That one second sound while I was making a drawing—a measurement of space. So, that was something I didn't even think of at the time— But later, I thought, "Oh, that's —"; you find out that later that there are layers of meaning in your work that you can take credit for, even if you didn't know it at the time.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: I have noticed that, with a number of your pieces, that there does seem—because there has been a repetition of them or a re-performance of them over time, that there must be layers of them that unfold. Or that would be reveal themselves to you. Or that alter—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —because they're performed over time.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Like working backwards from an intuitive position.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, exactly. Exactly.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And this piece has been performed multiples time, or?

TOM MARIONI: The *One Second Sculpture*?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

TOM MARIONI: Not very much. I did it in Paris once in a show about five years ago.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was in 2005 in Leone?

TOM MARIONI: And a couple of times when I was giving a slide lecture, I did it like at a university or something like that. But otherwise, I've only done it maybe three or four times altogether. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But since '69, most recently then in 2005. So, that's had a run of over 30 years.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, something about it has revealed itself over time. Is this ever one that you've given directions to and had somebody else perform?

TOM MARIONI: No. No. I don't believe in that. I don't know if you know about the letter I wrote to the *New York Times* about Marina Abramović recreating artists' performances in the Guggenheim Museum in 2005?

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't know about your letter, no.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Okay, well I wrote a letter to the *New York Times* that they published.

And in it I said that I was in festivals in Europe with both Marina Abramović and Chris Burden in the '70s. [00:34:07] And what we did was one-time sculpture actions. And for one artist to recreate—and Chris Burden did not give her permission to recreate his work in that thing at the Guggenheim. And then it was written up in the *Times*.

So, I wrote a letter about it and I said, "If one artist were to recreate another artist's work, I would turn it into theater. One artist playing the role of another," see? Because the difference between performance art and theater is that in performance art, you're not playing a role. You're yourself. And you're not in costume. And you're not telling a story. You're manipulating material. And you're not—it's not directed at the audience's emotions, like in theater. It's directed at the material you're manipulating, so. That's the basic difference between performance art in its original idea. And I was first generation performance artist. And that was—the artists of my generation were doing performances like—comes out mostly of Joseph Beuys.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: He invented the idea of this sculpture-based performance that they refer to it as.

MIJA RIEDEL: And because you had met Abramović in the '70s in Edinburgh, right? Or someplace in Eastern Europe.

TOM MARIONI: In '73 in Edinburgh and then '74 in Belgrade. I was part of something called April Meeting, and I met Joseph Beuys in those two places, too, at that time. And I was—I always considered that I discovered Chris Burden and Marina Abramović, because I gave Chris Burden his first show out of art school—in my MOCA. And Marina Abramović, just first time in this country was in 1980 when we did the conference in Ponape.

MIJA RIEDEL: Her first time out of the country?

TOM MARIONI: First time in this country. [00:36:00]

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, in this country, okay.

TOM MARIONI: Actually, it wasn't this country. It was Ponape [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And we're still friends— I'm friends with both of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so, you thought you were protesting the fact that she had done the piece without his permission?

TOM MARIONI: She didn't do it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, she didn't do it.

TOM MARIONI: She asked him for permission to do it, and he said no.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, okay.

TOM MARIONI: It said in the article he didn't even discuss it with her. And I said that in my letter, too. I understand why he didn't. He wouldn't even discuss it with her—for her to recreate his work. Because if you recreate something like what Chris Burden did, then it's theater then. It's not performance art.

MIJA RIEDEL: It seems a surprising request, actually, coming from her.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, well, she's evolved into a cult theater person, basically. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, I wanted to talk about 1970, because that was an extraordinary year. You were still at the Richmond Art Center. You performed *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art*—

TOM MARIONI: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —at the Oakland Art Museum, first time in 1970.

TOM MARIONI: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you founded the Museum of Conceptual Art.

TOM MARIONI: MOCA, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. Which was probably the first alternative art space in the country. I got the first NEA grant for that—category in '72.

MIJA RIEDEL: You came up with an—they came up with a new category for you, because they didn't—is that true that they wouldn't or couldn't give you a grant as a museum?

TOM MARIONI: When I applied for it, they said, I talked to Brian O'Doherty on the phone at that time. And I said I wanted a grant. And he said, well—he didn't want to give me a museum grant, he says, "Well, can we call it a workshop?" I said, "No, it's not a workshop." I said, "It's a museum." You know? It's accumulating a collection and if you have—technically, you can't call it a museum if you don't have a collection. [00:38:05] It's an art hall. Something like a *kunsthalle*. And so, he said, well, he gave me three names. He says, "If you can get letters from Jim Melchert, Peter Voulkos—" and a third guy; I can't think of his name now, who was an art history teacher up in Sacramento or Davis, someplace like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. I think you mentioned that in your book, too.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, it's in my book. Yeah. So, and I did. I got letters from the three of them, and that's how I got my first NEA grant. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But they came up with a new category of alternative art space. Is that accurate?

TOM MARIONI: There was no such thing as alternative art space in 1970. It was 1971 when I applied—because I was into it for one year only, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, they got the letters. They said, "We can't give you a museum grant but we're going to come up with a new category, and we'll give you a grant in this."

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Something like that, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's pretty extraordinary to think about a government institution, even the NEA, coming up with a whole other category. I mean, maybe they're in the habit of doing that—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well years later, Robert—the art critic for *Time* magazine. *The Shock of the New*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hughes?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, Robert Hughes, yeah. He wrote something that I wrote down, like, something like the alternative art spaces were rebel institutions and now they're in the employ of the federal government, because they—

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That's true. That's a whole other way to frame it. Exactly.

TOM MARIONI: And that's when it all changed when they started supporting them, the alternative art spaces there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah. Well, we're out of that problem now [laughs].

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Right [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: What were your expectations for MOCA? Were you—

TOM MARIONI: My expectations?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Were you interested in disrupting the whole concept of museums? [00:40:01] Or—

TOM MARIONI: No, I always thought I was concerned with the conservation, restoration, and collection.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And I even did a show, the restoration of the back wall, which I hired David Ireland to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. That was '76?

TOM MARIONI: '76. And that influenced David Ireland to become an artist that made his house into a museum, kind of.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, it wasn't about totally disrupting or redefining museums and what they did?

TOM MARIONI: No, no. I just—I wanted to create a scene. I wanted to be avant-garde, I guess.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, yeah. And you wanted to make a museum that really pioneered conceptual art—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and process-oriented art.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well, because I was a conceptual artist—and that's what the art of the time was, from the late '60s through the '70s. And I ran it from '70 to '84. But I only did stuff up to 1980, really. So, the last three years was not very active. I did one thing in Japan, like, outside the place.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Were you already aware of Joseph Beuys when you started MOCA?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And was that part of the inspiration behind it?

TOM MARIONI: People in this country were made aware of Joseph Beuys when Willoughby Sharp put him on the cover—interviewed him for *Artforum* magazine. And that was, I think, '69. Yeah. The same thing: that's how most people in this country knew who Yves Klein was. He was on the cover of *Artforum* magazine around '66 or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Willoughby Sharp curated one of your—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —seminal shows.

TOM MARIONI: *Body Works*, video art.

MIJA RIEDEL: In '70. Right.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have many guest curators?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-mm [negative]. Just that one time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Just the one. That's what I thought. Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It was presented in Breen's Bar where these booths came from—which was downstairs. And it was probably the first video art show in California.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah. And that was called *Body Works*, right?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, what was the response to that show? And who attended?

TOM MARIONI: Well, it shown in Breen's Bar. And I sent announcements out. Willoughby Sharp wasn't here because he was in New York. He came out here several times, but not at that time.

MIJA RIEDEL: He sent videos.

TOM MARIONI: Just sent the work, yeah. And I had to borrow a recorder from San Francisco State. Video tape recorder. And then hooked it up to the bar TV in Breen's. Like behind the bar, like that. Yeah. And so—and then Jerry Tarshis wrote a review of it that was in *Artforum* magazine.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what did he say?

TOM MARIONI: He just described it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, just described it.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Not how to work on, just—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. I don't remember exactly what he said, but pretty much described it, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great, it was reviewed.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. That was after Willoughby Sharp had been on the cover?

TOM MARIONI: You mean Joseph Beuys had been on the cover?

MIJA RIEDEL: No. No, didn't you—Willoughby Sharp put Joseph Beuys on the cover, yeah, yeah.

TOM MARIONI: *Artforum* put him on the cover, and then when he did *Avalanche* magazine, which was 1970, the first issue had Joseph Beuys on the cover.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So, was that primarily attended by artists or curators?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. All the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Did you have curators or collectors coming?

TOM MARIONI: No. I was on the wrong side of the railroad tracks, yeah? And people were terrified—not only that they thought it was not a good neighborhood, but also, they thought this new art was something that would be making fun of them or something. Because it was so strange and new. And because we had such a tradition of figurative painting and funk art, and everything here, up to that time. None of those artists—a lot of them I'm friends with today or later—ever came. [00:44:04] Like Bob Hudson, Bill Wiley, Arneson, all those guys. Joan Brown, all those artists never set foot in my MOCA space because it was a threat. Because here was a new group coming along that was taking over their position as the kingmakers in the art world here.

MIJA RIEDEL: I thought Wiley was part of one of those exhibitions. No?

TOM MARIONI: Not in MOCA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Not in MOCA, okay.

TOM MARIONI: He was in my invisible show at Richmond.

MIJA RIEDEL: Richmond Arts Center.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah. And then, later, he did stuff with me in my Art Orchestra. But that was in '97. Way later. And we became friends later, but we weren't friends back then. He was, like—he didn't accept what I was doing, really. Or those artists of that time.

MIJA RIEDEL: But he—by '80, he was one of the artists that went with you to Ponape, right?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, I invited him. We were friends by then. Good friends, yeah. Still are.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, it was in the '70s.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. I got him invited to make prints at Crown Point Press. I put him in my *Invisible* show and my Art Orchestra, so I had a lot of dealings with him. He was in The Buddhist Band, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So, I also want to talk about *Sound Sculpture As*, because that happened the same year. And that was—

TOM MARIONI: That was the first real show. It was a show called Artists' Films, or—yeah. That I showed. But I didn't even send out an announcement for that. It was just artists' word of mouth that came to that and we showed some films. But then a month later, I think it was April, I did the *Sound Sculpture* show, and that attracted a lot of people. And nine artists, I think there were nine artists—made sound actions, I guess. And that was an early sound art show before it was so-called sound art movement. [00:46:04]

MIJA RIEDEL: Or maybe the first sound art.

TOM MARIONI: Maybe, yeah. I always say—people say, "Well, Fluxus was about sound." And I said, "Well, what Fluxus did was music concerts and poetry and stuff like that. It was not sound art in the same sense that it was sculpture-based, or lack of sculpture material." It was mostly—it was avant-garde new music that the Fluxus people were doing, pretty much.

MIJA RIEDEL: And this was totally different.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Paul Kos had the piece *The Sound of Melting Ice*.

TOM MARIONI: Yes. That was in that show, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yep. And Allan Fish performed the famous *Piss Piece*.

TOM MARIONI: *Piss Piece*, yeah, right. Yeah. And that cost me, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did it?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, sure. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But didn't you also gain at the same time? I mean, notoriety has its own—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. No, I became, maybe, notorious and not famous.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: But like when I did the Vito Acconci show, Suzanne Foley came to that. And that was, I think, '76. That was already six years after I started MOCA. And Sue Foley was a very nice lady curator at the museum. She did the show called *Space/Time/Sound* in '79. And basically, got fired for it. Because everybody hated it, including the director. And Henry Hopkins never came to my Museum of Conceptual Art, and he was a director through the whole time I had it—at the museum here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right. Why do you think that is?

TOM MARIONI: Well, one thing, they didn't take me seriously because they didn't take conceptual art seriously because it was a threat. And also, they thought maybe they would be in an environment where they would feel out of place or something. I don't know exactly the reasons they didn't go. But hardly any of the establishment ever came there. [00:48:00] Harald Szeemann came. And Arturo Schwarz came, [laughs] you know? If you know who they are.

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't know Arturo Schwarz.

TOM MARIONI: Well, he was—he wrote the first big book on Duchamp. And he was Swiss. He produced all those multiples that Duchamp did.

MIJA RIEDEL: And they came?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, did you have—

TOM MARIONI: They came to visit. Not to an exhibition, because—what's the name that I just mentioned—came to the show of Paul Cotton and Howard Fried and Chris Burden.

MIJA RIEDEL: Harald Szeemann?

TOM MARIONI: Harald Szeemann, yeah. He did the 1972 *Documenta*. He was like the most famous curator in the world.

MIJA RIEDEL: By then you had a real collaboration and a real community going with a lot of artists from Europe—in Eastern Europe in particular, right?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, because I had this Museum of Conceptual Art, it was written up in *Avalanche* magazine and everybody in the world, in my conceptual art world, anyway, knew about it. I got stuff from all over the world from artists. And that's why I knew artists in Eastern Europe. And so, that's why I was able to know who they were and visit them when I went there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, and part of that all stems from your trip in '72 to the Demarco gallery, right?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That started it. Yeah. That's when I met all the Yugoslavian artist. And the Polish director, too, who invited me to have a show in Warsaw. That same year. When I traveled to Eastern Europe.

MIJA RIEDEL: In '72, yeah.

TOM MARIONI: No, that wasn't '72.

MIJA RIEDEL: '73?

TOM MARIONI: That was—'73 in Edinburgh, '74 in Eastern Europe—no, '75 in Eastern Europe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Before we get to Edinburgh, though, I just want to stay with 1970 for a minute—

TOM MARIONI: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and just look at the *Act of Drinking Beer with Friends* because that was certainly your seminal, primary social artwork yet to this day. [00:50:06]

TOM MARIONI: It's what I'm most known for. It's the one I keep getting invited to do. And it's starting to get boring [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: How many times has it been performed? Do you know?

TOM MARIONI: Maybe 40 or 50 times.

MIJA RIEDEL: I didn't realize it was that many; all over the world, to be sure.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: When it travels, what part of the structure needs to stay constant? And what are you open to?

TOM MARIONI: It has basic elements that they build or make. It's like they build the installation form. And it's a yellow light, jazz music, a bar that they build. A refrigerator. A shelf for the empty beer bottles and a flat-screen video of—it looks like it's filling up with beer. And a table with four chairs so that it resembles a bar, like where we are right now. Kind of like that. And then lately in the last, maybe five years, I would go to the opening and draw a circle on a prepared wall. Stand on a little box. And then tell jokes. And stay in front of it. So, it becomes like a lounge, a bar or something—that whole thing. It's like a thing a bar with entertainment and putting it in a museum.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right. I just am struck again and again by that line that you talked about art almost becoming life—straddling that, where it's almost life but not quite. I think about it coming full circle; you in '66 in a bar drawing nude models, right?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah. That was the first thing I did that you could call it performance.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And now here you are just doing stand-up jokes.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Similar, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: In these bars that you've created traveling around the world.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: I mean, it's almost the art is imitating the life that was art to start with, yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. [00:52:00]

MIJA RIEDEL: We're getting multi-dimensional.

TOM MARIONI: It was even in like, a very traditional, contemporary gallery this last summer in the Marlborough Gallery in New York.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: That was the last place it was, in a group show.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is it always—are the participants always invited or sometimes is it a free-for-all?

TOM MARIONI: No, no, no. Can't bring people in, they won't ever go for that. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, but in terms of—is it always a limited number of people? Or how do you stipulate—how do you control the space so that it—the space is handled as an art performance?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Okay, the way it's done is almost always is that the bar is open, serving free beer once a week. Not every day. Because the show runs, let's say, a month-long show. So, they have four or five times where they have the bar, the bartender, and they usually get a celebrity bartender. I've had Ed Ruscha, Chris Burden bartend for me in L.A., and Richard Long in Bristol, England. So, and museum curators, too, I've had as bartenders in different places. So, and that's going to draw people to the show. Because when I was in L.A. when Ed Ruscha bartended, like movie actors were showing up there because he's big in the movie industry. It's L.A.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah. And there's no limit, though, to the number of people that can attend?

TOM MARIONI: Well, they usually—like in L.A., they invited people. And then, the other days, it's there—But like coming in here and there's nothing going on. It's this installation, but yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yeah. And is that anybody who's visiting the museum that day welcome to join the bar?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Well, they usually have like an opening. Like you would for any show. So, that a lot of people come.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And have your thoughts about how the structure or what is left up to chance evolved other than getting up and telling jokes about five years ago? [00:54:07] I mean, have you observed patterns that have affected how you have adjusted the piece over time?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, it evolved from just leaving the debris—in the Oakland Museum, to a very refined, exact installation. Because in the meantime, I'd become influenced by Japanese tea ceremony and Deux Magots in Paris where the artists and writers hung out, that kind of thing. A scene, art scene. So, that's why I'm trying to create a scene. That's what MOCA was about too, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And when you say scene what do you mean? Is it that romantic notion you've talked about an artists' salon, where interesting ideas are discussed? What is the idea when you say I'm trying to create a scene?

TOM MARIONI: Well, one time somebody was coming—crashing my thing and she was bringing her friends and stuff. And I said, "I'm not running a mission," I said. "I'm trying to project an air of sophistication." And this is an artists' club, basically. And sometimes when I'm explaining it in a talk, somebody will say, "Well, how does the public get to see this?" And I said, "Well, it's an artists' club."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. It's private club.

TOM MARIONI: It's not open to the public. Except when it's in a museum or a public place. Then it's open to the public. But in my weekly club, it's a club. And the bartender—whoever bartends to sign-up—can invite up to three guests. So, there's always a few new people every weekend.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Does the—has—I'm trying to ask this question, I think, another way now. But I—with all this repetition, has it fed into changing the structure any further or no more than we've discussed? [00:56:07] Like for example, you've talked about the influence in the Japanese tea ceremony. Does that show up in any way in the new structure? Or your new venues, perhaps.

TOM MARIONI: Well, there's other things that influenced it. In Germany, in bars, they'll have a table with a sign on it. And the sign will say *stammtisch*. And that means "family table." Like a tree with branches or something. Where certain groups would meet on a certain day. So, that was an influence. And actually, Hans Haacke told me that. But I also observed it when I was in Germany because I've done several things in Germany. Performances and a couple of shows, too. And so, I've had, like—because of the Army and Germany, and I've had a lot of connection to Germany. I learned how to speak some German language a little bit, so. So, I even made tableau pieces about Germany and Italy and Japan.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I remember those, yeah.

TOM MARIONI: In the '80s, I did a lot of pieces about places I'd been, countries and cities. Yeah. But anyway, it's evolved into—like, I keep adding things. Like in 2004, I added the video monitor with the beer filling up. And then, maybe the next year I added doing the circle with telling the jokes. Because the circle comes out of my stretch drawings—of *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*, a circle and so on, like that. Those are all—I call them out-of-body, free-hand drawings.

MIJA RIEDEL: And also, the *ensos* came out of that, too, yeah?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. In 2007, I had a show of all circle drawings.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. It was a beautiful catalogue.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, thanks. Yeah. Oh, right, yeah. [00:58:00] And I said that I invented Circlism 100 years after Picasso invented Cubism, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's right, that's right. And you were going to spend a whole year making circles, in honor of that—yeah, yeah—year of the circle.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, where the idea of the now—I mean, we can get into the rectangle, and we certainly will—but the idea of the rectangle filling up with beer—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —what was the inspiration to add that to the performance?

TOM MARIONI: Well, one, it has to do with beer, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: And two, going back to the '70s, I was doing things in the proportions of a golden rectangle, which comes from the golden mean, which is also part of something called sacred geometry. And it's like what all the pyramids come from. The great cathedrals come from in history. It's a way a seashell grows. It's like—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sort of Fibonacci sequence.

TOM MARIONI: Yes, like that. So, something that has good proportions is probably because it has the proportions of things in nature. So, yeah. I did a lot of things—pictures or shadowboxes or objects in that proportion, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I just love the double meaning of this golden rectangle. And then also, this sort of pitcher filling up with beer, and then video installation.

TOM MARIONI: And it turns out that those flat-screen things—if you don't count the foam at top—is the proportions of a golden rectangle.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great.

TOM MARIONI: Those flat-screen videos, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, it's another one of those backward-engineered—yeah—intuitive choices.

TOM MARIONI: Comes out to my advantage, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah. Are those performances influenced in any way by the place that they're performed? Is it different in Germany than it might be someplace else?

TOM MARIONI: Well, I was—in the beginning, in the early '80s, I was doing performances where I'd draw my shadow. And there was music, and it was like, the artist at work in the studio.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. They were called *Studio*, right? [01:00:00]

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, they were called *Studio* and they were influenced also by the Catholic Mass, in a way. So.

MIJA RIEDEL: That in the sense of having your back to the audience.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, right. Yeah. Uh-huh [affirmative]. And so, in those performances, which were about the sound, too, the long pencil percussive sound on the paper. They were—now I forget the question [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I was asking if the piece is different in different countries where it's performed.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, that's it, yeah. Okay, when I was in France, they said I had a French sensibility [laughs]. And in Germany, they said my work was very German.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: So great.

TOM MARIONI: It's like one of those things where you can see anything you want in it. It's romantic, and I'm playing this Haydn music and Miles Davis in one part. And then it's kind of sensual because the pencil is diddling the paper under where the microphone is, [demonstrates], like that. And anyway, so—and then I back away and my shadow gradually disappears—because there's a curtain and two yellow spotlights. And so, it looks like I'm getting into the work, like a ghost or something. Once when I did it in Germany, I got back to the end, to the curtain, and I lit a cigar and I blew the smoke and all you saw was the shadow of the smoke appear on the paper. It was like a ghost disappeared into it. It was pretty magical.

MIJA RIEDEL: That sounds great.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: I also think there must be something to, perhaps, to going—well, we'll talk about that later.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so, the *Art of Drinking Beer*, does that change in different countries? Is the music different in Germany than it is in France? [01:02:00]

TOM MARIONI: Oh, no, that was a performance that I recreated slightly. I change it only slightly.

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TOM MARIONI: But it was a basic—I did that maybe four or five times.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. We're talking about *Studio* now?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, the *Studio* one. I did it in Japan, with a woman Koto player as a shadow. And then I did it in Cologne with a woman model. And I did it in Bern, Switzerland. And I did it in the Pompidou Centre in Paris. The basic idea of drawing the shadow And I've done it in several places, yeah. In Pennsylvania, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That went on for 10 years, that piece—

TOM MARIONI: Maybe five or six years, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And that—was that one of the installations, too, that had that sort of trinity of elements—the male, the female, and the spirit? Not so much in that one?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. The installations had those elements. Like, when I did *The Germans, the Italians, and the Japanese*, I thought of the Germans as male—the fatherland. And the Italians as female—the mother. And the Japanese as spirit. And then, in the installation, I think of the beer bottles as male—the refrigerator as female, because it's nourishment—and then the yellow light as the spirit. So, it's in a lot of my work, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So, the *Studio* piece, it seems like, seems pretty consistent no matter where it's performed. But when the *Beer Drinking*—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, different piece, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —performance. Does that shift with location as well? Is that culture- or country-specific?

TOM MARIONI: It's called—the name of the piece is *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art*, and that's basically the same. Over years, I added a couple of elements to it, but basically, it's growing in size a little bit. But it's—basic things of it are always the same. But there's free beer and a bartender and so on, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, that's been pretty constant for 40 years.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. That's been constant, yeah. It's just gotten more refined, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [00:02:02]

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And the few additions that we talked about.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. In 1970, we talked about the NEA grant. So—I think we've already covered that.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: I just wanted to go back to MOCA, because we sort—oh, '72, wait.

TOM MARIONI: You did a lot of homework, I see.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: In, '72, right—well, we've sort of moved into this, but let's go back and take a closer look. So, you'd been making actions pretty much from '68, '69 straight through '72. And then, you made a conscious shift to go back in making—to make objects again.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. I didn't—

MIJA RIEDEL: We touched on this through Demarco.

TOM MARIONI: I didn't do much in that sense. Yeah, in Demarco Gallery I did drawings for five days, different work on each day. And then the Reese Palley Gallery the next year—where I lived in the gallery for a whole week

and I did drawings based on the Creation, and the Bible, as it said. Like, symbolic things.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, things really seemed to change with that trip to Edinburgh in '72. And that was—you went there at Richard Demarco's invitation to perform, right?

TOM MARIONI: To have a show, yeah. He didn't know what I was going to do. That's a good story. It's in my book, too. He visited San Francisco, and what Ricky Demarco used to do, he'd go to different countries and he meets people and he'd say, "Who are the most interesting artists here?" You know? That's how he got Marina Abramović and all those Yugoslavian artists. That's how he got Joseph Beuys and all those German artists the year before that, anyway. So, he came here and he came to San Francisco to see about San Francisco. And he didn't find out much. He went to the Art Institute, and of course they told him Bill Wiley and all those guys. But he wasn't really interested in that, because this was already into—he was already into Joseph Beuys by that time. [00:04:03]

So, he went to the Oakland museum and he went around, asked the curators who's interesting. Nobody gave him my name except George Neubert at the Oakland Museum. Because he said, "Who's the craziest, most interesting artist in San Francisco?" And George Neubert said, "Tom Marioni." Anyway. Because I had done *Beer with Friends* in Oakland Museum already—two years before that. So anyway, then Ricky Demarco, who I didn't meet then—on his way out of San Francisco, he's in the airport and he calls me up from the airport on his way back to Edinburgh. And says, "Would you send me some material? I want to know what you're doing." Or like that. So, I did. And he invited me to come to the show at his gallery.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that—and also, I just want to think in '72 when you went back to making these objects again, how—or thought about making objects again—how had your objectives or your sense of process changed?

TOM MARIONI: After Edinburgh?

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, even—I mean, you were making—it was strictly actions for about three years before Edinburgh, right?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, now you go back to making objects.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Had your goals or thoughts about process—or had you set up any sort of structure for how the objects were going to be made? For the process?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well, it's not completely true, because like, when I was at Richmond, I did the *Birds in Space*, that's an actual piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's true.

TOM MARIONI: And the *Drinking Beer with Friends*—the debris was left as the evidence. It became—that was an installation, too, you see what I mean?

MIJA RIEDEL: Feels different that the body-process drawings, though. It somehow feels different.

TOM MARIONI: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Maybe it's what's left over, the documentation—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Well, I guess after the *Birds in Flight*, until '72, I wasn't producing sculptures, maybe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Maybe that's it.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. [00:06:00] So, this trip to Edinburgh in '72 must have just been exhilarating, because this was your first exposure to all of that. And that was where you first saw Marina Abramović, yes? And Joseph Beuys.

TOM MARIONI: That was the second trip there. Next year, he invited me back when I brought my band with me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay, the MOCA Ensemble —

TOM MARIONI: The MOCA Ensemble, and we played in St. Mary's Cathedral there. And that was kind of a

shocking experience.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. And so, did the inspiration for traveling in Eastern Europe really come out of those trips to Scotland and meeting Demarco?

TOM MARIONI: That's when it started, yeah. It started there. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And he put you in touch with those artists and one thing led to another—

TOM MARIONI: Right. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and you decided to go see what was going on.

TOM MARIONI: In '73, I met the director of the Foksal Gallery in Warsaw—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: —and he invited me to have a show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TOM MARIONI: And I met the curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. She invited me out there. And then I was invited to the—I forget what—a student center where I went. And that's when Joseph Beuys gave a lecture. One of his blackboard lectures. And Marina Abramović did a performance. I did a performance. Joseph Beuys was there in the audience, yeah. That was a big thrill. Anyway, it all began in Edinburgh.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And so, then, a lot of that was what you brought back—

TOM MARIONI: It's always been like that. One thing leads to another. You go one place and you meet somebody who invites you go to the next place like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Were you also playing drums in a jazz group at this time? In the '70s, early '70s?

TOM MARIONI: I was a percussionist in my MOCA Ensemble. We did a thing in the Berkeley Museum. We did a thing at SFMOMA. And in the Edinburgh Festival. Those were the three main places. [00:08:00]

MIJA RIEDEL: And was this music or sound? Which one was this?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, it was free jazz. Yeah, it was music. Definitely music.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, this was music. Yeah, okay. So, very different than the artists'—

TOM MARIONI: I played the conga drum, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Okay, that's right. So, then why Eastern Europe and not Italy or England or Germany where there definitely were conceptual movements going on at the time?

TOM MARIONI: Well, because of the connection with Demarco. That got me invited to Eastern Europe. But I'd already started to do things in Germany, in Italy, and France. It all happened around that time.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you were in London, too and Whitechapel—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —same time, in '72.

TOM MARIONI: London—that came out of Demarco as well, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And I—who's the guy—the guy who was editor of *Studio International*, a London art magazine [Peter Townsend]. They had—there was an interview with me in that. And actually, Lynn Hershman wrote it. Yeah, did interview me and they published it. And he had been the boyfriend of Princess Margaret earlier. The one that the Queen got rid of, because he wasn't royal enough or high class enough. I forget his name now. Shoot, I just—we're watching that program on TV now, *The Crown*—and they talk about that whole thing. I don't know if you've seen that, anyway. But he was—and he took me out to dinner. And—well, I can't think of his

name, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. We can add it later.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Anyway. The Queen's sister, in other words—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: —he was dating her for a long time. And she loved him, wanted to get married and everything. And the Queen nixed it, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Said no. Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [00:10:00]

MIJA RIEDEL: Did those trips influence your own work or did they have a deeper impact on your curating and maybe the publications you began to do, like *Vision*?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah. Well, *Vision* originally—my original idea of *Vision* was to do one on different countries. The first one was California. Second one was Eastern Europe—third one was New York City. The fourth one was going to be Italy. But at that time, you could never get anything out of Italy, and it was—and I went there, met a lot of the artists that I wanted to do, and that's when I—actually I met Francesco Clemente, also in Edinburgh in '74, when he was just out of art school. And then, I got him invited to Crown Point Press to make prints a few years after that. That was his first time in this country, too. Anyway, so I was doing mostly performances in those countries, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right. And did your experience with those artists, did that impact your own work as well, or did it have—in terms of what you were doing—you know, I'm thinking of *Drum Brush Drawings*, those—the first time they were performed, ever done, was in Demarco, right?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, first time I did the *Drum Brush Drawing* was in Demarco Gallery, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And also *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*—that was first performed at Demarco, too, right?

TOM MARIONI: No, that was first performed in the Reese Palley Gallery in San Francisco. But it was the next year or the same year, I don't know— but close, shortly after, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. But I'm wondering is if your experience with those artists in Eastern Europe and that you met through Demarco, if those experiences affected your own work as well? Because I know it made a different to what you were doing at MOCA. Certainly, that influenced what you were interested in doing there. [00:12:01]

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And *Vision*—we just have started to talk about.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Well, I don't know that the artists that I met in Europe, or in Eastern Europe, influenced my own art. My own art was influenced by these old masters that I have pictured up there on the bar. And each one of them has influenced a different element of my work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. We should definitely talk about John Cage at some point—

TOM MARIONI: Sure. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and I think we've mentioned Duchamp already.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And what I was doing at MOCA were groups shows where they had themes. And because I always thought that was much more interesting.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And how smart is it to call up Bruce Nauman and say, "I'll give you a one-man show." You know? That doesn't take any real creativity or anything. So, I did theme shows like *All Night Sculpture*, *Sound Sculpture*, *Actions by Sculptors for the Home Audience*, which I did on KQED TV. And the one-minute radio pieces, and all those kinds of things I did were about themes. Comedy. I did a show called *Comedy Sonatas* at MOCA where four

artists did performances. And then I did shows that were kind of invisible. I did *Moroccan Rugs*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right. Yeah. That was a little later, right? '74, '75?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, around '75. Yeah. I was inventing artists in the *All Night Sculptures* show, I did the back room where an artist friend of mine made a mold of a woman's torso and that became my work because he executed the work for me. Frank Youmans was his name and he was somebody I knew when I worked in a plaster shop years earlier. [00:14:01] He was an expert mold-maker. So, there's an example I invented an artist, just like Allan Fish.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And then also, 19—in the *Sound Sculpture* show, I did a piece for Allan Fish, but also Jim McCready, who was a lawyer friend of mine, not even an artist. And he did a piece—a sound piece. That was actually his piece. But the year before, at Richmond, he was in the *Sculpture Annual* that Larry Bell juried. And I gave him the idea for that piece that he submitted, and Larry Bell chose it. It was *St. Mary's Church on Fire*. It was a photograph, and that was his sculpture. Photograph of *St. Mary's Church on Fire*. And I had given him the idea for that, so.

So, I invented first, Allan Fish, and then Jim McCready I invented. And then Frank Youmans I invented. And then, basically, David Ireland, too, I invented because—he was older than me, but he went back to school—he was a student of my wife's as a printmaker. And I got to know him. He was an interesting guy, and everything. And I invited him to restore the back wall of MOCA. It was all, like—it was all my piece, basically. He was, like, executing it for me. And then that led to him going off and becoming known for doing all that kind of work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And what was the story on restoring that back wall at MOCA? I can't remember exactly how it went. It had gotten too—it was painted over and completely flat.

TOM MARIONI: Oh.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then you wanted to bring it back to its previous condition.

TOM MARIONI: Yes. It's an interesting story. I moved into this space that was a printing company from 1920 up until 1970.

MIJA RIEDEL: I'm sorry, what was the first year?

TOM MARIONI: 1920.

MIJA RIEDEL: 1920?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. The Bowles [ph] Printing Company.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay, you weren't there, right?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, big printing presses, yeah. That was the first tenant in the space upstairs over Breen's Bar. [00:16:02] Second floor. Second and third floor. Three-story building.

So, anyway then I did a show called *Second Generation* and I invited five artists who had been—were students of people from my generation. They were only like 10 years younger, maybe, five or 10 years younger. Like a student of Jim Melchert, a student at Howard Fried's, a student of mine, and so on like that. So, they all did things. And one of them was a Darryl Sapien, who did a performance where he painted the back wall white and put some panels up and took part of the moldings away, and stuff like that, in order to do his performance. And he just went in and sort of did it in the middle of the night, kind of. But then it was too late. So, then he did his performance, which was fine. But then afterwards, I'm left with this white elephant—in this kind of beautiful natural space. It was like an industrial space.

So, I got the idea to restore it back to its original thing, because of *The Night Watch* painting by Rembrandt in the State Museum in Amsterdam was damaged, slashed by somebody. And so, they set up a room around it with windows so people could watch, and for a whole year they spent restoring it. Well, people could watch the restoration. So, it became like a performance, in a way. So, that gave me the idea to restore what Darryl Sapien had done to my beautiful, natural space. It's like the opposite of making a white space dirty. He made a dirty space white.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, absolutely.

TOM MARIONI: So, then I asked David Ireland, I said, "You know, I'm going to hire an art student to restore this,"

and make a show out of it. So. He said he would do it. I said, "All right, but I'm only going to pay \$100." He said, "That's all right." He didn't care. It was a great thing for him and me both. So, he spent about a month on there, restoring it. And like, there was even different shapes on the wall where things had been painted around. [00:18:02] And so, he touched it all up like that and re-stained the floor and the area there and the ceiling. And built a scaffolding to work on it. And I videotaped it every day. So, I had video documentation of it, and slides too. So, then—

MIJA RIEDEL: This is all at the Berkeley Archive now? The video tapes?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah, it's in the Berkeley Archives. Yeah. So then, I had an opening. And I sent out an announcement, and it was called *The Restoration of the Back Wall Ceiling and Floor* by David Ireland. And so then, people came to the opening and there was an invisible work of art. See, there's where invisibility comes back again, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

TOM MARIONI: Because you couldn't see what was changed from before.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right.

TOM MARIONI: Because he did such a good job. He even smoked these clay pots or something, to get the smokiness to do the ceiling. He did a great job, anyway. And well, he ended up building a whole house, he was like a real craftsman. So, then at the opening, Darryl Sapiens shows up and somebody says, "What do you think about this? They erased your work and what you left." He says, "I feel like I'm being scolded."

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: By having his work taken away and restored back. And I always say it was the only painting show that ever happened in MOCA.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's right.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: And did you have—oh, you must have had original photos of what it looked like before he painted it over? Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, sure, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, it was restored to condition.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a great story.

TOM MARIONI: It was basically a photo-realist painting. Good work from the photograph to make it like the photograph.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. And that was '76, I think, right?

TOM MARIONI: Yes, it was '76, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: One of the last sort of performance pieces going on there. That is a great story. I want to make sure we talk a little bit more about Reese Palley and the performance there. That was a week-long piece. [00:20:00] And you said that it was—that was also the site of the first flying drawing, wasn't it?

TOM MARIONI: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. That was *Bird, Running and Jumping with a Pencil, Marking the Paper While Trying to Fly*.

TOM MARIONI: Right. That's what it was called, yeah. And then *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*. Those were two of the main pieces. But they were, like, seven days, seven pieces.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And there was also *Allan Fish Drinks a Case of Beer*. That was one day there, I think, wasn't it?

TOM MARIONI: That was another show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that was another show.

TOM MARIONI: Another time.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you had a couple of times—

TOM MARIONI: That was in the second space which was on Maiden Lane where the Frank Lloyd Wright building is. It was in the basement of that gallery, *Drinking a Case of Beer*, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, what happened during that seven-day performance? What was performed? The flying drawings?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, the first day I was in total darkness. And that was Sunday. And I built a little room in the corner where I had a cot and a hot plate, and stuff. And I'd sleep at night there. And that was in the corner, sheet rock thing with a little door. And then the Monday, I took LSD. First time. Only time.

MIJA RIEDEL: You'd never taken it before?

TOM MARIONI: No, I never—since, either. And so, I was in the gallery and people were coming in the gallery. There wasn't anything there yet, just the room where I slept in. And everybody looked like they were wearing too much makeup. Everything was colorful. And I'm color-blind, too—red/green. But everything was—increased my color perception. That was how I experienced it, yeah.

And then, Tuesday, I did the *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*, which was the day that was vegetation or something. And that was like making a drawing of a tree, the way a tree grows. And how—and it was like doing yoga and holding a pencil. And it was like a stretching exercise. [00:22:00] And it was drawing a line from the bottom to the top, far as I could reach on brown wrapping paper. And a few years later, when the Oakland Museum bought that drawing, the art critic, Allan Temko at the time on the San Francisco Chronicle, said it was a cheap—a mindless drawing on cheap brown paper.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: And years later when I saw him, I said he was right on, yeah.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: Because it was a Zen exercise, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Absolutely, yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Anyway. And then I did the *Running and Jumping* and that's when there were birds—

MIJA RIEDEL: That was day four?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. And then, as Allan Fish, in my fake Allan Fish disguise, I did a little—like a commercial for Anchor Steam Beer.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Okay.

TOM MARIONI: As Allan Fish. And Chris Burden had come up from L.A. to see that performance. Or that piece. And then he went over to Anchor Steam Beer Company on a tour with a couple of his friends or something. And then met Fritz Maytag, the owner of the Anchor Steam Beer Company. And told him, "There's a guy downtown in this art gallery did a commercial for Anchor Steam Beer." And then, on the seventh day, which was the day of the reception and the opening, which I considered the day of rest, the Sabbath. He shows up, what is it, on a truck—Fritz Maytag with seven cases of Anchor Steam Beer.

MIJA RIEDEL: How cool.

TOM MARIONI: At my show, yeah. That was cool. That's how I met him. And for years he would also give beer to my other beer installations because of that, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, that was how you met.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. And that was because of Chris Burden telling him, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow. And what happened on day six? Day five was the Anchor Steam ad. Day seven was the day

of rest.

TOM MARIONI: I made an ant colony on paper. I put this brown paper out. The *Running and Jumping* was on brown paper, too. [00:24:00] And then I had brown paper on the floor and I was down with ants. I collected from my house in Forest Knolls. And was trying to do something with ants. It wasn't success, anyway.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: So, that was like for insects and so on, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was there sound going on during all of this, or was it strictly the sound of your actions?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, no, there was no sound in that piece, yeah. And on the last day it was a reception and we had free beer and people came to that, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was that show reviewed or well attended?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, but I don't remember what the review was of that, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yeah. Oh, I want to talk, maybe final thing for today. We talked about MOCA starting to gear down, maybe by '76. But this, the beer tradition, has just evolved. And I've tried to sort of trace it. It started at MOCA. It started in MOCA in '73, right? Partly with a—

TOM MARIONI: MOCA started in '70.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. The beer tradition, the beer on Wednesdays—

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —that started in '73.

TOM MARIONI: That started the beginning of '73, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was that partially with a NEA grant?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Okay. And so then—

TOM MARIONI: I got three, maybe four NEA grants, and then another one for the Ponape trip.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, in 1980.

TOM MARIONI: Which was the last one. But in the early years, I was getting—as long as Brian O'Doherty was on the thing, he'd give me grants, and I wouldn't have to do anything except continue my work like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: How great.

TOM MARIONI: And then when he left, then I didn't get any more grants after that, because it became so bureaucratic and who knows what.

MIJA RIEDEL: I heard somebody else talking about—

TOM MARIONI: I didn't have a board of directors or anything like that. It was just me. It was a one-horse operation. [00:25:58]

And by the late '70s or whenever it was that I stopped getting grants, I wasn't playing ball, I guess, with them. Even though I was still doing great things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. Somebody else mentioned how—what a creative thinker he was and how he would just help make projects happen as opposed to put road blocks in the way.

TOM MARIONI: A lot of times, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, I want to talk about this social artwork of beer of Wednesdays. Because it started in '73 and it seems like it's just morphed—another thing that's morphed through the present day. So, I want to make sure—it moved downstairs to Breen's in '74 or '76, something like that?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, '76, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And then you had the Academy of MOCA?

TOM MARIONI: I had free beer in '73. In '74, I showed artists video tapes upstairs in the actual gallery, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Exactly, yeah. And then you had—then it became Café Society downstairs.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's what I called it. I sent a card out to invite people with that name.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And did it shift in its intent when you did that? I mean, it started off showing videos, but then it became more of an art salon?

TOM MARIONI: Well, when it moved downstairs into the bar, which is just downstairs from my space.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. You called it your office sometimes.

TOM MARIONI: Right, there was a phone on the wall next to it that I considered my office. Yeah, anyway. Let's see. And then it was a public space. And it wasn't free beer anymore. It went—people bought their own beers. But then when Breen's closed, and I moved next door to the bar next door, which is called Jerry & Johnny's, I got a credit card—I made credit cards for free beer. That I gave to artists. And in many cases, it was their first credit card any of them ever had.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That's so great. Free beer. Yeah. And that went on for 10 years—

TOM MARIONI: [00:28:00] Oh, no, two years.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay. Yeah, the credit cards.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But you were at Jerry & Johnny's until '89, right? Until the earthquake?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, it was—let's see. From '79 to—yeah, I guess like that. Until '89, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then you moved to Capp Street Project? Where you had your studio—

TOM MARIONI: After the earthquake, I lost my studio and I was homeless, in terms of a studio.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And I—there was even a little time where there was no Jerry & Johnny's, because they had moved down the street or something. And I went to a nearby bar in the Palace Hotel there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Just for a few months. And then, I got the show at Capp Street Project. And then I—that was a three-month show, where you build an installation. And that included these tables and booths, which I bought from Breen's when they went out of business. And then, every week, I had the bar with free beer and a bartender. Joyce Umamoto was my bartender for about five years, so from—starting then up until this space. But now I have people sign up to be the bartender. And after three times, they become members.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And how often—

TOM MARIONI: Grand choice.

MIJA RIEDEL: How often do you tend?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, I don't tend bar.

MIJA RIEDEL: You don't tend at all?

TOM MARIONI: Never. Never.

MIJA RIEDEL: You never did?

TOM MARIONI: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh. Not ever?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-mm [negative]. No, I'm like the maître d'.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: Or how I describe it is like it's a music piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: I'm the composer.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: The bartender is the conductor.

MIJA RIEDEL: I see.

TOM MARIONI: And the drinkers are the players.

MIJA RIEDEL: I see, okay.

TOM MARIONI: Like that. Like a symphony.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course. Now it makes much more sense.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, then it moved to your studio, right? And it took on the name the Archives of MOCA? Is that right?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, it was in this building but it was on the other side where the restaurant is over there now. [00:29:59] It was another restaurant in between.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hawthorne Lane or something, right?

TOM MARIONI: Hawthorne Lane, yeah, right. But the—when we first moved into this building, which was 1990—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right.

TOM MARIONI: I had my studio back there. And then, I don't know, in '95 the Hawthorne Lane came in and I moved up here. To the front of the building. And I've been here since then. Since '95, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And this is—you had called this Archives of MOCA, and then called it Café Wednesday. And as of 2000, it's been the Society of Independent Artists. Is that right?

TOM MARIONI: Right. Actually, it was 1999, but I made it 2000 because I liked the beginning of the millennia.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right.

TOM MARIONI: And SIA—so I have a logo. It's a little card up there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yeah, I see it.

TOM MARIONI: I designed the SIA, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Little piano keys or something.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, behind it, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

TOM MARIONI: And that I stole the name from the Society of Independent Artists early 20th century, the Duchamp exhibit in his famous urinal, and like that. And it's perfect because we're all independent artists. We're not artists who do the same thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, I know that you have rules. You had to come up with certain rules for how people had to

conduct themselves.

TOM MARIONI: There's only one rule that's really important, and that's: "the management reserves the right to refuse service to anyone who doesn't know where they are or what's going on." Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's a great rule.

TOM MARIONI: Because there've been times when people come in here and they say, "Oh, I'm in Crown Point Press," or something. Or they say, "How come there are no women up there?" This is my private studio. I can hang up whatever I want. Those are my teachers. I can't help it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: [Laughs.] [00:32:00]

MIJA RIEDEL: So, that rule probably evolved fairly early on? And that's been the one constant rule since—

TOM MARIONI: That wasn't from the beginning, no. That rule came along after a few years. But it's the number one rule now. And of course, I've had to change the rules over the years because, for instance, one of the rules was no slides. You don't come in here and show your slides to some curator or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's right.

TOM MARIONI: People don't use slides anymore, so that's not an important rule anymore. Or no touching the bar chair that has a handle on it because they kept breaking the handle. It's like rules like that.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: I love the one that's *no collectors, except in disguise*. That was a good one.

TOM MARIONI: Right, yeah. Yeah. Because I don't want my friends to be kissing up to them in front of others.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yes.

TOM MARIONI: Which I say they should be doing in private [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. So, do you envision this as ongoing until—

TOM MARIONI: I envision it to go on after I'm dead.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Well, I'd like to compare it John Cage's 4'33" of silence. Every time it's performed, it's about the moment. And that's what I think of this being like.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is there a way it can go on? Will it just move to a new location or are the bartenders charged with carrying it on?

TOM MARIONI: No, the weekly thing I don't think can go on. But having it be a part of a show in a museum can go on—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Exactly.

TOM MARIONI: —because I don't even have to be there. They have the plans and they can recreate it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. And you have—I think it's—I can't remember the title, but the Pacific Rim. You actually built a bar that could be transported and installed in different locations.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, I built a few bars as sculpture pieces, yeah, or installations. And that was like a—I forget what it was called. It was like a tiki bar. And the bar would be like the crate that the other elements can fit into. It never traveled anywhere.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, it didn't travel? I thought it did.

TOM MARIONI: Never did. [00:34:00]

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay. Well, I think maybe we can stop here for the day and then pick up again tomorrow. Does that sound good?

TOM MARIONI: Sure. Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, I think we're just about out of tape—

[END OF marion17_1of2_sd_track03.]

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Tom Marioni at his studio on December 22, 2017, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. I interviewed your brother seven years ago, Paul. He must have been on my mind yesterday. But today we have Tom Marioni—

TOM MARIONI: And you happened to get around to me because somebody was here, recommended me to you recently? You said?

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I actually talked to Paul because Nanette Laitman had funded a whole series of interviews of artists whose work was associated traditionally with craft.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, that was a large project that she funded specifically for that.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, he's big in the glass community.

MIJA RIEDEL: He is, absolutely. And I interviewed your nephew, Dante, too.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But that was all with Laitman funding. So, I don't know exactly how that all works out, but I do know those were specifically with Laitman. I don't know who in particular is funding—

TOM MARIONI: Dante said one time that he wasn't interested in being a glass artist; he was interested in the art of glass-blowing.

MIJA RIEDEL: I remember hearing that, yeah. Yeah. So, before we start today, you had said you had a few things that occurred to you overnight that you wanted to address. Let's start with that.

TOM MARIONI: Yes. Okay, 1971. I did my first video—and I only made a few videos in my life. I never was associated with that medium. But it was called *21:15*. I had a record by Cecil Taylor, the jazz pianist, called *21:15*. Because that's how much you could get on one side of an LP record, about. And so, I called my video the same thing, and I made it 21:15 minute long video of me eating—

MIJA RIEDEL: Dinner, right?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, eating dinner, and I smoked a cigar. And it took that long. It was very black and white, very grainy. Seemed very Warhol-like. So, that was a video that I think of as an art video. [00:02:01]

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Absolutely. Did you ever show—did you show that at MOCA as well?

TOM MARIONI: No, no. But I've shown it at the Art Institute in a showing once. And once at U.C. Berkeley there, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is it now part of your archive at Berkeley?

TOM MARIONI: Yes, I guess it is. Yeah. I guess it is. And then, okay, 1973. When the San Francisco Museum was looking for a new director—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right [laughs].

TOM MARIONI: I sent out a card announcing that I had been made director of the museum. And they had—it had already been a year—they were looking for a director—had gone by. And then it was mailed out and then the newspaper said there ought to be a limit to the pranks conceptual artists can pull. And then the board got really mad because nobody told them they hired somebody without consulting them.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's right.

TOM MARIONI: And then it was published in Museum News as an appointment. And all the museum people read that to see who's the new directors or whatever, like that. So, it really became, like, a scandal. Yeah. And then there was a show, an anniversary show—I guess it was the 50th anniversary of the San Francisco museum. And then, like, that was like six months later, then—or a year later when Henry Hopkins became director in the

meantime. Actually, he never forgave me for doing that because he was the one they eventually hired.

MIJA RIEDEL: Why would that be, do you think?

TOM MARIONI: Well, for one thing, he never accepted conceptual art or me, in particular. So, anyway. So, then he had this anniversary show, and everybody was in it. It was just California art. Everyone was in it except for me. And I think this was in, like, '75, I think it was, yeah. Or '76, something like that. [00:04:00] Yeah. That would—like maybe 50th anniversary. And I forget the art critic who I knew who was the art critic on *Newsweek* magazine came to review the show, like, several days before it opened. And the *Newsweek* magazine came out every week. So, it came out on the day of the opening. And so, I went to the opening and I didn't even know that I was mentioned in the review of the show that I wasn't in. And *Newsweek* magazine, he assumed I was in it because he mentioned several names, important California artists that were in the show.

And Henry Hopkins came up to me at the opening and he says, "Oh, I'm sorry I didn't include you in the show, even though *Newsweek* thinks you're in it." And I said, "Oh, I didn't know that." So, a week later, I mailed the card to him in the museum, and I said, "It's not too late, you can still put me in the show." With this card announcing I was director. So, it got in the anniversary show, and it traveled to Washington, D.C., to Corcoran or someplace like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, he did add the card to the show.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, he did add the card, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great.

TOM MARIONI: Because he had been embarrassed by not including me and having *Newsweek* say I was in the show. As a notable California artist. So then, years later, an art collector here, locally, Bob Bransten—Rena Bransten's husband at the time, yeah—bought the card from me. And he was on the board. They had two groups—they had the high-level group of art collectors, which they wouldn't allow him to be in because he wasn't rich enough or high level enough. And then they had the SECA groups, which are lower-level group of people. So, he was really mad at him. So, he thought he would get back at them by donating my announcement card to their permanent collection. And he did. He bought it from me for \$500, the card, and gave it to the museum. And now—that's why it's in the collection. It's even been in two shows since then. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's fantastic. So, the sense of humor is coming along, it just takes a while. [00:06:01]

TOM MARIONI: Really, like 40 years.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. That is a great story. I do remember reading about that card and there are many, many ripples that have gone on with that.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, and I heard great stories about it. Larry Bell said he was driving in L.A. with Maurice Tuchman, who was the curator of the L.A. County Museum at the time. And he told him about it. And he had been one of the people who applied for the job, too. And he said they almost had a wreck, he was laughing so hard.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: And so, Larry Bell has always admired me for doing that, ever since then. He said, because it hurt me as an artist. Because they—well, until recently, when it entered history now. They resented me being so presumptuous or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Not much of a sense of humor.

TOM MARIONI: No, no, no.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. I mean, it's like they don't even—never even heard of Dada or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Exactly. I mean, in the spirit of the—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —art history, it makes so much sense.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Well, it's very conservative here. The art community and that museum, too. They don't own hardly any work by any Conceptual artists. International Conceptual artists. Because there's like 50 really important Conceptual artists in the world.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Do you see that—

TOM MARIONI: Unlike the other art movements have fewer. Like, there's eight Pop artists. So on and so on, like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Have you seen that change at all? Or improve in the past 50 years?

TOM MARIONI: Well, they just acquired, in the last—well, they just acquired a Walter De Maria in the last year. They never had a Walter De Maria. He's even a Bay Area artist. And Walter De Maria is like, the most—one of the most important Conceptual artists because— In 1968, he filled a gallery with dirt in Munich, Germany, in the Heiner Friedrich Gallery [00:08:00] with the title, *God Has Given Us the Earth and We Have Ignored It*. See, it was political and moral. That's my point about Conceptual art. It's a political and moral art movement. Because it was against materialism and it was against the war, and it's political art, Conceptual art. So, for me, that's like the real beginning of that—and Sol LeWitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art* manifesto—that's really the beginning of Conceptual art for me, those two works.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, the museum's definitely—it's growing so much, it's gotten so much larger. They finally are doing more collecting.

TOM MARIONI: They didn't even own any Pop art or Minimal art to speak of until somebody gave it to them in the '80s, way after the movement was over with. And in the—well, I wrote about it in my book that they only collected Bay Area art in the '60s, pretty much. Anyway. So, okay, 1972. There are just two more things I wanted to—that I didn't mention before.

MIJA RIEDEL: Please. Absolutely.

TOM MARIONI: I did this piece at the Santa Clara museum—*My First Car*, it was called. And Lydia Modi-Vitale, an Italian-American like me, was the director. And I got the museum to buy me a used Italian Fiat. 1961. 750—one of those little ones. And I exhibited it in the gallery. And then the president of the university made her close the show the next day. It was—opening was on Friday night and on Monday I went, got the car, and took it home. And my reasoning was that in the Renaissance, the church supported the artists, and this was a way for the church to support an artist again. [00:09:59] So, they could buy me a car—I needed a car.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you needed a car. Right.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. And I even had lettered on the door, *My First Car*. And it used to say the museum and everything, like a label, a museum label. And I kept that on the car door all the time. It was a white car and it had the black lettering on the door, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, some of the early pranks didn't go over very well?

TOM MARIONI: No. That was—yeah. That's how it went, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And had you intended to leave the car there for the duration of the exhibition?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, for a month, yeah. For a month.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I read at some point that you were going to sit in there and have conversations? Or is that—

TOM MARIONI: No, just at the opening. And the opening, I was sitting in the car—There was a microphone in the backseat that ran over to a camera. There was a video of it. And then I sat in the car with the window open and the radio playing. It was a lot of—Mexican radio stations down in Santa Clara. Around that area. So, that's what's playing, mariachi music or something, on the radio. And people would come up and talk to me in the car while I was sitting at the window. And my kids were bringing me champagne and snacks and stuff, too. My little kids, they were little at that time. And so, that's the whole the video, yeah. Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is that part of the archive, too? That would be great to see.

TOM MARIONI: What, the video?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, that's in the Berkeley Archives, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Berkeley Archives, okay.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, the show was closed early. How long was it supposed to run?

TOM MARIONI: For a month, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: It was closed like, the next day. Because the president of the university thought that they were being—that I was getting away with something. I don't know what the reason was, they just said it's not appropriate or something. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Seems to be a theme.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Right.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Which you took as a good thing and isn't always interpreted that way.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. But, well—it's like—what Duchamp said in 1917 when he presented his ready-mades. [00:12:01] He says he selected them at random without any aesthetic decision-making about it. They were just more like by chance. Selected all the—maybe half a dozen different objects. And then in the '60s, he says, "Fifty years later, they admire them for their beauty." He said. So, it's like that. When something becomes familiar then you appreciate it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. I've been thinking—I've been looking at contemporary art now and thinking about how much of it we take for granted and how much of that is due to the fact that people did things like you're describing 50 years earlier.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, it's just—we accept it as commonplace and go onto the next. But, it takes—it takes decades —

TOM MARIONI: With every new movement—

MIJA RIEDEL: —exactly—sometimes.

TOM MARIONI: Impressionism was shocking to the public at the time, and now we think, what do you mean? How could that be shocking. Because things much more shocking than that have happened since then. So, you go back and say, "That wasn't shocking. How could it be?" And people that go back in history and criticize stuff from today's point of view. They don't appreciate how the culture was then. Like Mark Twain writes *Huckleberry Finn*, and he mentions Nigger Jim and they want to take the books out of the library because—Like as if it was written today. So, it's ridiculous.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, the context.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I think also that happens, too, when there's not—if everything gets reduced to a sound bite, then you often lose the context. And then—then you're shot.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Context is everything, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: All right, there's one more thing. In 1979, I did an edition of *100 Bottles of Beer*. I don't know if I mentioned that yesterday or not.

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't think we did. Which was that called?

TOM MARIONI: *Café Society Beer*, it was called.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

TOM MARIONI: In 1979, with the Anchor Steam Beer Company. [00:14:02] And they were in champagne bottles and they had a label that was an etching—basically. And then it came in a box with a card that said this is a social work of art, it should be shared with at least one other person to complete the work. Then you save the bottle as a kind of record of that act—that social exchange. And that sold out, *100 Bottles of Beer*. A good time, yeah. It was only \$100. People thought that was a lot of money for a bottle of beer, but—like it was old wine or something.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: But it was for the label.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Exactly. But they must have gotten it, because they bought it.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Well, actually, a lot of artists traded for it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. That would great.

TOM MARIONI: Because in those days, I was more like an artist's artist. Artists appreciated me even if there were no collectors that bought my work. Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative]. So. Anyway. So, that's all the things I marked on there.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, I actually had a couple follow-up questions from yesterday, too.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: I couldn't find much information about a couple of performances. The '74 performance in Belgrade; the *Sculpture in 2/3 Time*—

TOM MARIONI: *2/3 Time*.

MIJA RIEDEL: *2/3 Time*. And *Thinking Out Loud*, which was in Warsaw in '75. So, I was just—I was hoping you could just describe those.

TOM MARIONI: Right. Those were important to me. And, okay. *A Sculpture in 2/3 Time*—it was in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Joseph Beuys was in the audience, and Francesco Clemente was in the audience. That's when I first met him. And it was in the student culture center, which was like, that's the place where the thing called April Meeting was, that they did every year. And like a performance festival in a way. And so, I polished—I got a big piece of rusted steel. [00:16:01] Put a microphone underneath it on the floor. And I was sitting, like, cross-legged in front of it. And I polished a circle with an electric grinder and then with metal polish, so it became, like a mirrored surface. And then I moved a drum stick back and forth, like a pendulum across it. So, as it moved on the rusted metal, it made a rougher sound. And then when it moved across the smooth part, a different sound. And then the rough sound. So, what you saw was one, two, one, two like a pendulum. But what you heard was one, two, three, one, two, three, like a waltz.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

TOM MARIONI: So, that's what the *Sculpture in 2/3 Time* is like a marriage of art and music, or sound and image, like that. So, that's what that was about. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. The process sounds—

TOM MARIONI: Oh, and also there was a spotlight—a pencil spotlight on the spot. And it illuminated my face.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh. I've seen a photo of that. That makes sense.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how long did that last, the piece?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, maybe 30 minutes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And it sounds physically similar to the process of making the same—a piece from the same year, *The Sun's Reception*.

TOM MARIONI: That was for a print from Crown Point Press, yeah. That was my first print with them, yeah. Yeah, it was a very similar idea. But that was about the reflection of the sun—And it wasn't about the 2/3 idea. But I

did move a drumstick across it. But mainly, it was about the grinding and the polishing—the sounds were amplified, too, of that. In order to receive the reflection of the sun. So that then, when it was printed in blue ink — So, if you look at the sun, like you shouldn't—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right [laughs].

TOM MARIONI: And you close your eyes. You close your eyes, you're going to get like a blue halo. Opposite color, complementary color, or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. Yeah. And that was—

TOM MARIONI: So, that was the print.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was a performance in Sausalito, right?

TOM MARIONI: It was at the home of David and Mary Robinson. Who were friends of mine. And art collectors.

[00:18:00]

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, a performance and your first print.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: I've taken us away from Warsaw.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah. Okay, Warsaw. I was invited to the Foksal Gallery, which is like, was—a very famous gallery. It showed a lot of Conceptual art in the 70s. But I was the first artist that they actually brought there from America. And they did a little catalogue, and in the catalogue Weislaw Boroski writes a text that says I came from a remote part of the world.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: San Francisco, California. So, from the point of view of a people in Warsaw, Poland, I was from a remote part of the world.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. That's fantastic.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I love that. Yeah. Anyway, I did drum brush drawings, and I had my brushes. I had two pairs of brushes. One was gold-plated and one was silver-plated, so it was like I was, kind of—think alchemy or something. And so, they built two slanted walls and I did all the gold drawings on that side, and the silver drawings on that side. And the drawing board was hanging in the middle that I made the drawings on. And I made the drawings over two or three days.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so that was—

TOM MARIONI: And they were put behind glass on the slanted walls on both sides of the gallery, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how long did the performance last—until there were a certain number of drawings done? Or—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I did 11 drawings. Like five on each side, and one on the board left that I drew them on. Yeah, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: Five silver, six gold? Or the other way around?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, five gold and five silver. And one— It was 11. Ten and one, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, and so there were silver and there were gold and what was the eleventh?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, I guess it was—I don't know.

MIJA RIEDEL: I was trying to figure out that balance [laughs].

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, right.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: They all look like steel, anyway. I mean, the gold rubbed off the things, but then immediately that becomes the steel wire. [00:20:02] So, all the—except for those, all the drawings that I do, the medium is steel

and sandpaper. Because the brushes are made out of steel. And the steel rubs and makes a mark, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, were the gold and the silver visibly different in any way, once you got down to the steel?

TOM MARIONI: They pretty much looked alike, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's interesting.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But if you used a magnifying glass, you might see little tiny gold particles, maybe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And how did that title come about, *Thinking Out Loud*?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, because it was like—I thought about the drumming pieces as like, putting myself in a trance —

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TOM MARIONI: And trying to transmit telepathically with this kind of white noise, like they were using in those days for experiments like at Stanford, trying to see if you were telepathic or if you had psychic powers or something like that. I don't think they do that anymore, but back in the '70s, there were a lot of experiments like playing white noise to people somehow. Because it's like the same noise that you get from the universe. Like when you tune a radio station between two stations, you get that "shh." It's actually recording the sounds of space.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, I didn't realize that.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so, is this sound from the drumming with the brushes similar to that?

TOM MARIONI: Sounds the same, sounds the same, "shh." Like that, yeah. Anyway.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you—were you often in a sort of trance state? Did that happen for you often?

TOM MARIONI: Well, it's very hypnotic for an hour to—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. I'm sure.

TOM MARIONI: —do the same rhythm. And also, your body is repeating itself. I guess, like, people get in—joggers, they jog for miles, they get in a state of euphoria or something like that, too, just from the body's repeated action.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I think also you release endorphins—

TOM MARIONI: That's it, yeah. Something like that, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so, would you vary the beat? [00:22:00] Was that significant at all? It was just always steady, constant—pretty much always the same beat, year after year for the drum brush drawings?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

TOM MARIONI: Well, back in the '70s I was using an Echoplex, which made an echo effect. So, I was like playing a duet with myself because the echo sound would come back. It would help me to keep the beat, too. But I don't use that anymore, because I still do them, drum brush drawings.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Do you still do them now?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, every once in a while. Not every day, I don't do it. But I used to do it every day. I had a show at Paule Anglim just a couple of years ago, before they moved to Minnesota Street, of just drum brush drawings.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

TOM MARIONI: But I only sold one drawing.

MIJA RIEDEL: How many of those—do you know how many drum brush drawings you've done over the years? Did you number them at all?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, but, I don't—maybe 50.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, not that many.

TOM MARIONI: Not that many, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. We talked yesterday about SFMOMA not paying too much attention to the Museum of Conceptual Art. But in '79, they hosted the Museum of Conceptual Art at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

TOM MARIONI: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: How did that come about?

TOM MARIONI: They had hired a guy to be curator, Rolando Castellón was his name, to be curator for third world or for alternative art, or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Something like that, yeah.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: Something like that. And so, he organized a show of all the alternative art spaces in the city. So, Lynn Hershman had something called the Floating Museum; Bonnie Sherk had the Farm. There was Capp Street Project. No, that was before the Capp Street Project. There was Site, or Site, Incorporated. There was 80 Langton Street. [00:24:00] So, there was maybe eight or 10 alternative art spaces in the 70s, so. And mostly they did two or three shows of just photos and documentation, things like that. But in my case, it was an installation. And it was fun for me because in the next gallery was Judy Chicago's *Dinner Table*, or whatever it's called, something like that. It was dinner table—dinner, something [*The Dinner Party*]. And at the opening, there were all these women in her space, and all the men were in my space. Of course, there were women in my space, too—But it was like, the idea. People thought, oh this is a guy's installation; this is a girl's installation. So, that was kind of funny, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what was your installation?

TOM MARIONI: There was my refrigerator, it said free beer on the door. There was a table with six chairs. There was about six big shelves, bookshelves, up on the wall, that all the empty beer bottles went on. Anchor Steam Beer donated the whole—all the bottles of beer. It was like 2500 bottles of beer or something like that. Because the show was up for a month and it was free beer all the time, every day. And then there was yellow light in there. And the walls were all painted gray. So, it was kind of dark. Felt like a church. And the shelves with the beer bottles felt like stained glass windows. And it was like a café at the same time, both. Church, café, yeah. And the day after it opened, I went to do something in Europe or Yugoslavia or something, so I was gone the whole month except for the opening. So, I wasn't around to really enjoy the show while it was up, but the staff used to go into my installation to eat their lunch and have a beer and sit at the table.

MIJA RIEDEL: How great.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. That was great, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that documented at all?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I have some photographs, yeah, but not a lot.

MIJA RIEDEL: Photos, that's it. Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Not a lot, because I didn't organize that and the museum didn't, either. [00:26:00] And that was another show Henry Hopkins didn't like but it was sort of like they—because it was a series, like, of alternative art spaces—oh, and then there was another small gallery after the site, which had photographs of the MOCA space. Different things that—Paul Hoffman was kind of a documenter of MOCA in those days. The photos were all of the empty space, mostly, with some things in them.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, none of the exhibitions—

TOM MARIONI: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: —not *Sound Sculpture As* or—

TOM MARIONI: No, no.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. That's too bad.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Or the *All Night Sculptures* would've been great. Was that taken—was that photographed? *All Night Sculptures*?

TOM MARIONI: I made video the next day, but the actual, that night, I only had one video camera and I had a video curator. But Bonnie Sherk was in that show and she demanded that she use our video camera to document her rooftop thing. So, there was no video of the actual show that night.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that's too bad.

TOM MARIONI: But the next day, I walked around with Burt Arnowitz, who was my video curator, and explained what the different pieces were the night before.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that's great.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. So, I'm curious. Why do you write things down when they're in the tape recorder?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, because the SD cards go to Washington to get transcribed—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, they're transcribed by somebody there, who doesn't necessarily know that *All Night Sculptures* is the name of a piece.

TOM MARIONI: I see.

MIJA RIEDEL: Or doesn't know how to spell Bonnie Sherk.

TOM MARIONI. I see.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, we just try to make sure that the transcript comes back not looking like Greek, but like what you actually said.

TOM MARIONI: Okay, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And you'd be amazed how—I actually am surprised when I go back and listen to the cards sometimes, how things become inaudible. You'd actually probably be really interested in listening to the transcripts.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Or listening to the card. "He" becomes "we," or "we" becomes "she," and the context is completely changed. [00:28:02] So, it's really, it's—

TOM MARIONI: It's a big job, it sounds like.

MIJA RIEDEL: It is, and it's surprising how easily things just get lost or misconstrued, so. And even when I've got—you've given me I don't know how many pages of notes—and still I know we'll [laughs]—we'll have to make corrections.

TOM MARIONI: It's happened to me in the past many times, when somebody's written a text in a catalogue or something. On two occasions they wrote *The Act of Drinking Beer is the Highest Form of Art* and left out *With Friends*. And that's the main point of it. But it's like they don't think. Another thing is many times this happens where it's written, instead of the Museum of Conceptual Art, it's written the Museum of Contemporary Art. Because they don't think. It's so close.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. Yeah, I mean I think you're—sometimes our mouths get going and we say what we normally say, and not even what we're thinking. Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, so I wanted to talk a little bit about *The Sun's Reception* and—because you've gone on—that was in '74. That was the first time you made an etching?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay. I had made prints before, like lithographs, in art school. And I made commercial prints on a commercial printing press, like offset lithography prints. But that was first etching.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So, how did you see etching and, in particular, that process? Because it is such a process to do an etching, fitting into your larger oeuvre. It's so different than anything you'd done, yeah?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, well—

MIJA RIEDEL: Or, that's what you—difference is the way you—

TOM MARIONI: Kathan Brown was my girlfriend at the time, and so she invited me to make a print, and that's how it happened. Just like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yeah. So, yeah. And you—

TOM MARIONI: But artists like—especially Conceptual artists, but other kinds of artists, too, but—get invited to places where they do multiple things. [00:30:00] There's a place in Washington that I was invited to that makes—that does glass blowing. Where my nephew made that for me and a whole lot of bottles.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, is that Pilchuck?

TOM MARIONI: Pilchuck, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And so, that's an example of, well, you wouldn't think this artist would make things out of glass, but that's because somebody invited him to come to this shop where they make glass. Because you have an idea to do something with glass. And in Philadelphia, Kippy Stroud had the Fabric Workshop, and I was invited there in 1991, '92, something like that. To make stuff with fabric. So, like a print shop, only they make objects or something else, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. But you've gone on to do so many prints. I mean, you're married to Kathan now, makes a lot of sense for many reasons. But—

TOM MARIONI: I made lithographs in Houston Fine Arts, too. Made six lithographs there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TOM MARIONI: Back in the 80s. But that's the only other shop I ever made prints in.

MIJA RIEDEL: I wanted to talk a little bit about the *Vision* art journal and what your expectations were for that. We touched on it briefly, but not in depth, and yesterday you mentioned issues focusing on different countries. As I recall, one of the issues, maybe the last, was perhaps an exhibition in and of itself?

TOM MARIONI: The *Artist's Photographs*. That was the last issue. Yeah, the fifth issue, yeah. And it was in a box like you buy a box of photo paper. The eight by 10 photo paper. And they were all separate sheets, printed on one side, so that you could actually hang up the catalog and make a show out of it. Not the original photographs—but reproductions. And with 56 artists from 16 different countries. They were all Conceptual artists and because I was part of that world, I knew—I guess I knew all of the interesting Conceptual artists in the world.

MIJA RIEDEL: I would think.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. So. Including Eastern Europe, too. Even one from Russia. [00:32:00] Yeah, at that time, was in there. Anyway—

MIJA RIEDEL: So, was it intended to be, not a survey but really a gathering of what you thought the most significant Conceptual art going on at the moment?

TOM MARIONI: Actually, you might say the Conceptual art movement had just ended. This was 1981. Because it was a movement of the '70s, you see. And it already—Julian Schnabel had already brought painting back into the scene and other art, '80s painters. So, painting returned in the '80s.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, was it a farewell? Did you think about—did you know it was the end? I mean, did you know that something was changing?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, it was clear, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you want to capture it before it was gone?

TOM MARIONI: 1978 was the end of the Conceptual art era and that was the beginning of Neo-Expressionist painting. I think Schnabel is the beginning of that era.

MIJA RIEDEL: Would you have liked to have continued that journal?

TOM MARIONI: I thought about doing—I tried to do Italy, right? Didn't work out. And the one after that was going to be Japan. But I never got to Japan, because then it went over to the phonograph records. And then the photographs. So, it went from being different cultures or countries to themes of sound and photo. Those mediums, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: It started being countries.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then it was sound. And then it was—

TOM MARIONI: It was California. It was Eastern Europe. Four countries. And then it was New York City.

MIJA RIEDEL: New York. Right.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, those were the four issues.

TOM MARIONI: So, it was a state and then it was a—

MIJA RIEDEL: A region.

TOM MARIONI: A region, and then it was a city.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then it was sound.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And then it was an exhibition. And then you were out of ideas, or—

TOM MARIONI: The sound was artists' talks, on an island—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, exactly. I want to talk about that, yes. [00:34:01]

TOM MARIONI: —in the Pacific, yeah. And then the artists' photographs was an actual exhibition in the Crown Point Press gallery, which was in Oakland—when they were in Oakland, back in those days. Of the original photographs. Then they were returned to the artists. And they were all different mediums. One was a slide projection. One was transparencies. One was polaroids—some were polaroids. Some were an installation of a whole lot of pictures here. And they were mostly regular 8 by 10s, or 11 by 14 photographs. And framed and put on the wall. Made a show out of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: It sounds like you handled it—the issues almost like curatorial projects.

TOM MARIONI: Definitely, I was—I considered them part of MOCA. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Oh, you did?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Because it said in the beginning on the first page, it said, published by Crown Point Press. And Tom Marioni of MOCA, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, I knew you were the editor.

TOM MARIONI: I was the editor and designer. And it was my concept, too, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Okay. I do want to talk about *Word of Mouth*, because MOCA and Crown Point Press sponsored an artists' conference—

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's what it was.

MIJA RIEDEL: —in Ponape?

TOM MARIONI: Ponape.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ponape, okay, which is in the Caroline Islands in Micronesia?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, it's in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, north of the equator, near Australia kind of. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think there were—there was an NEA grant that covered the LP records?

TOM MARIONI: I got a MOCA-NEA grant—to make the record, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, which was a recording of the 12 artist talks that were given—

TOM MARIONI: Right, on three LPs. Yeah, six sides, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so, would you describe that event? Because that still in my mind is one of the glorious events [laughs].

TOM MARIONI: It was wonderful, yeah. We all met in Hawaii.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Good start.

TOM MARIONI: So, there were like a—Daniel Buren, the French artist.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, right.

TOM MARIONI: And Marina Abramović.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And Buren was from Paris, and she was from Yugoslavia. Or, I think she was—at that time she was living in Amsterdam.

[00:36:03]

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. And I invited her — those two artists from Europe. And from New York it was Pat Steir, Joan Jonas, Laurie Anderson, Bryan Hunt, Brice Marden. And from California, it was me, Bill Wiley, and Chris Burden. And I think that's all — oh and Robert Kushner from New York, too, was one of the artists.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right.

TOM MARIONI: So, everybody did a 12-minute talk. One before dinner and one after dinner.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TOM MARIONI: And they had a main house and the—this place was started— We had discovered this on a boat trip the year before, when we were on a freighter. And we ended up in Hong Kong, from here, and it stopped there to unload and pick up stuff on this island. And it was an island where mostly scuba divers would go to. And there was this hotel up on the top of the—it kind of seemed like a volcano. On top of a big hill. That was started by the guy who invented the electric carving knife, from LA, and his wife. And they moved there and built this hotel. It was all huts, like grass huts, like kind of—which were the hotel rooms. Separate. And then there was the main house where they had a bar and a restaurant where you went to eat. And then we'd go off in boats to the other little islands in the area, like that. One island where there was a waterfall and that was a great picture in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh my gosh.

TOM MARIONI: Anyway, so, then we all hung out and we—and John Cage was there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh right, John Cage. And he was—I was going to say, because that's 10. So, John Cage also spoke, and you, right?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, and me and John Cage.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so that's 12. There we go.

TOM MARIONI: Right. Yeah. And everybody—and we brought a recording artist. And John *Perreault*—an art critic. So, it would be written about in *Art in America* afterwards, and it was. That was the idea of bringing him.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you brought some curators, too, didn't you? [00:38:01] Suzanne Foley went, I think.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, there was a couple of curators that went. They paid their own way. We only brought the artists. The other people went—I think it was like 35 people altogether. But there were 12 artists that we brought. So. And some artists brought their spouses or boyfriends or girlfriends, and they paid for that themselves.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: We all met in Hawaii and then we all flew together in an airplane. We were flying in the airplane and somebody says, "If this plane crashes, tomorrow in the *New York Times*, it'll say 'John Cage and 37 others perish.'"

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a great line.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I mean, it's written about beautifully in your book so we don't have to go into it in great detail, but do you have any memory or recollection of the artists' talks and anything that was particularly memorable about that? And is there any place that anybody could hear those?

TOM MARIONI: Well, the records are still available at Crown Point Press.

MIJA RIEDEL: They're still available?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: The problem now is probably finding a record player, but—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well, vinyl's back, though.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, that's true.

TOM MARIONI: It's coming back.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's true.

TOM MARIONI: It did come back, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Because people miss the physicality of it, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. There is something wonderful about it.

TOM MARIONI: Because a CD, which they don't even sell anymore. Because people—a CD is just made up of sounds of zeroes and ones. It's computer sound?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: It's too clean. It doesn't feel—when you play a record, the needle is actually making the sound, the physical sound of the needle running along the groove with a little bit of static in there. By comparison to a CD, it sounds like live music, to me. Because it's physical. It's real. Anyway, so, that's—there were white records. And the natives there on the island were disappointed when they came up and hung out outside the hotel when they could hear us making the recordings. They thought we were a rock and roll group.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: We're talking all this art philosophy stuff. [00:40:00]

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: And what did you talk about? What was your talk about?

TOM MARIONI: All my ideas about invisible art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you recall any others that stuck out in your mind?

TOM MARIONI: Well, I talked about my Wednesdays in Breen's Bar, being basically invisible to the public because they didn't realize it was art. It was just people in the bar, drinking. And that was one example. And then—I can't remember now, but I mentioned two or three other things that I did that were invisible art. Like I invented artists, for instance. In some cases. Like the Frank Youmans thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. That we talked about yesterday.

TOM MARIONI: Stuff like that, yeah. Because there were several occasions that I mentioned yesterday—where I actually invented artists. They executed my work and got credit for it as being their art. And it was really my art because I couldn't be the artist and the director at the same time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. McCready was the other one you mentioned.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah, yeah, Jim McCready, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And I did another show called *Chinese Youth Alternative*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. That was also—

TOM MARIONI: They were given the upstairs from me for a while by the redevelopment agency. And they were up there—

MIJA RIEDEL: They were supposedly—

TOM MARIONI: —about a year and then, they basically destroyed the place. So, I opened it up as an installation from MOCA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, it was supposed to be a non-profit youth group, right.

TOM MARIONI: It was.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you thought it was a front for a gang or something?

TOM MARIONI: They were Hong Kong-born gang members. They were the ones that were involved in that shooting in Chinatown, that famous shooting that a lot of people were killed in that restaurant, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh. Oh, my gosh. Okay, and this was '74, your show.

TOM MARIONI: So, they were warring between the Hong Kong-born and the American-born Chinese. Those were the two gangs, like Latino gangs or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, yeah. And then they moved out. The place was trashed. And you sent an invitation—

TOM MARIONI: I sent out an announcement and had it open for one day. And not very many people came, but a few people came.

[00:42:01]

And they would walk up to the top floor and see this, like abandoned building with graffiti and trash and everything. So. And the announcement I sent out had a photograph of one of the walls, with Chinese graffiti and stuff like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah. Did you really get to know John Cage on that trip to Ponape, or did you know him before?

TOM MARIONI: He started coming to make prints in '78.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So, he'd come a couple years earlier.

TOM MARIONI: At Christmas, yeah. And so, yeah, already knew him by that time, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: And we're on the airplane and he comes up to me on the airplane and he says, "I'd like you to do a set for Merce Cunningham Dance Company" because Rauschenberg and Johns and other artists used to do sets for that. But it never happened for some reason, but that was a big, high point for me on that trip.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. And when he said a set, what did he mean?

TOM MARIONI: The stage set for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, a stage set, okay.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: It wasn't—I mean, "set," music—it could be a lot of different things.

TOM MARIONI: Oh yeah, it was for the dance company, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, so the way Rauschenberg designed the sets.

TOM MARIONI: Cage and Merce Cunningham collaborated —

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. All the time.

TOM MARIONI: Cunningham—the music in Cunningham's dances were always John Cage music.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, exactly. And Rauschenberg would sometimes do the sets.

TOM MARIONI: He did sets. John did sets, and other artists too, that they knew, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, but that didn't happen. That would've been wonderful.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yeah. So, I mean, when I think about of all the artists in your pantheon here, above the bar—well, Da Vinci, Duchamp, Brancusi, Yves Klein, Picasso, Joseph Beuys, John Cage—he was one of the two you actually got to meet. And certainly, the one you spent the most time with, Cage.

TOM MARIONI: Cage and Beuys, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, as you say, he was at Crown Point Press, I think, 15 times, between when he first came in '78 and when he passed away in '92.

TOM MARIONI: I think so. I think that's 14 or 15 times.

MIJA RIEDEL: How did he influence your work or your thinking? [00:44:02] That seems like that must have been a pretty extraordinary experience over almost twenty years.

TOM MARIONI: Well, yeah. Because I was doing things with sound before I knew him—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, absolutely. Of course.

TOM MARIONI: In the '70s. And even my *Piss Piece*—he was famous for water music. He was pouring water or stuff like that. So, kind of went with that. It was about the sound of the—in the bucket, and like that. He even told me one time that he was giving a lecture and he had to go pee, and he said he wished he could pee up there behind the lectern.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right. That's right.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And he would stay with you and Kathan, right? You had a little place and he would — when he came to work at Crown Point he often would stay with you.

TOM MARIONI: He always stayed with us. The very first year he stayed in a hotel, because it was in Oakland at that time. And then we both decided that he would rather and we would rather have him stay with us. So, he stayed with us in our guest room. And he cooked for us and we'd go out and collect mushrooms together and do stuff like that. And we had two or three parties where we invited the art community in and he'd cook up

mushrooms, and we'd smoke hash and everybody would get high and it was wonderful.

MIJA RIEDEL: Extraordinary. Anything else that was worth — that can be encapsulated or discussed here?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, he told me that he was famous—he was popular every other 10 years.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. I bet.

TOM MARIONI: Because of how times changes and tastes change, and stuff. And it seems to go like that, the art goes from realistic art to abstract art, and back to realistic art and abstract art.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, he gave you a sense of time and the pendulum and —

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And you're doing something—you're doing the same thing all your life and you go in and out of style and then you come back because—it gets appreciated 20 years later or something, you know? [00:46:04]

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. Would you be willing to tell the story about that splinter of wood from the *Étant donnés*?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I went to the Philadelphia Museum and there's Duchamp's famous *Étant donnés*. It's a Spanish door with a peephole in it and inside is this installation of a woman laying on a bed of sticks with her legs spread apart. And you only—well, you see one arm and one breast and her legs and you don't see her head. Because inside the peepholes is a brick wall with a hole in it as if it'd been blown out or something, an irregular hole. And so, you can't see what's outside that hole.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And then there's a waterfall which is an electric sign, kind of. And then there's—and the hand of the woman is holding a lantern. So. It's all symbolic. And anyway, she's there with her legs spread apart. So, when people first look in, it's a big shock, to look at—the model is made from a mold from his girlfriend at the time. Before he married Teeny Duchamp, who was the wife of Pierre Matisse.

MIJA RIEDEL: Pierre Matisse, right.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, anyway. So anyway, I looked in the peephole and I dug my fingernail—the door is real craggedy, it's real old. 19th century or something. It's a big giant wooden door, like you would see on a big church or something. And I dug a big splinter out under my fingernail. And then when I got outside I took the splinter out. It was pretty big.

MIJA RIEDEL: It was a pretty big splinter. When I saw the story and then saw the piece—

TOM MARIONI: —and I put it in the little envelope and took it home and had it framed later. So, then a few years later, a couple years later, whenever it was, I traded it to John Cage. [00:46:04] For one of his works. I think it's this one. I traded in that for that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, one of the smoke prints from Crown Point.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, right. And so, he said like it'll be our secret.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. There are just so many layers to that story that I think so beautifully say so much about your work and your relationship with Cage, and Duchamp.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] So, I appreciate your telling that.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, uh-huh [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Cage died in '92, and I know you did that art orchestra in '96. Was that in any way an homage to him?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, I'm still doing things—I mean, my *Beer Drinking Sonata* was written that year. And that was very influenced by John Cage, blowing in bottles. Random, by chance. The whole—the music composition is based on chance. So, that's really directly comes out of Cage's influence, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TOM MARIONI: And also, I did *From China to Czechoslovakia*, where I blew in every bottle and made a video of that. And it's an art piece, too. A shelf with all the bottles on it. A world map in beer bottles. That was in 1976.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And I can't remember but there's a lot of bottles there. And it's just a long — like it makes a horizon line almost, because they're all set up vertically, at least in the visuals I've seen.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well, yeah, it's like 12 feet long.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And so, that's also—

TOM MARIONI: And a little narrow shelf—with little brackets like that to hold it up. Like you'd have on a bannister.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So, Cage—homages to Cage just surface from time to time?

TOM MARIONI: And Cage knew about that piece. Because that was during—'76, when he was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, when he was—

TOM MARIONI: Before I even—

MIJA RIEDEL: Met him.

TOM MARIONI: Met him, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And he—that was an homage to him already then?

TOM MARIONI: It wasn't an homage to him —

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: —but it was influenced by him when I made the recording of the blowing in the bottles. Which I did around '79 or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And we talked about how you hoped that that can continue to be performed for years and years and years, the same way John Cage's 4'33" is?

TOM MARIONI: No, no, I was talking about the beer installation, not that piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, no, but I'm talking about—I shifted gears for a minute there.

TOM MARIONI: That, too. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, we can move onto the '80s; I think we've covered the '70s pretty well now.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: We've bounced back and forth quite a bit, but I think that's the way it's going to be with your work.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, as we discussed in passing, or briefly yesterday, the '80s you did a lot of travel. There was a lot of time in Japan.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And the work reflected that.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Those places and culture. Was your first trip to Japan in 1980?

TOM MARIONI: I think '81 or '82, I'm not sure. But the first trip to Japan was—this guy from Houston, Texas, I forget his name, who had the Houston Fine Art Press. He did a book on Richard Diebenkorn, and he had been a student of Diebenkorn's at Stanford. And so, he did a book of his prints, and they're all the prints that Crown Point Press had done up to that point. And he invited me to design the book. It's a hardbound, big catalog book.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right. Yes.

TOM MARIONI: And so, and he brought me and Kathan to Japan to Tokyo, to the Topan Printing Company, where they were printing the things. Since I was a designer of the book, to supervise it and make sure everything was right with it. So, that was—and we stayed in a monk's thing. Where monks live.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. And so—and then a few years later, Kathan decided to do woodblock prints in Japan With a woodblock printer there—That she met through one of her Japanese-American—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right. Hidashi—can't remember his last name.

TOM MARIONI: Well, [Tadashi] Toda was the guy, the printer in Kyoto.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. [00:52:01]

TOM MARIONI: But—[Hidekatsu] Takada was the printer that worked for Kathan.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

TOM MARIONI: And he was from—

MIJA RIEDEL: Tadashi Takada, I think.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. But he just went by the one name, Takada.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, did he? Oh, okay.

TOM MARIONI: Pretty much, yeah. And that was Kyoto, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: So, we went to Kyoto several times, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, I was going to ask. So, did you go frequently in the 80s? Because Kathan went back and forth a couple of times a year, I think, right?

TOM MARIONI: Kathan went about a dozen times.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: And I went about five or six times, maybe, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you got pretty familiar—

TOM MARIONI: I went with artists that I wanted to be with. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Because she took, I think, 17 artists there—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, and there was even a few trips that Connie Lewallen took artists there and Kathan didn't go there to do it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: So, I don't know how many—there were quite a few projects that were done, but Kathan didn't go to every one. But she went, I think, twice with Diebenkorn. And then we went with Clemente and —

MIJA RIEDEL: Pat Steir went I know.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, Pat Steir a couple of times.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think Al Held.

TOM MARIONI: And Wayne Thiebaud and —

MIJA RIEDEL: Yep.

TOM MARIONI: Bryan Hunt and some of those '80s painters, which I can't remember their names now.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think David Salle went.

TOM MARIONI: David Salle went, yeah, I think with —

MIJA RIEDEL: And Alex Katz.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Well, it's not important, who they were.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. They might think otherwise, but this is your interview.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, how did those trips to Japan start to influence your work? I mean, I think of the lines of some of your prints beginning to incorporate Japanese brush work.

TOM MARIONI: Well, I'd already in the '70s been doing things that were considered to be influenced by Zen. *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*— Things like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Were they influenced by Zen back then?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah. So, I always said, you can't live—can't be an artist and live in California and not be influenced by Asian art. [00:54:06] Or Asian culture, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's true. Yes.

TOM MARIONI: I mean, unlike New York, which is—comes from Europe. We're on the Pacific Rim here. Yeah, so. After 10 years then I became influenced by that. The first 10 years I was here, it was still just trying to fit in. Maybe trying to find my style, kind of.

MIJA RIEDEL: But the work looks very different. I mean, I'm thinking of flying—pieces that came much later—*Flying Yen* and then in '94 there was *Windblown Rooster* and *Stroke Rooster* and *War Horse*.

TOM MARIONI: Oh yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Those are—

TOM MARIONI: Those are called Zen stories, even.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, there you go. Yes.

TOM MARIONI: Well, see, in the '70s, I was doing drum brush drawings with musicians' tools. And then in the '80s, I got interested in Chinese calligraphy and I was using a feather—only I wasn't using the quill like the writers did in the 19th century—I was using the soft end of the feather like a brush, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: And actually, I gave that idea to John Cage, and he thanked me and even wrote in one of the books about him that I had given him permission [laughs]. He was so polite. To use feathers to draw with, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: So anyway, so, I was using a writer's tool to make an image instead of a musician's tool to make an image. So, in the '80s—so, I was using the feather because I never wanted to be associated as a painter. Because I always made fun of painting like that, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: I figured it was all right to make drawings with a feather instead of a brush, a paint brush.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, I see.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, so, I always used a feather. I used a feather to make those prints and also drawings and the *Pi* print I did in China. All those were drawn with a seagull feather. Yeah. So, anyway, the feather was my

tool, kind of. And so, in the '80s mostly I did this kind of calligraphy kind of thing. And also, installations about cultures. I did —well —

MIJA RIEDEL: We'll definitely get to those.

TOM MARIONI: Starts with *Sunday Scottish Landscape* in Edinburgh. [00:56:01] And then it goes to *The Germans, the Italians, and the Japanese*. Then it goes to *Paris, Kyoto, San Francisco*. And then it was Beijing, and it was *The Marriage of Art and Music* for LA. And so, I did these different — they were like tableau pieces. That's what I called them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. I did want to talk about those, so we'll just skip to that and then we'll come back around. So, I think in '81 you did *Paris, San Francisco, Kyoto*.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: That was at Site in San Francisco.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And that, to me — we've talked about the trinity elements in your pieces. And they really appeared more in the installations, something like that. But that piece really felt like almost a kind of self-portrait as trinity. It just felt like three sides of yourself. Did it feel like that to you at all?

TOM MARIONI: That piece I thought of as three works on three continents. It was Europe, America, and Japan. And they had three skylights. And the Paris skylight was covered in red gels, so it was all pink-like and red. San Francisco was like blue, so it was like fog. And Japan was yellow skylight, so those skylights lit those three tableau pieces.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: The Paris piece was about appropriation of famous artists that showed in Paris—French artists.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, you had some little paintings or—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, little drawings.

MIJA RIEDEL: Or replicas or—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Of those artists, Picasso and so on. And then there was an easel with a piece of copper on it and a microphone stand with a drumstick that was reflected in the easel like Brancusi's *Kiss*. See?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TOM MARIONI: And so, there was *The Marriage of Art and Music* there. Here's the artist's easel and the musician's microphone stand. [00:58:04] and the drumstick, which is a musician's tool. And then there was kind of a French mirror and then there were two blue paintings like for Yves Klein. And then the San Francisco one was a drum cymbal and an electric sign that said "private investigation." That all comes from Dashiell Hammett and that detective kind of thing, San Francisco.

MIJA RIEDEL: You did that at MOCA, too. There was some—

TOM MARIONI: I had that sign in the window at my office at MOCA, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

TOM MARIONI: And some people in the neighborhood thought I was a real private eye.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: I know. I love that.

TOM MARIONI: Because the sign was lighted at night, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: When you were out on a case.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: And then Kyoto was a flying saucer for their interest in science fiction and all that stuff. From *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, plaster thing on a Tatami mat floor with a miniature TV in the wall playing just nothing, no sound. A TV playing like miniaturization that they are famous for. And they have three posters—I mean, not posters, three prints. The Paris one had in gold, the name Paris. San Francisco had San Francisco and it was big lithograph stone. It was printed in Houston. And then, Japan was more of a yellow one with Kyoto. Name at the bottom of each one, like travel posters with no image though. You'd think that a travel poster would have the name of a place on it, like that. And they were like on the wall as the background for those three pieces, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you mentioned the light. One was yellow, right, and one was red, and one was blue, you mentioned that too, yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And that was '81. And then in '87, you did *The Germans, the Italians, and the Japanese*.

TOM MARIONI: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I thought, did that feel at all like a self-portrait as trinity to you?

TOM MARIONI: Well, that was shown at the Italo-Americano Museo in San Francisco, yeah. [01:00:06]

MIJA RIEDEL: Did it also travel to Japan?

TOM MARIONI: No, no. I showed those pieces in a show in L.A., though, at another time. Actually, earlier than that one. Anyway, it was like—the Germans had symbolic objects and the Italians and the Japanese, so, together I thought of them, again, as like male, female and spirit. And also it had symbolic line. And they also had a drawing or a print in each one. They also had two prints printed in Houston, the Germans and the Italians had images like a train station and an optical diagram of an eye in the German one. And the Italian one, it was an eardrum and a sound wave and a thing like—for the opera. And something about the church. And the Catholic Mass. And it was more warm, yellowish, and it was more gray in the Germans. Anyway. And the Japanese had a line and a circle with it done with a feather and a blank scroll. And a little sake cup in a little box stand like that. Very minimal. Very Japanese. So.

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't know why, but I thought about both of those pieces in reference to that 3-part drawing called *Personal References* that was part Yves Klein and part Miles Davis, and then the *Mona Lisa* smile from—

TOM MARIONI: Oh, that was in my drawing shown in the Berkeley Museum. Oh, yeah, I had Miles Davis's mouth which you could recognize because it had the trumpet thing on his lip. And then I had the *Mona Lisa* smile. And then the other one, Yves Klein diving out the window, which looked like a mouth. Just had his figure, like that, yeah. So, it was like three mouths. [01:02:01]

MIJA RIEDEL: And that was certainly an homage to three people who'd influenced you, but I—

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MIJA RIEDEL: —for some reason the whole trinity thing, I—so, you don't think of these as particularly as self-portraits at all?

TOM MARIONI: No. But I mean, people say everything's a self-portrait that an artist does. But I don't think everything's a self-portrait.

MIJA RIEDEL: Never occurred to you that way.

TOM MARIONI: Because my influences are so broad. I've got seven artists that influence me, so I've got a little bit of each one of those seven people in my work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Just the fact that it was trinity somehow.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well, I do things in sevens, but not necessarily about the trinity.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Okay. I wanted to go back to some of the pieces we were talking about before we started on this. I was thinking in particular of the *War Horse* and *American Eagle*. Those two pieces felt like two of the most, almost directly political, works I've seen you do.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. You haven't done very many like that though.

TOM MARIONI: No. No. But *War Horse*. I can see it from here. It's sitting against the wall in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh yeah. Oh, I'd like to see that afterwards.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. It's from Picasso's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: *Guernica*.

MIJA RIEDEL: *Guernica*.

TOM MARIONI: Which I made a whole copy of. That painting got stolen by the way. It was original facsimile the same size as the original. It was—

MIJA RIEDEL: The painting was stolen?

TOM MARIONI: It was in the storeroom I had in the basement. And then they gave me that room over there and then I moved my stuff out of the storeroom, we had somebody come and haul away trash and everything. And they took that. And I wasn't aware.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's too bad.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. I didn't even realize it was stolen until like a year or two later, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Because it went to another room where it's stored in the other side of the building.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, what prompted you to make pieces then and there that were more directly political and why have you not done more of that?

TOM MARIONI: Well, a lot more of my work is political in a more subtle way that's not so overt.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. [00:02:00] So. Yeah. Well, it's just because I've gone through different eras. Like Picasso had his blue period, his pink period, his cubist period. Like that. So, it's like that. So, I have periods, too.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That was your political period.

TOM MARIONI: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: What else? I mean, I think, those are really the only two I can think of that I've seen, *War Horse* and *American Eagle*, that did feel more directly political. Were there others?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, but they don't come to me right now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. I love this—you ended your memoir with one of the most political statements you've made and I just would like to read that.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Because I think that it's so fitting. "Even art with wit and art with beauty should have political content. Have a subject, make a point, and not be an ornament. Picasso said when he painted his *Guernica* in 1937 that painting is not done to decorate apartments, it's an instrument of war against brutality and darkness." It's such a lovely way to end your book.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Well, I can't top that. So, we talked about Zen and how you—that had been of interest to you even before you went to Japan. Did that—was your experience in Japan, did that deepen your interest in Zen? Or

did your friendship with Cage deepen your interest in Zen, or—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, all that.

MIJA RIEDEL: All of that?

TOM MARIONI: All of that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: I mean, I was ready for Japan when I went there.

MIJA RIEDEL: I'm sure.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. You did actually—you did a woodblock print there, too, right? It was rather —

TOM MARIONI: Not in Japan.

MIJA RIEDEL: No?

TOM MARIONI: It was too expensive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Crown Point did woodblock prints with artists that they knew they could sell. Because it costs a lot. And the expense in Japan is so much more. But in China, I did three different watercolor—not watercolor—woodblock prints. Because it was so much cheaper. Not only to travel in China but to do business in China, too. [00:04:03]

MIJA RIEDEL: So, where did you do *Pi* and where did you do *Flying Yen*?

TOM MARIONI: The first one I did was just a line drawing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

TOM MARIONI: That was in Beijing. The famous shop. And then *Pi* and *Flying Yen* were done more in—more down in Hangzhou, I think it was. Yeah, Hangzhou. Right. And later I thought *Flying Yen*—that's when the Japanese yen was so valuable. Then later when it started to fall, I thought, you could turn it this way and call it *Falling Yen*.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] There you go. You also started your circle drawings in the early '80s.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you see those as any kind of integration of the *enso* tradition and body art?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, because I knew about that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, no, I'm sure you did.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: But it was—did you see it as some sort of fusion and hybrid of the two or was it just a natural evolution of things that you were interested in?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well, it was, like, that was the beginning of calligraphy, in a way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. I mean, so much of—

TOM MARIONI: It's like calligraphy to draw a circle. It's like a letter. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so much of your work—

TOM MARIONI: And I got interested in the idea that the—that originally it was picture writing. So, like, 5000 years ago, if you wrote chicken, it'd almost look like a chicken. But over time it got more abstracted in time. And that fascinated me. And I'm also fascinated that when you read the words in Chinese, it defines it. When you write "music," you write a character for "sound" and a character for "harmony." So, when you read that, it describes it or defines it. And when you write "art," it's "beauty" and "skill." [00:06:00] And "beauty" is graceful like that in

the script. It's got a thing like that on it; it's like a woman. And "skill" is "pshh" like that. It's like male. And so, I see—because I've done a couple of writings of the word "art," you know? And so, I see it as a male and a female dancing together. Like the man is turning the woman around.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that's true.

TOM MARIONI: And her skirt is doing that, you know? And so, "beauty" is for "female" and "skill" is for "male." And that's how you write "art." Because when you think about it, art is about skill and beauty. So that—when I do my stand-up thing, I say, "Speaking of Chinese—"

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: This Chinese couple are in bed together and the husband says to the wife, "Can we do 69 tonight?" And the wife says, "You mean you want beef and broccoli now?"

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: That's how I can make an ethnic joke that's not offensive. And I can lead into it from art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Did the *Finger Lines* begin in the '80s as well? The *Finger Line* drawings? I see how they're a natural progression out of *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*.

TOM MARIONI: They're just different versions. I did them different sizes. Based on my arm—from my wrist, from my finger, like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: When did they start? Were they the '80s, do you recall?

TOM MARIONI: I guess so. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, so I wanted to talk about the piece we touched on briefly yesterday. *Studio*. Because you performed that a lot —

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —between say 1980 and '82. I found at least nine instances: Bern, Basel, Berkeley, Berlin, Chicago, Kamakura, Kyoto, Essen, and Cologne. So, two in Japan, two in Germany.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And Philadelphia.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, and Philadelphia, too?

TOM MARIONI: And Kyoto, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, Kyoto. So, it's the one piece I can think of yours that I'm familiar with that you performed really frequently for a very condensed period of time, in a couple of years, at least nine or ten performances. [00:08:08]

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: How did that performance evolve? And how did it vary from one to the next?

TOM MARIONI: I usually—the one I did more than once was with a mirror that reflected light. And it was my shadow and a circle of light. And there was two microphones. And one microphone was where my head would be in the shadow, and the other microphone would be in the center of the circle of light. And that was from a light reflection. An oval on the floor tilted so light hit it and made a circle of light. So then, I would draw my own shadow with a long pencil. And it would be [imitates drumming] like a percussion thing. Starting with the bottom. So, it would be like a Giacometti figure in a way. The shadow. And when I get up to the head, the pencil gets louder because the microphone's under the head.

And while that's going, a pre-recorded tape is playing Miles Davis's solo *On Green Dolphin Street*. Famous Miles Davis solo record. And then I moved the pencil across the paper to the circle of light, and at that point, then there's silence between the two. And then at that point the sound of the—of Haydn string quartet comes on. Very beautiful kind of romantic even. So, then I'm drawing the—filling in the circle of light, but especially the circle of light with darker in the middle because that's where the microphone is. So, it's a very concentrated, kind of intense moment, where the pencil is just barely moving back and forth on the microphone, so it's like a little scratching sound. While the Haydn music is playing. So, it seems to go together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TOM MARIONI: And it's lit with yellow light and a giant paper, like photographers use for background. Paper that's just like a scroll, with the rolls at both ends. And it's very stagey. People are sitting in chairs in an audience. Yeah. And then I—then when the Haydn music stops, I draw the pencil back to the beginning. And then I pour—on a little table—I pour a beer into a wine glass, and I drink it, with my back to the audience. Like the priest does with the chalice of wine in the mass and it makes light reflections from the glass on the line on the wall, too. So, a light show, a little bit. And then I slowly back up—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sorry, I don't think we picked that up—like what? When you drink it and it makes a reflection like what?

TOM MARIONI: Like a light show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, like a light show.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Got it.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Because the beer is golden. So, it's like this beautiful yellow light, kind of. And there's a video of that. And so then, slowly I back up to the curtain, which is narrow. And I have to stand sideways when I get to it. But because of the two spotlights on me, with the curtain in front, you see the left half of my body and the right half of my studio. And as I get close to the middle, the two come together and they finally disappear because you can't see my shadow anymore because I'm in front of this curtain. And then it ends. So, this like—at the end, it's very quiet. There's no sound then. So, I'm getting out of the work and into the work at the same time, right? Like a ghost, kind of.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how long does that performance last?

TOM MARIONI: Only about 30 minutes. So, it was a piece that I kind of perfected. I spent a lot of time designing it like it was a play or something almost. [00:12:02]

MIJA RIEDEL: Because I wanted to ask you what you observed or learned from doing it so many times in such a short period of time. Very different from anything else that you've done really, in that sense, no?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I don't know. It was just a romantic, beautiful experience. Very touching, like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, there's a real emotional component to that piece it sounds like.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. Well, yeah, I guess so. Yeah, it was like people came up and kissed me afterwards like that. [Laughs.] That's how great it was, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's pretty great.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Where was that?

TOM MARIONI: Well, in Bern. And other places.

MIJA RIEDEL: In Switzerland?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, in Bern, Switzerland, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: You were in France at least a couple of times in the early '80s, and you performed *Atelier* at the Pompidou.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: What was that piece?

TOM MARIONI: That was *Drawing My Shadow*, but it wasn't all the elements that I just described in that piece. And I made a big drawing of my shadow. And I think there might have been another shadow of something else on it. I'm not sure now. But anyway, then they kept the drawing. I said they could send it to me, which they never did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: Twenty years later—like around five years ago, they emailed me and said, "We just discovered this drawing you did in 19—" Whatever it was, '81 or '82. "And do you want it?" And I said, "Well, you can keep it for a small fee,"—for, what'd I say? I said 900 marks or something like that. Or 1000 marks. [00:14:02] Really cheap. So, they agreed.

MIJA RIEDEL: How great.

TOM MARIONI: So, that's how it got in their collection, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's fantastic.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that's so interesting. It was sort of lost for 20 years.

TOM MARIONI: Well, it went into the storage.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: Like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And then they discovered it—

TOM MARIONI: They discovered it.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it became part of their collection.

TOM MARIONI: I guess they were going through stuff, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. There's time lapses in you work.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: On so many levels.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: You were back in France in '84 in Dijon to install *Cutting the Mustard*.

TOM MARIONI: *Cutting the Mustard*, yeah. They didn't know what that meant because it's an American expression.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. What was that piece?

TOM MARIONI: Well, I did a series of my drawings. *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*, a shadow drawing, and a drum brush drawing. I made the show there, right there. And then they had two galleries, and the second gallery was all dark and there was a big table—eight-foot square table that they made and we poured like gallons of mustard on the table, so it was like—like this table of this ochre yellow colored mustard on the table. And then I had a long rod with a pizza cutter on it. And I drew it across the mustard to the center of the mustard. And then there was a spotlight on it from a slide projector that made this kind of butterfly reflection of light on the thing. And I didn't think of it at the time, but the pizza cutter was Italian, so it was like an Italian cutting mustard in France, where the mustard comes from.

MIJA RIEDEL: There you go, exactly.

TOM MARIONI: [Coughs.] What'd I do with my cup? I got to stop and get—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, we'll pause this.

[Tape stops, restarts.]

TOM MARIONI: Well there's a lot of stuff on this thing where we're having conversation that's—might not be part of this or it's all part of it, yeah?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, no, it's all part of the interview, sure.

TOM MARIONI: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: I wanted to talk about the shadow boxes because we haven't talked about those at all.

[00:16:02]

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's something else I did in the 80s, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, in '89, right?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: You have a series of shadowboxes. You made a few more after you did the seven boxes based on the Christian Genesis story, right? The seven-day creation?

TOM MARIONI: That was the seven shadowboxes, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. But you did a few others, I think, at—

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, one back there, it's called *Brancusi Award*. It's like a trophy for Brancusi, the person. And that's called *Over the Piano*. And I did about eight or nine others that are in storage.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. It seems like, unlike some of the other series, you did a few of these pieces, maybe a dozen, and then you were done. And they didn't repeat themselves. Is that true?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, because I didn't like to repeat myself. I always felt sorry for artists that got known for one thing and they were doomed to do the same painting for their whole life. Like a stripe painter, for instance. Got to do stripes for your whole career. How boring is that?

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: In '88, you had an installation at Margarete Roeder Gallery?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Based on Galileo's finger, right?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And of all the pieces, this seems to connect most directly back to what we were talking about yesterday, that sense of first- and second-class relics. Did you have sense of that?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah, yeah. That's a relic, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Would you describe that piece?

TOM MARIONI: In Florence, Italy, there's a science museum there. And they have some of Galileo's instruments and things like that. And they have his finger. His index finger. It's in like a chalice kind of thing, a little glass window, and it's a black, shriveled up finger, because it's 500 years old or whatever. Or 400 years old. And so, I made a piece that I thought was about astronomy in a way, because the background was like Stonehenge. [00:18:00] The silhouette with cut-out pieces of wood in black, like you'd see a silhouette of Stonehenge, which is big, like 12-feet long or something. And then there was a Chinese calculator, what's it's called?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, an abacus.

TOM MARIONI: It's an abacus, yeah. And on top of that is like a stick that holds a plaster mold of the finger pointing, like that. Only it's just a half a finger, it's a negative of a finger. And then, in front of that was a silk flag, like, plain piece of silk. And then hidden is a fan over there. So, there's this flag waving and there's the finger pointing. And that's all I can remember about it now. But anyway, it was all about Galileo and astronomy. Basically, it was an astronomy piece, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. That seems unique to itself.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, it's not pictured in any of my catalogues, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-mm [negative]. That's one reason I wanted to ask.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. *Observatory Bird*. At the Marin County Civic Center. This seems to be one far end of your

continuum. It's a permanent public sculpture.

TOM MARIONI: It's the only public sculpture I ever did. I got discouraged after that because I applied for two or three public things like that, later, and they always gave it to some dumb, obvious thing. Mine was too interesting or something, or conceptual, I don't know. Anyway—

MIJA RIEDEL: It's a variation on a telescope, right? Is it a functioning telescope?

TOM MARIONI: It's a functioning telescope that I changed. I painted it dark blue and I had a gold-plated front on it and it was in the back of Frank Lloyd Wright's last building, which is the Civic Center, which always looked to me like an observatory in a way. [00:20:05]

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, interesting. With that dome.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. So, we built—I worked with a landscape architect. We built a mound, it's like, I don't know—maybe four stories high, about. With dirt. And it had to be wheelchair accessible, so it has a thing where a wheelchair can go up, cut in the dirt. It's not paved or anything. And I like that, because it's like a spiral goes up. And on top, there's a circle of concrete and a bench that I designed out of concrete, kind of deco-like. Then a column post. And then this telescope is on it. So, you can look at the landscape with the telescope. And you could see Frank Lloyd Wright's building over there. So.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

TOM MARIONI: And then they had an opening and we had dinner—not dinner, a picnic outside, and that was nice. And then like years later, it gradually got defaced and ruined and had graffiti sprayed on it. And there was a breast plaque with my name on it; that got stolen. And somebody had spray-painted the front of the telescope black, so you couldn't use the telescope anymore. So, it got completely ruined. And then many years later, somebody said, "Well, you want to get it restored and come out here and meet people?" And I never—I just got discouraged, and I never did it. I don't know what state it's at now. I haven't seen it for 10 years.

MIJA RIEDEL: What inspired that? How did that come about? I mean, I don't—

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah, well I actually wrote about it in my book. When I was a kid up the street, we lived on Observatory and Delta Avenue. And up the street was an observatory that was built in like, 1900 or something. Once a year, they'd let you look at the moon. So, I was always fascinated by that idea and because I got this commission to do something at the site of the Frank Lloyd Wright's place.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how did that come about? What inspired you to apply for that is I think what I'm asking. It seems so different from anything that you'd done up until this point. [00:22:06]

TOM MARIONI: Oh. I don't know. It was a small outfit called Marin Public Art Project or something. And I didn't make very much money out of it—hardly anything, really.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I'm sure.

TOM MARIONI: Money went into the making of it all. And so, it was just seemed like it was site-specific to me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, okay. That was the draw.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, in the '90s you lost your studio in the earthquake and started a project at Capp Street.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. You did some of the pieces you'd done earlier—the running and jumping and the *Process Print*, which we haven't talked about yet. So, what inspired you to repeat *Process Print*, which is so thoroughly about reproduction and process and also about landscape, which seemed especially timely given the earthquake?

TOM MARIONI: Well, actually, I repeated everything in that show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, that's true.

TOM MARIONI: I did a line drawing, *Running and Jumping, Flying* drawing with other people. The bar with free beer on Wednesdays—open and free beer on Wednesday. And I had this *Process Print*, which I originally did back in 1970. And so I repeated that and it went all around the space. And so, that sort of—it was like I built a house.

It was a big giant garage before and then they turned it into an art space where artists built installations. That was the idea of the Capp Street Project was basically a gallery for installations. Because they'd give three months to each artist to spend to build something. You'd spend a week building it and then it was open for—or two weeks building it and then it'd be open for another few weeks. And they had a good budget so you could do a lot, something good. So, I had this studio in this building that I was going to move into, but I hadn't moved into yet. So, with these kind of windows and everything.

MIJA RIEDEL: In this building right here? [00:24:06] Okay.

TOM MARIONI: So, we built a space the size of my studio here, inside this bigger space with openings for the windows and it was like floating. It felt a little bit like a houseboat. It was like raised up off the floor, you had to go a couple steps. Which you did, like here, it's a few steps up from the street. And a wood floor. And then, so then, when you're inside and you looked outside, this processed landscape was like — went all the way around. That's what—it looked like a processed landscape, because brown ink on big sheets of paper like that and they were all linked together in a row like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: And bright yellow light in there too, wasn't there?

TOM MARIONI: In one room. In one room there was a skylight and I put yellow gels on the roof and I put a polished copper thing on the floor, which was a drain, originally, in there. So, when the sun was at high noon it made this glow.

MIJA RIEDEL: Glow.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. That's a beautiful—I saw a photo of that installation, it was beautiful.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. So, yeah, that was good and fun, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: In a little later in '92 and '93, *By the Sea*, *The Pacific Rim*, we talked about it in passing yesterday. But you said that it summarized a lot of the things that you'd been working on for 30 years?

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Certainly, it included—I can think of social artwork and personal artwork, but how did it synthesize so many things that you've worked on for so long? Could you just be more specific?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, oh. *The Pacific Rim* was another of the series of cultures and places.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, yes. Definitely that.

TOM MARIONI: So, it was like the Pacific and I guess comes from doing the Ponape trip. It was like a tiki bar with a thatched roof kind of thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: It had some of your drawings in it as well, didn't it? [00:26:04]

TOM MARIONI: Well, it was all wood panels. And then it was based on a Japanese painting that I had seen called *Hut and Crows*. And then the hut became my bar. And the way it was lit, the shadow the roof of the bar was like the hut in the original picture. And then I had two places with drum brush drawings on wood up there—those were the crows. And then I had another panel in the middle which were three line drawings, sideways, that represented branches of the trees in the original painting. So, I just basically made an installation—big—based on a little Japanese painting that I saw, that—it had my tree and it had my birds and it had my bar in it already. So, that's my elements.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, there they are, all together. Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: That makes sense. We haven't talked much about the golden Rectangle. We did touch on it. You've done a number of pieces about the golden rectangle—*Golden Rectangle with Boomerang*, *Golden Rectangle* from the Pacifico beer bottles, *Golden Wing*. Did your interest in golden rectangle emerge from the ensos and the circle drawings, as a response to that? Or did how the *Golden Rectangle* come about?

TOM MARIONI: I don't know how I first got interested in that idea, but it first occurred to me when I did the first *Vision* magazines and they were like the proportions of a golden rectangle. And the first issue, I invited artists to have two pages. So, when you open the two pages, it becomes like a square. So, they could design their work

that they were invited to do to fit on two facing pages like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Perfect.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. And then, I got interested in that idea of geometry and so. Like that. [00:28:02]

MIJA RIEDEL: We talked about sacred geometry a little bit, too. Was that as direct a reference as we were likely to get to the spiritual in art or a reverence for nature?

TOM MARIONI: Oh. Yeah, I guess so. I don't know; I don't know how to answer that. It's like a—yeah, spiritual I guess. I'm not religious, but I'm spiritual, I guess. Like a lot of artists. Because I was ruined by the Catholic Church.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well, you mean, it's like today, what's going on now with this witch hunt that's happening. All these powerful men are getting brought down because of their inappropriate behavior against women. And I don't know if you saw yesterday in the *New York Times* about Chuck Close.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, we talked about that. Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: We did?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, I forgot that, yeah. Anyway, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: That it's going to an extreme.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. I mean, he invites women to come and pose for him nude. That's basically what it was about. I mean, that's what artists do. Anyway. Well, I mean, he's a little bit obvious about that he was a voyeur. But so was Picasso. Anyway. So, now I've lost my train of thought.

MIJA RIEDEL: We were talking about spiritual in nature and—

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah, the Catholic Church, yeah. Because when I was a kid, went to confession. And if you had impure thoughts, that was a sin you had to confess. Impure thoughts. Imagine thought—like *1984*, thought police, kind of like that. [00:30:01] So, I can see that I lived through the McCarthy witch hunts. The people who were Communist, and the only reason we hated communism is because they were atheists. We're a Christian country and they were atheists, and so they didn't believe in God. So, they were the enemy. And we didn't want them to infect our society, so we ruined the careers of communists in 1950. All those Hollywood people couldn't get a job. They had their careers ruined. And it's happening a little bit with this Title IX business now. David Brooks wrote about it a year ago in the *New York Times* about how some professors are having their whole careers ruined because they made an inappropriate remark in class. So, like—it's gone too far. Well, I'm getting away from my art career now.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: It's all right.

TOM MARIONI: But this is the kind of stuff we talk about on Wednesdays with my Wednesday people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I'll have to come back and hear that, how it all works out [laughs].

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, in 2004, you had a wonderful show at Yerba Buena. The *Golden Rectangle* with the *Temple of Geometry*. It included your drawings. It had a built-in bar in a tea house. Which I love that synthesis of influences.

TOM MARIONI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: So, the *Temple of Geometry* seems quite different from earlier installations—

TOM MARIONI: Wait a minute, there was no tea house in the Yerba Buena.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, there wasn't?

TOM MARIONI: No, there was a bar.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And then, there were tables and chairs, like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

TOM MARIONI: And 11 line drawings on the wall. And then in the next room was the *Temple of Geometry* and the musical instruments could not be played, and the stage where the *Buddhist Band* played. That was the show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. I read somewhere that there was some sort of fusion of a tea house bar. [00:32:04]

TOM MARIONI: Well, there was a bar—But I never thought of it related to a tea house.

MIJA RIEDEL: Maybe it was the writer's interpretation.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, that's helpful to clear up.

TOM MARIONI: I never read that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So, that feels like—that also really integrated so many different things that you'd been working on for 40 years. Did it feel that way to you as well?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I guess. I guess. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: The *Temple of Geometry* also was really different than anything you'd done before then.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, yeah. It was a golden rectangle thrown into three dimensions. So, from the front it was this rectangle with an opening and made up of three squares. And then from the other side you could see the three squares, because there was a big one, and the medium, and then little one down here. And then a space that was five-feet high and three-feet wide. You had to duck down to pass through. So, when you came into the gallery there was this structure right there, just a few feet inside the doorway. You could walk around it or you could pass through the temple. You couldn't enter it because you'd come out on the other side. You're on the other side of the temple, see.

MIJA RIEDEL: I see.

TOM MARIONI: It's like a door with a hallway that comes out on the other side of the building. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

[They laugh.]

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. So, then you go through and you come out and you're in this big space that—all this beautiful yellow light and then there was—the floor was the only wooden floor in the gallery because I was on the committee when they built a place with the redevelopment agency that it had to have wooden floors. And they got a Japanese architect who I was sure would work with wood, but he didn't—it was all aluminum and metal—I mean, steel—aluminum, steel, and concrete. But they required him to do one gallery with a wooden floor because that was a condition of the building of the Yerba Buena Center. And so, I put a label on the wall and claimed the wood floor as one of my pieces. Because I was responsible for that being a wooden floor. [00:34:00]

MIJA RIEDEL: What are you working on now?

TOM MARIONI: I'm doing drawings—watercolor drawings of beer bottles.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, I did see some of those because you just had that show.

TOM MARIONI: The prints that I'm doing—lots of drawings now. And so I'm going to have a show in Colorado Springs in June and it's going to be a bar and it's going to be all bar-related stuff, China and *Czechoslovakia* and a lot of these framed watercolor drawings of beer bottles I'm doing. And that's what I'm—I finally decided—I don't know why I waited this long, but everybody knows they're drawings, really. Watercolor drawings.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

TOM MARIONI: Anyway, they are like—I decided that's the only thing most people know me for anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: Are the beer bottles—

TOM MARIONI: The beer pieces. So, why don't I make drawings and watercolors of beer bottles. And I did these prints. And I started doing them just before that and then I thought this is what I should be doing. People will say, yeah, that's—they'll recognize: "Oh, that's Marioni." Like that. And you know who Agnes Gund is?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

TOM MARIONI: She bought three of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, just from the announcement without even seeing them. Just from the—

MIJA RIEDEL: From Crown Point Press?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, Crown Point Press.

MIJA RIEDEL: Because you just had a show, *Tom Marioni at 80*, at Crown Point Press in October.

TOM MARIONI: From that show, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that was all etchings and watercolor drawings, as you're calling them, of beer bottles. Beautiful yellow, and by themselves and in groups, yellow and green.

TOM MARIONI: Oh, they were all prints and there was other support material that were like announcements and things like that. And there was a pencil drawing in there too.

MIJA RIEDEL: And there was one *Café Society* bottle, I think. [00:36:02]

TOM MARIONI: Oh, yeah, that edition of beer in champagne bottles, yeah. That was in there, too. Yeah. So, it was beer-related stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And anymore drum brush drawings?

TOM MARIONI: Oh, there was a drum brush drawing in it because on the night of the opening, we performed *Beer Drinking Sonnet for 13 Players* while I drummed on a drawing table with sandpaper to create the rhythm for the sound, which gave it another dimension and made it better. I'd done that a couple of times before, too, with that performance. Yeah. So. [laughs] Okay. How many women did I support?

MIJA RIEDEL: That's right, that's fine [laughs]. All right, so I just have a final question and then if you have any final thoughts, by all means. So, just a summary question: you've been involved with the conceptual art scene in San Francisco for 50 years. What do you see as the legacy?

TOM MARIONI: Oh. Legacy? Wow.

MIJA RIEDEL: Where it led or—yeah, I mean—

TOM MARIONI: Well, I'm usually pretty good at predictions, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: I know you are.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well. Yeah. Well it's impossible to predict the future in art because there's no more avant-garde, for one thing. Because there's so much communication with the internet that every artist in the world knows what every other artist is doing in every other culture. It used to be so clear that the Italian art, German art, Muslim art, whatever—was so clear because it was so designed and colored by the culture. But now, because of all this—these art fairs and everything where there's so much cross-pollination, kind of, then the art is all becoming the same. Kind of. And so, that's one of the reasons there's no avant-garde, because it's—all styles are out there and acceptable. I mean, we go through periods like right now—it's abstract painting is the style right now. But that'll end. And so, like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, no legacy. It all fuses into everything.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, well. Yeah, I have—I used to be on top of all that, but I'm—

MIJA RIEDEL: Know where you are [laughs].

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, I'm not anymore, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, any final thoughts?

TOM MARIONI: Yeah. I guess I'm used up [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, it was pretty thorough. So, thank you.

TOM MARIONI: Yeah, thank you.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]