

**SKYPE
CALL**

**SANDS &
RADNA**

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Speakers: Sands Murray-Wassink, Radna Rumping
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00:00:02 Radna Rumping: [singing] La la la.

00:00:10 RR: [Skype calling sound]

00:00:16 RR: Hey!

00:00:19 Sands Murray-Wassink: Hello, it's working, I think. [chuckles]

00:00:21 RR: I think so. [chuckles]

00:00:26 SMW: Anyway, I'm holding my phone and it seems to be doing something, which is a lot.

00:00:31 RR: Does it feel like calling for you? [chuckles]

00:00:37 SMW: For me? It's like calling, yeah, yeah, yeah. You're speaking via the computer or not?

00:00:41 RR: Yeah, because that was the whole thing I was mainly thinking about. Like how can we make this like a phone call... [laughs]

00:00:54 SMW: Well for me, that's very important. That it's like a phone call. I mean this Thursday we will do *Auto Italia* with everybody on Skype. But Robin...with video, I guess for me also, but Robin has the webcam. We have several webcams and he's got one on top of my computer screen now, so I don't have to use his laptop anymore. And this may make it easier for me, I think. I hope so, anyway. Well, I'll have to see how it goes... But you understand also that I thought this would be better in any case in English because of the archive. Right?

00:01:41 RR: Yeah, yeah. I definitely... We made the switch already... [laughs]

00:01:48 SMW: Yeah, we made a switch already... Well, I was trying to write... You know Marjan Sax, right?

00:01:54 RR: Yeah, she was at the radio show you did at *If I Can't Dance [I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution]*, right?

00:01:59 SMW: Exactly, yeah, yeah. Well, she had, let's see I have them under the desk. She brought eleven bottles of perfume, vintage, very special stuff from her mother that her mother didn't use anymore and she didn't

want either because Marian doesn't use perfume anymore. And so eleven full bottles. Very special things, some of them go for a lot of money on eBay now. And also six little miniature perfumes, which are also things that I have always wanted to test. So I was very, very happy. And this is the first person that I've met since Corona, since the lockdown, since the 6th of March. And she came by and we sat outside on this little bench on the other side of the street from us, and when I came in, Robin was telling me that I was sitting too close to her. Even for the Corona, even though we put one chair in between us we didn't sit next to each other, but apparently that was still not far enough. So this was my first meeting and I have some getting used to as far as this distancing goes, because I find it rather hard to conceptualize the distance and focus on a conversation. [chuckles]

00:03:32 RR: Yeah, because we want to be close, I think also. Yeah, it would be strange also to suddenly have this distance and...

00:03:44 SMW: Right.

00:03:44 RR: But that was exciting that you met her and that she was the first one also. [chuckles]

00:03:49 SMW: Yeah, she was the first one, and it was really, really wonderful because she even said... She's very blunt and she's very honest. And she even said "Oh, I wasn't so sure"... I mean, we spoke in Dutch, which is of course, always what I like as well. She's always spoken to me in Dutch, not during the radio show, but after... And then she said "Well, during the radio show, I was a bit out of it, and I thought it was all a bit vague. And I didn't know if I really was interested in what you did or felt much for it." And she was very, very honest like that. And then she said... "But now that we're talking here, I find it all very, very interesting." So that was nice, and I also surprised her with a horse drawing to say thank you for the perfumes, because I knew she was bringing the perfumes, so I chose a specific horse drawing which said... I've also posted it on Instagram, you may have seen it go by, perhaps. It says, 'try feeling good', and then on the horse, it says 'good'. Like the horse is called 'Good'.

00:05:04 RR: I haven't seen it yet. Oh, but it sounds very nice.

00:05:10 SMW: And she also made me very happy because she then sent me an email, right after we met, like just a few hours later. Showing a picture of the horse drawing hanging on her office wall right above her working desk with lots of other things that she said were very important to her. Mainly photos of people from what I can tell. So she put it up immediately, which made me happy because we talked a little bit about art, and she said that she finds a lot of art, like also by museums, by the Stedelijk or other museums... She always finds it, she said something very specific, like the level of abstraction is not her taste or something like that. It is this kind of... I won't name names on this recording, at least not yet. But you wrote to me about certain names that we felt were a bit abstracted perhaps, and maybe not so relevant for the urgency of today's lifestyle and what's going on, and this is kind of... I think what Marjan was saying is that she finds a lot of art difficult to rationalize with the urgency of life, something like this.

00:06:41 RR: Like it has to go through many... Like some art, I don't know how to explain it. It's like it needs a lot of other things. So it's not so much about the type of artwork, but more about how it fits with a theory or how the text explains it. Or how it's about so many other things that as someone who is a possible visitor of an exhibition or someone looking at the artwork, there's... I don't know that there is this direct relationship, I think it is a bit difficult to have then. Or...

00:07:20 SMW: Yeah. Well, that's what I try to explain to her. When I do things I want them to be... I think I didn't say what I normally say to people, which is that I hope that when people see my work, they think, Oh, I could do it myself, and so then they can go do it then. Whatever it is, drawing or painting, or writing or whatever... I didn't say that, I just forgot it. I think at that moment that I did say that I always try to make things very, very clear and that I don't like a lot of... I'm not against explanation. I think explanation in context can be interesting, but there are different ways of doing that, in my opinion. And I think a lot of artists

– too many, unfortunately, in my opinion – they rely on the explanation almost as if it's the main thing, somehow the explanation. And then what always makes me curious is, if the main thing is the explanation or the contextualization of whatever it is, I would find it more interesting if you make that the work rather than something else that I have to look at and understand through a lot of explanation.

00:08:42 RR: That's what I meant, if it's a side path or maybe it's not necessary, or that it could be the work itself.

00:08:45 SMW: Yes, yes, yes. The work itself. I always say to Robin things like, when you walk into a gallery and you see an orange on the floor, like a fruit, a piece of fruit, and that's it, and that's all there is in the space, and then you have this long story about why this orange is important. And I always think to myself, with work like that... Then I think, well, actually the story about the orange is the work. So do we really need the orange at all as a piece of fruit or whatever it is. Yeah, this is just the example that always comes to mind, and it was strange because I was doing some committee work for the Mondriaan Foundation a few months ago, and one of the applications actually had a work in it where there was an orange on the floor of the gallery. It was literally, like my worst nightmare of art. But the funny thing was, in this case, this person did it in such a way that I actually liked it, and I understood why the orange was there and it wasn't irritating, it was actually very poetic.

00:10:03 RR: I was thinking of a work by someone who placed an orange on top of... What is it called? An 'haan'.

00:10:16 SMW: A rooster.

00:10:16 RR: Yeah, a rooster on the church, on the top of the church you sometimes have this golden rooster... And she put an orange on top of that. And that became a mystery, like why is the orange on top of that? And so the story also became work, but it was also a work with one orange involved, that I like actually.

00:10:42 SMW: That's quite funny actually to put in or on top of it, that actually... 'Cause that has a very beautiful word in English actually, and I'm curious,

I can't remember what it would be in Dutch. When it's a metal representation of a rooster on top of a building, that would be called a 'weather vane.' Yeah, because that rooster would normally have an arrow or something pointing and the direction of the... From what I understand, I don't know that much about it, but from what I understand, those things are there to tell you which direction the wind is going. It is the direction of the rooster or whatever is attached to it, metal stuff, that gives direction. Is that true?

00:11:35 RR: Yeah, I think, yeah, you're right. Yeah.

00:11:38 SMW: No. And just out of curiosity... And weathervane is spelled, it's one word, and it's 'weather' like 'weather', and then V-A-N-E. Weathervane. Yeah, it's a very... It's quite a poetic word. I don't know, I've always liked it somehow. I haven't thought of that word in ages and what would it be in Dutch then... I'm trying to think, but I don't think I know.

00:12:03 RR: 'Windvaan' I would say... But that's not exactly the same, I think.

00:12:07 SMW: What did you say? I didn't hear.

00:12:08 RR: 'Windvaan' maybe, but I'm not sure.

00:12:11 SMW: Okay. Yeah, I don't know, we would have to put it in Google Translator sometime. [chuckles]

00:12:19 RR: Maybe I can do it from my laptop now. [laughs]

00:12:21 SMW: Yeah it is... I hope that my voice is clear because I have to say, this is one of those things with Skype that I find with video, and now also without video, that sometimes I don't fully hear what you say because of the Skype situation.

00:12:43 RR: I hear you very well.

00:12:43 SMW: What?

00:12:48 RR: I hear you very well.

00:12:48 SMW: Oh, you do. OK, that's good. Well, we'll make it work. And like you said, this is an experiment, and if we

decide to do it another way next time, other than Skype with the phone or some other way that we can keep experimenting and see what works best...

00:13:10 RR: Yeah, I think we will never end up with one format probably because although if this works, we can do a few like this. But I have a few questions. Not many. [laughs] It's funny because I'm so reminded of the beginning, when I also had a few questions... So today, I actually looked back a bit at the video we made in the Rijksakademie, in the first studio where we were. And also at the recording that was in Dutch, when I also asked a few questions, but I think that was in October or something like that...

00:13:52 SMW: Yeah, yeah, that was at the old studio at the Rijks.

00:13:56 RR: Back then, you said you painted yourself in a corner, literally, when we talked about how the situation, and how your studio was and... I think what was quite interesting is that in one part you said that you were not so used to start a project or a process with a very... That it is very open-ended and that it was all a little bit scary because it wasn't really clear like: When will I be finished or done or succeed. Or, where are we even going? And the other thing you mentioned is, when I asked if you maybe have certain fears or reservations or... You said "Yeah, I'm afraid that I might work too fast, you know that I'm too fast, thinking this will go like this and that we're done in three months, and then it's all one big failure." [laughs]

00:15:04 SMW: Because it goes too quick.

00:15:06 RR: Yeah, and I thought this is maybe a good moment to look back at what you said back then and how you feel about that now. How you feel about this process, from what you have experienced so far, compared to your expectations from when we talked before.

00:15:25 SMW: Yeah, well, that's really good. I feel like it's been moving because of Corona, I think it has so much to do with the situation of the world. It's actually been quite slow and much slower than I expected, and there's so much to get through for all of us that are collaborating on this *Gift Science Archive*

adventure. I'm amazed when I look around my studio now, there's still so much stuff here as well, and also in the Rijksakademie, and so it's moving actually, I would say a lot slower than I had maybe anticipated it. I wasn't sure how quick it would go, and I'm already a bit worried about, but I think I'm gonna figure it out, but I need some time... Probably the whole summer, somehow. I'm already worried that when things come back from the Rijksakademie, that this space is gonna be even more full than it was before. For instance, the pyramid frame that I had made and the three frames that go with it, so there's four frames together as one work, that thing is too big to hang as we have it in the Rijksakademie. I cannot put that in my apartment, there is no wall space that big. So those things will probably end up in packing material, you know wrapped up, just in my studio.

00:17:11 SMW: In general, I'm trying to clean and organize as much as I can, and I have gone through some parts where I haven't touched these parts of the studio in maybe more than 10 years, which feels good and like progress. But there is still so much more to do. It's only a 25-square-meter space where I work, but it's just so full, and all of the things in here are so... Many of them are so small. Like what we talked about, you and me, over the months that we've been doing this, they're not only bags within bags. But also lots and lots of just little pieces of paper that are so significant to me. But on the other hand, this is what we had at our event on the 6th of March of the Rijksakademie as well, this question of trash. I've thrown a few things away here actually, but I do it very reluctantly and I just... I'm pretty overwhelmed still by the scattered nature of everything. Especially here, in the Rijksakademie, I think we have more organization and I know pretty much what is there and what could be done there. But here in my studio, since we have this lockdown situation, although it's now changing slightly.

00:18:49 SMW: Which is also very weird for me, by the way I was just getting used to the lockdown... I didn't love it, but it's very weird, I think for many people, you get used after a few months. You think, 'Okay, this is my life', and I had withdrawal symptoms and all sorts of weird stuff, thinking how different it

was going and everything... That I was just kind of resolving myself to the fact that that's the way it would be. And now these changes as good as they are, slight things like the hairdressers going open today and stuff. I have an appointment for next Tuesday to get my hair cut. I'm very excited. It's been eight weeks. I'm so routine in the way that I do things that this is also gonna take some getting used to... I think I'll get used to it quite quickly. But I got so used to not seeing people, being in my studio and just trying to find my way around this room as if it was the universe in a way... This became my world in a way, and it's just not as organized as I would like it. And I know that if I put some effort into it and just take time, most of what I see around here as I'm talking with you on the phone or on Skype as we are, it could be organized better so that there would be a lot more space in here. And that's something that you and I also talked about, about what I would see as a failure of the project... If I don't manage to somehow create space in the house and in my studio, so that I have more floor space to paint and also wall space to paint and just space to move around really.

00:21:01 RR: But I think it's also when you're in the middle of something... Because once you start to untangle all these threads and you open one bag with bags in it and tiny papers in it... Once you open it, of course that bag... Demands more space or something, right? And I think that's always the phase when you're not there (yet). And yeah, then there is this moment where everything suddenly needs more space. But then I think there can also be this phase again where things find their new place. So I still wouldn't be so worried about it already, actually.

00:21:47 SMW: We have time. That's the good thing is that I think we have... From what I understand now, we're not gonna be out of the Rijksakademie at the end of September, but more like the end of November or the end of December, from what I can tell. So we do have more time depending on how things open up and when we can come together and work again. And I also think it's a question of momentum. What you just asked, your question that I'm trying to answer now, it is a question of momentum because... Exactly what you said, when I cannot see the end of something, it

means that I have to budget my energy in a different way. If I can see the end, then I know what I have to... How much energy I have to spend just psychologically, I can gauge that I kind of feel it out. And now that I know we have more time, I think that also affects how quickly I move in my own studio now even, organizing and going through things. I think the closer we get to the end of the period when we're working together officially and everything, I think the quicker I'll be moving and also, not only quicker, but also making more hard decisions about space and about what I need to keep and what I need to get rid of, somehow. If I get rid of anything.

00:23:27 RR: Is that still... Did that change? Because I think you were very clear in the beginning that you wouldn't throw anything away for all kinds of reasons; for accepting everything, and also for not editing yourself, and also for... You mentioned that if you throw something away, you have the feeling that you need to make that work again. Did some of that change now you're looking more at the archive or at your works from the past, or maybe also... Yeah, there's work that is very clearly work and there's also works that are a bit in between life objects and works or... I don't even know what to call them. [chuckles]

00:24:13 SMW: Power objects. I don't know, but power objects could also be works themselves. Well, one of the main things that I threw away, it's really, very, very minimal, it was just several pieces of paper, and again, I can't name names now because it would be too tricky for this recording, but I threw away a press release that I found... 'Cause it's normally... When I keep things, I don't only keep my stuff, but I keep a lot of stuff that crosses my path, so like press releases, show invitations, ephemera, and this is something new, by the way, maybe you noticed on Instagram and on Facebook, I changed my profile names...

00:25:06 RR: Yeah that was one of my questions for today.

00:25:09 SMW: Yeah. Because ephemera... We'll get to that. It's very, very important for me, and I don't know why I didn't name it before because it makes such perfect sense to me. But one thing that I threw away that I can remember is the press release that a curator wrote

who I'm not too crazy about... And the person that the curator was writing about, I was also not too crazy about, so it was like a double thing where I was kind of thinking, this is negative energy. So that I did throw away because I had kept it somehow and I thought that doesn't deserve to be in my archive. Because it was even a press release about relationships and friendships, and knowing the people involved, I felt that it was totally a construction and that it was very superficial and not really about relationships at all, but only about careers. And that really bothers me, so I thought I cannot have that in my archive. But for the rest, I think that may have been the only things I threw away, maybe also a train ticket of something, very few things, I keep everything. But I may have found the train ticket that was not useful anymore for tax purposes or whatever, that I had forgotten to put with my taxes and maybe that kind of thing will also get thrown away. But I do keep a lot of things like that.

00:26:46 SMW: I say I've thrown some things away, but definitely not works. And you may have seen also on Instagram just yesterday, you may have seen the sketch that... I see it as a sketch as well, like a drawing, that I posted about people who don't like me. [laughs]

And I found this from 2016, and I thought it was really, really significant because... Okay, you know that I have a blacklist and I still have it somewhere from the past, from even before this work, which is 2016. But what I found so interesting about this one is that it doesn't say blacklist, it says people who don't like me. So I'm not saying that I don't like them or that I don't trust them. I'm saying that I don't think they like me, which I thought was a different kind of perspective or angle. And I thought it would be very important to post [on Instagram] because I think a lot of us in the world, not only in the art world, but in the world, have these feelings, but it doesn't often end up as a drawing or something. I see the... It's an A4 paper, and it has different kinds of pen on it, some purple pen, some blue pen, and I really wanna see it as a drawing. And increasingly, that's been something that came out of this archiving process that I learned again and again, that when I come across a

little scrap of paper with some writing on it, that for me, mainly, in that way, I really see it as a drawing. Like text as figuration.

00:28:47 SMW: It's the same for me as... I don't know why I'm thinking of her and I will name her, but like a painting of Marlene Dumas... I think the reason that I would name Marlene Dumas in this case as well, is because she is known for saying things about how frustrated, especially people in the Netherlands are, but in general also, about seeing text as figuration. She said that people have said to her before, because she paints figuratively but she adds text to her paintings that people have said to her "I don't wanna read a painting, I don't wanna read a drawing, I just wanna look at it." And so I've always... It's so stupid in a way, but I've always found this very, very interesting: that language or just writing actually can function as a drawing. You're making marks on paper and it means something, so it's actually drawing to me. And this is becoming... Looking through my archive now with you guys, I see so many things from which I think, 'Oh my goodness, this is a drawing form', which I just have never really called that, to not put so much stress on it...

00:30:08 SMW: I'm sorry, I'm getting a bit away from your question. I'm trying to answer everything in one big bubble.

00:30:13 RR: It's okay, I kind of forgot the question. [chuckles]

I actually have another question that relates to this or that I had in mind. It's that your work – which Maria Pask has mentioned – that your work has been very consistent, like what your work is about, what it addresses. Also maybe the shape and the positioning of your view as an artist, that you have been super consistent in the last 20 plus years. So that was a question for me. Now, you're also looking back, do you see new patterns within this or other things you forgot about or that you realize now?

00:31:03 SMW: I think it's becoming more and more clear to me. Oh, I've just found a paper while we're talking, which I just saw on the floor which says 'naming names, people I don't trust.' But I'm not gonna post this on... I'm not posting it on Instagram, that is gonna stay with me because that's too sharp from my side. But

it has become clear to me again that... You remember that you and me found this yellow piece of paper from 1996 in the archive, which said that my work was going out with people for a drink or going on a walk with them, or having a conversation, or... This is all... That kind of consistency that I think Maria was talking about, and that I also feel is a strong point of my work. You know this kind of focus on something which is invisible, often like relationships, and also structurally, the way that my work is, it's almost like a form of scattering ideas or thoughts. It's all kind of... I think what's becoming clear in a big way actually, is that everything from the past 20 plus years, and I would extend that back into teenage years, even somehow... It's all part of one thing. And I think that many artists could say this, that their work is all part of one thing, but I think for me, it really goes quite far in the sense that it's all...

00:33:11 SMW: Somehow the way that I've positioned myself makes it so that everything that I've kind of touched or crossed paths with or everything, and everyone I should say, that I've touched, or crossed paths with becomes part of a kind of web or something like that. And everything is literally interconnected in a quite remarkable way. And also that's kind of why I posted this thing on Instagram about people, who don't like me, because I get the feeling that... Well, I miss it. I never saw anybody post anything like that as an artwork: 'the people who don't trust me.' It feels a bit like... Maybe Tracey Emin. She might have done something similar in the beginning, but she moved away from that, and I'm not saying that she doesn't have any connection to her early work or whatever. But I have to say that I saw in people like Tracy Emin, and her in particular, something which I felt that I was already doing. When I found out about her work, for instance, which was around 1995, I felt like that is what I had already been doing for years, this kind of... Something that relates to spontaneity, that's a very important word, I think.

00:34:49 SMW: If you grab a piece of paper and a pen, you do something on there with text, and even if it's writing down your feelings or someone's name or whatever it is, and that becomes an artwork with a kind of

value. In her case now a financial value. But in my case maybe an intellectual value or a value, like what Megan [Hoetger] has said 'a value of feelings.' So there are a lot of things, no matter where this goes. You're the one that said that to me, and I really fully agree – and I should have noted myself without even having to hear it – there is no real expectation of what this will become, the end of this project: The Gift Science Archive. And there's no need for that. There is no failure. As I said, the only failure for me would be on a practical level, when I don't make more space for myself in my studio. But even that would be not necessarily a failure, so it's... I think that is the condition of making my work that I see over and over again going through the archive, is that I've built a sort of system where nothing really fails.

00:36:27 SMW: This kind of *Queer Art of Failure*, like Jack/Judith Halberstam's book, that was from years ago. When this book came out, I also thought, Oh, this is kind of what I'm doing. Before I knew about this book, I've never read the book but I just know the title. But I thought it's not about failure in the sense of society not being queer and not doing what society expects of you as a queer person or whatever. Or even that phrase which I posted on Instagram also with this 'the people not liking me' drawing... 'sadness as resistance.' I don't even really like that phrase. And I do that sometimes because I post things (online) or I say things or write things that also annoy me, because I have to look at them and think, well, why do they annoy me, why does this phrase bother me so much.

So, that failure thing as well, I knew people, other artists who I was acquainted with around the time that book came out about *The Queer Art of Failure*... Queer artists also... Who literally said to me, "Oh, my work is all about failure." And I thought to myself, I never could say it to their face somehow, but I thought, this is not anything that I would ever say.

00:38:01 SMW: My whole life is a bit of... And I have used that word failure... My whole life is kind of a form of a failed experiment. But it isn't about the failure. And the failure has become so consistent that it's not a failure... [chuckles]

00:38:24 RR: Exactly. Because saying your work would be about it... Would mean that you would incorporate the idea of what failure is, right? And it might be something that you don't need to incorporate because maybe you just don't agree with it anyways. Maybe it's not good for you to think like that, or maybe... 'Cause I think saying that the work is about failure would be admitting to something that maybe isn't so interesting to admit to in the first place, you know.

00:39:01 SMW: You know what also is bothersome about it is that it becomes a strategy. It becomes... Not that a strategy is always bad, but if your strategy is... If you call your strategy failing or whatever, that would mean... I don't know, it almost feels childish to me, it almost feels like a lack of responsibility. I don't know why I'm saying that exactly, but it's... What comes into my mind? I think that owning up to your life situation and confronting how you are at every point in your life, which is kind of what I do as an artist, this confrontation with myself, I find that courageous actually... It isn't super hard for me, it's kind of something that I have to do like breathing, I just do it. But it is scary. And it's a risk when I post things like that 'people who don't like me drawing' online... There are people on there, I can name names, because they're out there now, like Mirjam Westen, this Dutch curator. I know you know, but I've been saying it for the recording. And maybe we shall find out that I've said this now, but I think to myself, I thought it...

00:40:32 SMW: And so the fact that I thought it and that it was in my head means that I want to express it, whether or not it's true... Maybe she does like me, or maybe she doesn't even think about me, or maybe there are many maybe's in a way. But just the idea of trying to get some grip on what that relationship is, because this person in particular just on the side here, Mirjam Westen calls herself and is a feminist curator and one of the only really hardcore feminist curators that exists in this country. And she's never shown... She's never even done a studio visit with me. And in 2012, Cokkie Snoei, my former gallerist who never really did that much for me, just some things in the very beginning, but then it unraveled quickly... We had an exhibition in 2012. I think I told you this, but I'll say it for the recording. Cokkie approached

Mirjam with photos of paintings of mine in 2012 and asked her, would she not like to buy one for the collection of the museum where she works in Arnhem. And she said something like that the esthetic was repellent. [laughs] I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was quite hard core.

00:42:01 SMW: She really did not like the way they looked. And that therefore, she thought that they were not good art. And therefore feminist or not, or whatever my intentions may be, or my success or failure at making a feminist or pro feminist artwork, she was not interested. And I've seen her since then, and she embraced me, she came up and gave me a hug and I was so shocked because I thought... You told Cokkie Snoei that you really dislike my work, but you're gonna give me a hug in public. And I think this is all the reason why I make the work I do, because I think that there are a lot of people who are, for whatever reason, twisting themselves into very uncomfortable situations in relationships in life and in the art world as well. And I think that frustration that I have witnessing these kinds of inconsistencies in people's behavior... I do things as well, I'm not perfect. I'm only human as well, but I try... When I do something like this, if I was to say something nasty behind certain ones back and then speak to them in a completely different way when I see them, I would try to expose it in a drawing or something and make it public so that I can get it out in the open. Because I think this comes from my background and my upbringing, that there were a lot of secrets and quite big secrets kept in my family, and they caused a lot of damage over the years to me and to my parents and to my sister, and to all of us actually in the family that I can... Extended family as well.

00:43:49 SMW: And so maybe that's a frustration that I had for years and years and years, because I always wanted to bring... It's not a form of confession, I don't really like that word. But it's a form of exposure and expression. I always felt there were secrets. I knew in my family, the biggest secrets that have now become clear and that we know the answers to now in our family, my family. That's just from the past two or three years, but for all these 25 years or whatever it is, before then, I felt that there were

things that people were hiding, and I couldn't stand that. And so I brought it out into public and that's the way I always made my work because I felt... I just intuitively felt that this was healthy to get it out. Because when you keep secrets... I think when people keep secrets within themselves or within relationships, sometimes we have to, but if you don't have to, there are certain things that can destroy you if they're not... People keep things quiet in a way to hurt each other also, like the systems of abuse, actually. This terrifies me, and I can't stand the thought.

00:45:20 SMW: And it happens a lot in the world. People abuse each other, and I think this is something that I just feel I want justice for. I'm very into justice. I love, I guess I would translate that in Dutch as 'rechtvaardigheid' or something like that. And this is exactly that word. I want justice, I want the whole world to have some justice. And I'll just finish that part of what I'm saying by mentioning Marian Sax, who we were just talking about before. She sent me the link to Arnon Grunberg's speech for the fourth of May about the Holocaust. Did you see this?

00:46:10 RR: No I still haven't seen his speech. I've only seen the speech the king gave.

00:46:16 SMW: I didn't see the king's speech. But Arnon Grunberg talked a lot about recognition and also how we're all the same, and that... He's Jewish, and he talked about the Holocaust and told some pretty explicit stories about his family background, which were... I almost started crying, it was really heavy stuff. I think that's also because I am Jewish through my mother, and so this kind of speaking about what happened and how that developed World War II and the Holocaust for instance, and just everyone who was killed actually in those years, not only Jews. It's always extremely heavy because I know I grew up with a lot of European Jews who had left Europe because of World War II and found themselves in Kansas where I grew up. So these were people who I grew up with, Germans or Austrians or Swiss people. And it was always fascinating to me because I would hear the accent. They spoke in English, but a lot of them had quite heavy accents. And I thought it was so

wonderful and fascinating. And I always thought, 'Oh, I don't wanna speak like that too.' I almost wanted to develop [an accent] and now I have my own thing because I can speak in Dutch with an accent. [laughs]

00:47:48 SMW: I got my wish somehow. But this feeling of what Arnon Grunberg talks about, he also says something in the speech about when you say, when people speak about people as a group, that a member of the group does not represent the whole group, which is quite obvious and we know that, but it was good. He reiterated and says it again. And he says, when you're talking bad about any group of people, you talk about me as well, and about how World War II was allowed to happen because people looked the other way, or were too afraid to do anything. When things escalate to this level of... Murder actually, in this situation. How that all develops from interpersonal relationships, just on a one-to-one level actually. How we treat each other. And I think this is something that makes me quite happy about the way my work has developed, because that is how I feel that I'm dealing with the world. That I feel like it's all for me about confrontation on a one-to-one level, which I feel has an effect, which could be bigger than just that one-to-one relationship or form. So, through this archiving and coming across the people that I've existed with or coexist with over the years, and also the way I've made my work...

00:49:32 SMW: I'm just getting more and more sure of how I do things, but I still get scared and frustrated because I know that what I do is not the way most people make art or do art. And that means that... I'm not even 50 yet, and I do get scared about what will happen over 10 years, now I have the commission with If I Can't Dance [I Don't Want To Be A Part Of Your Revolution] and I'm working with you and Megan [Hoetger], Amalia [Calderón] and Frédérique [Bergholtz]... And there's this involvement and there's money... And I have a grant and I'm working for the Mondriaan Foundation, but this is not forever. So yeah, I'm very aware and cautious about how the future could look.

And then as a last thing, that's why this archiving feels so rich and important and necessary. And I'm very happy that I came up with this idea to do it.

Because I need to strengthen my backbone, my spine, and my resolve to go into these next years and think: How am I going to continue? How am I going to extend this? Because I know posting things like what I posted on Instagram yesterday about people who don't like me, I mean, this could cost me teaching jobs and things, people could see this and say "Oh my goodness, this guy, he's not very discrete" or whatever.

00:51:25 RR: It is courageous. I'm not doing that, partially because of those reasons. Because it's... Of course, on one hand it's exactly what I think that art needs... And it's relevant, and I think indeed these questions are not only interesting for you personally, in your personal relationships, but they are interesting for everyone. Everyone can relate to this, but not everyone has the courage to also post it [on Instagram] so it has this double side. I think also that a lot of what you're doing is urgent, and I think more and more people feel that urgency. Because I think there's more and more critique of how the art world is as it is now, and has been for many years. But I think no one knows yet what kind of new or hopefully better landscape will come out. So that's a strange time, but I think for you there is no other choice than to make this kind of work, right?

00:52:43 SMW: No, and I hope it can give people... I'm an example or one way of doing it, but in any way that someone could relate to my philosophy, I guess, of how I make work and how I do things, and how I live actually. I hope that this will give other people, courage or permission. Carolee Schneemann used to talk about permission. She said that she looked for in her life, permission from artists to be able to do things that people told her not to do, in the art world. Like get naked or... Not only getting naked, but the way that she... I learned a lot from her as well. About how to make... There's this wonderful word in English, which is a really weird one. I'm gritty. G-R-I-T-T-Y, when you... And Carolee was really... I've just been thinking last week about how gritty Carolee's work is and was... Because she made it super difficult for people as she was a painter and it was all about painting. But she did so many things that it confused people because they don't want to...

In general, I think it confuses people for almost her whole life. Because they thought: How is getting nude and being in a structure where you swing on this kind of harness and make marks on paper, how does that relate to making an object like a discrete painting? Or whatever. Or when she would kiss with her cat and take photos of that and then make a large photo grid of that. How is that a painting?

00:54:44 SMW: So I think with Carolee, she wasn't like a clean artist, and that doesn't mean necessarily that I would use the word dirty for her as well. You could, I guess. And also for me. But I think just... I would prefer the word, which is such a specific word in English, contingent at her work... Everything in her work depended on Carolee's work, depended on her philosophy of how to expand painting, and I feel like I've tried to take that further in my way and expand painting to a degree where it's literally about things which happened between people. Carolee did that as well, there's so many elements of what she did that I feel taught me a lot. She was also quite focused on relationships and what they meant and support systems. I think there's a group of artists, also for her generation, who worked with these subjects. And now as younger generations are in a state to kind of sift through and go through all this material that they left behind, people of her generation. And there's so much more actually. If you just take the movement of the 70s feminist movement, in its international form, that could keep us going, if people pay close attention to that, that could keep us going for at least another 100 years. But the trouble with the world, I think today, and maybe it's always been the trouble with the world, is that people don't really stop and take time to look and pay attention to the information that's available to them. They wanna move quicker and faster and everything has to be new and fresh and young, and it seems like it doesn't change, people are so fixated on...

00:57:12 SMW: Which I can understand to a degree. But it feels... It disappoints me because I think you can still have youth and freshness and new news when you're looking at things which already exist in a fresh way or a new way or a young way, even. Young in the sense that the thing is a concept which hasn't really

been fleshed out or developed, really. Like is the concept of relationships in our work, which Hannah Wilke was responsible for, this kind of thing. So... Yeah, I hope between connections that you and I have, or that we have with each other and with other people, that it just slowly has to grow. I don't know exactly. Slow or quick. It could be both at the same time even... It just has to develop in a sense, but it can always go backwards, and that's why I'm very urgently trying to make as many documents as possible about self-expression and taking responsibility for life and that kind of thing, because I feel that it's fragile. I won't keep going... But I wanna say one more thing about this. One good artist who did this in the, I guess in the 30s, or early 40s, was Charlotte Salomon, this 'Life? or Theatre? [song book]' that she made. These wonderful drawings and paintings. There are hundreds of them I think.

00:59:00 SMW: I hadn't thought of her in a while, but that's an example of a Jewish artist who was really doing what I feel I'm doing as well. All the way back then. And luckily, these things have survived even though she didn't... So yeah, that's a good example, 'cause she was all about documenting human behavior and her own behavior. I don't know the work that well...

00:59:35 RR: I don't know her... Charlotte O'Soloman?

00:59:49 SMW: Charlotte Salomon. And then Salomon is S-A-L-O-M-O-N. Her biggest work... I think she was German or was she Dutch? I have to look that up. She was German or Dutch, something like this. Because what I'm thinking of is the English title of the biggest work she made, which was like 300 drawings or something like this, and lots of figurative... They were a bit like cartoons, the drawings. I think it was called 'Life? or Theatre?' And there's a beautiful book as well, I've got it somewhere. I don't know where it is off the top of my head, but I have the book... There was an exhibition at the Jewish Museum here, more than ten years ago, and I think it's the only time I've been to that museum, I went specifically to see this exhibition. And they're really incredible drawings, and it's so interesting and thank you for that, that you triggered something in me to remember what she was doing all the way back then... She was even older than Carolee in that

sense. I think she was born in the early part of the century of 1900 or even before. She was doing something very similar to what I feel I'm doing in the sense of documenting the behavior that she saw around her to reach a sense of justice, because she knew that...

01:01:27 SMW: And my memory is also that she was killed by the Nazis. I think that's what happened, but I have to look it up. I'm sure there's a huge Wikipedia page on her, we could look it up at some point. But it's this casual documentation of... An urgent documentation of the state of the world really, and I think this archiving is making it all clear to me. And I'll round up this part of the question that you asked, or what we're talking about now, by saying that I'm very grateful again for doing this because... Well, it's been very scary because for many, many years, people did not see what I was doing as a valid activity. I mean many people ignored me or even were patronizing to me or just sort of like "Yeah, you're doing whatever you're doing but we're not interested." [chuckles] This was very painful and it was... I'll never forget it, it was 10 years or more. And it was terrifying because I had no money, I had no teaching job, I had some work in between also working with Elke Krystufek but it was always very, very fragile. And even with Elke, it was always her who had the big career as an artist and I was like this kind of anomaly or this strange person that was connected to her somehow. I was never on that level. I think intellectually I was, I hope, but not in a financial sense of marketing or (in a) gallery sense.

01:03:27 RR: Yeah, and I'm thinking also of the feminist artists, from the movements in the '70s for instance. You knew the examples of artists who work their whole life and were not always recognized during their life. Or were only recognized very late in their life or after they passed away. And you knew that very well, also through your connection with Carolee, where at that point people were not so interested in her work. So I'm also wondering what that did to you, like knowing this from examples before you, and examples from artists that you have been in touch with, where you build relationships with. And also, because it means that you do... That when institutions

don't do it or when others don't do it, you do the archiving work by yourself or the reflection on your work by yourself, or the making public of the work. All these aspects. And I have the feeling... It's not that you didn't do any archiving, I think you did a lot of archiving by yourself, looking at your old websites... Yeah, making sure that your work was out there through maybe your website or social media, or you did all that work alone, basically. Or with help from Robin but not from other people, right?

01:05:08 SMW: No, not really, no. Not with other people no. No, I didn't. It's very interesting that word 'reception', like how work is received. Over the years, I have studied, as you and I have talked about I think, I have studied over these 25 years very closely how the artists that I admire were received in public. Or in their cases, mostly not received in public. You know, that there was very little reception of the work. 'Cause when I did meet Carolee, it was really, really bad, it was like the worst period of her life. She was 55, which is kind of... You're not young anymore, you're really fully adult even into middle age, if not further than middle age. And people were... You know, she had these early successes more than me, she was more visible when she was in her 20s and 30s. And then it really fell away into her 40s as the work got more and more... As one example: As her work got more and more experimental and unusual and specific, people really were very turned off, and when I met her, she was even a little bit bitter about just how dismissive people were.

01:06:47 SMW: It wasn't that she got nothing, she had... There was, when I had her as a teacher, she took us to see an installation of hers which was in a gallery which doesn't exist anymore. It was a very strange gallery called *Penine Hart* in New York City, Soho, Downtown. In 1994, and it was an exhibition where she was commemorating the lives of her friends who she had lost to various things, death by for instance AIDS in that period or heart attack or whatever it was. I think there were thirteen of them, I can't remember the exact number. And she made a whole installation about it... Within the space of two years, she had lost these 13 friends, including Hannah Wilke. So it was an installation, but it was an installation all about death and loss and mourning and relationships,

and even... This taught me something, that at the bottom point of her whole career as an artist, she still didn't change how she was making her work because she had this kind of urgency to what she did, Carolee. And that made it so that she would do these very ephemeral and very fragile installations about life and death and relationships.

01:08:25 SMW: I think she got even... The more people ignored her, the more unusual her work got. And the more urgent and the more... And she would complain about not having enough money to do things properly like that. You know, the budget for an installation wouldn't be high enough for her to handle the technology as she might want to. But I think in the end, I hope she was happy somehow, and I can never know that because at the very end, we had less contact because when she was dying, she kind of withdrew. Which apparently is quite normal for people when they're... She had breast cancer, and she knew she was dying... And I think she wanted to die by herself because she knew that's the way it would be. So I don't know for sure what her last days were like, except from her personal assistant who sent me a very beautiful email of the last, actually months, of her life, a description. But it was a sense of... There was one funny thing from that, that when she was very, very ill, right... A few days before she died, some nurses came in to care for her, and she was asleep in her bed with one of her paintings. Like one of her earliest paintings, the landscape painting hanging over her bed. And I thought it was so sweet because her assistant told me, that when she woke up and these nurses were there asking her how she felt, and knowing that she was almost dead, that she was very, very ill, she woke up and she said "I'm a famous artist. I painted this above the bed."

01:10:06 SMW: And I thought that was sweet actually, but I never really heard Carolee speak like that and say something so direct. Like that she was a famous artist and that she wanted to show that to these nurses coming to care for her on her deathbed, because she found it urgent to say somehow that she made a mark. This even taught me something. Where other artists pay attention to maybe how something is conceptualized, or if there's too much yellow in a painting or something aesthetic, I pay attention to behavior

and how people react in whatever situation they find themselves in. And I think this is a part of the way I've learned. And so actually watching these artists become dismissed or ignored or whatever happened to them over the course of their lives. The ones that I've admired through the years... I've learned from that, and that's why I'm less afraid. I can do things like what I did yesterday by posting on Instagram about the people who don't like me, because I know that if you just keep doing what you're doing long enough and you live long enough... 'Cause many artists die young as well, that's happened over the years that they don't even make it past... What's the magic age, 27 or something like that?

01:11:48 SMW: If you live long enough and continue just doing what you're doing in your own way, then eventually either people will find you, if you're lucky before you're dead. And sometimes after your death. But it will eventually have an effect and you don't have to look for... I think what I learned so much from this experience of watching and paying attention is that you don't have to look for a quick result. And I think a lot of artists are looking for... My feeling is that a lot of artists are looking for very quick results in their... For lack of a better word, in their careers, for instance. And I gave up looking for a quick result a long time ago because I realized that I couldn't have that... That wasn't the way that it was gonna work for me. So actually, this having survived that long period of neglect in a way by the art world has made me pretty strong and pretty unshakable as well. Nothing really surprises me or shocks me because I've been through a sort of weird situation, things still, I suppose, could happen that I don't expect... But in general, I've been through such shocking situations or people saying the most outrageously rude things to my face about my work and about me personally, it's made me pretty strong actually. And I am alive and I'm just 46... It's not that old that I'm 55 yet or whatever.

01:13:37 SMW: That would also be okay, but I feel like I'm curious to see now what it's gonna look like when I have more solidarity. Like with you and with Megan [Hoetger], and with Marjan [Sax], with Frédérique [Bergholtz], with Maria Pask... There is a bit of a small network now of people that I believe in and

that I trust. And well, I guess we'll just see what this means in my case. Because I think that's what Carolee may have not done in her way, she paid some attention to how people were received before her, artists that came before... Like Virginia Woolf or Paula Modersohn-Becker, a German painter, who came before her. She did pay some attention, but I think I can be so grateful for how public these artists in the 70s, for instance, made their thoughts and feelings and observations of the world. Because it gives me endless material to study in terms of gender... I think it's also interesting because men have not consistently done this through the years. This is also something which has been very gendered that I feel in many ways. And so people are going on and on about feminism these days, but I wonder...

01:15:21 SMW: Sometimes I get the feeling that feminism and feminist art has become a kind of buzzword that people feel they have to use or say, or they want to because they think it will make them impressive to other people. But I can't help but finding myself disagreeing with a lot of how people are dealing with the situation of what actually feminist art is and what it means. Because in many senses, I think that feminist art is not about receiving any kind of recognition or thanks... It's not about the canon, it's not about hierarchy, it's really about just doing something that you feel from a very small perspective, from a small one-person perspective. You do something which you feel can make the world a better place in your way. In whatever way you can, and that you know that you're probably... The recognition that you might get from the art world is one thing, but as a feminist or a pro-feminist, you really... I often think that we cannot expect... You don't do it to get thanks, you do it because you need to do it. Because you think the world is gonna be a better place because of it.

01:16:44 SMW: And you're not doing it to get something back. That's what Marjan Sax said to me as well. She said, You know, you don't need to give me a drawing... Because before she'd seen the drawing, when I told her I had something for her... She said "you don't need to give anything... I'm not giving you perfumes so that you will give me something back." But I feel more and more... And that's maybe one of the questions

you had about the word ephemera. I feel more and more strongly that giving is actually more pleasurable even than getting... I enjoyed giving things away so much, whether they are horse buttons or little scraps of paper or just advice or thoughts or whatever it is. Giving things without expecting anything back and without getting paid for it. I almost want to develop my work in a way, I don't know how this is gonna work logistically or actually, but I feel like it could be quite interesting to consider my work as one big gift to the world in a way. And whatever that means, that I almost maybe need a patron or one very rich, specific person who believes in me like Marcel Duchamp had the Arensberg couple who I guess backed him for much of his life.

01:18:21 SMW: Whatever it is, I just feel that this giving, the active giving is very significant. And that's what I can see also, looking back over my archive and my oeuvre and the things that I've developed, is... It's weird to say this about yourself, but a form of generosity and sharing, that's been very consistent, also. And I think that's one thing that... I think that I don't wanna fault Carolee for that, but I think that her generation was maybe less in state to give because they had so little to begin with. And now... I feel like I've been given so much, and I feel like the whole gift of the 1970s feminist movement in art has given me so much. That's a gift in itself. And so I feel like... And I have Robin and I have a stable... I have a roof over my head, the bills can be paid if they need to be somehow right now, and it's been that way for years because of Robin's stable job in our relationship. So I'm in-state to be super generous, I hope with what I can offer people. Whatever that is, whether it's a drawing or perfume, whatever it is.

01:19:55 SMW: So yeah, that's what... Maybe one of your questions was about ephemera.

01:20:04 RR: Your name on Facebook and Instagram was 'Sands Murray-Wassink Process Archive'. And then recently you changed it to 'Sands Murray-Wassink Ephemera', right?

01:20:19 SMW: And on Instagram Sands Murray-Wassink Ephemeral, with an 'L' on the end.

01:20:28 RR: So why did you feel this change was needed?

01:20:31 SMW: Well, the change was needed. And I'm gonna change the Facebook one, I think also. The thing about Facebook is they won't let you change your name... I know you know this, but I'll say it for the recording. If you change your name on Facebook, you cannot change it again for 60 days, you can't touch it. It's fixed. So I had done Facebook first, but I actually like 'Sands Murray-Wassink Ephemeral' better. With an 'L' on the end. Because it implies the transitory nature of life for one thing. So nothing lasts forever, and that life ends, nothing lives forever either on this planet, essentially. You know we're all part of one big thing, but in individual embodiments, whatever that is, from an insect to a human being, to whatever it is, we die. So I like this word 'ephemeral' because it refers to that kind of situation of not lasting forever. But also... What's really been interesting for me, and I think this came from the archiving, from this project... I never even told you or Megan or Amalia, but I have spent years following sellers of what is termed 'ephemera'. Like posters, invitation cards, multiples. Especially multiple small objects that are made whatever they are, paper or 3D, or whatever they are, in editions or unlimited editions. Like for instance, you have this guy in Amsterdam, I don't know if he's still doing it, but his name was Harry Ruhé, R-U-H-É.

01:22:37 SMW: And he was exclusively dealing in Fluxus objects. Do you remember this? He was over by the Concertgebouw, in the south of the city, and I've been there once or twice. But even by email I was following for many years, used book sellers and people who were related to used book sellers who were selling artistic objects. Things like again; posters, invitation cards, press releases, one-off photos, little drawings or things in multiples, lots of things in editions, whether the edition was 100 or unlimited or whatever it was. And I found these things so fascinating and it connects a bit to what I have just bought... I mean I have a lot of it myself, 'cause Carolee gave me countless... I have stacks of stuff from Carolee, that's probably worth a lot of money now, somehow... From over the years, not only personal letters from her, but also objects that she made, and book works and posters and the invitation cards

and photos and little photo prints and things like that. I have a collage from her that she made for me once. And I realized that over the years, I've paid so much attention to this kind of material that isn't a big one-off unique painting...

01:24:21 SMW: With Hannah Wilke... With this stuff from Hannah Wilke that exists, posters and things. This all has really high value now, because she was a body artist, they were some of the only things that existed from her life. So they become very valuable. And I thought to myself, that's what I'm doing. I'm making... All these years, I've been making... I call it process because of Eva Hesse, she talked a lot about process and the absurdity of life. And I thought that was all very interesting, so Eva Hesse was a very important artist for me, so I referred to her quite a lot over the years. And she was a proto-feminist, she died in 1970, so she died before the real movement got started. But I thought even more than process, what my work is about is this notion of ephemera. Also book works, like my *Profeminist White Flowers*, that's a form of ephemera as well. And I always get very, very excited when I see used copies of my books available online, and that happens quite frequently. They're even on Marktplaats here, at the Dutch eBay, there's a copy of *Profeminist White Flowers* for sale for 20 euros or something like that. Sometimes the prices are higher or lower, that doesn't really matter to me.

01:25:51 SMW: I just, I found it so fascinating, the way all this stuff finds its way into the world. And with my books, for instance, I've given a lot of my books away. And I know that the one on Marktplaats even says that it has a signature and an inscription. So I wrote... I dedicated it to somebody, it doesn't say who. I've been tempted to write to the book seller and ask if they can tell me as I'm always wondering who has given my book away to a bookseller to be resold and the price is now 20 euros for the book, so... What did they get for it? They must've gotten like 10 euros maybe for the book? You could just as well throw it away if you don't want it anymore. What is 10 euros? For a lot of people, that's not much money. So it fascinates me that someone thought for whatever reason, this is something I should throw away, I don't want it anymore, but I don't

wanna throw it away either, so I'll take it to a... But how does this happen? That becomes a question of distribution actually, so you've got reception and then distribution as well. Like how do artworks find their way into the world, and it used to be that museums were in charge of this, and then you get into colonialism and imperialism, and how do we get objects from one part of the world to another...

01:27:27 SMW: It's all of that kind of stuff as well. Which is in itself fascinating and horrible at the same time, as when you're talking about colonialism and imperialism. But, in contemporary art or even part of recent times, you could call it the last 100 years even, or whatever. How does this stuff end up where it ends up? I find it absolutely fascinating. And that's why I consider... Even my business cards, I consider them work. So when I give these new business cards, these purple ones that you have as well with my image on it smoking, that's a work for me, whether or not it's signed, it's a work. And I love the fact that I can give that to somebody, and then they've got a work from me. Whether or not they care or realize it, is another thing. But the fact that I can do that and get it out in the world and distribute it in that way. It's a bit like throwing a message that you put into a bottle and a piece of paper into the ocean, and then writing on that paper 'if you find this bottle with this message, contact me.'

01:28:46 SMW: Did I tell you... I don't know if I told you the story even... It's just kind of a nice little story about my strawberry baskets and helium balloons. Is that you I was talking to?

01:28:55 RR: [chuckles] No, I don't know his story.

01:28:58 SMW: I think it was Megan. So when I was living in Topeka, Kansas, where I grew up, even before I was 10 years old, I was totally obsessed with helium balloons. Like floating balloons... Like rubber floating balloons. Not on the ground, not that you blow up yourself, but that when they would float in the sky and the fact that you could let them go, and that they would just go up there in the sky and fly off into nowhere, and you had no idea where they would end up... My parents used to bring me, for every

birthday when I was very, very young, I would get a big bunch of balloons. And nothing made me happier than this, just getting a big bunch of balloons. And several times I would release the balloons into the sky just to watch them float away and be fascinated by this. But it may have been my father that had the idea that we took this little... Strawberries. In Kansas when you would buy strawberries, they would come in these little green plastic baskets. Like little... Open, not closed, like a cage structure made in green plastic, very small.

01:30:22 SMW: And we got the idea. I think we did several different versions, we would attach these little baskets through the bottom of a helium balloon, or a bunch of helium balloons to make it fly better if it was too heavy. And then we would put a little message on paper in that basket, somehow attach it in there so that it would stay. And it would say "if you find this, please call and my phone number or contact me in some way" and then we would release it into the air in Topeka where I lived, and hoped that it would reach someone. And one time... I don't remember who it was that actually called, but once it actually worked, that somebody found the balloon when it wasn't floating anymore, when it lost the helium power and it would come to the ground. And someone found the little basket with the balloon attached to it, not floating, but on the ground, and they called and said that they found it and just wanted us to know that it worked and that our message had reached them, whatever the message was. I think we even made little drawings.

01:31:38 SMW: Maybe my dad... My dad was always very helpful, supportive and encouraging my creativity. And maybe we made little drawings to say something like, 'have a beautiful day' or something, and so it was a gift as well. And I hadn't thought about that for many years, but this idea of getting things out into the world and not knowing where they're gonna end up in this fascination of where they do end up, it's still very exciting to me.

01:32:10 RR: Do you also do that to yourself? It reminds me of a memory of what I did when I was 13 or 14. I wrote tiny, tiny notes on my computer, but in the smallest font and then printed it very small and cut it as

very small notes. And they were just notes with nice thoughts of things I wanted to remember. But I would hide them in my room, so I would bump into them one day without remembering where I put it. So I'm thinking of this way of distributing ephemera into the world, but also you in your studio, when you write something down or see an invitation or a photo of someone... That it's almost also a gift to you... Like the possibility that you might bump into it again, although you don't know exactly when and where, because it's not so formally structured or something...

01:33:10 SMW: No, yeah, exactly. No, that's beautiful. I never did that actually, in that way. But I love hearing that you did it, because you're younger than me as well... I didn't have a computer. How old was I? I did everything with typewriters when I was younger. So when I grew up, when I was in my teens, for instance, I didn't have email until I was 23. So I didn't really have a computer even till I was around that age, or maybe even that was Robin's computer. So I guess my form of note-making would have been... And I did used to make drawings in those years and teenage years, but I never really hid them specifically for myself. But I think the idea is exactly the same in that and you do something... And just like that yellow piece of paper that you and I found, about that my work is going on a walk or going for a drink, or going to a club dancing or whatever it was... That's very, very exciting. To discover things that you didn't even remember. You know, that you can make these notes to yourself. I mean, literally, it's funny you say that because the thing on Instagram that I posted about people who don't like me, in the bottom right-hand corner, I have it here in my hand, in purple marker it says 'note to self.'

01:34:48 SMW: That's what that was in 2016. It was just... I made it in one sitting, I didn't go back to it, I just took a piece of paper and I was so angry. And I wrote, these are the people that don't like me. And one of the people in the list is even... Let's see what number it is, 'cause it's such a short list... Oh, it doesn't have numbers, but it says one of the people is the United States of America, which I thought was quite funny actually finding that back and then seeing that... I saw it as a person in a way. So that note-making thing. I think this is something that

excites me a lot, as you know, when art becomes something that is so interconnected with your life that it's not even clear, like you were saying before... It's not even clear whether it is art or whether it's not art. That's very, very exciting to me. It always has been. And that idea of... Because what you were doing with those notes to yourself, typing them on small pieces of paper and hiding them so that you would find them again, that to me is an artwork. That is what I define an artwork as. You know, that you consciously do something which has a physical form, or even if it doesn't have a physical form. That is an art concept for me, and a life concept. It's the same thing.

01:36:24 SMW: So that's why I always wonder if I should... I like the word artist because it says something and it's a definition of something. But actually what I do, as I said before, and as you and I have talked about before, there isn't often a lot of difference in my work between what I would do as a person, in life, and what I would do, calling it art. You know, it becomes very in-between and unclear, and that thing of ephemera. You remember the Angelyne hat that I bought. This piece of... She calls it merchandise when she sells it, but actually that is a form of ephemera as well. Or the little button that I have from her, from Angelyne in Los Angeles. Or the image that I bought of a print of hers, which is kind of a postcard format actually. That's all ephemera, so the combination of ephemera and also doing something which is, as you were talking about in the beginning, not completely clear whether it's art or life... I think those are things that recur and repeat themselves over and over again in what I do.

01:38:06 SMW: Even these slides, you and I looked at so many slides, we've got 500 slides or whatever in the archive. I don't know how many. Each one of those, I would consider a work as well. You know, each little slide is like a work. So that's also a form of ephemera, I think. It just excites me that an artwork does not have to be a huge steel or metal sculpture. That you can have something as powerful, I think even more powerful than a massive sculpture as a simple note to yourself, or small piece of paper or whatever it is. It just excites me that we have more power... That you don't need lots of

money or big production values to make a very very impressive existential statement. Which I think is what art... I guess everyone defines it differently, but I always think that art is a kind of existential statement for almost everybody. I could look at anybody's work and say, this is some kind of existential statement, even if it's collective, because it's just about humanity then... Or life for that matter. So all this kind of blurring of things really excites me, it's very... It sounds very 1960s maybe, which I don't think is a bad thing. That it's kind of like this idea of art is life or life as art. It's almost a form of play that I like to do. And then sometimes making a painting which looks more like a painting is kind of fun, because I like to also make people work a little bit or maybe a lot understanding what I do or appreciating engaging with it. And also make it either difficult or confusing or exciting in that way, hopefully. That if you engage with what I'm trying to say, it could connect with you in a way where you could say that it changes something in you as well, which I guess is what art seems to want to do, somehow.

01:40:42 SMW: These are very long answers to your question.

01:40:47 RR: Of course, I didn't expect otherwise. I think I have maybe one last question for today, maybe it's nice to... And then we do a few more of these calls later, not tomorrow, but it's... And maybe this is also something to go into more another time. But for now, I was also wondering... You know, we talked about this archive thing and also how you look at your work, how you take care of your work, and keeping all these things together, not throwing anything away... But also your relationship with Carolee and looking at how she dealt with her archive and life. But what does it mean for you, how has it been to collaborate with this because that's been quite a new experience, I think. With the Gift Science Archive project, in that it's not you doing this alone, but that there are suddenly other people involved and you have to find a way together. How has that been for you?

01:42:05 SMW: Well, actually, I didn't know how it would be before we started, of course. 'Cause you can never know before you start something like that, how you're gonna... Something new that you never did before,

how it's gonna be. But I really love it, and why I love it so much is because it feels like all of a sudden, all the responsibility that I had all these years to do it myself and to be my own art historian is a shared conversation even. It's not even about me anymore. It's about again, about the relationship between the four of us: You, Megan, me, Amalia. And it's this kind of wonderful discovery that I finally feel... It makes me feel less self-involved in a way. And that is such a great feeling because I've always said that I'm not actually that self-involved, although my work looks that way... The ironic thing is that I find a lot of art, I meet a lot of artists who make work, which is nothing about them, not at all, and they're super egotistical and self-involved. And I always think that's so strange... They're the ones who say to me that I'm self-involved, and then I look at them and I think... Wait a minute, no, you're self-involved, your work doesn't look like it, and maybe it should look like it, because then maybe you would be less self-involved... I'm gonna start saying that to people's faces. I've never said it to anyone's face before.

01:43:38 SMW: But I love this archiving together because I don't feel any... Things to me are precious in a sense, but in another sense, I'm so happy to now... It's almost like we're bringing things to life, together. Because artwork needs an audience that was even... I'm sure other people have said it, but the first name that comes to my mind about the audience completing the artwork is Marcel Duchamp. But there were other people that said that as well, I don't wanna give him credit. It's just the first name that appears in my mind. But art work needs an audience, even if it's you who's your own audience. It's been me for so many years, I was my own audience. Then you get into that question of the audience, but also this sharing... The fact that we're all doing this together. It's been a relief for me because I finally have collaborators, people that are... And I'm only too happy to collaborate, that's also been so ironic in my life that I feel that I've made myself incredibly available, my phone number and my address. I'm even listed in the phone book... I did this years ago.

01:45:05 SMW: I'm listed in the phone book as my business name: *Sands Murray's Personal Artistic Business* under 'Fine Artists', under 'Beeldende Kunstenaars' and even under 'Schilders'. If you go to the phone book online and you look under those two categories, all of it is right there for you to find... Because this was also something when I was growing up and younger, it was always very famous artists were very difficult to get the contact information of, if they were very known. And so I thought, Well, I wanna be part of that. So I even wrote to *Art Diary*, when *Flash Art* was still doing *Art Diary*, I wrote to them and I said I wanted to put my name in their database, and they screwed it up. And I'm still in their database 'cause they don't ever take you out somehow. But they have the wrong address for me, it's a very old address. And I'm not even gonna bother correcting it because it's too much hassle, and the phone number they have for me is my ex-gallerist, Cokkie Snoei's.

01:46:20 SMW: So if they call up and think they are gonna get Sands Murray they'll get Cokkie Snoei gallery. And I did not do that, that was their mistake. So I really like it now that all this... It's bringing it to life, what we're doing together. It's like your interest and your engagement, you specifically Radna, with what I do and who I am... Our conversations... This is kind of what I've been waiting for all these years. Because it's exactly that. That it breathes life into it, and I'm not particular or possessive or thinking that no one can touch my stuff. It depends on what it is I guess, some things I have to keep in a certain order. But in essence... Yeah, this is really what I've been waiting for. And it's much nicer than doing it alone because nobody... This is the whole problem with this Corona lockdown, which brings us full circle in the conversation today. Because we realize now, human beings realize, and we always knew this, but it's become even more clear. I mean, I used to go out sometimes just to get out of the house, I would go on a walk to the center of the city to go to a perfume shop to test perfume.

01:47:47 SMW: 'Cause Robin does the shopping. So sometimes I don't even have to leave the house for days, so I would give myself like assignments to leave the house and go do something, whatever it was just to get out of

the house. And I would specifically take the most touristic central streets like the Kalverstraat or whatever, full of people. Just to be... That wonderful Dutch expression, which is one of my favorites: 'onder de mensen' [amongst people]. It's so weird, if you translate that directly... 'Under the people', it doesn't even work. It sounds really weird, but it makes perfect sense to me because you're surrounded by people. And this is because I'm an incredibly social person. I spend a lot of time alone, and I do keep myself, to an extent, self-sufficient, I wouldn't call it isolated, I would say self-sufficient. I spend a lot of time with Robin and our cat Duman, just being here in the apartment, but I feel very, very social, and when I am among people, I want to... No matter how depressed I am, when I'm with other people, I make a real effort to not moan and complain, and no matter how I'm feeling when I'm alone.

01:49:16 SMW: When I'm with other people, I think it's the responsibility that I give myself, to be social and to show interest in what other people are saying and doing and thinking. And also because I am interested. It's almost like other people are... Robin and I were just talking about this the other night... 'Cause I've been with Robin nearly as long as my archive has been going, about 24 years. But when you're with someone that long... It depends on the couple, I guess... But with Robin and me, I cannot even really see myself anymore when I'm with him because he literally is like my other half. Like I feel more complete when I'm with him. It's like two halves of the circle or something like that. So when I'm with him I don't see weirdnesses or idiosyncrasies or behavioral things... I see this with people that I don't spend all of my time with or my whole life with... Everyone is kind of a mirror for each other, we're all kind of mirroring, and showing each other facets of ourselves that we don't always see when we're in very close relationships like love or intimate relationships. They're both very important, I think. And I really miss this because of the lockdown.

01:50:49 SMW: And I'm glad it's getting a bit easier now to see people one way or another. It's so hard to not be around other people and have that experience of mirroring. Or just even thinking about what it is

to be with other people, that you're not romantically involved with. Because that's been my world for the past two months, and for many of us, it's in that way. So this archiving, I would say it's the simple word that comes to mind is 'relief.' I feel relief that I managed to survive this long and could experience this feeling of now sharing the responsibility or sharing the... Not even the responsibility so much as just sharing the activity of talking about all of this stuff and going through it. And not seeing it even as mine necessarily, but seeing it as something which reflects on a human condition. It's almost like by doing it together with the four of us, I have to own it, but I also can let it go and I can just see it as something which is not really me anymore. It is, and it's not. It's very double, and I think that has to do with working together.

01:52:29 SMW: It just feels so nice... I'm not used to that all... It's very, very new for me to have anyone... I was a bit shy at the beginning because I thought... And we talked about this, you and I, and also all of us together, that whole question of trash, because I'm so used to seeing what I do as insignificant or nobody cares or whatever. That it's been very new for me to have this experience of people showing interest and care. You know, engaging with all this stuff. Because it feels... It's just new, I'm not used to it. And I must say that's what Carolee... I felt a bit sorry for Carolee at the end. Because when Carolee did get recognition in the last two or three years of her life, like when she got the Golden Lion in Venice, I think I've told you... She just... She hated it. She said it was all these fat Italian men in suits. I hate to repeat this on a recording, but this is what she said. She didn't like it because it wasn't what she'd been waiting for as far as collaboration went. And I feel like I've been very lucky over the years with Robin and with other special people. And then when you came into my life, for instance... When we came into each other's lives.

01:53:51 SMW: I feel like now, the people that I'm working with and that I am getting attention from and giving attention to are people that I feel that there's a two-way street going on with it. No matter how much I talk, I know that I'm talking with you, specifically you...

I would speak differently to other people. Part of the reason I talk so much is also because it's a form for me of generosity. Because I feel that I'm sharing things which are urgent somehow and very considered. I don't see it as a monologue at all, because I know, with you also, and with special people in my life, that when I speak, they're gonna hear things that I say. Which they'll reflect on and then it will come back to me through things that you say in the future. So it's like an investment, it's like a mutual investment or something like that. And yeah, this archiving together. It's made things easier. Now we can't do things physically, we have to do it this way... But even this, that you're recording our conversation is... It gives me such hope and... I thought of the Dutch word 'voldoening.' How would you translate 'voldoening', is it 'satisfaction'?

01:55:37 RR: I think so, yeah. Or maybe 'fulfillment'.

01:55:43 SMW: Yes, 'fulfillment' is a good one as well. I feel like this is how I want things to be for the rest of my life. And I don't mean... 'cause it's not a... You said it yourself, you use that word 'schare'. Like a group, a small group of people that are rooting for me or giving me attention, or that I'm in dialogue with. I hope that this stays this way and develops, and I'm going to invest in it so that hopefully will continue. All this stuff, all these physical things, these papers and notes and bags and bags and things like what Ivan Cheng said... How would this be accessed in the future, how will it go out into the world. These are very important questions that I don't really have direct answers to, but I guess we're gonna figure it out together. That's great, that's amazing. I never dreamed of something like this. When I heard the word 'intern'... It's one thing to have the fabulous collaboration with you and with Megan, but I never thought I would hear the word intern in relation to my own work [laughs] You know I thought this is something that... Collaboration happens for very rich, very famous artists or whatever. And who am I? Whatever. So when I heard the word intern I had to laugh. I thought, this is amazing. When I tell people that I'm working with someone who is officially an intern, that we're even able to pay. That makes me feel quite proud in a way. It's great.

01:57:45 RR: I think the interviews were also very exciting. The interviews for the internship were almost events.

01:57:54 SMW: Yes, they were like performances, there were events in themselves. And then we were doing Amalia's interview on Skype... The thing that I fear most. That was really bizarre. And I said that: Interviewing for interns... I never in my life dreamed that I would be doing that. In my life, I've always been the one who had to convince someone else to hire me or to take me or to pay attention to me. I never was in the position to choose and to help choose someone to work together on my stuff. So it's been... Yeah, it's been amazing. I'm so glad it's not over, and that it looks like in the next... Well, before the summer's over, I'm expecting probably in the middle of July, or we'll see... But it looks like we're gonna be able to start coming together again. Because Robin was even talking to his parents about... He hasn't seen his parents since the lockdown because his dad's health isn't so good.

01:59:14 RR: Me neither.

01:59:15 SMW: Are you gonna go soon, to see yours?

01:59:18 RR: I think I'll go next week actually, because they are married 40 years on the 20th of May. I'm okay and Ingmar is okay, so I think we can visit them.

01:59:31 SMW: Yeah, and you can keep your social distance if you want, you know... A meter and a half. And it's so wonderful that they are married on the 20th of May, in the sense that that was the official date when the regulations would be looked at again. First it was the 28th of April and then it moved to the 20th of May. So I've been keeping that day in mind as a magic number, or something like that. A magic date.

02:00:08 RR: Sands, I think I'm just going to stop the recording. We can still stay a bit, but because it's already two hours and I'm just afraid that the file is getting too big. [laughs] So can I stop and save it and you stay on the line?

02:00:26 SMW: Yeah.

