

CONVER SATION

SANDS &
ROBIN

(ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

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(English translation)

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00:00:00 Robin Wassink-Murray: Does it have a meter on it or something, so you can see it?

00:00:05 Radna Rumping: Yes, you can just see that, I'll keep a bit of an eye on it.

[Talking in the background]

00:00:17 RWM: I don't feel like it right now...

00:00:18 RR: Yeah, I'm not hungry actually...

00:00:20 RWM: I just finished a sandwich, so...

00:00:32 RR: Where do we start? Well, I do have a start, actually. I would find it interesting to hear in which way Robin is an actual part of Sands' work. For example, sometimes you are more present in the background with what you do...

00:00:54 RWM: Yeah, that's mainly what we're talking about, I think. And of course I do a lot for him. I help him when he has to set things up... That's a little less now, isn't it? Now that he has four colleagues he works closely with, of which you are one. That is something different, because that whole show in London, eventually... It used to be always... I actually pretty much set up everything. The technical things when he does a presentation or something, I set those up. That is now no longer necessary, because there are now professional people, thanks to If I Can't Dance [I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution] but that is my biggest influence. Except... But you might better voice that – how I influence you? That of course has to do with what we talk about every day.

00:01:39 Sands Murray-Wassink: Yes how do I always phrase that... We are a team. That's how I always say it: we've been together since November 16, 1996. And yes, I have always seen you as very influential because you have taught me a lot about people and also how to look at art and my own work. Because you... How do you say that? Feet or legs on the ground? You keep my feet on the ground.

00:02:21 RWM: Yeah, you shouldn't get too dreamy. So sometimes I also say harsh things on purpose, while I don't mean it so hard. When I say "what nonsense, act normal"

for example, while I actually don't want him to act normal. But then he just gets carried away a bit too much, and I try to ground him again.

00:02:43 SMW: It's not so much that I get carried away but...

00:02:46 RWM: Well, you can get absorbed in your thoughts. And then you sometimes end up with unrealistic ideas, I think. And even though it may sound nice, when it's not really practical I will help to remind you.

00:03:00 SMW: Yes, he is very practical in that respect. But you also do it to challenge me a bit, I have the idea. Not just to keep my feet on the ground, but also to say, how can people look at that with a... Sometimes it even sounds a bit cynical. Like... What did you say about that, about my drawing? That it doesn't... What was it? You said something about...

00:03:27 RWM: Yeah, I said in a cynical way "oh, that's really beautiful" or something. Your work is unpolished of course and often not intended to be beautiful or something, it's more about what lays behind it. What it wants to say is more important than what it looks like. And if it doesn't look that attractive, it actually has a more important message than something that does look nice. So I get that, but I like to joke about it too, of course.

00:04:05 RR: How do you feel about that Sands?

00:04:05 SMW: I like it, I can appreciate it coming from him. When it would come from someone else I might think "they don't get it" or maybe I would find it annoying or something. But we've been together for so long. He also has a certain view of my work, which is unique I think, because he knows me better than anyone else. So that's very...

00:04:38 RWM: I am also uneducated, in that regard.

00:04:38 SMW: Yes uneducated, that's important too. When we met, that was the time of the Young British Artists in London and I had just discovered Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas. And Tracey Emin once said something like, "When I go to the bakery or the dental hygienist, I want them to be able to understand my work a bit too" So it doesn't become so abstract

that it has no connection with everyday life anymore. So when I got to know you, I thought... I thought your view of my work was interesting. I think we complement each other in that regard.

00:05:34 RWM: I think we also have big contrasts. I am indeed quite logical, because I always want a little... What do you call that? I like symmetry, and for things to be neat and a bit logical and I want to know a little bit about what's going to happen. Things like that. I always strive to have nothing left to do, but when I have achieved that, I do start looking for other things again. And with him I have found that. It's something that complements me in a way that I can't achieve by myself, because I'm not actually built that way.

00:06:15 RR: But you know from yourself that you are curious about it?

00:06:18 RWM: Yeah, exactly.

00:06:19 RR: It might be something you would enjoy but just isn't part of your character, in that sense?

00:06:22 RWM: I don't think I would have ended up in the art world by myself. I also knew nothing about art. It might be nice to share: when I got to know him and came to his studio in de Ateliers for the first time, the school where he was at the time, and I was looking around... That kind of work...

00:06:44 SMW: No, not that kind of work, there was a specific painting.

00:06:47 RWM: That's right, yes. That's what I wanted to say. You are used to work that is beautiful, the type of work that compliments the sofa. If you don't really come into contact with artists and you don't have an interest in art, then you actually know nothing about art. So I was like that and my idea was that art must be beautiful

00:07:02 RR: 'Skillfully made.' [laughs]

00:07:03 RWM: Exactly. And then I saw his work and then I thought 'it can also be like this' And then there was something in the corner that looked very rough, so I asked

him, "Is that something you clean your brushes on or something?" But as it turned out that was a work he had sold to one of his teachers. For quite a high amount even, I think...

00:07:32 SMW: Marien Schouten, yes.

00:07:33 RWM: At that time that thing was still attached to it right? That thing which Roos pulled off?

00:07:36 SMW: Yes it was like this... It's a couple, and they are both artists: Marien Schouten and Roos Theuws. Her last name is a bit difficult for me to pronounce.

00:07:49 RWM: Theuws.

00:07:52 SMW: But I came to their house to deliver the work and it was wrapped in bubble wrap. It wasn't on canvas or fabric, it was on board, MDF or something. And on top was a piece of gold cardboard, it looked like packaging material. And indeed they paid quite a lot of money for it. And they were unpacking it and Roos saw something hanging and she thought it was packaging material and she pulled that off. And I had glued that part in a very delicate way so that it stuck. And Marien was furious, he could not believe it.

00:08:22 RWM: I was not there.

00:09:04 RWM: And Roos said... That's the thing with art, I think... Sometimes you wonder when you walk into an exhibition space: what am I looking at? Is that socket intended like this, or is it art? So this was just a case of 'this is packaging material so it has to be removed.'

00:09:28 RR: 'Is it trash or trashy?' [laughs]

00:09:37 SMW: Yes, 'is it trash or trashy?' It's always like that. That was also Robin's introduction / confrontation with my work... But you also saw – that's important to tell – it was a very large studio so you were probably a bit confused. Because you thought 'it is a large building, there are only twenty people here and everyone has a studio of 100 square meters.' Or what do I know, very big.

00:10:06 RR: Almost bigger than this house, right?

00:10:10 SMW: It is bigger than this house, with a ceiling twice as high, or even three times. It's really super big. So for you that was probably... That coherence of prestige and what it looked like...

00:10:27 RWM: And of course you know that there is a lot of money going around in the art world. You can of course see the auctions of Van Gogh and that sort of thing, on the news. So you know that. But with that type of work, I didn't know that either. But on the other hand, it was not completely strange either, because you are aware that people in the art world have a certain view on life that deviates from the norm, so to say. There is a difference between people who are creative and reside in the art world, let's say, and people who have absolutely nothing to do with it. And that divide, I still have that due to my work, because I still have a 'normal job', I always say. I work in a hospital and my colleagues in the laboratory are highly skilled and in general highly educated analysts. But when I tell them about what we do on the weekend or what we are doing or what we are interested in, they absolutely don't understand. They only talk about going away for the weekend and going camping in the summer, and things like that. But when you start talking about interesting things that go a little deeper, you will lose them very quickly.

00:11:38 RR: Yes.

00:11:38 RWM: Which makes me the 'weirdo' in their eyes. But that makes sense actually...

00:11:43 RR: So maybe in terms of knowledge of art, you didn't have that at the time, but in terms of your vision on life, or politics or how you want to go through life, that did click?

00:11:53 RWM: That clicked yes. I also had a circle of friends who, well... Were mainly interested in 'booze and chicks' from which I actually really wanted to part with. Well they were a bit better than that... But anyway, when I met Sands I wanted to move to Amsterdam pretty quickly. Luckily I managed to do that by buying a small room, and I haven't seen them since.

One of them once called like “we should come by sometime” and I was like “I don’t know if I feel like it.” Actually, I have never run into them since then. We did see one of them. When we were sitting on the terrace by the road...

00:12:36 SMW: He was friendly, but that was your favorite.

00:12:36 RWM: Yes, that was Raymundo and he already lived in Amsterdam, and he is a landscape engineer and he was a bit more interesting.

00:12:50 RR: I’m actually very curious, because you mentioned November 96... I was looking around on your Vimeo... And there is a recording of your first telephone conversation

00:13:03 SMW: Yes.

00:13:03 RR: And I had another listen to it again today – I didn’t quite listen to all of it – and I assumed ‘oh Sands must have recorded that’ but...

00:13:16 RWM: No, I recorded that.

00:13:16 RR: I am actually very curious about that.

00:13:19 RWM: Well, I can tell you about that. We met in a gay bar, it was called ‘Havana’, it no longer exists, in the Reguliersdwarstraat. I was out with a friend who wasn’t really my boyfriend anymore. We had been together, but not really anymore. But he lived on the Keizersgracht, around the corner from the Rembrandtplein, and I still went out with him a lot and visited him there. That night we went out too, with several friends... And there was a seat available next to him [Sands]. And neither of us were looking for a partner or anything. For me it was quite early after coming out and I had only been going out in the gay scene for a few years. So it was all a bit new. And he had had his share as well, I think, with the relationships he had been through, I think. He was kind of fed up with men.

00:14:10 SMW: No, I wasn’t looking.

00:14:12 RWM: But that chair was available and I sat down next to him. Or at least, I asked if it was taken and then

we started talking. And then we went to the ‘It’ a club which also no longer exists... Now I feel old, but you know of it... And that friend of mine, he also had some sort of hotel rooms in his house, he had a large canal house from his boss, which is now his. And I could just sleep there, with him, and that was our first meeting. The day after I went home with my car. And then I called him for the first time the following Wednesday. And I thought that was interesting. I thought this could be an interesting conversation.

00:14:54 SMW: And you were already recording the conversations with your grandmother.

00:15:00 RWM: I was, yes. I always liked to play with electronics, that’s why I also ended up in IT, I think. This was an old-fashioned Bakelite telephone, with a rotary dial, or maybe with keys... I don’t really remember. But there was a screw underneath, which let you take the cover off, and then you could connect things to it.

00:15:20 SMW: [laughs]

00:15:21 RWM: So I just connected two wires to it and connected it to the microphone jack in my cassette recorder. And then I could record it, I found out. That just somehow worked. In the analogue era that was still possible. And I liked doing that. So yes, I had that option, so I just did it. I just recorded that conversation without telling, but I also think I forgot, during the conversation. And then we made our first date for that Saturday after that, Friday or Saturday I would visit him where he lived then. And I think I told him then, or the day after. We were in the car, and then I told you I recorded it and I had it with me on a tape too. I immediately showed that in the car. He thought that was very interesting and then he said: “we have to make a work out of that.”

00:16:15 SMW: I said right away that it was already a work.

00:16:18 RWM: Yes, that it was already a work. Exactly. So, we had to transfer all that to CD, and we had that done in an edition of ten, very few. I think we sold one since then, didn’t we?

00:16:30 SMW: Maybe a few actually. I made two editions of ten CDs.

00:16:46 RWM: Which was also funny, because then we actually had to make a kind of cover for it. And I was working on a computer in Paint in Windows 3.1, at the time, and I wanted to make something really beautiful. And I can still remember that we bought pink paper, and that the print try-outs which had failed... He thought they were good enough. He just cut those out – it looked a bit messy – and that's what it turned out to be. Whereas I wanted to make a really nice design. But then I learned that it is actually better that way, because that way you put more of your own feelings into it.

00:17:23 SMW: Well things are less mediated or something. There are fewer steps between your ideas. It is spontaneity that you get.

00:17:43 RWM: Less editing, more spontaneity. That's what you use in your work, yes. If you make something spontaneously, it is just completed in one go.

00:17:50 SMW: And that's very important, because then it's directly... It's as close as possible to what's going on in your brain.

00:18:05 RWM: Roughness.

00:18:05 SMW: Roughness yes. Not polished, usually not, some things, but generally not really. And that suits you too, I think. And that's why we're together... Because you are too... The way the house is furnished, our apartment, it's also very practical. We needed a couch, so we have a couch. And we needed a few chairs so we collected some chairs. From his parents, or... I don't know where that chair Radna is sitting comes from?

00:18:38 RWM: It comes from my work.

00:18:40 SMW: But we have absolutely no affinity with interior design.

00:18:52 RR: Would it be okay if I close the window?

00:18:54 SMW: Yeah, yeah. They are both open...

00:18:57 RWM: It's a bit noisy, yeah...

00:18:57 RR: Oh, it is audible, but this makes a big difference.

00:19:01 SMW: Is this better?

00:19:04 RWM: Close the other ones too.

00:19:04 RWM: Yes, during the day it's a disaster. I work from home now of course, and then I sit here, in front of that television. And that is how I work, and if those windows are open... that is just simply not possible. It's a disaster.

00:19:08 RR: Yes.

00:19:09 SMW: Yes, there is a lot of noise outside right now.

00:19:10 RR: But I find it really fascinating that Robin made that recording.

00:19:30 SMW: Yes...

00:19:31 RR: Also because it fits with your work very well...

00:19:48 SMW: Yes.

00:19:48 RR: And that I thought 'oh you already did that then' and that you immediately thought I'm going to record or document it. Even if it was a spontaneous gesture... And that it has become a work... That fits very well, and I think it is really beautiful.

00:19:48 SMW: I remember our first night very well, at Peter – we can mention his name – your ex boyfriend. I couldn't stop talking. We've actually been awake almost all night.

00:20:05 RWM: No...

00:20:11 SMW: Almost. Until very late.

00:20:12 RWM: No, you started talking in the morning.

00:20:13 SMW: Well, my memory is that I couldn't stop talking. It really felt like I had someone in front of me who could understand me... And I had never experienced

anyone who I thought could appreciate my way of thinking and the way I go through life. I realized that immediately, in terms of feeling.

00:20:44 RWM: You were also deeply embedded in the art world at that time. If you were at de Ateliers at that time, you were a bit shielded. You weren't allowed to do exhibitions, you could only work in your studio. That was kind of how it was back then. It has changed a bit, I believe. But that he met a 'normal' person, someone like me who isn't part of it... Because your boyfriend, whom you were with before, he even came from de Ateliers. That is very different of course.

00:21:17 SMW: Yes, but I knew very quickly, I already knew that in Kansas... It was very clear to me: artists and I, that doesn't work in a romantic relationship. Or at least I never got to know one from whom I thought... Even with Bas, that was really intense, we were arguing all the time. So I was actually already looking for... It is not so much about whether someone is in the art world or not, it is about how people think about life, and how they treat other people. And what I noticed in the art world, already back then, was that there was not much attention to how we treat other people. It was very low on the list of important things. You had to make beautiful things, you had to sell, you had to become famous... Have a career, basically. And how you treated others that was... That just wasn't really on anyone's list.

00:22:34 RWM: Do you think that has changed?

00:22:37 SMW: No, I don't think it has changed. I think it's generally still the same, which is why I seek out people like Radna, Megan, Amalia and Frédérique Bergholtz from If I Can't Dance. People who are more sensitive to how they treat people, because that's what it's all about.

00:23:01 RR: It exists but you really have to search for it...

00:23:03 SMW: Yes, it exists.

00:23:04 RR: ... you won't just end up there.

00:23:08 SMW: No, you really have to look for it and build a kind of network of people you trust.

00:23:15 RWM: And that is what clicked. Because I couldn't be together with a standard artist who is really just about the work...

00:23:25 SMW: Business like.

00:23:28 RWM: ...and is indeed only interested in money and prestige. Because he thinks it's important. Sands feels it's more important that he treats people well. That is more important to him than a flourishing career, and that is something that really appeals to me.

00:23:48 RR: Yes...

00:23:49 RWM: At the core of us there are things that are exactly the same, I guess, but a different life has been shaped around it. Because I was also born here [The Netherlands] and he... That is all very different of course. Yet still, there are also a lot of differences between us, but that really complements each other very much. To remain grounded for you and I just want some more dreaminess, because otherwise my life might become really boring? So in that way, yes, I think we complement each other very well.

00:24:19 SMW: And every time it gets balanced, say when you've finished things or something, I make a mess of it again.

00:24:30 RWM: Or I do so myself.

00:24:30 SMW: Or you do so yourself. But usually... [laughs] I'm quite...

00:24:33 RWM: He is indeed very good at it. The messiness we have here... I'm also not very neat and I don't like cleaning, but still a little bit more than he does. He just takes it a little too far.

00:24:47 SMW: I do usually let it get too far... That also has... It's no excuse... But it's just a fact, it also has to do with depression, I guess. All the depressed people I know, manic depressive or just depressed... Cleaning and keeping things in order is generally difficult for people who are depressed.

00:25:11 RWM: But then when you have done it, it's very satisfying, so it is very good actually. But to take that step to do something. That is something that remains difficult...

00:25:23 SMW: Maybe I can... This might be something... I don't know... Hopefully I'm phrasing this the right way, but there is something in the art world that is also – and I have never talked about this, or at least never on record... I've always had difficulties with the fact that in the art world you don't see what's going on behind the scenes. My work is very much based on the fact that when you see a painting... I want to make apparent in my work, in whatever way, what lies behind it. That you have to pay the rent, that you have to eat, that you have to shit, that you have to go grocery shopping, that you have to clean, that you have to pay the rent and utilities and that you have to go to the doctor. All those things that remain hidden.

00:26:35 RWM: You mentioned “pay rent” twice.

00:26:35 RR: [laughs]

00:26:35 RWM: That's exactly the thing you don't do. [laughs]

00:26:35 SMW: [laughs] That is something I'm very aware of, that it is basically paid for me...

00:26:43 RWM: But that's also what your work is very much about, and that's something you see with very few artists.

00:26:48 SMW: Invisible labor.

00:26:53 RWM: The end result, the work of art, is often the most important for artists. But for you it's the process, and it shows, I can't name any other artist who does that.

00:27:05 SMW: Well, there are. And people have different ways of expressing that in their work. So I'm not saying I'm the only one, but it's not really common.

00:27:21 RR: No. And I think it is that which makes life and work merge. Also domestic life and art, and your relationship is part of that too.

00:27:27 SMW: Yes.

00:27:33 RR: And that's evident too, because if I'd never met you, Robin, for example, I would still have known things about you because I know Sands's work.

00:27:37 RWM: Oh, yes for sure.

00:27:41 RR: So they are quite... Well actually, the relationship, family, where you come from, daily life... All of that is also in your work.

00:28:00 SMW: Yes.

00:28:01 RR: And in a way that has not been edited, or hardly edited.

00:28:04 SMW: I see art as a kind of toolbox, full with stuff like a hammer and whatever... Whatever you want to call it. To me art is also a system, a belief system. A system of thoughts and how I perceive the world. I really use it to get through life. That is why it is very important to me that those things become visible. And I think it also helps, because at de Ateliers and other places I always tried to talk about money with other artists. How do you earn money, how does it work? And at that time... Now they are talking about it, or now they are starting to talk about it. There are business courses at art schools. But in that time they had nothing to say about it. It just wasn't a topic.

00:29:12 RR: Or it was important but...

00:29:17 SMW: No, that had nothing to do with art itself. It was always about aesthetics or the quality of an object. And I thought that was so bizarre, because I thought it is all made by people and you're not talking about people. How is that possible? It's not a chair or... And I know that design-wise... everything has become a little bit more fluid. Fashion, design and everything...things are not so separated anymore in specific boxes... But in the end the quality of life is the most important, I think? Because if you don't have that covered, or if that is shaky, it will show in everything; your behavior and in your work itself, I think.

00:30:12 RWM: Yes, a lot of people who... Like Rob, with whom we went to St. Petersburg, gave a lecture about that: how art actually belongs to all of us and the artist is only a medium. It appears to the artist who expresses it through his work, so the artist isn't important. It appears from somewhere, and that goes through the artist but it is meant for us, the audience.

00:30:36 SMW: But I always find that so strange, because where does it come from then?

00:30:40 RWM: I tried to talk to him about it...

00:30:43 SMW: He is a philosopher...

00:30:43 RWM: He was very nice and we got along with him, but...

00:30:47 RR: It was vague or something?

00:30:48 RWM: Yes, something like that, it actually came down to something spiritual, according to him.

00:30:55 SMW: It can also be spiritual, but it has to be connected with real life, otherwise it will become too abstract or too floaty.

00:31:06 RWM: Exactly. Because you are not just a tool, you are human.

00:31:12 SMW: Yes. Art is the tool.

00:31:13 RWM: Yeah, it's not like you're just a medium, and that's what he kind of meant. It's a nice philosophical thought, but I didn't think it made much sense...

00:31:25 SMW: It's also a generalization. Not all artists work the same. Some artists might agree. They work from nine to five and are a completely different person after that. Of course there's those artists too... They might also be very good artists, but that is different from what we are talking about now, I think.

00:31:46 RR: Yes I think so too. I'm curious, Robin, if you sometimes feel – because your personal life is also made public by Sands' work – if you ever have a problem with that? Or that you think 'should this really be out there for everyone to see?'

00:31:59 RWM: No...

00:31:59 RR: Because it is very open and sometimes explicitly so, and therefore also vulnerable. Which I find very special because it brings me to think 'wow Sands does things that I really wouldn't dare to share.' But how do you feel about that? Because it is also about you and about you two together.

00:32:16 RWM: Yes, it took some getting used to in the beginning, I must say. Because I'm not that extroverted. Neither is Sands actually, but in his work he is. And I indeed tend to keep things more to myself. But it's that contrast which attracts me. That's something... I think it's interesting. Maybe I wouldn't do it myself, but that he does, I think is very good.

00:32:40 SMW: We even have examples. Remember those pictures...

00:32:53 RWM: Yes that nude work. Yes indeed. He wanted to make wallpaper from his sex photos that he had made by a photographer. It was eventually done in 2008, but in 1997, at his first exhibition, he wanted to do that at the Stedelijk Museum Bureau. And I did have a hard time with that at first. I thought 'I've only known him for a few months, and now he'll be standing there full blown, with an erection...' That did make me think like 'hmm.' But I took some time to think about it and I then quickly figured it out. You still have that letter that I sent, in which I wrote that in the end I was fine with it. But I had to get used to it, I explained in that letter, so that is an example of such a thing. But you get over that and at some point you get used to it, and ultimately I have no problems with it at all. Also during the performance in Bern ['Town Hall Philosophical Living Color Drawing' at Performance Saga, Bern, 2008]...

00:33:41 RR: Yes I wanted to talk about that too. Because that is in 2008 with Beth [Stephens] and Annie Sprinkle.

00:33:48 SMW: Yes.

00:33:48 RR: I am curious about that because that was actually the first time where you were visibly part of a performance. While before you could often be seen in other roles but not in the spotlight.

00:34:05 RWM: Basically we did two performances together. Bern was the first, which was also the greatest success, I think. I did indeed do quite intimate things there. I kind of filmed inside his body – you saw it of course – with a...

00:34:20 SMW: Speculum.

00:34:30 RWM: And afterwards they also asked me... People came up to me like "do you have no problem with that?" Jealousy and stuff is what they were talking about.

00:34:37 SMW: Possessiveness...

00:34:39 RWM: But by then I had been with you for so long, ten years or so, and it was absolutely no longer an issue for me. So I answered with a question myself: "what do you mean?" As if I own him and that his naked body or his words are only intended for me... I am not possessive at all, and I think it is very important because he is well-rounded, I think. And he has a good moral stance in life, and that is something that you should propagate and share. I like that and I only encourage it. So no, I have grown over that over the years. It took some getting used to, like I said, but already very quickly that went well.

00:35:21 RR: What I also liked about that performance is that Sands was naked and you were wearing clothes, but still you were clearly in a performance together. In a slightly different role, but that it was really by you two together. And towards the end, was it Annie [Sprinkle] who said she thought it was transgressive? Because it was love, that was clearly shown too?

00:35:39 SMW: I think (it was) Annie, Annie Sprinkle.

00:35:42 RR: And then, I'll just call it the anal scene, which of course raised a lot of questions. And that she said that she felt something about that too, but that at the same time when you performed that dance for Robin that you also showed love on stage. And that it was very moving because you don't often see it that way. It is often one or the other.

00:36:10 SMW: By then we were already together for twelve years, right?

00:36:13 RWM: We had been together for twelve years then, yes.

00:36:17 SMW: So I see the things we do together – that was definitely a high point – it was almost like it took us twelve years to get to that point. That's why it's so powerful, I think. Because it was the first

time... And we only did that one other time with a very difficult audience at de Ateliers, a year later – and I was not naked, on the invitation it said I was, but not during the performance and that was also a problem for some, or at least, comments were made about it. It [Performance Saga, Bern, 2008] was just magical, but that also had to do with the context, because Annie Sprinkle was there, because it was a performance week in which younger artists did performances as homages to leading pioneering artists from the sixties, seventies and eighties. So that context was also perfect.

00:37:31 RWM: Who also participated themselves.

00:37:36 SMW: Who were there and performed as well. That making public of... What I find fascinating, whatever you expose or make public... You can never remove mystery. We can make everything public, I can make everything public, but there are still things that will remain private. That is just how life works and I find that so fascinating. And I am always exploring that, trying to push the limit of how far you can go. You can go incredibly far but some sense of mystery remains.

00:38:27 RWM: Oh, of course. It's not like you can get rid of it all.

00:38:29 RR: [laughs]

00:38:32 SMW: No, and I find that so... Because that border to many artists, to many people, is much closer... Closer to home. To search for that limit is something very specific. The limit of how far you can go in your work and how much you can show, how much you can tell. But some kind of mystery will always remain, and I think that's the essence of life or something. Something that remains. And I actually want to show that by removing all other things. Someone once said about my work that it was a kind of stripped down version of art making, and I thought that was fitting.

00:39:21 RWM: Yes that's how you work, that is how you are. And also during that performance ... For me it was absolutely not – I was a bit nervous beforehand, I had never actually been on stage and there were 200 people in the audience or something – but as soon

as we started, that felt so normal to me, because he is always himself. He also doesn't play an act or anything in his work. The way he is talking now, he will also be talking tonight, and it is also how he speaks on stage. So that is so recognizable to me and that gives me such a safe feeling. It really was absolutely no effort for me once I started. And you quickly forget about being naked. That is just how he is, and I am used to that, that he is like that on stage. Like at Witte de With [Kunstinstituut Melly] where he did a perfume performance. There he was also naked all day.

00:40:17 SMW: Three hours...

00:40:17 RWM: And after five minutes you are no longer aware of that actually.

00:40:26 SMW: Actually we're all like that, underneath our clothes. Hannah Wilke – she's one of my three favorite artists with Carolee Schneemann and Adrian Piper – Hannah Wilke said that 'exposing the truth is like nudity.' So there's something about taking your clothes off, that's a very specific gesture.

00:41:03 RR: Disarming...

00:41:04 SMW: Disarming, yes. And by doing so, you make yourself vulnerable. Because clothing is really just a construct, it is a social construct. It will keep you warm or cool, or whatever you need. But actually it's... We all know it, we're all naked, all the time actually.

00:41:26 RR: Yes.

00:41:33 RWM: Yes, your face huh? Everyone shows their face. You cover everything except your face while that is actually the most special because that distinguishes everyone. If you think about it, it is actually quite special that we walk around with a bare face, I think.

00:41:47 RR: [laughs] I've also thought about it... What if we would consider this (face) the most intimate. And clothing would therefore be very different than, for example, pants and a sweater, and that we would cover completely different parts of our bodies.

00:41:52 SMW: Yes.

00:42:04 RWM: What's so weird about your genitals that you have to be so careful with it? Hands can be just as special ... And the face is of course the most special and you just walk down the street with it. It's very strange actually...

00:42:19 SMW: That's probably for a practical reason, because you have to eat, you have to talk, so the mouth must be left uncovered, probably. And you have to see, smell or breathe through your nose and listen with your ears. So it's also for practical reasons, I think, that you leave your face uncovered.

00:42:45 RWM: Yes, but you don't have to. That's just a social construct that you do that. In some cultures it is very different...

00:42:54 SMW: That it does remain covered, yes...

00:42:57 RR: And Robin, have you filmed or photographed Sands a lot?

00:43:01 RWM: Yes, a lot. I would say that most of the photos you know of him I took, actually. Filming a little less, I think. Well, I do film his performances... But to do this, for example, that I would film him with the camera, that is something we've been wanting to do. But we have been wanting to do that for 20 years, but it just never really happens. I did sometimes set up a camera for him so he could just talk by himself and that's something that he'd like to do more often. But the pictures you see, many times it mentions 'by Robin' underneath.

00:43:45 SMW: Because he's very good at it. I don't know if it specifically has to do with me, because you are skilled with the camera anyway...

00:43:57 RWM: I am visually oriented...

00:43:59 RR: But you do give him directions?

00:44:03 SMW: Well, that's a bit... It's very organic, very natural. Because usually I want... I find it hard to look at myself, and you might find that a bit crazy, because I am so visible in my work. But I find this

confronting – also for me – to see myself in photos or film or whatever. But Robin, he takes pictures at the most unlikely moments... Like... I was sick once, on New Year's Eve, and we had ordered shawarma and I was in my dressing gown eating shawarma with sauce all over my face, and you took pictures. Just because...

00:44:58 RWM: I can't even remember that.

00:45:03 SMW: But we do really have them somewhere. Really gross, actually... Or when I'm talking, he does it on his own accord. I never have to ask for it. I don't say: "take a picture." We had that once with Carolee Schneemann, who said "and now I want you to take a picture" when I was combing her hair. But in general it is his initiative. He does it by himself, when he thinks it is important. Usually I don't want it, but afterwards I am usually very happy with it.

00:45:48 RWM: You don't like posing either, do you?

00:45:49 SMW: No.

00:45:49 RWM: That's why I usually don't say it because posed photos are also boring. It's nice when you see interaction between two people... When you capture that in a photo. And I try to do that, but when they see that you are going to take a picture, they often look at the lens and that is a pity. So indeed, I prefer to do that secretly. But you do like my gaze... Right?

00:46:19 SMW: Yes. Your gaze.

00:46:20 RR: The Robin gaze. [laughs]

00:46:22 SMW: The Robin gaze.

00:46:22 RR: I'm curious about the 'backstage of the backstage', so to say. About all the material, because there is physical work, but there is also a lot of digital work. Which we've been talking about a bit lately, and of which you sent gigantic Wetransfer folders our way...

00:46:43 SMW: And that was only a part.

00:46:44 RR: Of course that was only a part.

00:46:46 SMW: Yes.

00:46:47 RR: I'm curious what role Robin plays... Whether you play a role in that too, in digitizing all the photos or organizing them?

00:46:58 RWM: Definitely. I got to know him in 1996. That is actually almost still pre internet times.

00:47:11 RR: Yes.

00:47:11 RWM: I did already have an internet connection, but that was still over the telephone lines, and it was all very slow. And in that time Sands did not have an e-mail address yet... His mother at one point asked for his e-mail address. Well, he did not get that at all. How did she get into thinking he had an e-mail address? So at that time he also used my e-mail address for correspondence for a long time, but at a certain point that of course changed... But it was also pre-digital photography... The first digital photo camera we have, I bought in 2001 I believe, that was again a few years later. So most of the photos from the period before that – that's a lot – are stacks of analog photos, printed, and we have the negatives still too. I sometimes buy devices, scanners, equipment with which you can scan the photos. For example I bought something that you can use to connect a video recorder to your computer, so that you can convert it to a digital file with USB. So I do those types of things, or if it's too complicated, we have it done by someone else. But those are things that I can do, so often I will.

00:48:26 SMW: And also about my hard drive, about arranging all the folders...

00:48:33 RWM: Yes, that should actually be done better. But I do arrange it a little bit for him, so that he has at least a folder per year, for example.

00:48:40 RR: Yes.

00:48:41 RWM: And that he has a backup, which is also important. We still have to come up with something for that, because your backup is at home here. You should

always have a backup outside your house, right? Because if a bomb explodes here, you have nothing at all. So you have to put it online or whatever... So that's what I'm working on.

00:48:59 RR: I don't know if you can back up to If I Can't Dance? [laughs]

00:49:01 RWM: Yes, exactly.

00:49:05 SMW: That would be an idea...

00:49:10 RWM: Like you can store some on your Google Drive... But yes, those are things that keep me busy. That's not... You're not really the technical type.

00:49:17 SMW: No, but you are very handy in that respect, because you know it all. You can... If you don't know something, you can somehow... You know so much that you can figure out how to get certain things done. Even if you never did before.

00:49:37 RWM: My IT background is useful, yes. If he gets a file sent... Who did you just get a file from? Some... From Apple...

00:49:46 SMW: Oh, from Perdu [center for poetry and experiment].

00:49:51 RWM: Oh, exactly. The invoice you received was a certain Apple file.

00:49:55 SMW: Pages...

00:49:55 RWM: Pages, yes. I think it is quite straight-forward, you just google what kind of file that is... And then you put the word 'convert' behind it, and that will already result in an online converter which turns it into a Word document. That makes sense to me, but for him that doesn't go automatically.

00:50:13 SMW: No.

00:50:13 RWM: So I'll take care of that.

00:50:15 SMW: And the whole exploration of all those folders and stuff, that's also thanks to you. That things are a bit ordered, actually.

00:50:28 RWM: Yes, but that should actually be much better of course. But that's something you have to sit down for, and that would be quite a project. And that just never happened. But I am glad that this project is now taking place, that it has actually been taken out of my hands a little bit. That it is just happening.

00:50:40 SMW: Well it's also a thing that in the past I have – it's better now – but in the past I was also very, very impatient. If you were doing something for me – I can easily admit it – I got very, very irritated when things weren't done a bit quickly... And now I have a lot more patience, I notice. I hardly ever become irritated again, at least not about that.

00:51:12 RWM: No, that has improved, yes.

00:51:13 RR: And the digital is of course not as direct as the making of a drawing? There is always a program in between and that program may not work immediately...

00:51:24 SMW: Yes, yes.

00:51:26 RR: You always depend on other things too. That a file might have become outdated and so on, these are things that then also come into play.

00:51:34 SMW: With Word or something. With technical things you just have to have a little patience usually...

00:51:44 RWM: At least you have a fast computer.

00:51:47 SMW: Yes, but that's also thanks to you.

00:51:48 RWM: Yes, that's something that I generally take care of. Also his previous computer, which he had for fifteen years, I believe. I had just bought such a good computer that it lasted a long time. It was also quite expensive. And nowadays with those SSDs and processors, it all goes so fast. And it will continue to do so. Nowadays it is actually no longer an issue. He sometimes still asks whether the computer is on when he wants to do something... And that doesn't really matter, because you turn it on and fifteen seconds later it is ready. You used to have to wait a few minutes for that. So it doesn't matter whether a computer is on or not, you can just use it right away.

00:52:29 RR: Yes.

00:52:30 SMW: And I don't know why that is... But I usually have things – when I'm taking notes or something – I want to see it on paper. I want to use my hands... I even find it soothing to make marks. How do you say that?

00:52:49 RWM: Yes, you are a 'mark maker' in that regard.

00:52:53 SMW: A 'mark maker', yes. Because if I don't feel right... If I write down a few words, in my own handwriting of course, then I immediately feel different in one way or another. As if I did something, as if I made something. It's physical, I can see it. It's not digital, it's not on the internet. It's that physical... It has to do with the body, that the body is also physical. So I find that contradiction, or that situation of having a physical body, but also having a presence on the internet... I still find that complicated.

00:53:32 RR: Yes.

00:53:43 SMW: If I stopped being physical, if I was just energy, floating energy, I would be fine. But I find it difficult to make that translation or whatever you call it, from physical to digital. Or cyberspace...

00:54:01 RWM: I am not like that at all. I prefer to have everything on my computer, and as few copies as possible. I'd like to keep a clean desk policy, but that is not always the case. But I understand very well what you think, and it is also appealing to me. Because it is... on the one hand, it does make a mess. There are always all kinds of papers scattered all over the house here, but I also understand, because it is your way of... Your expression is actually part of everything. And if you didn't write it down with your handwriting, it wouldn't be the same. So that's not how I am, but I understand why he is, and that is why it clicks very well. And my neatness, to call it as such, that also attracts you because you like things... So the contradictions are also the attraction between us, in one way or another.

00:54:57 RR: But sometimes I also think that the digital side, that there might be a bit of an archive function in there, or a documentation function, or

whatever you call it. Because I also looked a little at the current website, but also at the previous ones...

00:55:14 SMW: Which he made.

00:55:15 RR: Yes, I really want to know more about it. It looks like it has a double function. Because they are often websites with a lot of links or a lot of names of others. As if it's almost... It's something different than your work or the physical, it's almost like an archive to me actually. It really is a source of information. It also seeks to be something different than your work, than your performances.

00:55:46 SMW: It has to do with research, I don't have a PhD but actually I have done a lot of research over the years. About other artists and movements and how things work. Very different things actually. Social stuff... Fashion was important in the beginning, Thierry Mugler and the likes... And sharing information has always been very important to me. The funny thing is that people were generally either annoyed by my past websites that Robin set up, or I got very few visitors. So I always really want to share. Share, share, share whether it's about me, or information about others that I consider important, or just information that I want to share with people. But what I always find so bizarre is that there are not that many people who are... Like you said, Radna. You said... There is a group of people or a handful of people...

00:57:11 RR: A loyal crowd of followers...

00:57:11 SMW: ...who might want that information. It always bothers me that the people who are perhaps more difficult, artists especially in my experience... Artists, who are very difficult to reach or who do not often share information about their life, or about what they know... It is as if people are drawn to that. When they say less, they are wanted even more.

00:57:44 RR: Hard to get.

00:57:45 SMW: Hard to get, yes exactly. And if you really like to share information and are very open in my experience, people often are... Then they are not really interested. Because it might be too easy. I don't know...

00:58:03 RWM: That's also a bit of the perspective of... What I said in the beginning about how I saw art as a layman, as someone who had nothing to do with it at all. Lots of people who, even art collectors I think, still think that way. They have no relationship with artists, they do buy work and all that. They may come into contact with that business side, with gallerists they talk about money and things like that. But they may miss actual contact with artists.

00:58:35 SMW: Well they have, but maybe in other ways.

00:58:37 RWM: Maybe yes, but I mean that the classical artist, the mysterious artist that you don't know much about and who can't express himself very well personally... That's something that was considered very attractive and still is by many people. And someone like Sands, who gives it all, people just don't understand.

00:59:03 SMW: I have the idea that people find me less intelligent because of that.

00:59:06 RWM: They think that because they are not used to it. You are supposed to be a complicated person whom I can't understand, or something... That's what they want, so that's also what they're willing to pay for... And if you expose yourself and just show things as they are...

00:59:18 SMW: In a simple way...

00:59:22 RWM: The simplicity of things, that's exactly what you want to make visible. And that scares people. Like "oh well, how boring."

00:59:30 RR: That requires a different type of intelligence from the reader, I think.

00:59:34 RWM: Exactly, to understand how special that is... You need something extra for that. Yes that's right.

00:59:40 RR: Maybe admit something yourself, or be willing to step out of a certain idea to see it.

00:59:47 RWM: Yes, exactly.

00:59:49 SMW: That has to do with emotion, I think. Emotional intelligence. It's different from... There are several ways to be intelligent, I think. It is very much

underestimated, in one way or another. It's like there is only one way and if you don't follow that way, then you have nothing, or you are nothing. I don't know.

01:00:18 RR: I also think it has to do with the amount of things you share. That not everyone can handle that, or that people can feel uncomfortable "because it is a lot." Or "where do I start" or "if I can't handle this all, then I won't at all." Because as a viewer you also have to be confident. For example with your book, that's so much text. So you actually have to be very comfortable yourself and think "well, I'll just read two pages and maybe read another page later." You don't have to know or understand everything right away. I mean, I still don't know everything, and I still don't remember everything, my memory just isn't that good. So you may also have to accept that you can never take in everything that you share.

01:00:24 SMW: Yes.

01:01:12 RWM: Yes, that's very important. Because there are also people we know – whom you often part ways with at some point – who think "oh I have to understand everything and be able to comprehend everything." They get nervous otherwise.

01:01:28 SMW: Yes.

01:01:29 RWM: You might know who I'm talking about.

01:01:29 SMW: Yes.

01:01:29 RWM: You can notice that in the interaction. That people like that are uncomfortable. Like "Sands will think I'm not smart enough, because I can't grasp it all at once."

01:01:43 SMW: And I don't think like that at all.

01:01:45 RWM: That is not at all part of your character.

01:01:48 SMW: No, I never think like that. It's absolutely not how I think. I actually find people who think they know everything, that often bothers me. That arrogance, I'm really afraid of that even... To become arrogant, or to think I know everything.

01:02:16 RWM: I don't think that's possible.

01:02:16 SMW: No, it probably isn't... I might actually hover more towards the other direction. Sometimes or often. But no, you are right. For some people it is all or nothing. And if they can't understand everything at once...

01:02:35 RR: Yeah, then they are afraid of it.

01:02:43 SMW: Then they are either afraid of it or they think 'it is too much trouble.' I have the feeling that a lot of people – it sounds very harsh – but I have the idea that quite a lot of people are either lazy or they have so much going on in their own lives that they can hardly deal with anything else, from anyone else. Especially if it is not their partner. If it is an artist who just tells a lot: people often find it banal what I am talking about. Because everyone knows it, but that is precisely what I find so fascinating, that you can be creative with basic things. That it doesn't always have to be so abstract. That it can be about grocery shopping or whatever. I personally find that very fascinating. That's a new way of... Or new ... It's a way of looking that perhaps can add to what we already have.

01:03:55 RWM: That comes from feminism...

01:04:00 SMW: From feminism, yes. Yes, that's for sure, I got that straight from feminist art. 'The personal is political' I think that says it all: your composition as a person and also that which you experience. That makes you who you are and it is actually very simple, very uncomplicated, people sometimes make it way too complicated, I think.

01:04:30 RWM: Not from men. I think it's still the case that what you're talking about now is expected of women, female artists, but if a man does...

01:04:41 RR: Yeah, yeah.

01:04:41 RWM: It is in a transitional phase now. Things like that are starting to change now. It is different from twenty years ago. But especially twenty years ago, when they were all like "well, what are you doing?" What did I want to say about that, I just lost it...

01:04:59 SMW: About men who are so...

01:05:04 RWM: What I wanted to say is – I've often said that to you over the last twenty years – had you been a woman, your career would have been very different, I think. Then he would have been much more accepted than he is now, because he... He's not part of the boys club, but you were expected to be... And because of that... Well, I think you understand what I mean.

01:05:28 RR: Yeah, I don't know many examples (of artists) who work like you ... Masculine examples.

01:05:33 RWM: There are a number of them but it is still...

01:05:39 SMW: Those examples are very important to me. Role models are very important, I think. I try in my own way to be a kind of role model for whoever wants it. But for the past twenty years, it was almost as if no one was interested. So I almost had to become a role model for myself, somehow. I have so many role models, people I look up to... And in my own development I almost had to be my own example, or something...

01:06:22 RWM: People can now make use of that, now that the world is a bit more open. Less binary and things like that. Because the new generations who do recognize things, in which you have been a pioneer in actually.

01:06:44 RR: And then there is also a lot to be found. That is beautiful. That people who do have that interest, or maybe young people now, that you share a lot.

01:06:58 SMW: And that I have saved a lot.

01:07:00 RR: Exactly. A lot of people don't, of course.

01:07:06 RWM: And now it is made accessible by projects. That is also very nice, because that was a problem...

01:07:14 RR: I would like to continue with some questions about the websites. Because there are some very specific ones. There is one that has nearly 3,000 links on it.

01:07:19 SMW: Yes

01:07:21 RR: With those digits. And then later I saw one ... Was it the one from 2008? Or no, 2006. [reads] "this site will be clean, ordered and healthy" as a kind of response to the previous website. [laughs]

01:07:35 SMW: [laughs] Yeah.

01:07:36 RR: I'm very curious... Did you conceptualize them together? How did that work?

01:07:40 RWM: I can say something about that. It started with a 'go.to' site. That used to be 'go.to/sands'. That way you could get a website for free, free webspace, and naturally that was full of commercials. A nice technical fact might be that '.to' stands for Tonga. That's a small country in Africa that has sold a lot of those sites.

01:08:08 SMW: Tonga is an island I think.

01:08:09 RWM: Was it Toga?

01:08:11 SMW: Toga, something like that.

01:08:13 RWM: It was, yes exactly. So, you could just get a go.to with '/sands' behind it in this case. I had made that at the time - I don't know anything about web design actually - but already at that time you could find an html course by google or something, so with a few tags you could come a long way. So I made a very simple site there. But yes, Sands collects a lot so the website had to be able to contain a lot.

01:08:41 RR: So you kept coming up with "I still want this on there" or "I still want that on there."

01:08:45 RWM: Yes, and then I would add a new page... It all started with that - maybe you've seen it - rotating star.

01:08:52 RR: Yes.

01:08:53 RWM: That was the homepage of that go.to site, but it became such a mess eventually and that's when we bought the domain sands1974.com. And then we started doing that and the intention was to keep it very neat indeed. We had a white homepage...

01:09:12 SMW: My mother even said something about that, remember? "You said it was going to be healthy, but it is getting complicated again." She said something about that. At least she didn't think it was healthy or wholesome.

01:09:32 RWM: It quickly became messy again. Yes, that's right, but that makes sense too. That is how you are put together. And we just expanded...

01:09:44 SMW: It's an inbetween phase...

01:09:46 RR: Because you thought it shouldn't just be announcements of exhibitions, or documentation, but it should also be about the perfume? And that it should also contain links to so and so?

01:09:56 SMW: Yes...

01:09:56 RR: ... and correspondence. Which made that site keep growing.

01:09:58 SMW: Bigger, yes. I tried, at the very beginning... I sometimes sent e-mails to lists of people I wanted to announce an exhibition to. But people didn't like that at all, I got several responses from people saying "this is spam" or whatever. So I have actually done that very little in my life. Still, when I have an exhibition, I send very targeted and specific mails to people I know or from whom I know they want something from me.

01:10:41 RWM: Yes, but that was actually a bit of a mistake. You announced our first website by sending an e-mail to your entire address directory. And that directory also contained all kinds of companies and shops and they responded with "what on earth is this?" Because in that e-mail you wrote "this is not spam" but of course it is when you haven't asked for it. So that makes perfect sense. [laughs]

01:11:01 SMW: [laughs] Yes.

01:11:06 RWM: But that was just enthusiasm back then. And of course, now you don't do it like that anymore. If you want to announce a show now, you make a list of people you want (to reach).

01:11:20 SMW: I also found it very intense. Because of course at that time I had nothing, not many people were interested in my work. I already discovered pretty early that people I had relationships with, from de Ateliers or something, that they thought I was strange, or that they didn't want to have much to do with me. Or that I got into confrontations with curators... So it was kind of scary, actually. And especially at the time, at the very beginning of e-mail, or the internet... I didn't even know who I wanted to reach, actually. Because I had a vague idea in my mind of what that person would look like in character. But to really make sense of it, that was very overwhelming. It was very complicated, actually, that beginning.

01:12:25 RWM: What are you talking about right now?

01:12:28 SMW: Well, whether I had an idea about who I wanted as a spectator...

01:12:34 RWM: Oh, yes your audience.

01:12:36 RR: Of course you don't know that with a website...

01:12:41 SMW: No, I was not sure how that should function. Do people come to you? Do you have to go to those people? So it was kind of an online collection of information, in the beginning, of what was important to me. To kind of attract people in the way of "if you think this is important or interesting, you've come to the right place." But we received a lot of negative reactions. Also that 'Portal of Evil'...

01:13:15 RWM: Oh yes!

01:13:15 SMW: There was a whole campaign started because of that website, that first website. By a group of people on the internet, it was called 'Portal of Evil' or something.

01:13:23 RWM: A web forum.

01:13:29 SMW: A forum yes, and they were really writing me down: "this is bad and all those digits that don't make sense..." And then I ended up in Artforum because of AA Bronson. Who compiled a top ten... Somehow I was in contact with AA Bronson, he found my work interesting and he also wrote about that website, about

those digits and that he thought that it was important and informative... And that's when they [Portal of Evil] stopped because they were apparently so impressed by prestige.

01:14:06 RR: So it was an art related forum?

01:14:07 RWM: I found out about it by accident, by googling. I could not believe my eyes! A huge discussion about that website that we made together!

01:14:20 RR: Maybe it's actually some kind of net art, maybe LIMA [platform for media art]...

01:14:25 RWM: It was an acquaintance of yours, right?

01:14:27 SMW: Yes, it was someone from Pratt, my first art school in Brooklyn. And someone I thought I had a great relationship with, but apparently not. And somehow he apologized once, but it was all very messy. I didn't like it, I didn't like it at all.

01:14:59 RR: Do those websites also have a kind – because when you make it public it is of course directed towards the other, but it also does something to you – so did those websites also have a function to you yourself?

01:15:09 SMW: Yes absolutely.

01:15:10 RR: ... For example to go through material, or to list all those names...

01:15:13 SMW: Yes...

01:15:14 RR: ... Or as your personal library almost, of memories or things that you find important.

01:15:18 SMW: That's exactly how I see it. It's research, pre-PhD, and everything... But it was my way of researching and collecting information, and communicating on the internet what I stood for and what I was interested in. So it was a kind of storage...

01:15:49 RWM: It has stopped a bit, eh, the last few years?

01:15:54 SMW: Yeah, it has kind of stopped because of Facebook. I first joined Facebook and that was 'Sands Murray-Wassink Process Archive' that was my name on

facebook. So Facebook was my way of archiving for a while. And now it's Instagram, but I have very little there. Or well, very little... I have 370 or 380 followers. I will remain very specific I guess. I am not really a social media person, my work does not look... What I am quite proud of actually: my work does not fit into a social media framework, or whatever.

01:16:54 RWM: Well on your Vimeo page...

01:16:57 SMW: Yes my Vimeo, page, yes. There are videos on my Vimeo page that have been viewed more than 20,000 times and that also have a lot of likes. But those are usually – I have to add that...

01:17:15 RWM: That brings us back to the topic of nudity, which we spoke about before.

01:17:17 SMW: Most of the people who follow me on Vimeo... I have more than 300 followers on Vimeo, which I think is quite a lot, because I don't know them. They are all strangers and very often people who are not in the art world, very often people who are nudists.

01:17:39 RWM: Or at least, that's the idea you got.

01:17:40 SMW: Yes, when I get a notification of 'so and so has just started following you' I click and usually it's people who find being naked important.

01:17:56 RWM: They probably post those videos of you somewhere in forums. And then people come from those forums... And then we get more views.

01:18:08 SMW: Vimeo is my favorite... Also because it contains videos that I made myself, privately. What I mean by private is Robin helped me set up the camera, to then just film myself, like it was private, but then you get to see it. And they have not been edited at all. 'Death Dying' is the most watched, 23 thousand now or so. And that has not been edited. There are a few transitions from one scene to another, but that's because I stopped the video and started it again. I didn't do anything to edit it.

01:18:58 RWM: I always find that a bit difficult. Because I think that things could be a bit more beautiful, that scenes blend into each other a bit. That's something he really does not have patience for.

01:19:09 SMW: Sometimes...

01:19:12 RWM: Sometimes he does take those very sharp edges off, and sometimes he has it done by someone else, and sometimes you don't.

01:19:19 SMW: Yes it depends.

01:19:26 RWM: And if he doesn't want that, I can imagine that very well, then I won't be the one that says it is nonsense or something...

01:19:29 RR: Yes. But you did work on the 'horses' video, right?

01:19:32 RWM: Which one do you mean?

01:19:33 RR: 'Horsepower' ?

01:19:34 SMW: Yes 'Horsepower'.

01:19:36 RR: With the drawings.

01:19:39 RWM: Oh yes with the drawings.

01:19:41 SMW: You did that.

01:19:42 RWM: Yes, but that's just a slideshow right? Those are just sequenced JPEGs with music. In Moviemaker...

01:19:47 RR: But it works very well.

01:19:51 RWM: I did that by myself after which I showed it to him and he thought it was good enough. But if we had worked on it together it might have looked a little different?

01:19:59 SMW: Yes maybe, But often I also want to let go of control. Because I have the feeling that I always try to understand everything. I always want control, I feel, so it is very liberating and satisfying for me to let go of control. So if you have ideas about things, or other people I trust, then it is great fun for me to let them take the [Dutch proverb]... How do you say that?

01:20:39 RWM: You said it right.

01:20:39 SMW: ...lead. I have the idea that, as far as I am concerned, art can arise from small things, small achievements in life. You don't have to do that much really. It's not that I'm lazy, it's just, there's so much in the world already, you don't need that much... Like Hannah Wilke, which I thought was so beautiful, she was wearing high heels, high heels and nothing else. So she was all naked, but she had those high heels on, and she said, "These are my plinths." So suddenly she was a sculpture, in those high heels, and things like that... You don't have to do very much, and then you can get something really beautiful. I find art, in my opinion, is often over-elaborated. A lot of art has been worked on way too hard. You don't have to do all that much. I have that with food too. I'm not much of a cook, but I hear from chefs: it's about the ingredients. If you have something really beautiful in terms of vegetables or something, then you don't have to do very much. The taste of the vegetables can exist without too much fuss...

01:22:20 RWM: Yes, but those ingredients, they must be there. What you're saying about Hannah now, is a brilliant idea from her, and it's simple once you have it. But where does such an idea come from? Because there you have it again... As if she were a medium it appears to her... That is of course very special.

01:22:49 SMW: She was a genius.

01:22:50 RWM: Once that idea is there, you can say: look how simple it is, you just have to put on high heels and that's it. But before that idea appears...

01:22:57 RR: And before anyone executes it with conviction ...

01:23:00 RWM: Exactly.

01:23:01 RR: Because I think doing it with conviction is also a step.

01:23:10 RWM: It's not that simple. Yes to you, maybe. But then again, you often have thoughts like that and it makes sense to you. But most people don't have those kinds of thoughts.

01:23:23 SMW: Well, I learned it too. Because I've looked very carefully at some other people that I appreciate and admire. I looked very carefully at how they do it, Hannah and Carolee and Adrian for example. And Hannah, for example, talked about spontaneity. So I learned spontaneity from her, I learned courage from Carolee, and I learned intellectual rigor, or approach, from Adrian, if I have to say it so quickly. So courage, spontaneity and an intellectual approach which makes for a sort of a triangle or something. A trinity of what I think I need. I don't break my brain about it. To me it might actually be quite simple. It feels simple what I'm doing.

01:24:34 RWM: Yes... okay.

01:24:36 RR: But it comes from experience, research and looking at those others...

01:24:39 RWM: And reading a lot, look at the library [in the house] and what he has collected ...

01:24:44 SMW: Pre internet yes... [laughs]

01:24:46 RWM: It does not really come from just nowhere.

01:24:48 SMW: No, I'm not saying it comes from nowhere.

01:24:55 RWM: You do not have a PhD as you say. But you can compete with the most intellectual academics, I think.

01:24:59 SMW: Yes, it took me quite a bit of effort to learn all that, maybe.

01:25:06 RWM: A piece of paper is not really important in that respect.

01:25:06 SMW: No, that's not really important. But yes, it just evolved over the years. I have a better overview... I have more confidence in my own ability than twenty years ago. That's true.

01:25:27 RWM: That makes sense.

01:25:28 SMW: It took a long time to build all this. And those websites are storage spaces, but also proof of my journey.

01:25:45 RR: It's a point in time actually.

01:25:47 SMW: Yes.

01:25:47 RR: A timeline, in a way.

01:25:48 SMW: Basically there are three websites: the first one which is black, the second which is white and the third which is very colorful with pictures ...

01:25:59 RWM: With Carolee...

01:26:07 SMW: With Carolee and I on the homepage.

01:26:07 RR: And we haven't talked so much about the physical output yet, but of course we are now at your home. And I am curious – you have saved a lot, you still don't throw anything away, we talked about that extensively before – and I wondered how Robin actually feels about it. How things sometimes can pile up and how that might make for a certain tension. So, on the one hand making things messy, but also doing it consciously and having reasons for it. But on the other hand, also keeping things and taking care of them.

01:26:23 RWM: Yes, it drives me crazy. [laughs]

01:26:25 RR: [laughs] Okay.

01:26:31 RWM: No it's not too bad. But like I said, I'm pretty messy myself, compared to people who vacuum every day, for example, which is pretty normal I think. Or change bed linen every week... We rather do it monthly than weekly. I do do the dishes every day but... His messiness is a bit worse. Over the years there has been so much... If you look at all of that...

01:27:19 RR: Many frames and books...

01:27:20 RWM: Everything used to fit in his studio, but yeah that's just bursting at the seams, and then it also starts coming into my space. And that is quite difficult, sometimes but it doesn't bother me that much.

01:27:34 SMW: Perfumes...

01:27:34 RWM: Perfumes too, yes.

01:27:34 SMW: And here, in the hallway, at two places.

01:27:42 RWM: Yes, I like space. I actually like to have things a bit organized and it is like that here too. This table was not there a few years ago, when apart from the sofa it was empty space... So I like that and if it becomes too much, I will also do something about it. But as long as I can still keep an overview, I think it's okay.

01:28:08 RR: But then do you, when you see the studio for example – but that has changed again now as well, I haven't seen it myself for a while – don't you think that... There is also a tension somewhere I think, in not wanting to throw anything away, so you keep it because you don't order it hierarchically and everything has value. But that at the same time, because it literally just doesn't fit or things are in a garbage bag somewhere. Or because sometimes... Well, can you still move around and find your way... It's also about taking care, and I'm curious to hear how Robin feels about that.

01:28:44 RWM: Yes, I wouldn't be able to do that, how he works inside his studio, that he just has a very small path where you can still walk... That he has just enough space for his computer mouse and keyboard but nothing else...

01:29:00 SMW: On my desk.

01:29:00 RWM: On your desk, yes. No that's not for me. And when I walk in there and look around, I do think... No. Because in five minutes I could probably gather a lot of things, so that it's all just a little bit more feng shui, you might know of it... I think I might have more connection to that than Sands. Because I just feel more comfortable when the house has been vacuumed, for example, while it is really not that important at all. It's not as if you will get sick if you do not do it, or anything, it does not matter. But when it has been done... It feels... But he doesn't feel that way. I think that's not important at all to him.

01:29:40 SMW: Well, eventually it does. But you reach that feeling faster than I do.

01:29:48 RWM: It doesn't matter much to you, whether the floor is clean or not, I have the idea.

01:29:54 SMW: Depends. It's also the relationship that we have because I think if I was by myself I might do more, I guess.

01:30:08 RWM: Well, when I came into your room at the Lomanstraat, for the first time... What a mess. Back then he had a very small room.

01:30:11 SMW: Two by three meters...

01:30:21 RWM: I organized it once, I can still remember. Very carefully, because of course everything must remain at the same place. But it's also... His way of doing things is throwing things on the floor, and I'd just neatly store that away somewhere. And he just leaves it that way, like it will be taken care of some other time but then that never happens. And then a few years later it is still a mess and I wouldn't let it get that far.

01:30:48 RR: So you don't really do anything in the studio?

01:30:52 RWM: No.

01:30:53 RR: You don't really go in there at all? Your hands itch but you don't touch anything in there? Is it really Sands' place?

01:30:55 RWM: I do offer that, like 'why don't you let me help a bit', but then that just never happens. I've already helped a few times but... No that's his... The door can be closed so it doesn't bother me. So he should just do it his way... And if he needs me, he can ask but I don't really offer that anymore. Because I know that he is the one who can handle his work the best, and when I start interfering... Well, if someone is allowed to interfere it's probably me, but still... You do have to be careful with that because it is his work of course. So when I put things together that don't belong together. Of course you (Radna) know something about that too, now with this project.

01:31:45 SMW: Well, usually I'm not that strict. In terms of whether things belong together. In principle, I must be able to find them. But more people have said that things

come about by mixing things from different periods, and that it can contribute in a positive way to gain new insights into how things are connected, or what relationship they have to each other. It has to do with depression again, I think. And also that I am so productive that I can work so quickly and that I don't care whether a drawing or a painting is made in ten minutes or five minutes. Or even shorter, or an hour or in a few days... Preferably as soon as possible. And I have piles of drawings and paintings of horses, for example. And what....

01:32:57 RWM: What do you do with it? [laughs]

01:32:57 SMW: [laughs] Yeah what should I do with that. I can't throw them away. I think it's a shame to throw things away. I always think they will eventually find a destination in one way or another. I kind of believe that they will eventually end up somewhere. So throwing them away is not an option, actually. It is quite complicated and simultaneously it is also very simple. It's a bit double. But throwing things away ... No, I'm not good at that. I even keep packages of things, boxes and bubble wrap. Making a package for someone is also a kind of work, so I keep packaging materials in case I need them. But it doesn't happen very often so I have piles of packaging material just in case.

01:34:20 RWM: But then you just throw that in the corner.

01:34:25 SMW: Yes...

01:34:25 RWM: Instead of storing it neatly somewhere.

01:34:28 SMW: Yes it's too much...

01:34:29 RWM: And before you know it is a big mess. If you had put it all down together a bit nicely, it could have been a bit smaller.

01:34:36 SMW: I am confident that someday, somehow we will have more space... What we really would like is two apartments, because there is very little separation between my work and my life. And actually that's the way I want it, so it would be best to have two apartments...

01:35:09 RWM: Two apartments would be ideal, because you also want a living area near your workplace.

01:35:18 RR: Maybe one exactly below here. [laughs]

01:35:19 RWM: [laughs] That would be ideal.

01:35:21 SMW: Yes.

01:35:28 RWM: And then a flight of stairs from here... Or maybe not because that would make it very easy for him to come over...

01:35:29 SMW: Yes because even in the beginning... You moved to Amsterdam and I came to live with you very quickly.

01:35:41 RWM: I did have to get used to that, yes. When I came to live here I also said "I want to have at least one or two evenings all to myself. And then I want you not to be there." But that never actually happened.

01:35:55 SMW: That did not take long, that he had evenings to himself or something. I was very needy... My background in the United States is pretty intense. And to disconnect that, my background, my upbringing and everything, from the now, in the Netherlands, in Europe, that was super complicated. Robin supported me a lot with that, psychologically too. We had to be pretty tough to tell my parents, or other people... Yeah, we didn't want to be in touch or had to change phone numbers, and it was kind of complicated. So I was super needy. I remember calling you when you still lived in Hoorn – you recorded those conversations too – and I can hear from my voice that I was super depressed. I needed so much.

01:37:10 RWM: Yes, he got very damaged in America. It was very noticeable and that's why he came here and lingered here. Because that was a bit more healthy for him than that competitive mentality you have there in America. Because there people don't allow or grant each other anything. That might be different now... But what I heard from him, it did damage him, it needed some healing. And I am someone who has a lot of patience and can help with that. And I did help him in that, I can admit. It's something he needed back then.

01:37:57 SMW: And I am very grateful for that. It's still not quite easy but it's different now. I think I am stronger now than I was twenty years ago.

01:38:10 RWM: Sure, and that makes sense. Especially after the attention of the last few years, that also contributes to self-confidence. In that respect, things are going in the right direction.

01:38:23 RR: I think so too.

01:38:28 RWM: We have had to have a lot of patience. Although, it is not really patience. What Sands said: you are constantly building. It is not as if you did nothing at all at first and now suddenly you have a lot. It is really...

01:38:38 RR: Quite gradually actually...

01:38:38 RWM: It went very gradually, a bit at a time. Sometimes it is disappointing and slow and in other moments it moves forward again. Just like life.

01:38:51 RR: We also spoke about Sands's work being very consistent in a way. Even when I see or hear old things – like that phone conversation between you two – it is also about behavior or about the art world, and about how people act. Things that always return actually.

01:39:08 RWM: Nothing has changed.

01:39:09 RR: You say that nothing has changed? Or do you think that certain things have changed?

01:39:14 RWM: No, actually not.

01:39:15 RR: Or maybe not the topics, but something else?

01:39:19 SMW: Approach.

01:39:22 RWM: When I got to know him, he had just finished de Ateliers. Or actually not yet, but two weeks later he did, I believe. And the foundation of his practice had already been laid. His interest in Carolee and Hannah and Adrian was already there, and he already knew which way he wanted to go. He just wasn't heading there

yet, but we did kind of start with that then. I actually see very little difference... I have to think for a moment.

01:39:54 SMW: The execution is more confident.

01:39:55 RWM: Yes, you have indeed become more confident. That is something (that has changed). In the beginning, during his first performances, he would also read texts from other writers, from books or something. And even with Carolee he did a performance in 2001 where he recited the words of someone else.

01:40:16 SMW: And from there I moved to my own words, but read from paper.

01:40:19 RWM: Yes, exactly.

01:40:21 SMW: And now I don't need paper anymore.

01:40:22 RWM: Now you just talk. Well, you're (Radna) familiar with that, when he talks by heart, and that's just as good. So that self-confidence has grown, making it easier for him to do those kinds of things. But the foundation that is actually... I don't really see any difference there.

01:40:39 SMW: No, it's very consistent. I always knew, it's because of my parents or my upbringing, it was super clear to me... I said about Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas... But actually what I loved about Tracey and Sarah... And about Elke Krystufek too, at the beginning, in the late nineties. I recognized things in them I was already doing. It was just recognizable, so I was like, 'I'm not all alone in my generation.' Tracey is thirteen years older, Elke is four years older and Carolee is 35 years older. So the generation gap is not that big. Yes, it was recognizable...

01:41:39 RR: Yes.

01:41:42 SMW: But the foundation was... It has not only to do with de Ateliers. Because I think that even at the Rietveld [Gerrit Rietveld Academy] before de Ateliers and in New York I already had some kind of foundation. But it has become more clear during those two years at de Ateliers, I think.

01:42:03 RWM: I think you had a lot of time there to think about it. And there you have established your subject. And he has not yet deviated from that, it only gets expanded.

01:42:21 SMW: Carolee said... Her thing about me was that I was unteachable, and she heard that as well when she was studying. So that was a big compliment for her to tell someone: "you are unteachable." People did try to give me direction, and I got certain tips... And that's why I always say: I learned the most from Robin about art, because the things that are most important to me have to do with people. So art is one thing, but ultimately it's about existential things. And that is what he has had the most influence on. And still.

01:43:15 RWM: It is very interesting to experience. I, as a layman, who does not know anything about art, is the teacher of... That is very special, but I understand what he means.

01:43:27 SMW: Yes, because you don't have to... If you are sensitive to something... That bothers me terribly, that people think you need a piece of paper from a university if you want to be a sociologist, philosopher or intellectual. Because basically everyone is... To get through life, you have to be able to be all those things. Everyone is philosophical and everyone is intellectual and everyone is... I hate that divide between what is and what is not... Or writer. I see myself as a writer and also as a poet actually, I have no trouble at all to pronounce that, to say that I am. But I never studied for that. I've had some sort of basic English education in the United States.

01:44:30 RWM: And then you have poets who did study for it, and only identify as poets and when they hear you calling yourself a poet... Oof. They don't like that.

01:44:42 SMW: I find that so ridiculous, because I am an artist and I have studied somewhat, in my way, to become and be an artist. But I have absolutely no trouble when someone comes up to me like "I'm an artist" and they haven't studied art anywhere... SO WHAT? Just do it. It just needs that conviction. And when people ask me what you need to be an artist, you just have

to say it and take responsibility for it in one way or another, and that conviction. And that's all you need. And there are many examples of artists who never studied to become an artist. So that's nothing new. And in that way you can also be a poet, or a philosopher or... That has to do with imperialism and colonialism, and all kinds of bad things in general. That history of why you need a paper to be something.

01:45:54 RWM: There are all kinds of very wrong social constructs created by the past hundreds of years during which the white man was in power... There is still a lot to be deconstructed indeed.

01:46:20 SMW: And who can or cannot be something or someone...

01:46:21 RWM: We are so stuck. It will take a good while before that will loosen up. But a lot has happened in the last twenty years!

01:46:21 RR: [laughs] yes.

01:46:21 SMW: Yes, we are working on that. And that what you said, Radna, about my archive, that it is not always clear whether it is art or not... That is important even for objects. What is an art object and what is not? It is quite relative and it has a lot to do with contéxt [Dutch]. Context?

01:46:51 RWM: Context yes, not contéxt. Yes indeed, Megan said one of her favorite things is that glass horse.

01:46:51 SMW: From Maria Pask.

01:47:05 RWM: That is a very cheap thing but because it is in your collection it takes up more value than a cheap thing you can buy on the market for an euro...

01:47:18 SMW: Well, it is actually Murano glass from Venice. But it probably wasn't that expensive I guess, it's a small horse.

01:47:29 RWM: But it's a special type of glass?

01:47:31 SMW: Special glass I think yes, Murano. It has a name. We can set an example or be an example for people... What we do is not that different from what everyone else does to get through life. It's just that I call

it art, call myself an artist and also because we are a team and we try... I always say good energy, we try to add good energy to the world.

01:48:13 RWM: Positive attitude. I think what might be nice to tell you is that what you (Sands) always say, artists very often have another artist as a partner. Or someone who was already part of the art world, before that relationship started. That is something that is also quite special, I believe. That Sands is together with someone who is not in the art world and you don't see that much. When I look online, most of them (couples in the art world) are colleagues.

01:48:56 SMW: But not everyone. Miriam Wistreich, for example, she is a curator, and her partner is in IT and he never studied art. And that can bring some balance sometimes for people. And I do need that, because I noticed with artists, or people in the art world, if I was in a relationship, it was very difficult for me to stop working. I'm not saying it is... It's not like I want to stop working.

01:49:34 RR: Yes.

01:49:34 SMW: It is not that I want to stop working, but it is also important to unwind. It was hard for me... I love to work so much that when I'm with someone who is also in the art world then I just want to be working all the time and then it's hard to unwind. And for someone who suffers from manic depression, that may be extra important.

01:50:04 RR: I can also imagine that sometimes when there's two artists in a relationship... Sometimes they are a team and sometimes not at all. There are also many examples in which the partners are almost competitive...

01:50:09 SMW: Yes...

01:50:11 RR: Or that the art is completely separated. But you are really a team, it could have also been a relationship where things would have been more separate. You do your job, and Sands makes art and that works fine in the relationship, but they don't really overlap or affect one another. But I think there are a lot of overlaps. Maybe in other ways than you (Robin) making art, but you are part of it.

01:50:43 SMW: Yes and in history you also very often see teams. It wasn't always called that way, but you see it with Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre or... There are many examples of creative people who really complemented and needed each other. I don't know if Sartre and de Beauvoir is a good example...

01:51:20 RR: I don't know how Carolee was with her partner...

01:51:23 SMW: Only with her first husband, James Tenney. They were together for thirteen years, they knew each other from the time they were teenagers. That's how they got to know each other. She was sixteen and he was seventeen or something. She based her entire life on that. I had the feeling that... She had other partners but for shorter periods. But no one has ever surpassed James Tenney... Or how do you say that?

01:52:03 RR: Matched...

01:52:04 SMW: Matched, yes. Her whole foundation of equity as she called it, and equitable relationships, was based on how James Tenney treated her and how they were a team. They were both creative, he was a composer and she a visual artist, or an artist. That's a very good one. Funny you should say that and we ended up here in our conversation. Because Hannah Wilke, her husband, who is still alive, he told us her work was about relationships. She always said that. People think her work is about sculptures, or about narcissism, or about her own body, or whatever. But actually, according to her, her work was about relationships and I learned a lot from that. That was also very recognizable to me, because relationships have always been very important to me. But before Robin... I've had friends who were important to me but never really someone who made me think 'this is my other half.'

01:53:26 RWM: Yes... Special.

01:53:32 SMW: It's special. We just have to have faith in the future, in terms of the messiness of my studio... That it is given a shape or obtains a new shape. That's why we are archiving. I knew that immediately when Frédérique Bergholtz said "do you want to work with us?" I knew immediately what to do... Wanted. Wanted, and had to do.

01:54:06 RWM: Yes, it was really necessary. It couldn't go on like this any longer, because at some point, we would have really had to throw things away. I still don't quite understand what it will look like after April next year, but we still have a little while.

01:54:24 RR: We might also just not know for a while longer until suddenly we do know.

01:54:26 RWM: And then it has to go back.

01:54:33 SMW: Yes and that's what Frédérique said – I told you that – she said to me last week, we called each other and she said "in the end we are aware that we have to create more space in your studio." That's finishing the project, to put everything back in our home, in our apartment, and then somehow it will have to fit.

01:55:06 RWM: Yes, I was very happy with that when I heard it.

01:55:10 SMW: I think that's very thoughtful; it makes sense...

01:55:13 RR: I asked you at the very beginning, even before we even started anything... When would it not have been successful? And already then you said "if there is no more space in my studio after a year."

01:55:26 SMW: Yes

01:55:27 RR: And how? That's still... But something is going to happen, in a different...

01:55:35 SMW: Yes, and somehow I think to myself that I can handle that. Somehow that will work, I think.

01:55:47 RWM: I have a good feeling about it.

01:55:50 SMW: We still have months, and I don't want to do nothing in the meantime or something, but when it comes down to it, when it's almost May 2021, you can bet I'm working on that. And that I want to get that done, to create space. That everything can come back.

01:56:15 RR: It could almost be, just like that gesture of... walking in heels and saying "these are my plinths." That comes from somewhere. Sometimes an action

can be faster than you might think, if you already know all the context. You have been going through this for so long now, with several people.

01:56:24 SMW: Yes.

01:56:38 RR: That's why you'll probably end up thinking "oh, that fits there and that fits like this" we just haven't done it yet. But at a certain moment when it does get to the point where we still have only a month and the bags are here... Then you can go about that very practically.

01:56:53 RWM: Then it can suddenly go very quickly, yes.

01:56:55 RR: If you've gone through everything. Not everything, but that enough sensitivity has been attained to be able to make that decision quickly.

01:57:04 SMW: Yes.

01:57:04 RR: Because you couldn't have done that half a year ago.

01:57:07 RWM: No, no, no, not in such a way.

01:57:10 RR: Not with others. Because then those others would not have known exactly how things work, or what is important...

01:57:15 SMW: No, exactly. Somehow it will be okay. Ivan Cheng asked how it can be accessed, the archive. You know, during the performance on March 6 [Gift Science Archive Process Event #1: VALUE / What is trash? What is trashy but valuable, Rijksakademie, 2019]? And that is also a point. We have a database, we are building it... But how physical things...

01:57:38 RR: You mean become accessible?

01:57:39 SMW: Yes exactly. How things can become accessible. That will have to show...

01:57:48 RWM: We'll see that when the moment arises. I've never seen that database.

01:57:56 SMW: Oh that database is quite... I saw it, last week, for the first time, with a lot of information added. And it looks very exciting I think, in a good way.

01:58:08 RWM: Because if I also have access to it later. Once it is transferred, it becomes ours. Then I will see to what extent you can share it publicly. Because it will just become accessible online, and we can determine what people do and do not see, of course.

01:58:14 RR: Yes.

01:58:14 SMW: Yes.

01:58:31 SMW: But taking myself into account there will probably be very little that is not public.

01:58:43 RWM: There's a big chance, yes... That doesn't surprise me. [laughs]

01:58:44 SMW: Probably everything will ... I can't think of anything of which I now think 'that will not be made public.' So, yes, a big chance, but we'll see. But as a durational performance it is certainly very exciting to do. And I am so grateful. We have had very difficult times. The past fifteen years have been quite intense, also in terms of money and stuff. And also, way back, before my first group exhibition abroad... When you came home and when I did not have an e-mail address yet, and when I was under a table, somewhere in my studio, crying... I don't cry often, but I was really... I didn't know how to proceed. And then there was an e-mail from someone sent to your e-mail address asking if I wanted to come to Switzerland.

02:00:04 RWM: We only had one e-mail address, which was that one, so I instantly had the medicine with me. That was very easy. It is always that way with him somehow, if he is really rock bottom then something will always come. That is really... It seems like a coincidence to me, but maybe not.

02:00:25 SMW: Yeah, I've thought about it too, but coincidence... It's happened so many times that I was rock bottom and an opportunity came up. You can hardly call it a coincidence. I don't know what to call it, but a coincidence is once...

02:00:42 RR: Synchronicity?

02:00:42 SMW: Synchronicity, maybe yes. It has happened too often to be just a coincidence. It also has to do with effort, you're planting seeds... You are in the world somehow, you throw your stuff out in cyberspace or something... And yes, it's magical, actually.

02:01:15 RR: I think the way you think about ephemera is that something is sent out into the world and you don't know exactly where it ends up. And you have that with the website too. Which may be frustrating at times because you don't know who is reading it. Do people read it at all, does it even end up somewhere? And sometimes you don't hear anything and you think it's going nowhere, what am I doing? Exactly, you never know where the seed will eventually land, but something can come back. And if you hadn't planted those seeds, maybe nothing would have come back. It's also because you send out things in a certain way, not in a super mainstream way, but you do it continuously.

02:01:56 SMW: Yeah, and I feel like I put quite a lot out there... It took quite a while, but new people are, like you and a few other people that I trust... At least I know if I... Because I didn't have that ten years ago, if nothing happened, there wasn't even someone to tell. We didn't really have people of whom we thought, "this is a solid relationship" or something.

02:02:35 RWM: Yes, definitely, we've been pretty lonely, at times. Yes, you are a bit isolated from the successful stars who are megastars straight after leaving de Ateliers. They had flown away, so to say.

02:02:53 SMW: And even when I worked with Elke Krystufek, that was seven or eight years, I never clicked with the people in the mainstream she worked with. Gallery owners or something ... And that was not my intention, to work with her to further my career. I wanted to work with her because I appreciate her work: her aesthetic and content. Even with her, we were... For years she was the only one I could hold on to.

02:03:30 RWM: You didn't have much contact with other artists.

02:03:37 SMW: And not much with curators either. So those were lonely times. But I don't think it was bad. It builds character.

02:03:51 RR: Yes.

02:03:53 RWM: It had its function, I do believe that. We have often talked about how it took Frédérique so long to do something with Sands. But – Sands talked about that with Frédérique himself – that actually makes sense. Because Sands wasn't really ready when If I Can't Dance started. It's actually a good thing that... In retrospect it is twenty years, I believe? When did they start?

02:04:19 SMW: 2005. Fifteen years.

02:04:20 RWM: Fifteen years. Yes, so now it is actually very convenient. You've developed yourself tremendously, and he's gotten so solid, and confidence is starting to come. So now you can do something with it. And if she had done that fifteen years ago, it might have resulted in something very weak. This feels much better. I think that's smart too, of her. She also did that a little consciously, she said.

02:04:43 SMW: Yes, half consciously and half intuitively.

02:04:49 RWM: Maybe if she had known you better, she would have done it before. But she's pretty impressed with you, I think.

02:04:59 SMW: And now it stands firmly. It's just perfect now, and I continue to have faith in the way things develop and continue to develop. It made sense, and it still makes sense I think, in one way or another. So I am confident that something will happen. We just move on. I also said it recently in the letter I wrote for Perdu. If anything happened to you, it would drastically change my life in many ways. And you wondered if I'd be able to cope... A few weeks ago you said something about ... The things I did before I met you, getting out of the States and moving here and all . You said something about whether I still had similar energy.

02:06:17 RWM: Oh, that energy has changed of course.

02:06:12 SMW: But if something had to... you have to go on of course.

02:06:32 RWM: Yes, he does often suffer from his depression and things like that. Then he says that things aren't

possible. Then he stays in bed or whatever. But actually, if something really has to be done, even when he is depressed, it will be okay. It always works out because one way or another he does get the energy from somewhere. So it's a confluence of multiple external things, often, that happen. And yes, in that respect you always figure things out. But you bet, if I die, just like that, that would be quite something for you. But the other way around too, I mean, if you were to fall away. I don't know if I would remain in the art world. Probably not, I don't really know. I sometimes think about it, but I have no idea. I think that would fade away slowly, but maybe not.

02:07:24 RR: Or people would all come to you with questions about Sands ...

02:07:27 RWM: [laughs] Yeah, if he died now, I would have a job in taking care of that.

02:07:39 SMW: [laughs]

02:07:39 RR: [laughs] This conversation took a bit of a morbid turn.

02:07:44 RWM: Yes.

02:07:44 SMW: No, not morbid, it's realistic.

02:07:46 RR: It's realistic too. Because you also mentioned examples of artists who are no longer around, whose partner then... That legacy...

02:07:46 SMW: Nothing is forever, for humans. It will end some way or another. And I want to give that a lot of thought, and I do, about what I want to leave behind. And I am very aware of that and not only physically, but also how I treat people and what effect that has on the world.

02:08:21 RWM: I have that a lot less. That doesn't really interest me at all. If I'm dead, then that's that... I want to have treated people well, I don't want to be seen as a tyrant when I die. But suppose nobody remembers me, I really don't think that's important. That is a big difference between us, which is why you are the artist and I am not.

02:08:44 SMW: It's complicated. Or complicated, I keep saying it but it might be double. I don't know if I want to be remembered, it's not about ... It's funny, because Carolee, at the very end of her life, said "I don't need it. The work needs it." Right?

02:08:55 RWM: Yes.

02:08:55 SMW: And we joked about that. You said something... It was kind of funny in some way. But I do understand what she means. Because actually in my way, I don't have to ... It's not that important to be remembered. It's more that I want to have an effect in the world. It's about change, about change and all that. And I have already done that, Robin and I together, that is already a relationship of change, I think. Because that is already having influence on the world, on someone. We also influence each other. It's not that I Sands Murray ... It's not just about me, it's about me, but it's not just about me because it's about relationships. It's not just about me, it's about Carolee, about Hannah, about Adrian, about anyone ...

02:10:39 RR: You actually form a link to those people.

02:10:44 SMW: Yes.

02:10:44 RR: And you experienced that yourself... Because you never knew Hannah ...

02:10:51 SMW: No, not Hannah.

02:10:53 RR: ... but you have experienced what she left behind and what it can do, without having known her personally.

02:10:56 SMW: Yes.

02:10:58 RR: So you have examples of both people you have known, with whom you have literally been in contact, and people with whom you have not but whose legacy has meant a lot... That still had an effect on you, and I think this is also what you want to do for others.

02:11:16 SMW: Yes, that is very well said. That is indeed what I mean.

02:11:17 RWM: Yes.

02:11:22 RR: I'm now going to make this gesture [makes a circular movement with her hands – a radio gesture for 'rounding up']

02:11:27 SMW: Okay, that's a great way to end.

02:11:33 RR: Or did you want to say something else?

02:11:35 SMW: No, I don't think so.

02:11:37 RWM: I think we said everything.

02:11:41 SMW: I like what you just said about estates, that's the point. That also has to do with the archive. That is a very nice way to end.

02:11:52 RWM: It's not morbid at all, death is also part of it. It's beautifully fitting at the end..

02:12:00 RR: Well, it's (the recording) over two hours... But I didn't expect it to be one hour either.