

COLA20 Salon Conversation #3 Session 2

Moderated By: Janie Geiser, Ken Roht and Kent Young
With Sarah Maclay

00:00:06

KEN ROHT: Great. Seen any great movies lately?

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JANIE GEISER: Well, Jim and I.

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KEN ROHT: What's that?

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JANIE GEISER: I don't remember. Oh, I, don't remember the director but Joseph Losey films on Fandoor. Fantastic.

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KEN ROHT: Oh, Fandoor is a good site; right?

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JANIE GEISER: But they're from San Francisco, so we will move along from --

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KEN ROHT: So that's not here?

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JANIE GEISER: Are we supposed to reframe the question?

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KEN ROHT: Oh, yeah, I don't know.

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JANIE GEISER: It had something to do with the cinematic and its relationship to Los Angeles where it was partly born, it wasn't totally born here, but Hollywood was born here and popular motion pictures were born here. And what our relationship as artists is o that tradition and that presence might be a good place to start.

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KEN ROHT: Have you thought in terms of a cinematic context for your work? Or what does that mean? That's what I'm saying. Well, --

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JANIE GEISER: What do you mean? Yeah, what do you mean by that? I, I use film in my work. I make films, I use films in my performance. And film was one of my major artistic influences growing up, film and television. So, it informs actually everything that I do in terms of my artistic practice.

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KEN ROHT: Do you remember anything? Like of older films or things, what are the ones that really stick out to you as being sort of relevant to you right now?

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JANIE GEISER: Oh, relevant to my work? One of the films that I remember seeing as a kid on TV, and it just was so amazing was *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. And it just, well, it was fantastic. You know, or those things like *The Wizard of Oz* or the things you see as a kid that are shown over and over on TV.

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KEN ROHT: Do you see that cropping up in your work for example, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*?

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JANIE GEISER: Not now, but at one point I did make a puppet that I named after that phrase "Klaatu Barada Nikto."

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KEN ROHT: That's cool.

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JANIE GEISER: So, yeah, I, I thought, you know, my work is actually drawn very much from cinematic form, like thinking some more or thinking about other kind of experimental films. But I never had thought about it in terms of LA in particular.

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KEN ROHT: Right.

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JANIE GEISER: But this question really made me think about that.

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KEN ROHT: Yeah, sort of the history of cinema here. I've never, yeah, I do.

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JANIE GEISER: But, I mean, I feel like I should pass this on. But, but I will say early film was also a big influence and we'll come back to that.

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KEN ROHT: Sure.

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KENT YOUNG: Well, I don't know about the question as it pertains to my work. I think for me the draw, the draw of the industry is, was sort of a subconscious drawn, not growing up in a big city, New York or Los Angeles, I had a choice at some point I had to make. And I think coming to Los Angeles, and making that decision to come here, was probably in large part, whether I knew it or not, because of the industry, the methodology of the industry, the desire to sort of be a part of that dynamic, again that dynamic mythology.

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KEN ROHT: When did you come to town?

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KENT YOUNG: I came in 1989.

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KEN ROHT: Did you do the touristy Hollywood thing. Did you go on the Universal Studios tour?

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KENT YOUNG: No, no, no. I, actually, I had been here. My, my, my grandparents, my maternal grandparents, lived in Canoga Park and my grandfather owned a biker bar when I was a kid, so every other Christmas, we would come out here. And we would go to Disneyland and then we'd end up at the biker bar. And I just remember listening to country music with a bunch of bikers, and eating hamburgers, and falling asleep down in the booth. But when I moved out here, I came out here for school, thinking that I wouldn't be here very long.

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KEN ROHT: And it seems like such a, such a, an event, a biker bar, do you know?

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KENT YOUNG: Oh, no, it's great. Yeah. Yeah.

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KEN ROHT: And did that crop up in your work at all, the --

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KENT YOUNG: Maybe. I mean maybe that's for someone else to see, you know.

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KEN ROHT: Kind of sexy, too; right? Or was it, you know, just sort of that sort of parade, not your --

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JANIE GEISER: Parade of bodies and stuff.

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KEN ROHT: Yeah, sort of sordid and fantastically?

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KENT YOUNG: Oh, yeah. And, and the row of bikes in the parking lot, that's what I really remember.

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KEN ROHT: Yes, that's right.

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KENT YOUNG: And the, and the, and the bands.

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KEN ROHT: And bikes are really reflective. Don't you have my reflection there?

00:05:00

SARAH MCCLAY: So, I got to Los Angeles largely because of the film industry. I had been working, I'm from Montana originally, and I had fallen in love with, with European film and, you know, other foreign films and, and American Independent Film. And so, for a few years, I was working behind the scenes at the Sea Islander National Film Festival which some of the people running that ultimately organized the Palm Springs Festival. And so, I was also meeting a lot of filmmakers and came here partly because I had been writing, I had been singing, I had been acting, I had been doing all these different things.

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SARAH MCCLAY: And so I thought okay, you know, I don't want to be 80 and not have tried acting. So, I came down and I was studying with Peggy Furry and, and, and others,

Jeffrey Tambor at one point. And, and then I did a lot of work, development work for Armand Hammer productions, a little bit of PR work and, and office work for Sundance and other people. But, you know, it was the '80's, and so basically what was being made here wasn't what I was seeing except I had fallen in love with, with Bergman, especially Persona and The Silence are probably the ones that I find most haunting. Herzog starting with Strawcheck [PH] and, you know, I loved him. And Forgotten Dreams.

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SARAH MCCLAY: David Lynch, well, pretty much everything with David Lynch and especially Blue Velvet and Mulholland Drive and vendors, especially Paris, Texas. And, and, and Wings of Desire and, and also Bretolucelli. And so, you know, when I think of what is cinematica, I realized that for me a lot of it has to do with things like even camera moves, you know, especially the dissolve. And a lot of my work is very involved with the dream-like and the surreal. And so, you know, so, so there's kind of an, an automatic connection in there.

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KEN ROHT: And poetry?

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SARAH MCCLAY: I find, I found my way back to poetry. I had been published as a poet before that and then lost the thread sort of and, and then came back, so that's a little, a little bit of it.

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KEN ROHT: I'm from Los Angeles and from an early age I got to go, I told you guys before, I got to go on the studio lots to see films and television being made, and so it was demystified really early for me. And so, I respond, I mean now still I respond to sort of

the, the, the pop or the, sort of the crass commercials and an aesthetic almost, do you know? And to go and sort of play with that in sort of a pop aspect of, of, of things. And my first job was when I was in ninth grade, I was an assistant to a guy who was running one of the, the stagecraft locals.

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KEN ROHT: So I was very, I was around that and around sort of teamsters and the whole like that kind of thing. So, I was just around it a lot, you know, and then just kept going at the song and dance and that was, that's my sort of background in, as I went into high school, that became interesting to me, so Fosse was everything to me. You know, like that's a great influence as far as song and dance, film, sexy, funny, really beautifully stylized, you know. So, early on, I kind of got the sense of, of all of that.

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KEN ROHT: But I was around a lot. That's why I was asking, did you, when you, when you came here, did you, you know, do things that were more Hollywood, bur you actually, you were here a lot before that?

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KENT YOUNG: Right. No, I think I was, I was more attracted to the idea than, than the actual place itself. So, I would go to the beach, you know.

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KEN ROHT: Yeah, that always works.

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KENT YOUNG: Anyway, you know, well, I remember going to Disneyland when I was a little boy once, and it rained the whole time. I had a great time though, so.

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KEN ROHT: I used to go to Disneyland every year with school, you know. And then as an adult, on just a little bit of hallucinogens and things like that, you know, so I did the whole gambit of, of Disney. And you talk about early formative, I understand that's animation, you know, and that's super exciting to me. And now, after really having done theater forever, I am interested in really getting into animation so I'm, I'm meeting the people who are really doing a lot of animation and just trying to acclimate myself to that world because it's, it's brand new to me. And so, and, and the work that I've done as a really whimsical, surrealistic music theater, just sort of these alternative worlds, but fun.

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KEN ROHT: And it just seemed like that would be a good natural extension for me to participate in animation which is the same sort of thing, except in a different, you know, median.

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JANIE GEISER: I mean listening to everybody, I think for me one of my biggest attractions to film are what I got from film. Like I didn't come here for the mythology or to work in the business, I came here to teach at Cal Arts. But I was already an artist and making films, so there is --

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KENT YOUNG: The school that Disney built.

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JANIE GEISER: The school that Disney built, that's true. Yeah. But, but I think it's really the artifice of film that I fell in love with and that is a big part of my artistic practice is that

everything is knowledgably fake but standing in or creating some kind of illusion that we all decide to believe in but we know is fake. And that tension and that beauty of that artifice is in my work and really what I think I got from, from film.

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SARAH MCCLAY: I'm having an early memory of being here that may or may not be relevant. But I didn't have a car, you know, for a while and I was taking the bus to this acting class in the valley. And these guys afterwards, here we'd go to the Tai restaurants and eat and stuff. And, and these guys knew that I was interested in Fassbender films, so they said, "Well, we want to take you to this new Fassbender film and it's called The Lanes." And I thought this doesn't, I don't, I haven't heard of this. So, it's a bowling alley. And I've never been to a bowling alley before. I had never bowled.

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KEN ROHT: Really?

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SARAH MCCLAY: Yeah. But the big lesson that I got out of it was when I was trying to send the, the ball down to hit the pins was that if you, if you, if you are just trying to hit the pins, you're probably going to gutter the ball, it's not going to work. But if you aim for the marks which are closer, then you have a chance. So, this was my great, you know, kind of the same bowling lesson in care of acting class.

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KEN ROHT: Bowling is interesting because I, a friend of mind in, when we were both 20, we used to just get high all the time and we both went bowling and I got the highest score that I ever got, and it was really high. And 230, or something, which is to me just ridiculous. The only other time that that happened was when I was really over-extended

directing an opera and I just had to be in a zone. And to, to take a break one day, I just thought, I have to go by myself and do something else, so I went bowling. It was crazy just like you get into that thinking.

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KEN ROHT: And you are going to do a zone and you know those, they have turkeys, three, three strikes in a row is a turkey.

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KENT YOUNG: I don't know.

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KEN ROHT: That's what they call it. It's a turkey. I got three turkeys in one game and that's ridiculous, but I just, I, it is about sort of channeling or something like that, or really kind of that thing.

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JANIE GEISER: The feelings of bowling movies.

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KEN ROHT: Bowling movies. I really liked The Big Lebowski. That's a really great movie. I loved the Coen brothers, you know. They're, they're just terrific. They did that movie; right?

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KENT YOUNG: Yes.

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SARAH MCCLAY: I have to say wait because the, the, the --

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KEN ROHT: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

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SARAH MCCLAY: No, really, the, the Big Lebowski is modeled after a guy that I was going out with when I was first down here.

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KEN ROHT: And good; right?

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SARAH MCCLAY: Yeah.

00:14:00

KEN ROHT: Like literally?

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SARAH MCCLAY: Yeah, literally.

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KEN ROHT: How?

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SARAH MCCLAY: Jeff Dowd was helping the Coen Brothers with the marketing of Blood Simple as a, a producer's rep, and so we met them in Sundance when I was there, you know, before coming down here.

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KEN ROHT: Oh, my God.

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SARAH MCCLAY: Yeah, so. But you didn't bowl that much in, in real life.

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JANIE GEISER: But I think that brings up a point about Los Angeles, like you were talking about going onto the set when you were young. Living in Los Angeles all those people and all those stories, they're, they all intersect with real life. Like you will be walking around and you will see a house and you recognize it from a film, or Marshall High School in my neighborhood is in every high school TV show, you know. So, so there's something about living inside of that that's very interesting I think, again, about the art of it is constantly being broken.

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KEN ROHT: Yeah, and that's what I wanted to ask you about it, you, you said that you, you employ elements of artifacts that, that you, that you are confident will elicit a response.

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KENT YOUNG: You hope.

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KEN ROHT: Yeah, you hope. And, and that you hope will do that. And what makes that, is that a, is that a classic element, you know? Is it something classic or, or archetypical, or do you know what I mean?

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JANIE GEISER: Well, I work, I mean my films are either, you know, I work with puppetry and objects and found materials, so often I will be objects that might elicit a certain thing from you because maybe you didn't have that object, but it's a little figure like a train figure. So, using things that might have a kind of sense of cultural memory but they are not being used the way they were used, or in my performances I, I use film as part of the performance, but the main characters are pullets but they're, they're not real. They're not alive. And so, they are constantly reminding you of that line between life and death that they are walking all the time.

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KEN ROHT: Like Rauschenberg's sculptures used sort of like common [UNINTELLIGIBLE] events.

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SARAH MCCLAY: Right. He used found, yeah, yeah. It doesn't, yeah., it's, it's related and not related to ration. But certainly related to the history of collage which also is a big part of film, collage and montage and use of materials in a lot of different ways, you know.

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KEN ROHT: And you're a montage artist; right? Or is that you collaged funny or something? Is it that way or?

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KENT YOUNG: I don't consider myself a montage artist.

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KEN ROHT: I don't know. What is that? What is a montage artist here?

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KENT YOUNG: I don't even know exactly. But, no, my work is, is, it's such a corny thing to say because it's so cliché nowadays but it's sort of conceptually-based and depending on the project, sort of the media is determined by what, what needs to happen and the best way to affect the real, or to realize the work. So, I worked, I did a lot of performance work for several years. I have an identical twin brother. And we sort of engage to that subject pretty vigorously for a while. That's, that's not the case any longer. It's harder to collaborate with a family member, I think, than it is in, in another environment, but.

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KENT YOUNG: So, yeah, my work really sort of spans, spans the, the sort of field of media from performance to video to collage. So, and I don't know how my work relates to just sort of the overriding subject that we are supposed to be talking about tonight, other than the desire to, sort of like Hollywood and, and, and LA in a larger sense, that sort of, the place where people can come and, and, and vent and reinvent themselves. And Hollywood, I think, extends beyond sort of this geographic place itself.

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KENT YOUNG: And that's probably what drew me here to begin with is, is, is Lands' End. You know, it's still the last frontier and in so many ways, and I think Hollywood mythologized that to the point where growing up, I grew up in Texas. Where do you go? You go to New York or you go to Los Angeles. So, I liked the way the --

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KEN ROHT: What kind of videos are in your work, or do you, and just is that occasionally you, you will work in, in video or employ it?

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KENT YOUNG: Yeah, the video work, it tends to be, I wouldn't say documentarian in style but it's, it's, it's, more or less, describing events. It's, it's narrative only, only by default. And they tend to document events or actions. Flexes in some regard would be a close analogy, you know. A lot of the videos are of my brother and I sort of in the middle of performing acts or,
or --

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KEN ROHT: Or Beckett, you said.

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KENT YOUNG: Beckett, exactly. Beckett is one of my heroes. So, and oftentimes the performances took the, sort of took the, the, the form of an experiment. So, we, and, and, actually, quite legitimately they were or are considered experiments. So, they would draw from that sort of world of sort of the scientific or the weather of the sciences, just in terms of the scientific method, sort of incorporating that in, in, as a strategy for creating a structure, so.

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KEN ROHT: Were you ever self-conscious about starting to create video, I mean as far as like doing?

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KENT YOUNG: Absolutely.

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KEN ROHT: You know, yeah.

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KENT YOUNG: You know, when I was in school, if you had told me, you know, in 10 years you were going to be doing performance work, I would have laughed at you. I would have said no way will I never do performance work. But the idea came and that's, that's how they had to be realized so you do what you've got to do.

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KEN ROHT: Yeah. Did you feel like you were in, in any way, getting permission from any particular filmmakers, you know?

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KENT YOUNG: No. Actually, I think you mentioned Beckett, and Beckett was a strong influence. The influences or the, or the encouragement were more literary absolutely, although, yeah, Paris, Texas. I mean movies like that, that sort of, they define Hollywood by what it's sort of a, almost by admission, you know. They, they are just like, well, they understand Hollywood but they sort of operate phlegmatically outside of the, the Hollywood formula, now.

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KEN ROHT: They are more interesting in that way.

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JANIE GEISER: Well, that kind of makes me think about the whole experimental film community that's always existed here, or you brought up focus like artists who use video as a big part of their work, and they, I don't know what their relationship would be to Hollywood. But I do know that a lot of experimental filmmakers had jobs in Hollywood. Like they might be editors or color-correctors or camera people, and they would take the left-over film and go make sound footage films out of it or, you know, they, they would have access to optical printers and all this kind of equipment. So, there is a kind of cross-over that happened there and still happens somewhat, but a little bit less with the digital.

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JANIE GEISER: So, an artist like Pat O'Neal, you know, he was really integrated in the, in the film community here and, and developed a lot of his skills through his access to that equipment, you know. So, there, there has always been a community of people working outside of Hollywood, but I think always, not necessarily informed by Hollywood but aware of it or earning money from it.

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KEN ROHT: In relationship to it, sort of necessarily.

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JANIE GEISER: Or, or, or even in, in contrast to it.

KEN ROHT: Right.

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JANIE GEISER: Reaction to it.

KEN ROHT: Yeah. Yeah.

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SARAH MCCLAY: Yeah. And a couple of things have come up. One, one is just about that when I kind of got back into writing, I was going to workshops at the Midnight Special bookstore on the Promenade and Beyond Baroque. And a lot of the people that were going were also people who had been working in film or at one time an, an editor, an actor, somebody who was, I think it was doing set design, you know. And it was a place you could, you could go and you could have creative control of your own work and you didn't have to wait for anybody's money, you know. And, and I think it was both informed by and in reaction to, so I wanted to say that.

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SARAH MCCLAY: But also the thing about both Beckett, who's also one of my, you know, kind of ongoing inspirations, especially in some of my work that's not poetry. Some of them were kind of performative work, and collage and montage. I think especially montage in my poems is something that I kind, it kind of, it's like a condition I aspire to, you know, that sort of fluidity of, of rolling and, and maybe going outside of the, you know, of the, of the, the diurnal, you know, world and into the nocturnal.

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SARAH MCCLAY: And collage has been really freeing a few times, and I teach it sometimes when I'm teaching poetry. There was one poem that I wrote by putting all of these fragments of poems that I thought were going to become longer poems, you know, like torn off of bank slips and, and envelopes and things, into a pitcher that I had on a kitchen table. And then one day I started fishing them out and I thought, oh, actually these are great together and so this became a, a poem that was one of my favorite poems

in, in my first full length. But it was just great to know, yeah, this is absolutely as legitimate as that thing that happens when the poem seems to come out of you more whole cloth.

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JANIE GEISER: Well, I have a question for you. Just how do you feel like your interest in film has, seeps into your writing or film genre or anything sort of related to that or even film writing?

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SARAH MCCLAY: One kind of contrasting thing, I guess, is I, I can do narrative poetry but I don't consider myself primarily a narrative poet, but I think that to the extent that I can do it, a lot of it comes from the discipline of, you know, being a reader or, you know, kind of working in the industry and really, really looking at a story in that way. But, but it's more, I feel more connected, I think, to, you know, those kinds of films that I was talking about like, like Lynch, that world of Lynch, or, you know, moments of, of Vendors or moments of Bergman where there is sort of a blur.

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SARAH MCCLAY: You know, like if you think about those great moments in persona at night where you're not really sure if, if it's a dream or if it's, if it's meant to be real. Yeah, there, there is a lot of stuff like that in that film and, and I'm really interested in, in anything that's liminal, you know, anything that has that kind of sense of blur and boundarylessness and threshold. So, so those are some of the, the filmmakers that I kind of go back to

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JANIE GEISER: I think that idea of the luminal space is, it's very important to me and my work, too. And I don't know how much of that comes from film, I don't know. But it does

exist in that luminal space between sort of something real and something not real and, but I was also thinking when you were talking ab the beginning about dissolves. And, and I think film form has affected every bit of art in the 21st Century. You know, just the idea of cutting or, you know, jump-cutting or dissolves, or that something is here and then it's over here. Something you could do in film now we do in live performance.

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JANIE GEISER: I mean it has been going on for a while. It's not new. But I think film forum has really permeated a lot of art making.

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SARAH MCCLAY: Yeah. Or even like an extreme close-up, you know, when in, poems, I'm not just thinking of mine, but some other poets might focus for a second on something that seems peripheral, you know, like in a glimpse. That's not, and there wouldn't be the, the, the main, the central subject of the scene but it has so much information that's so potent.

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JANIE GEISER: I did a performance once. I, I did it first in New York, but then I, I did do it here where it was influenced by a film of the war, and it was a character that was going through eight different miniature sets that the audience went from set-to-set. And actually, there were eight of the character because she existed in every one of these settings. And for most of the sets, they were sort of like dioramas and the audience of eight people would stand in front of them and watch a three or four-minute scene.

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JANIE GEISER: But then I had one scene where I had slits around both sides of the stage and the audience would put their eyes right up to the, the borderline, that luminal space,

and afterwards I realized, because people would talk about it like that was so shocking to be that close up. It was like a close-up in the film, and I didn't really realize I was doing that. But there's something about in live performance, being able to be that close but has that same power, you know, when someone comes really close to you in a performance as an audience member. What about you? (POINTING TO KEN ROHT)

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KEN ROHT: What about you?

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JANIE GEISER: No, I mean in terms of your performance and, and film?

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KEN ROHT: There's a lot of video and live feed that goes into a lot of theater now. You know, it's such an important part of that, you know, to, to get that close-up effect that you are talking about, and then just as another, as a sort of a three-ring circus element, you know, to the performance is very interesting. Going back to what you had said about collage, you know, again I sort of started in musical reviews, which is a collage, and then I worked with this guy named Raza Abdou [PH] who was all about collage, so I learned about collage. And then as I was trying to start making films, I made a really bad vampire movie. And, and, and I, I tried to employ some of those techniques and it didn't, for me it didn't work out as well.

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KEN ROHT: I think I, I, so when you talk about, you know, the dream states and things like that, I think it's, I feel like, and my response to that is I feel like it's still a linear trajectory to a storytelling, which I think, and that, you know, my [UNINTELLIGIBLE] is not that, you know. And so, but it's, but, but for me I couldn't employ the collage, my collage education

and experiences to film, and because people were just sort of saying, now, people weren't saying, but I was trying to make a story but I only, I really wanted to employ like that weird song and then that weird song and, and kind of sew it altogether.

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KEN ROHT: And it had to have a different, it was a different discipline that, that, that I needed to have, and I needed to grow and subsequently I hope have more, you know. But I, I did find the concept of collage is very important to me, you know, and I would love to sort of, if I can, find my way back to that. I don't know if you guys know about it, a cartoon called Adventure Time? It's so brilliant and it's so weird. It's so --

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JANIE GEISER: Because it's non-sequitur. So, as much as film has, you know, influenced artists, I think artists have influenced film and, and all the different art forms have found their way back into film. You know, I mean collage, again from the beginning film, there have been filmmakers using collage. But there's something about that sense of time in that cartoon that really.

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KEN ROHT: They are still telling the story though. Really, it's linear, but it's whacked, you know, and so many disparate elements that are so interesting and, and just really jarring sometimes in such a great way.

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KENT YOUNG: So, the story is linear and the imagery is non-sequitur or?

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KEN ROHT: Non-sequitur is a great word, you know. It's about, it's about a boy and his dog, and the, the dog, I think, farts a lot or something, I don't know, it's just like and it, and it's, and it's, and they have, you know, adventures, you know, and they meet the king of this and man of that, you know, and so they have, you know, they go on quests and things like that, so in that way it's linear. But then they will come across and they are talking, eating flour or some, you know, whatever, cat singing in Spanish or, you know, or sometimes in that show they will switch all the characters so the dog is voiced by the boy character and, you know, it's just, it's non-sequitur.

00:32:24

KEN ROHT: And I, you know, and kids and stunters really love it, you know, and really respond to it. And which is great because it, it's sort of in that way it is just sort of wide-open. Was Olan Jones part of the Beyond Baroque, do you know? [DIRECTED TO SARAH MCCLAY]

00:32:42

SARAH MCCLAY: She might have been before I was there. I'm not sure. I think she was more involved with Paduwa [PH].

00:32:46

KEN ROHT: Yeah. I see. Right. Yeah. I just remember, she --

00:32:51

SARAH MCCLAY: I don't know.

00:32:51

KEN ROHT: Yeah. She was, she just came back to guitar playing. Oh, and Ann Jones. Do you know her? [DIRECTED TO JANIE GEISER] Okay. Yeah. So, a great actor, somebody that, and an artist and a composer as well. You know, who, who is very invested in art and, you know, and definitely a, you know, pretty successful actress, you know, so in that way making that.

00:33:13

JANIE GEISER: Well, we sort of keep coming back to this thing of like artists in Los Angeles who aren't necessarily working in the film industry and, and LA as a town that you decided to stay in [DIRECTED TO KENT YOUNG] as an artist even though you came here for something else. So, so what do you think it is about LA that has kept you here?

00:33:33

KENT YOUNG: Well, I used to say people move here for all, any number of reasons but they stay because of the weather. And that's partly true. I mean as a, as a, a sort of newly minted grad student in the late '80's and early '90's, it was a more affordable place to live, the alternative being New York. It allowed me, now I see it as a luxury, the luxury of, of a part-time job and a space and the, the remaining available time to make art. Hollywood was the, it was the lure. It was the, it was sort of the bait and switch, it really was.

00:34:15

PAUL YOUNG: It got me here. But I think that again, and I'll go back to the, I think the idea of Hollywood is the strong, it's the magnet that brings all of these creative people here. And, and they stay, who knows, for any number of reasons. And everyone has got their own reasons. But it's the, it's the rare individual who is actually from this area, so most people I know are from somewhere else and they come here to seek, to seek out creativity. So, I attribute that a lot to Hollywood.

00:34:56

JANIE GEISER: Well, when I was coming here from New York, all of my friends in the Lower East Side kept saying, "Well, you have to meet David Wilson, you know, who runs the museum of Geographic Technology." So, I made it a point to go and, and meet him like within the first month that I came here. And I went to an event there that was a lecture on bird calls by a very eccentric man who was showing slides, actual slides of, of birds and making sounds. And then I sat next to David and spoke to him. And after it was over, I said to my husband, "Okay. Now, I can live in Los Angeles." Because I, I think, I think I was sort of afraid that it was all Hollywood and all the industry and all people working in the business, even though I had been here a couple of times to things at Mocha.

00:35:50

JANIE GEISER: And I didn't really know the city. And so, from that introduction to David, who started the museum from, as a model-maker, working in movies and then making his own models, you know, in his spare time that started to gain this other kind of fictional historical, you know, presence. So, he had that skill, and he went to Cal Arts, too, of course. But the fact that he could exist and thrive and make this place here seemed, okay, there's something really interesting here. And, and in the years since I've uncovered a few other things like that.

00:36:30

JANIE GEISER: You know, there is the panorama or different little enclaves in different neighborhoods where you find a certain little tiny art space or a studio. And, and so Los Angeles then becomes your own map of these places and people, and it's very different from a city like New York. And I love New York so I had to find a way to understand this city that was different from what I knew. But you grew up here. I mean why did you stay?

00:37:02

KEN ROHT: I moved around a lot but I would always come back here because it was, it was home. But, you know, I started in not an artistic world at all. I started in commercial entertainment and was having a great time, and all the way into my early 30's, that's what I was doing. I was making these sorts of industrial shows for hotels or a dinner theater in Catalina Island and doing all these yippy skippy songs and loving it, having a great time. And if I'd kept doing that, I'd be a millionaire. But, you know, but, and, but I met Reza and, and through him a very important mentor obviously. I've worked with him for seven years and was his choreographer, and so I understood what he was doing on some visceral level.

00:37:52

KEN ROHT: I had no idea intellectually what he was up to. It was like, "You want me to do what?" Okay. And, but through that became very sensitive to the arts community and, and, and whenever I lived with him for a while and, and just kept sort of following him to Bob Flannigan shows or, you know, things like that that was like, wow, you know. Yeah, no, not at all. And, and Raza's work was intense, you know, and, and it was crazy for me as a, like a song and dance guy in a little blue sweater. So, you know, now get all naked and, you know, crazy stuff.

00:38:34

KEN ROHT: So, it was like there was really a mind and, you know, to, to have that transition. And I used to see his work. I would do one show and then feel like I was some sort of spiritualist flogging myself, you know, to, to really exercise the upper middle class guy that I was, you know, with all my sort of conventional presets. And then, you know, was able to finally kind of understand that and embrace it and love it, become, and then do my version of song and dance which is, then was considered art, you know.

00:39:15

KEN ROHT: And then that's an interesting concept. Like what is art, you know, in, like I think, I, I say that as long, as long as people are singing in four-part harmony and dancing in unison, people love it. You could get away with anything, and I got away with a lot of, of sort of wild collage just by having those conventions, what you're talking about, in a way that's sort of like conic images or things that are familiar enough to draw people in or to captivate them on some level, but then sort of take them on another ride; right?

00:39:50

SARAH MCCLAY: Ultimately for me, when I found my way back to, to poetry, it was, it was a little bit later than when, when Bob Flannigan was at the Bambrook. He was dead by the time I got there, though his influence was still there. But then out of, of those workshops and others, a bunch of poets that are, I still workshop with a bunch of us found our way to doing a master class with David St. John who I'd known at Overland many years before that, and then, you know, suddenly we were both out there. And he's been very instrumental in, in a lot of poet's lives in LA.

00:40:34

SARAH MCCLAY: And, and then Ralph Angel and Cecelia Wallach and there are a whole bunch of, of really interesting parts here. And the poetry community, there actually is one, and it's, it's hard to find a community, a sense of community in LA that stays. I mean in the film business, you know, there are all of these sorts of temporary communities that are really intense, and then after something is over, you can feel kind of cut off. But the poetry community is pretty porous and it has a way of continuing and people will actually drive across town to see each other and, really, although that's harder now with, with traffic.

00:41:14

SARAH MCCLAY: So I realized that I was actually thriving as a poet here and it was probably because of going to workshops once a week for a really long time, sometimes more, you know, and having that sort of soft deadline and, and inspiration, inspiring. And then things kind of kept growing out of that and then teaching, you know, out of that. So, it, it, and I, the light, not for me the weather so much, actually I really miss snow. But the light, you know, and there's something about the quality of the light.

00:41:32

JANIE GEISER: Well, one thing I was thinking about is that, you know, going back to film form and things you were talking about, about collage, is that the film is so ubiquitous now and, you know, we're all carrying around cameras, we're all, you know, I heard actually Sherry Lansing, did you hear that NPR thing?

00:42:08

KENT YOUNG: When you used the term films sort of broadly.

00:42:10

JANIE GEISER: I used the term "film" broadly and I, I, or cinema. That's now what you, actually, that is the term, cinema.

00:42:19

KENT YOUNG: Is it? Because it's --

00:42:19

JANIE GEISER: Like younger filmmakers who are working in experimental film are working in cinema so I, I have to learn to work in cinema now. But there's something about everyone having that access that has both democratized it and made it sometimes

too ubiquitous, but its, its changed it a lot, I think, and, and changed it out of Hollywood's hands in a lot of ways.

00:42:47

KENT YOUNG: Right. Right. It seems like, yeah, the, the medium is being redefined by, by the technology. I see, I see my daughter watching whatever she watches on a little bitty i-phone, and it's not, it's not the traditional narrative. It's, it's hands and a voice. And it's someone playing with Lego's baking a cake, you know. And it's just this voice, and this voice says sometimes Australian, sometimes English but with a Korean accent, you know, and, and you start to see the characters sort of being arrived at through the, the painted fingernails or the inflections in the voice.

00:43:41

KENT YOUNG: And where they emphasize the, the important sort of structures within the set. The set is oftentimes something from an art, Lego's or, or how to bake a cake. And it's such an odd thing to be fascinated by. When I grew up watching TV, we had three channels. And the narrative structure was just, it was already determined. And then it was, there was a rich and long history in, in how that, that structure was, was arrived at I think primarily through Hollywood. And I see a lot of, that's what, when I hear filmmakers and, and writers talk about film and writing, it's, it's almost in contrast to what we understand as the Hollywood model.

00:44:30

KENT YOUNG: And I think that's where I see a lot of the creativity coming from is people come here again for any number of reasons, but to look for that creative, that creative force that, and I, again it's, it's maybe Hollywood is, in my view, getting too much credit. But it's this place now that has, has generated a critical mass. You don't have to go to New York anymore. And when I graduated, that was the big question. Do you go back to

New York? Do you go to New York? Do you stay here? Well, if you stay here, you have a cheap place to live but that might be all you get, you know, so.

00:45:09

JANIE GEISER: Well, teaching at Cal Arts, since I've started teaching there, I've noticed a huge shift in the percentage of, especially graduate students who stay in Los Angeles instead of going to New York. Yeah. And it's not just you can have a cheap place to live because it's not that cheap actually, but you can have a garage or you can have a shed in your backyard, or you can have a driveway. You can have actually a place to work and so space is really essential. And there's, I think, a, a big community now of, of visual artists, performance artists, you know, filmmakers, that are staying here and sort of forming what you're describing in terms of the poet's community.

00:45:51

JANIE GEISER: And, and there's circles of overlapping communities but, but I think that's a really good thing. And it's always been here but I think it's reaching a kind of critical mass.

00:46:05

KEN ROHT: And it's more, it's easier and important actually to sort of commodify like those hands, you've got a million, you know, hits on, you know, You Tube, you know. And I, I was --

00:46:18

KENT YOUNG: And my daughter likes it every time.

00:46:19

KEN ROHT: You know, exactly. And so, yeah, a million times. And I went to, I was at a meeting today with a, I've been commissioned to write a musical, so I'm writing the book to a musical. And this, and this producer is, also has an animation company. And so, we could write this musical and it could be an animated film, which would be great for, because I'm interested in that, well, sort of thing. But so much of the conversation was about the amount of, you know, traffic that this project could get on all of the different, you know, ways to, you know, to, to share that, to share that product, you know.

00:47:11

KEN ROHT: I thought that was, and so that's becoming such a, a thing. And, yes, it's opening it up creatively a lot but it's also, you know, it's really, but it's also getting artists to think, you know, about product and about the monetary ramifications of what they're doing.

00:47:28

JANIE GEISER: Right. But there's also this other thing that's happening that's from those likes and everything. Like it used to be, okay, you come to Hollywood or you come to New York. You can just be a kid in your dining room. I mean my son is a teenager. He has, he's an 18-year-old. He knows people who make money from their Instagram by putting up cool photos and modeling and doing these different things, so they're, that's what they're aspiring to right now. They don't really understand how ephemeral that is, but, so, so there's this other Hollywood that's sort of beckoning people to the same kind of instant fame that's, it's interesting to watch. I'm glad I'm not doing that.

00:48:14

SARAH MCCLAY: This is a little bit, a little bit away from the, the like kind of conversation. But I was just thinking as you were talking about how one of the, the things that's been

going on for a while in poetry, but it's kind of gaining more traction now, is cina [PH] poetry. And sometimes it's, it's film or footage or photos or montages made of stones dissolving into each other or whatever, along with words and sometimes it's not. Sometimes, you know, because lyric poetry is poetry that there might be a story in the background but it's not really about defining the context of the story so much and all the details as delivery when you write to that sort of naked emotional center of, of a moment.

00:49:04

SARAH MCCLAY: And with the sort of sensory-specific around that, mainly through imagery, you know. And I mean I think imagery is, is one of the really strong connections I feel to film as, as a poet because largely in, in poetry especially, you're, you're not talking in abstract words, you're talking in images. You are trying to leave traces, you know, phenomenological traces on the minds of whoever you're, you're, you're speaking with. But the cina poetry is interesting because some of the cina poems are not narrative but more like the sort of lyric moments of really early filmmakers before narrative became a stronger need, a tendency especially when you got into, you know, the monetization of it.

00:49:55

SARAH MCCLAY: And, and sometimes it's just about image or, or, you know, image and, and music or flow, and creating that feeling of transport with means that are more imaged than word.

00:50:10

JANIE GEISER: Well, it really kind of goes back to the history, early history of film then because there were all these tracks of filmmaking and one was what the scholar, Tom Gunning, called the Cinema of Attractions. And that was film that did not have a narrative necessarily. It was all about creating interesting imagery, creating experiences, like dream-like experiences, or trick films or, or a kind of documentary film about just like

here's some people leaving a factory. You know, here's what it's like behind the lunch counter. You know, and, and all of those things were very exciting to people.

00:50:52

KEN ROHT: What's a trick film?

00:50:52

JANIE GEISER: A trick film, well, there, the most famous trick filmmaker that you can find online is Georges Melies. So, he, you know, people began to realize what you can do with the camera. And so, he would set up a scene and it, it kind of looked like the way 19th Century theater looks, usually like a curtain and, and, you know, like Vaudeville. And there might be a woman standing there, and then he would stop the camera and get her out of the frame --

00:51:21

KEN ROHT: Oh, I see.

00:51:22

JANIE GEISER: And then come back and she's not there. So, well, he used cinematic tricks. So that was like a beautiful form. And now we call it special effects, you know, and it's really sophisticated, but it was much more this revealing of the artifice, I think, in those early times.

00:51:37

KEN ROHT: Trying to force the limits of what you could do with it.

00:51:40

JANIE GEISER: And have fun with it.

00:51:43

KEN ROHT: Yeah. Where do you get, where do you get inspiration for your text in your work?

00:51:48

JANIE GEISER: Well, I would say less the text than the, well, in my films I'm mostly not using text. But in my performances, the, I usually work from some kind of story. And as I've lived in LA longer, those stories are much more coming out of LA. So, one of the pieces I did a few years ago was about a girl who was kidnapped and murdered in East LA. And, and it was more about the, her disappearance and how that affected people around her. But the story wasn't told through like a very literal kind of news story, who done it kind of thing. It was more emotional and so I, I used puppetry and film.

00:52:35

JANIE GEISER: So, the film, the main, one of the main images was of her sister just digging in the dirt and looking for clues. And so, then we would do live feed of the puppet's hands and project that. And so, working with the materiality, the set was just like a big landscape with very little green on it because she was kidnapped in East LA and then she was found in San Bernadino. So, just thinking of that travel into the wild, sort of, not the City of San Bernadino, but the mountain.

00:53:10

KEN ROHT: Sure.

00:53:11

JANIE GEISER: So I'm, I'm really actually, I don't know, permeated by the stories that happen here, and I'm an obsessive newspaper reader still. And, and then, you know,

research into other kinds of things. I did a piece that was weirdly about the, the tuberculosis hospitals that started springing up here in the '30's. The City of Hope Hospital started as a bunch of tents on the mountains east of Los Angeles. And, and so just those little bits of history actually is where most of the work comes from, yeah. And then just getting into research about it and telling these sorts of emotional poems almost, you know.

00:54:090

KEN ROHT: So, stories and stories is the thing, yeah.

0054:09

JANIE GEISER: In my performances, stories are the thing. And in my films, it's a little bit looser and more of a progression of events and, you know, the, it's, it's very, they're very different and so I kind of like working between those forms and then using them together when I can, too.

00:54:33

KEN ROHT: Do you work in stories?

00:54:34

SARAH MCCLAY: I, well, I, not, not a lot, you know. I mean sometimes they'll, they'll come up. But what I was thinking about the story was related to film. I had mentioned David St. John and there's a particular poem of his called Meridian, which is a story about an encounter with a woman who seems to be maybe, there's some kind of relationship there, you don't know what it is. And it turns out that she has a really devastating problem with, with drugs. And, and the, but what.

00:55:12

SARAH MCCLAY: well, the reason that I am bringing it up is that when Michael Ballhaus died a few weeks ago, the cinematographer who did a lot of stuff for Fassbender, but also for Scorzayzee and, and, and others, there's this amazing kind of infamous dolly tracking shot at the beginning of Goodfellas, that took, I think it took about a day to set up that's, do you know this shot? It's like one long uninterrupted --

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JANIE GEISER: Is it the one that's the uninterrupted one?

00:55:42

SARAH MCCLAY: Yeah. Uninterrupted shot where they come through the bowels of the restaurant and then come out into the main side, and you learn all of this detail of character as that's going on, that's what this poem reminds me of in the way it's constructed. It's like this kind of really intricate shot that's set up that way so that you can barely breathe by the time you get through it, and then you realize you, you are, you are, you have so much information by the end. And there's another, another more recent poem like that. So that's, that's one of the things that I was thinking of where, you know, talking about the sort of technical side of film and, and camera moves relating it to story, not mine particularly.

00:56:29

KEN ROHT: But to storytelling, yeah.

00:56:32

KENT YOUNG: You know, I just thought the, the question of story and I think as an artist, my job is to tell a good story. And so, I'm thinking about where in my work can I identify this idea of story. And I think when I was doing these performance pieces with my twin brother, they, the form was really a science experiment. It was a simple, simple setup.

There was one where we tried to solve a crossword puzzle telepathically. One of us had the clues and the other had the puzzle. And it went on for over an hour, so the audience, the story came from the audience.

00:57:14

KENT YOUNG: The audience brought their own stories to what it, whatever their conception or, or, or their ideas of what twins are supposed to, to be like, or the special sort of connective powers that twins must have that, you know, they, they're, they're identical. They must, they must be closer, they must have some special bond. And so, this story really was just brought out through the context. There was not a lot going on, so the story was really fabricated in the minds of, of all the, all the audience members. And the story was, in that regard, variable. So, everyone sort of made it up.

00:58:05

KEN ROHT: I love that you really understood how intriguing twins are to people and sort of worked with that, you know.

00:58:16

KENT YOUNG: Well, we resisted it forever, for, for, for decades, and it just, it finally just reached a point where we just had to run with it. You know, you go, well, you go where the work takes you. And you just have to follow the work sometimes. And that's how, again, that's how the, me becoming a performance artist happened. It would not have happened any other way.

00:58:45

KEN ROHT: You mean by yourself or --

00:58:46

KENT YOUNG: No. Yeah, I, I prefer to be behind the camera as it were. Or in my studio making. So, really, it was a situation where the motivation was so strong that there was no way to deny pursuing it.

00:59:06

KEN ROHT: Yeah, I find twins really fascinating. I, was that you did Beckett or you got, or was trying to tell me he introduced Beckett?

00:59:13

KENT YOUNG: No, we, we did one of the, another performance was, the set-ups were generally the same. They, they, they took the form sort of formally of like a three-act play. So, the first act was literally like a song and a dance. And the second act was the experiment. And the third act was sort of a return to the song and dance. The third act tended to be a little somber or sort of, sort, yeah, sort of a, you know, Segway out. But the first act in one of these performances/experiments was the re-enactment of Act One of Waiting for Cadaro. So, it was two, two characters.

01:00:00

KENT YOUNG: And we were twins. And in the middle of it all, they switched characters. And that really was just such a simple effect, we just changed hats and then switched positions and just kept right on going, so.

01:00:16

SARAH MCCLAY: Did you ever do Ohio Impromptu together --

01:00:17

KENT YOUNG: No.

01:00:18

SARAH MCCLAY: -- where it looks like they are two characters who look exactly alike?
It's like, it's built for you.

01:00:29

KEN ROHT: You have to do that. Your brother has to, has to agree. Janie sort of said
push it.

01:00:37

KENT YOUNG: Yeah. I, I don't know how many, how many more collaborations I have
and so.

01:00:42

JANIE GEISER: Well, I already told him I have a space he can do it in.

01:00:44

KENT YOUNG: Yeah. So, I, I keep fishing, fishing for ideas and not ideas but on, on sort of
strategies to convince my brother to participate.

01:00:55

KEN ROHT: Money.

01:00:56

KENT YOUNG: That's a strong motivation but it would be a lie in this case, so.

01:01:06

JANIE GEISER: Well, I'm curious, can't like you're taking what you've been doing as a live performance into film and what kind of translation that involves? And, also, I mean film as a lot of people involved and I mean, I don't know if you've hit that phase of it yet where there's an assistant for every assistant, and you're with, working with a lot of people and it's very different probably from how you've worked before. I mean I know you've worked with groups, but a different kind of chain of command.

01:01:43

KEN ROHT: Yes. I think what's, what's benefitted all of us, me in this case, is just intuitive response. And so then to have a distinct aesthetic and to make decisions based out of intuition and so. And then to sort of build leadership skills, well, and working with large casts and lots of designers in theater, you know, as a director or as a writer, both a lot of the time, so, so it primed the pump for that. And then so the largest film project that I worked on, I mean I've acted in large film projects, but was a, I did a cowboy film as sort of, it was, and I'm really proud of it.

01:02:38

KEN ROHT: It's, you know, it, but it was, it, it had 13 locations all over California. I worked with U. C. Irvine's musical theater department, I worked with a church in Tularie, their choir and their bell choir, lots of horses, lots of people riding those horses, cows and all the rest of that and all that needed to be pulled together and organized or whatever. And I did it for \$30,000, which means that you, I know, so you really have to do a lot of communing, you know, and that sense of community, we are talking about sort of the poet community, and then like this film.

01:03:20

KEN ROHT: And I was thinking about this as you, you know, is that these people had an experience they are not going to soon forget, you know, to go into, there's a north, Northern California Clogging Association, they are clog dancers, you know. And for us to collaborate for six months because they were up there and I was down here. I'd give them a piece of music and they're like, well, this is great. And, you know, we want to buy shirts for this. Great, buy shirts for this, you know, and all the rest of that. So, it, it just becomes, you know, we all get it done, you know, because we have to.

01:04:02

KEN ROHT: And so it just, as, as I was doing these music theater shows here, they got bigger and I, I just sort of understood how to multi-task and do all the rest of that, then I just turned into how to do that for film.

01:04:15

JANIE GEISER: I see.

01:04:16

KEN ROHT: Yeah, it worked, it worked out that way. I tend to love it. It's very difficult, you know. It really just takes years off your life, you know, you wanted to know. But it's, but it's just, there's nothing more rewarding if you feel like you've come up with something good and you can get it out there. If its not distributed, and we're sort of talking about YouTube and all this, to let you know.

01:04:37

KENT YOUNG: Okay.

01:04:38

KEN ROHT: If it's not out there, then it's depressing, you know, because you've done all that work for, for nothing. And so, then it's about, you know, the chore of doing that. We, we opened the first weekend at Outfest in the DGA Hall which was cool. Yeah, it was, it was so gratifying, you know, to have that experience. And then it wasn't ready, so we kept cutting it down progressively, you know, different screenings. We would just make it tighter and better and, and didn't stop when it was at the DGA. We wouldn't go, oh, there, it's done, it's so great. It was just like we needed to make sure that it was, was fulfilling in that way.

01:05:19

KEN ROHT: But I liked, I get overexposed, I, I know I seem gregarious but I'm actually one of those extroverted introverts, you know. And so, it's, it's a little wearing to be really in front of so many people, and sort of consistently but it, but there's nothing more satisfying, you know, especially if you know you are building community, which is something I do.

01:05:44

JANIE GEISER: Well, I come from a visual art background, solitary, you know. Then I started doing performance so there's people involved. But I have no desire to make a big movie. To me, I mean, and if you know, if you have that desire and you're good at that, it's the best thing. But I really like working in, in a much smaller way where I feel like I can be in control, not in a control-freak kind of thing but just where I, I can make decisions and they happen, you know.

01:06:13

SARAH MCCLAY: You have visions that they make.

01:06:20

KEN ROHT: How has teaching sort of changed that? Because you have to be with people, in front of people.

01:06:25

JANIE GEISER: Oh, yeah. And it's not like I'm, I'm a, I think I'm a --

01:06:27

KEN ROHT: A recluse?

01:06:28

JANIE GEISER: -- extroverted, an introverted, one of, one of those coming out. I'm not an extrovert, but I, but I have a social, I'm socially fine, you know. So, I actually burn a lot from teaching, you know. I, I find it really exciting what people come up with, you know, and I, I don't teach like as a dogmatic lecturer kind of teacher. I teach by creating situations for other people to make or to, to thrill me, you know.

01:07:00

KEN ROHT: Inspire me. We had drinks with Charlie Adler, and Charlie Adler is the voice of everything, and did a lot of voice direction in cartoons, and he's a little older than I am. And just like this, go have drinks with him. It's just like [MAKES CARTOON SOUNDS]. And just like wow, you know, he's alive. But he was really stressing just how everybody was coming out of Cal Arts, all these animation people. It's, and it's like a direct line to making lots of money in animation if you go to Cal Arts.

01:07:34

JANIE GEISER: I mean there, there are several, I teach actually in the theater school, but I deal with a lot of film students. And there are a couple of programs, so there's

character animation which is the pipeline if you want to work in the industry. And then there's experimental animation where the, some people want to work in the industry, but they're mostly, you know, individual artists who are interested in that form as their form of art-making, you know. And, but there's also this big interest now in immersive entertainment. Like people come out and they work for companies like Sinkro and, and Disney and Imagineering. And they are finding like designers and theater directors and playwrights that are finding their way into that world of storytelling.

01:08:25

JANIE GEISER: It's a different form but it seems really attractive to people right now in a, in a different way than sort of the Hollywood movie model.

01:08:33

KEN ROHT: So you're talking about live immersive theater? Yeah.

01:08:35

JANIE GEISER: Well, not just live immersive theater, like the big, you know, theme parks, the narrativity of that kind of entertainment. They're looking for people who have those skills and innovations and can work in that really big system. So, it's just interesting to observe. There's still plenty of people just coming out and wanting to make their own work, you know.

01:09:02

KENT YOUNG: Right. Right. Their own?

01:09:03

JANIE GEISER: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And maybe trying to figure out always how to make a living while you're doing that, you know.

01:09:11

KEN ROHT: That's what changed for me as like, you know, I'm going to start making a really great living, you know. And now at 55, I've decided I'm going to make money. This is a great idea, you know. And so, to really focus on that, to see about that, you know, and to, that's part of the game for me, you know, because I've lived how I've lived. I can live like this forever, you know. But it's also, wouldn't that be interesting, a different adventure, you know. And so, then it's like, all right, who's going to have me? You know, where do I get to play. And I just think it's an interesting thing to try for, you know, in the film industry, cinema.

01:09:51

SARAH MCCLAY: I want to veer a little bit actually back to what you were talking about with allowing the audience to make the story because it's, it's something that every once in a while, I'll experience, well, after reading where, especially with, you know, with the, the part of the idea about a lyric poem is that there are, there are going to be gaps. Not everything is going to be told. And I've had experiences sometimes, sometimes with really short poems where somebody in the audience thought it was about something completely different. But it was really moving to them, it really mattered to them.

01:10:32

SARAH MCCLAY: And so I learned not to correct that perception and to, you know, allow, allow for that ambiguity to happen I think actually in, in particular with poetry, ambiguity is one of the powers of poetry, in that it allows for somebody in an audience to have an experience that you can set up but you can't completely control. And then the thing is to let go of that and let them have it.

01:11:02

JANIE GEISER: I completely agree. I, I think that's, that motivates a lot of things that I do. But it, so it's not like I'm trying to make work that's opaque or, you know, distant or any of those things but that, allowing for the ambiguity for people who have their own experience as you're doing, you know, while giving them whatever it is you want to give, you know, not holding back in any way. When I, when I was first living in New York, I made a living as an illustrator, but like the New York Times Book Review, things, literary kind of illustration, you know, and I learned from that experience.

01:11:45

JANIE GEISER: I had like two days to make a drawing. I would read the review and I had two days. And what worked best was not to make something that really pointed to the writing but that kind of suggested something and, and, and was ambiguous.

01:11:59

SARAH MCCLAY: Right. And maybe a little oblique.

01:12:00

JANIE GEISER: Yeah. Yeah. So that I, it was a very good kind of learning ground for me to, for that, yeah.

01:12:10

KENT YOUNG: I mean speaking for myself, as an artist I don't know, I don't believe I am in any better position to understand like the effects of the outcome of my work than any of you are, and what they might bring to it, and so. And as far, as far as ambiguity, I think I've always strived, at least in, in my ideas is for clarity, and it is through the clarity that allows for the ambiguity. And I've noticed things they do that are somewhat ambiguous just create confusion. I don't like, you know what I'm says,

01:12:51

KEN ROHT: It, it turns around.

01:12:52

JANIE GEISER: Yeah. It's not like the intention is ambiguity but through knowing what you're doing but trusting it, and not having to explain it, that allows a certain kind of ambiguity that lets other people in.

01:13:06

SARAH MCCLAY: Yeah. I mean, I, I, I am thinking of things where there are very clear images but it's possible for something to be interpreted more than one way. And sometimes the way someone takes that in merges with a really potent emotional memory. It's interesting.

01:13:28

JANIE GEISER: How about you and ambiguity?

01:13:29

KEN ROHT: Well, it's interesting to come from like, like I said, she's a song and dance and then to create surrealist work with those elements, and I did, and that's, you know, and people are like, well, I don't know what it is but it's delightful, you know, that kind of a thing. And it's that sense of delight that I think it would be great to bring to animated films or just cinema in general.

01:14:00

JANIE GEISER: Well, I mean I think one of the sort of big things coming out of this discussion is not so much that any of us are working in reaction to the film industry or against it or, or not necessarily in confluence with it, but that being here, it is a big part of

our landscape and we engage in it in a lot of different ways and we are affected by it. But it's, it's kind of also made the space for all this eccentric art and profound art to develop. I mean we haven't even talked about music in Los Angeles which is very powerful, current experimental music in LA is, I think, one of the most vibrant in the country.

01:14:48

JANIE GEISER: So, it's, it just seems like LA has always been, but if you think about all those composers that came from Germany and really affected also the film industry. So, it's, it's really a place where a lot can happen and does happen, and it seems to be good for that right now. I still dream of New York sometimes.

01:15:13

KENT YOUNG: But less so; right? Now I don't have anything to say.

01:15:21

KEN ROHT: And with that --

01:15:25

JANIE GEISER: I think it's really nice to get to talk to you guys and, and that these conversations, if they're, if nothing else happens, I think it's bringing people together that wouldn't have come together. And in LA, that's difficult, well, I think.

01:15:40

SARAH MCCLAY: It's rare.

01:15:46

KEN ROHT: That's all we've got.

01:15:47

SARAH MCCLAY: I'm just going to, this is funny. I was, it took me an hour and a half to drive across from Venice, of course. Right. So, I always listen to KCIW and, and I happened to, happened to hear Eric Garcetti actually on the way over. So, we may as well end there, talking about LA as an imperfect paradise. And I thought, that was good, you know. So maybe part of what we are doing is we are embracing that imperfection.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]