

**ALLAN RUBIN AND CANDY SPILNER ORAL HISTORY**

Interviewer: Huffa Frobess-Cross with Josie Naron and Claire Henry	Interviewee: Allan Rubin and Candy Spilner	Date of interview: July 24, 2022
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**HUFFA FROBES-CROSS:** [00:00:00] My name is Huffa Frobess-Cross. I am here with Josie Naron and Claire Henry from the Wildenstein Plattner Institute. And we are here to do our oral history for the *Tom Wesselmann Digital Corpus and Catalogue Raisonné* with Allan Rubin and Candy Spilner. So, what I would like to start off with is to kind of get a sense of where you both were when you first started working at the studio. Like where, you know, what was going on in your lives and, you know, what were you doing artistically, educationally. Take me, like, kind of back to that time right before you started working. What were you up to? Yeah, where were you at.

**ALLAN RUBIN:** Okay. This is Allan Rubin, and I originally got the job for Tom and later gave it to Candy -- or sooner gave it to Candy, because I worked for Tom for three weeks in 1977, and then I got a National Endowment for the [00:01:00] Arts grant and started selling my own work. So I said, "Well, Tom, I don't really need the job, but I recommend Candy." And he said, "Well, I don't know. I don't know. Can she do your, you know, what you can do?" And I said, "Oh, she can do anything I can do better." And that turned out to be an understatement, which he, like, thanked me profusely for recommending her later.

But the reason I worked for Tom is I had previously built up my career as an artist's assistant, thinking this is a good way to get paid well for skills that I obtained when I was at Cooper Union. Where I met Candy, by the way. And if I work for an artist, I can make my own hours and I can use skills that are valuable, which was something that Wolf Kahn, another artist, told us to do at Cooper Union. He said, "Have a skill where you can make your own hours." So, previous to that, I worked for some unknown artists, and that led to working for Robert Motherwell for a couple of years. [00:02:00] And after

that, for Chuck Close for a couple of years. And then, I needed a job. At one point I was doing house painting and carpentry and things like that, and so was Candy, although she had another job working for another artist.

And I was in a show at the downtown Whitney Museum called *Nothing but Nudes*. And I was on the poster and I was on the catalog cover because I had painted Candy in the East River nude. And I combined, like, a picture of her from Maine in a, in a pond and put it together with a picture of the East River and worked that together. I could show you, show you the image. And that was hanging right next to a *Great American Nude* painting by Tom Wesselmann. In this show, there was a whole bunch of famous and less famous people. So, I liked Tom's work. I always did. Before that, I didn't really know Motherwell's work, but anyway. So, I needed a job.

So, I wrote three letters. One to [Roy] Lichtenstein, one to Lucas Samaras, and one to Tom Wesselmann, with [00:03:00] resumes of who I'd worked for before. Tom called me up and he said, "I have a guy working for me now, Richard Dimler" -- you know about him -- "but he may be leaving, so I will keep you on the top of the list and I'll give you a call." And it was maybe almost a year later that he called me up and said, "Come on in. Richard moved on." Then I did my three weeks working, you know, stretching shaped canvases and things like that. You get a lot of skills at Cooper Union, and I could, I could pretty much -- you saw my canvases. I can stretch anything. And so, he was happy with my work, but then he went away for the summer. And then, when he came back, I said, "I won the grant. I'm selling my art. Let me try living, you know, living off my art." But so Candy took the job in January, 1978. And, and tell what it was like to go to work for Tom.

**HFC:** Yeah. And what, where were you at at the time [00:04:00] as well? Like what else were you doing before you started at the studio?

**CANDY SPILNER:** I worked for various artists, not long-term. I did house painting. That was awful. And --

**AR:** You did a lot of airbrush work at that point. That paid really well.

**CS:** I was really good at airbrushing. Did I ever work for Chuck [Close]?

**AR:** You did some work for Chuck Close.

**CS:** I did a little work for --

[break in audio]

What was the question?

**HFC:** Yeah, that was exactly the question. Where were you at? What were you doing at the time.

**AR:** Well, we were developing our own work and taking our time --

**CS:** Painting.

**AR:** Trying to have careers. Because when we got out of school, they said, Take 15 years, and at the end of 15 years, take your work to galleries.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** And --

**CS:** Well, they, what they said was, Okay, now you, now you sort of know how to paint. Go out and practice it for all this time. And then, maybe something will happen. Which is not what -- now people get picked up right out of school or in school, even.

**HFC:** In school.

**AR:** And during those 15 years, that's what happened. All of a sudden, younger [00:05:00] people than us were getting picked up. So, we were being responsible, developing our [laughter] painting abilities. Although I did go to Ivan Karp when I was in my early twenties. And he looked at my slides and he said, "Well, if your paintings are as good as your slides, your career is made." [laughter] And he came out to Brooklyn. We had a studio in Brooklyn. Well, we had an apartment in Brooklyn with a living room. And he looked at my paintings and he said, "You take good slides."

**HFC:** Oh my God. Wow. Wow. [laughter]

**AR:** But that was okay, because we didn't plan to have careers until much later.

**HFC:** So, this is good 'cause it actually takes me to something else that I wanted to ask, which was to kind of follow up on what you both brought up and go back a little bit. So, you both met at Cooper Union. And did you -- were you in the same class at Cooper Union?

**AR:** Candy was two years behind me.

**HFC:** Two. Okay.

**AR:** I was a senior and she was a sophomore when we met.

**HFC:** And you graduated [00:06:00] in what year?

**AR:** I graduated in '70 and she, two years later.

**HFC:** Okay, cool.

**AR:** And we met and, and became a couple very quickly. And then, we traveled to Europe together and if you can do that, your relationship can survive. So, we've been together for 53, almost 53 years.

**CS:** Yeah. Hitchhiked all over Europe.

**AR:** We hitchhiked all over Europe.

**CS:** Can you imagine --

**AR:** You could, you could do that then. That was 1970.

**CS:** Not really, not dangerous.

**HFC:** Amazing. Yeah. I'm really interested also, though, in your Cooper Union time. Of course, you know, Tom is a big presence there. He taught there for a bit.<sup>1</sup> You know, were you kinda aware of him as a Cooper Union luminary while you were there?

**AR:** I think we were.

**CS:** I don't think I was.

**AR:** . I knew that he went there. I enjoyed his *Great American Nudes* and his, you know, the other work that I was aware of, but we were only becoming slowly aware of who else the art

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<sup>1</sup> Though Wesselmann was heavily involved with the Cooper Union community and art scene, there is no record of him teaching there.

scene [00:07:00] was. It wasn't that big then. Like, Tom used to say that there were like 150 artists in the entire art world in New York when he got into the art world.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**CS:** Tiny.

**AR:** When he was fortunate to get into the art world. But 10 years later, when we got out of Cooper Union, you know, it's 150,000 artists.

**HFC:** [laughs] Right.

**AR:** And you were competing with them and you needed a day job. You know, Tom taught first, too.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** But he didn't really wanna do that. So --

**CS:** Well, he taught at -- he taught high school, high school art class. In fact, I know, I know somebody up here who was a student of his.

**HFC:** Really? In the high school art class?

**CS:** Yes [laughs]. And Tom left very abruptly. Tom, in the middle of the year, he got into Janis Gallery.<sup>2</sup> And then, after the Christmas break, he just didn't come back. They were, they were really angry that he didn't say goodbye, 'cause they all liked him so much.

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<sup>2</sup> Wesselmann stopped teaching high school art when he was accepted into Green Gallery, not Janis. He joined Janis Gallery in 1966.

**HFC:** So, you met at Cooper [00:08:00] Union and it sounds like between the time that you graduated and the time that you started working for Tom, you were sort of under the advisement of the people that you knew at Cooper Union. Kind of holding back from really trying to get gallery exhibitions, working for other artists --

**AR:** And every other job you can imagine.

**HFC:** And every other job you did.

**AR:** Carpentry, house painting, art moving. You know, what, whatever artists do, we did.

**CS:** Yeah. They had a -- I mean, there was a job book at Cooper where you could go --

**HFC:** Yeah.

**CS:** -- see who was hiring somebody.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** And we found out that the working for other artists was the most lucrative and the most forgiving.

**CS:** But I, well, I never you know, picked out an artist and pursued them as a -- for a job. It's just, you know, whoever was offering, that was it. I wasn't doing it because I wanted to be influenced or anything.

**HFC:** Yeah. And I was gonna -- because you mentioned that you had been in this show, Allan, which --

**AR:** Which is what directed me to Tom.



**HFC:** -- was what directed you to Tom. But Candy, it sounds like you weren't necessarily sort of [00:09:00] clued in or particularly focused on Tom Wesselmann's work at the time that you started working there.

**CS:** No, not at all. No. Yeah. It was a job.

**HFC:** It was just a job. Yeah.

**AR:** And once we did decide to have our own careers, you know, we'd send out dozens of slide sheets in envelopes. And some of them would actually come back with rejection letters. Most of them went in the trash. And that's the life of a -- of an unknown artist at the time. But having, but working for other known artists, like the people we were mentioning, you get exposed to what it's like to be a successful artist. And we had no stomach for it.

**HFC:** Really? Why not?

**AR:** It didn't appeal to us. Because you spend all your time doing business, and then you're making work for the market, and then you're not free to explore your own stuff, because people tell you, Gimme 12 of those and none of those. And we really just wanted to make [00:10:00] art and see where it led us. And we weren't business-minded people. It kinda nauseated us. And hence, throughout our lives, even though we've had some success, it's always not had an appeal. And we're not great self promoters. So, it's good that we had a day job.

**HFC:** Yeah. Actually, well, this -- I mean, this is sort of a broad question early on, but I am curious, since you bring it up, do you both see the long time that you spent working for Tom Wesselmann as kind of facilitating the kind of art career that you wanted? I.e., one that did not involve primarily

being involved in business and making work for the market? Because you had this other job and you didn't have to primarily do -- I mean, is that accurate? That was, that was a reason that you did it?

**AR:** That was the plan.

**HFC:** Yeah. Okay. That was -- yeah.

**AR:** We didn't have to make a living from our art, so we were able to just make enough [00:11:00] money working for Tom and then just do whatever we want.

**CS:** Right. Plus, I mean, it was three, was it originally three days a week?

**AR:** Yes.

**CS:** Yeah, it was always three days a week.

**AR:** Three days a week.

**CS:** And then, we got -- and then we started getting summers off. With pay!

**AR:** Explain how, explain how we got the summers off with pay.

**CS:** Well, it was just me working -- oh actually, Richard, I worked with Richard.

**AR:** Richard Dimler came back for a while.

**CS:** He was there for like a year when I was there. And then he went off to Florida. But Tom went, always went away for the summer for 10 weeks.

**HFC:** Right.

**CS:** And I, and I said, "I have to pay my rent. I have to get another job." And he was horrified. So, [laughs] so he paid me. Well, the first -- the first thing he did was he gave me a, a job to do over the summer so I could --

**AR:** Oh, that's right. The embossing.

**CS:** He gave me prints that I was -- embossed prints. The little --

**HFC:** oh.

**AR:** The portfolio.

**CS:** -- watercolor portfolio. The portfolio, yeah.

**HFC:** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, of course.

**AR:** She made those.

**CS:** So, I took the plates home and I pressed them and [00:12:00] painted them in. And I spent the whole summer doing that.

**HFC:** Really? Just on your own?

**CS:** Yeah. In my -- at home. Yeah. You know, and kept track of my hours. And then, he paid me.

**HFC:** So the -- but so, the embossed nudes basically were made over a summer by you on your own, just working.

**CS:** Yeah, he had --

**AR:** As an edition.

**HFC:** As an edition, of course, yeah.

**CS:** He had all the -- he had all the plates lying around that he had made just a few. I don't think he intended them to be an edition. Originally, just made a few of them. And then I was there and could paint them. So, [laughs] since I was -- turned into editions.

**HFC:** Gotcha. Oh, I see. Oh, so initially, it wasn't gonna be an edition, and because you could do it --

**CS:** I don't think so. He just made a few.

**HFC:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AR:** You know, to be clear, he hired us because of the Cooper Union connection.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** Because he knew that we would have the skills to do whatever he needed us to do. Because with Tom, everything was always what he needed.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** And I -- [00:13:00] I love Tom and respect him, and I want you to know that he always saw himself as the most important thing.

**CS:** [laughs] Of course. Why not?

**AR:** Yeah. I mean, he was no saint. He was a great employer. Super generous, understanding, forgiving, patient. Enjoyed the studio being a fun place to work. Forced us to listen to country music, [laughs] but even sometimes let us play our own music.

**HFC:** So I'm really interested in what you said when you said that he was the most important thing. What -- how did that manifest itself at the studio? What are you trying to get at when you say that? What -- what was it?

**AR:** Well, first of all, one of the early things he told us was that he spent 15 years in psychoanalysis learning that he was number one. That he was the most important thing in his life.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** Which meant he wasn't there to serve [00:14:00] anyone else. And that was his ego and persona. In a good way. It meant that he went places that people who were less self-centered couldn't get to. And also, he was very lucky. He won the art lottery. I wanted to say that artists' assistants are very often just as talented. I'm not saying we are. But as talented as the people they work for, but not as fortunate. Not as focused on by somebody who said, "You're the one I'm gonna sell." And that's always been the issue. The situation for every successful artist is a thousand just as good who don't get anywhere, and yet they interact with those successful artists and they feed on each other. So, the people like us feed off of Tom, and sometimes Tom would [00:15:00] feed off of us. And there's nothing wrong with that. You know, Picasso said, you know, "Good artists borrow, great artists steal."

**HFC:** Well, since you bring that up, I do -- it just reminds me of this one thing I was gonna talk about later, but you've led me right to it, so I feel like it's worth bringing up now. Which is that Tom has actually said a couple times, publicly, that he at some point decided to stop going to your studio, because he was concerned that by going to your studio he was getting ideas that he was -- so, can you just tell me a little bit about that situation from your perspective and how that all happened?

**CS:** I think I'm a little bit confused with exactly when it happened, but he used to, you know, he wasn't far away. He would make a regular studio visit every summer. He'd come and he was very entertained by what we were doing and -- and then, at one point, I think it was at -- in my studio. He got really out of breath. He got really, [00:16:00] like, uncomfortable, and he had to leave 'cause he didn't feel well. And he said, "I can't come here anymore because I have a venue and you don't." So he didn't -- he didn't come.

**HFC:** Did he ever explain anything more about why?

**CS:** Well, I was doing three -- oh, he also said, "I'm trying to" -- this is silly, because he was already doing big three-dimensional works, you know, big canvases spread around and stuff. He said, "I'm trying to get into 3D and you've already done it." [laughs] What?

**AR:** He even bought one from Candy.

**HFC:** Really?

**CS:** Oh, you gotta -- oh, I will show you this.

[break in audio]

**HFC:** While you're looking that up, when was this? What -- do you like, roughly what year was this?

**AR:** [sighs] It would've been in the '90s sometime.

**HFC:** Okay.

**CS:** Tom bought this painting. This is four feet square. You can't tell from this picture, but it's -- it's three-dimensional.

**HFC:** Wow.

**CS:** It's, I can't, three or four layers piled up with the -- I had looked at it really closely. I can't even remember what the layers are.

**AR:** [00:17:00] Like the work in her studio.

**CS:** Like, the figure is cut out and on top of the other. Tom bought that out of my studio and took it home and hung in his bedroom.

**HFC:** Really?

**CS:** [laughter] Yes.

**AR:** Is that before he was doing 3D work?

**CS:** Well, he always did 3D work, so, you know, I --

**AR:** No he didn't. [laughs]

**CS:** Yeah, he built the giant things with --,

**AR:** Yeah. Well, there was a symbiosis.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**CS:** Yeah.

**HFC:** And I'm curious, Candy, did you ever -- before this happened, did you ever look at his work and think to yourself, Oh, I see things that I'm working on in his work.

**AR:** She says no.

**HFC:** But did -- no, you didn't.

**CS:** I don't, I don't think so. It's so long, I -- I don't think so.

**HFC:** Yeah. No, I'm not saying it necessarily in a negative sense. It doesn't have to be in a negative sense. I just mean, but -- so you think --

**AR:** I did.

**HFC:** You did? Yeah.

**AR:** I did. When I saw that he could make shaped canvases, I said --

**CS:** I mean, this [00:18:00] is --

**AR:** I can make shaped canvases.

**CS:** That's, this is what I was thinking of when I was making 3D. I wasn't thinking of Tom.

**HFC:** Oh, okay. Yeah. Yeah. Mm-hm.



**CS:** There's a couple of them like that in the [Museum of] Modern [Art], cutout wood things. They're tiny.

**HFC:** Of course. Yeah. Yeah.

**AR:** And at one point, she did a sort of circular black -- she, Candy did a circular black-and-white figure thing, 3D. And then Tom did a big abstract black and white thing.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** After having seen it in her studio.

**CS:** I did it circular?

**AR:** And then Jacques Kaplan, the dealer from Connecticut -- you know him?

**HFC:** I've seen his name quite a few times. Yeah.

**AR:** Yeah. He put us in a show called *Artists and Their Assistants*.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**CS:** And, and in his --

**AR:** Right.

**CS:** Caboose, in the caboose gallery [Paris New York Kent Gallery].

**AR:** Caboose gallery, out in Kent, Connecticut. And It's funny because he was a furrier originally.<sup>3</sup> Oh. And I've asked my

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<sup>3</sup> Rubin's father, like Kaplan, was also a furrier.

father, "Hey, did you ever know Jacques Kaplan?" "Jacques Kaplan. Oh, Jack Kaplan." [laughter] [00:19:00] But, but Jacques Kaplan, when we were unloading work at his gallery one time, he alluded to, "Yeah, I saw something just like this at Tom's studio, wink, wink." You know? So he thought that -- he thought that Tom was borrowing from Candy. We did not.

**CS:** We met Jacques in the studio.

**AR:** Right. We met, met him in the studio. Tom didn't have time to talk to Jacques, so Jacques said, "Do you do anything?"

**CS:** So that's why he did that show, *Artists and Their Assistants*.

**AR:** That's why he did that show.

**HFC:** Okay.

**AR:** Yeah. And we're here, by the way, because of Tom, you know.

**HFC:** Oh, you mean you're here -- in this location because of --

**AR:** In this house. In this location, because we came up to visit him here. We got to know the area. A friend of his rented us a house by the river for three summers. We got to love the area, and so, so Tom brought us to the area. But we didn't work for him during the summer when he could've asked us to come over and work. He was paying us.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** But he never did.[00:20:00]

**HFC:** Did you -- yeah.

**AR:** He was super generous. And he gave us gifts and he gave us bonuses and gave us summers off. With pay. And man, at that -- at that *Artists and Their Assistants* show at the caboose, we met Lichtenstein's assistants.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** And we started asking them, Well, what's your pay situation? And then we started telling them ours.

**CS:** What are your perks? [laughs]

**AR:** Yeah, what are your perks? And as their jaws started to drop, we started embellishing.

**CS:** Making stuff up.

**AR:** You know --

**CS:** Oh yeah, we get to go on the private jet.

**AR:** Private jet, you know, anywhere on earth we wanna go. And, and, and they were like, they believed us halfway through. It was a good joke.

**HFC:** I definitely hear you about all of the advantages of working for him, and it leads me back to something that I was gonna ask earlier, which is like, can you kind of walk me through a typical day at the studio. What was it like? What did you do? You know, how, [00:21:00] obviously there were different things on different days, but like, yeah, give me a sense of what a day at the studio.

**AR:** You go first.

**CS:** Tom came in and sat down in his chair by the little, little tiny TV and turned on his stock market stuff. And he -- and made graphs of the stock market.

**HFC:** Really?

**CS:** Yeah. He had this [laughs] --

**AR:** He had a system.

**CS:** He -- it was a visual system where he would draw these graphs and there was something about things going up and down that he decided, Oh, this, this is the buy point, blah, blah. Because of -- because of the drawing, really. It wasn't because he understood the money stuff. It was because of the drawing.

**JOSIE NARON:** Did he do anything with them?

**CS:** So, he spent a lot of time doing that and investing.

**HFC:** Where are -- I wanna see these drawings. [laughter]

**AR:** They're just lines through --

**CS:** Yeah. And he talked to his -- and he talked to his broker, too.

**AR:** Moving average.

**CS:** In the morning. That's what he did for most of the morning. [00:22:00]

**HFC:** Really?

**AR:** And he lost money consistently.

**CS:** Oh, he always lost. 'Cause that doesn't work. [laughter]  
But he had fun and you know, he, he had fun doing it.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**CS:** And then, so I would -- I would, he'd be doing that and  
I'd come in and I would have something, some project --

**AR:** We were self-starters.

**CS:** -- to work, work on. You know, I made paper -- I painted  
paper things and I painted on metal and mixed colors and you  
know, all that. I mixed up paint for a minute and handed it to  
him and then he would paint. Match colors.

**AR:** Tell them about painting that work on Bristol board. And,  
and, and when you, he walked in on you.

**CS:** Oh God. Okay. So, I was there first and then there's this  
enormous Bristol board thing where that has a tracing on it of  
a figure or something. And I'm supposed to mix it. I'm  
matching some -- a little watercolor or something.

**AR:** Liquitex.

**CS:** Making it big. And Tom, I heard the key in the door and  
the door opened and just as Tom stepped in the door,  
[00:23:00] I knocked this jar of brown paint. It hit the  
floor, made a volcano, [laughs] went all over this thing that  
I was working on and Tom didn't, like, miss a beat. He didn't  
even, like, catch his breath or anything. He just walked by  
and said, "Huh." He just kept going.

**HFC:** Really?

**CS:** [laughs] Yeah.

**HFC:** That's very funny. It's consistent.

**CS:** I had to start over.

**HFC:** But he was unfazed. He was just like, yeah.

**CS:** He didn't even blink. He was like, Oh, that happened .

**AR:** He didn't have a short fuse. He had a very long fuse.

**CS:** Yeah, that was Tom.

**HFC:** It's funny because that's so consistent with things that I've heard from Monica [Serra], for example, where she's told me -- I don't actually -- I'm not even sure this was in the oral history. But she told me at one point that, you know, the first thing that she painted, you know, she didn't, she thought that she actually messed up. And he came over and was just like, "Oh, it's fine." You know, very, very relaxed about it. So that's the sense that I got. That he was very forgiving of error.

**AR:** Well, I might as well just [00:24:00] quickly tell you that when they were moving, when we were moving the studio in 1994, we were backing all the paintings with foamcore. And I was working with a matte knife, and I put a slice in the back of one of the paintings. And then I went and did another one. Two slices in the back of one of these million dollar paintings.

**CS:** [laughter] Stuff happens.

**AR:** And he had -- he wasn't there at the time. He was at his gallbladder operation. So he was out for a few weeks and we were doing all the packing up at the old studio. When he came back, I waited until he was completely healed. [laughter] There was no way I wasn't gonna tell him, but I waited until I thought he could take it, 'cause I thought he would be upset. And I said, "Tom, I gotta show you something here. This, I did while we were packing. You see these two slices? Whatever it is, you know, take it out of my pay. He had Geld -- Gold -- [00:25:00] Geldzahler, the --

**HFC:** Geldzahler?

**AR:** No, no, no, no, no, no. Gold, gold, gold. Something. The restorer, famous restorer.

**HFC:** Oh, okay. Okay.

**AR:** Cost \$900 to fix, to do, you know, re-line it. And he didn't charge. And he, again, he didn't even blink when I showed it to him. He didn't act disappointed. People, you know, people are fallible. He was extremely non-judgmental and forgiving.

**CS:** Kind.

**AR:** Kind. Yeah. Yeah. Not, you know, better than us.

[break in audio]

[reading off list] My jobs. Studio organizing, stretch canvases, underpainting, mix colors, crating and uncrating, receiving from fabricators, demanding -- I demanded an in-out book to keep a record of what was leaving and what was coming back.

**HFC:** Okay, yeah, we've gotta come back to that.

**AR:** 'Cause he was very -- he was very loose on that. Painting works on paper, editions, painting editions, tracings from projections, creating healthy boxes for the pallet table so [00:26:00] that they -- we weren't breathing the fumes. I built those. Designed, I designed crates and the wheeling the crates. I composed text and wrote on the back. Monica said she wrote on the back? When she got there, she wrote on the back. [laughter] Before that, I did all the writing on the back.

**HFC:** So Candy, you never wrote on the back of --

**CS:** I must have, I'm --

**HFC:** But not as much.

**AR:** No.

**CS:** I kind of remember writing on the backs of canvases, you know, with the marker?

**AR:** Yeah, you did that.

**CS:** Well, you know, I had to write the titles and the dates and the dimensions and all that stuff. I did that.

**AR:** She packed up a birthday card with a painting bought by Yoko Ono, and the card disappeared and she got blamed. But --

**CS:** No, I didn't.

**AR:** Oh, I thought she accused you of taking it.

**CS:** Not really. She was just -- no, not, not directly.



**AR:** Well, you didn't or else we'd have it. And I composed texts and stuff for writing on the backs of things. Although he did the original, I tweaked it to make it [00:27:00] clearer for other people.

**HFC:** Can we pause on that for a second? Cause I didn't know that and now I'm kind of curious. I mean, obviously, you would know better than anybody else and I've spent a lot of time reading them. There are very elaborate texts on the backs of a lot of these works. So --

**AR:** Tom originated that.

**HFC:** And then you would sort of edit to make it clearer?

**AR:** I thought, make it easier for someone like me to understand how to take that and put it on the wall.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** How to -- because Tom wasn't the installer. I was the installer, so I tried to just make it clearer.

**HFC:** Yeah. 'Cause we were -- I mean, just recently we were in the studio and working on a piece and yeah, the elaborate instructions, especially on the pieces, for example, that have multiple sections that have to be aligned correctly.

**AR:** That was him, mostly. Before I got there.

**HFC:** Okay. So, with, like, on the -- for example, some of the metal pieces have very elaborate care instructions, sort of like what you're [00:28:00] supposed to do to repair them, what you're not supposed to do when you handle them, , all

those things. Those were the kinds of things that you would write or, okay. Yeah.

**AR:** No, the whole idea was that a total idiot could read that and understand what we wanted to happen.

**HFC:** I mean, I think you did a good job. They're very clear.

Oh yeah.

**CLAIRE HENRY:** I'm really fond of the "nail here, nail here, nail here." [laughter]

**AR:** Yeah yeah, that's me. And putting the nails in the envelopes and making sure that everything went, you know, in and out of crates correctly. And only once did a crate come back empty without the painting in it. No. Went out. It went to Germany empty. We thought the artwork was in the crate and it was between the crates. So, you know, that was my, that was my goof.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** I didn't goof that often, but I can remember each one. You know, you wanna hear more?

**HFC:** Sure, sure.

**AR:** Working intimately with fabricators to correct drafts of metalworks. So, we would do the designs on paper, give it to the fabricator. He [00:29:00] would make a -- put it together in a mockup. You know, like careful, like, just like ease -- simple weld, put everything together. And then, I would take the original and make corrections. You know, Tom would be there too, but I would say, "Tom, this, this looks like it

needs to be moved over two inches." And he would say, "Okay, move it." Or, or sometimes he would say, "I don't care about that." But I would -- I was very good at pattern recognition. And so, if anything was different than the original, I could point it out. And then Tom would decide whether he wanted it changed. And the fabricators hated me because I made more work for them.

**HFC:** What, tell me -- specifically, which works are we talking about here? Like --

**AR:** The shaped metal works of the 1990s.

**HFC:** The laser cut ones.

**AR:** The laser and -- the aluminum ones were actually cut by hand, some of them.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** Not laser cut. So, but -- but also the laser cut ones that were -- that would be put together in a way. The laser cut ones were the [00:30:00] flat laser cut ones [were?] Just finished. They came cut out of one sheet of steel. I'm talking, I'm talking about the 3D aluminum one.

**HFC:** The 3D aluminums. Okay, yeah.

**CS:** We found -- the guy who wrote the original program for --

**AR:** For the laser cuts.

**CS:** -- for the laser cuts was a friend of ours. So we, you know, when Tom said he wanted to do this, we said, Oh, we know somebody who could --

**HFC:** Really?

**AR:** Our friend was a physicist and a -- he actually was president of, what's that college out in Hoboken, I'm forgetting the name of it. Stevens Institute.

**CS:** Stevens, yeah.

**HFC:** Okay.

**AR:** And he was also a computer expert and --

**CS:** Early, you know, nobody could do anything.

**AR:** And Tom had a fabricator who wanted to charge him a hundred thousand dollars to develop a program for laser cutting. And we said, Oh, come on, Tom. Our friend could do it for \$1000. As a joke. And he said, "Okay, get him." And he did. He did the same program that this other guy would've charged Tom a hundred thousand dollars and we [00:31:00] were protecting Tom from this guy's greediness.

**CS:** Oh, Tom gave him a little painting or something.

**AR:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. But --

**CS:** But he was happy to do it.

**AR:** But our friend was happy to help make art. His wife was a painter. And so, he came up with his algorithm for -- that he gave to the, all the laser cutters.

**HFC:** Gotcha. Okay.

**AR:** Because he was doing something nobody else had had done. Cutting art out of steel with a laser. That was his thing. Tom invented that.

**HFC:** Right. No, I, no, I understand. And so, with the aluminum works, the 3D works, the process would be kind of -- you would submit something to the fabricator, you'd get it back, and then you would kind of have an editorial look and you would often be the one to sort of give the okay or not to --

**AR:** Tom would give the okay. I would, I would give them all the -- anything which was anomalous. That didn't match.

**HFC:** Gotcha.

**AR:** And we -- so it would take all afternoon to do that on each work that [00:32:00] came in. A couple of hours. Oh, and also, you know, we did all the early projections of the full scale [work?], and then it would go to the fabricators in a big rolled up roll of paper. We would trace the whole thing out from --

**HFC:** But you'd do the tracing --

**AR:** -- from the maquette.

**HFC:** Gotcha. So, that opaque projector that you showed me in your studio, you would use that, trace --

**AR:** Originally, but then it went from slides.

**HFC:** Okay. Yeah.

**AR:** And then, we would also draw out all the individual pieces that the fabricator would then cut out and put together. So,

we did all the work that Tom didn't wanna do but he knew we knew how to do. He would show us how he wanted it done.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** He was -- he was the designer and the creator.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** And we were the -- we were in a sense, fabricators.

**CS:** Enablers.

**AR:** We were enablers.

**HFC:** [laughs] Enablers.

**AR:** Yeah. We were a tool. He used us very well as tools and we never did anything creative whatsoever.

**CS:** I'm [00:33:00] remembering most -- mostly what I did at first was mix colors, because he would always have a tiny -- for a big canvas. He had a little tiny thing. And I would take the canvas and mix big, you know, huge blobs of paint and hand it to him.

**HFC:** To match the smaller [work?].

**AR:** Yeah, because one thing you learn in art school is how to match colors.

**CS:** Yeah, I didn't --

**AR:** So we could look at his original color and come up with the exact color.

**CS:** And I did -- I did a little bit of painting on those canvases, but it was always underpainting. It was never the finished thing.

**HFC:** You never finished. Okay. Yeah.

**CS:** Yeah.

**AR:** The only thing we did finish was the editions.

**HFC:** The editions.

**AR:** 'Cause that's like a printmaker.

**HFC:** Right. And other than the embossed nudes, what other editions were you finishing? Do you remember? I mean, I know you may -- probably did a lot, but are there any others that particularly stand out that you --

**CS:** Editions?

**HFC:** -- of the editions that you worked on?

**AR:** Cig-- *Smokers*.

**CS:** There was an embossed *Smoker*.

**HFC:** Yeah. You also did -- oh, the embossed *Smoker*, yes.

**CS:** I think there might have been two. There -- I think --

**HFC:** There's two, yeah.

**CS:** There's just [00:34:00] lips and --

**HFC:** Yep. Mm-hm. And then there's one -- and then there's one, yeah, with the cigarette.

**AR:** And then the *Smoker* editions that were like, made out of cardboard. You built those and painted them.

**CS:** Cardboard?

**AR:** You know, the Bristol board?

**HFC:** The Bristol board, the three-dimensional ones. Did you build -- yeah.

**AR:** We sold a couple of those. We had those.

**CS:** Three dimensional?

**AR:** Yeah.

**HFC:** They're like little maquettes, yeah.

**AR:** They're like little maquettes.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**CS:** [laughs] What?

**AR:** She has chosen to forget.

**HFC:** You've chosen to forget that one. Okay.

[break in audio]

**AR:** I designed the lighting booms. I did light -- I did lighting for Jim, his photographer, and later for Jeffrey,



when he was taking photos. I would arrange the lighting 'cause I was good at that.

**CS:** We cleaned the floor. [laughter]

**AR:** We did -- we [laughter] -- we mopped the floor.

**CS:** It would take, like, a whole -- it was huge and really, really dirty. It would take a whole day to sweep --

**AR:** And we made a game out of it.

**CS:** -- and mop the floor. Yeah, right. You'd dance around.

**AR:** Dance around and entertained him. We entertained him.

**HFC:** [00:35:00] Yeah.

**AR:** Because it was fun to make him laugh because he was from Cincinnati, and he had a very droll sense of humor. Bob and Ray. And so, you had to come up with sort of extended skits and puns and, and you know, funny dances and imitations of people he knew. I won't --

**CS:** Yeah. Don't do that.

**AR:** Some of whom are still alive. [laughter] Maybe off the record.

**HFC:** Oh, yeah.

**AR:** And we just enjoyed trying to get him to laugh and, and he appreciated that.

**HFC:** Yeah, it sounds like it. I mean, it sounds like that was a big part of the --

**AR:** Yeah. I'll tell you a typical joke.

**HFC:** Yeah. Tell me.

**AR:** There was this Monty Python routine. They were in a shipwreck. They were in the -- you know who Monty Python was, right? And they, they're in the -- what, what's the boat you escape?

**CS:** Lifeboat.

**AR:** Lifeboat.

**HFC:** Okay.

**AR:** Yeah. And, and the the captain says, "Oh, oh, how long is it?" And the mate says, "Well, that's a bit of a [00:36:00] personal question."

**CS:** So anytime measurements ever again --

**AR:** How big is it, how long is it? "Well, that's a bit of a personal question, Tom." And never failed to make everybody laugh. That kind of thing.

**HFC:** Gotcha. Okay.

**AR:** I figured out the nail hanging methods for the metal. We arranged the original website. I was the one who repaired bent metal because I understood metal tolerances.

**HFC:** Mm. Mm-hm.

**AR:** Suggested the forklift and stair pulley system for getting things down into the basement.

**HFC:** Oh, that thing. Yeah, that -- that I have --

**AR:** That was my idea.

**HFC:** That was your idea. Yeah. So --

**AR:** We were bringing things up and down the stairs, and it was very dangerous. These like 100, 200 pound crates, if they slipped down the stairs, you could get crushed under it. So I said, you need a pulley. We got an electric pulley, I guess off Amazon or something, before -- off the internet. And he -- I [00:37:00] think he thought of the restaurants' rollers. Yeah. I backed and packed everything for moves. I did installations at Janis [Gallery], OK Harris [Gallery], Queens Museum. We did all New York galleries, Los Angeles, two, uh, two Paris installations. London. Tokyo. Tübingen, Germany. He would send --

**HFC:** So you traveled to these?

**AR:** He would send us to these places.

**HFC:** Interesting. Okay. So this is --

**AR:** Because he wanted it done his way.

**HFC:** Got it. And he didn't --

**AR:** Candy supervised the Tokyo Museum exhibition installation.

**HFC:** Really? You did?

**CS:** Yeah. [laughs]

**HFC:** No, no, I, I'm asking you that -- the reason that I'm asking you that with so much emphasis is because we're actually currently researching that exhibition. There's a lot of things that we want to know about it. But so, I know that he never really wanted to travel, so --

**CS:** No, never.

**HFC:** When you would go in his stead to oversee it, were you -- were you kind of overseeing [00:38:00] it like, both technically and also to make sure that everything was installed in a way that you thought was like, appropriate and representative of his work? Would you kind of give critiques like, oh, this work and this work don't seem to be hung very well. Like, put this.

**AR:** I'm forgetting the name of the guy who went along with us. He was a art historian. I could find his name for you, but I --

**HFC:** It wasn't Sam Hunter, was it? Or --

**AR:** No, it wasn't Sam Hunter. Who was the other guy.

**HFC:** Trevor Fairbrother? No, Wilmerding?

**AR:** No, a British guy.

**HFC:** British. Who else? Who else is there?

**AR:** He wrote a book on Tom.<sup>4</sup> He's on Instagram. But anyway, he went and he was pretty much the eyeballs, and Candy was Tom's brain. So he would say, "This should be next to this," and

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<sup>4</sup> Rubin is referring to Marco Livingstone.

Candy would say, "No, Tom wouldn't like that." That kinda thing.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**CS:** Or it's just simple as it's too high, it's too low, you know?

**HFC:** Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

**AR:** She was very good at that.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**JN:** So is that through like your personal experience, like your [00:39:00] kind of expertise, or is that kind of like putting yourself in Tom's brain?

**CS:** Same thing.

**JN:** Yeah?

**CS:** It's kinda the same thing.

**AR:** Well, we did it at Tom's and we did it for ourselves.

**CS:** You know, we knew what -- we knew what he wanted always. So, yeah.

**HFC:** Did he give you very explicit instructions on things that he wanted? Did he -- did Tom give you very explicit instructions on what he wanted before you went? Did he say, "I really want this, this, and this?" No.

**CS:** Well, he chose the work --

**AR:** He chose the work.

**CS:** -- along with those guys.

**AR:** Later on, we did mockups of the shows, you know? We'd do computer printouts and we'd literally hang the show in a little model.

**CS:** Not -- yeah, model hang.

**HFC:** Yeah, I've seen them around.

**AR:** Yeah, that was my idea, too. What were you asking before? Oh, and at the Tokyo thing, I, I then did all the metal. I was responsible for hanging all the metal things and lighting the entire exhibition.

**HFC:** Gotcha.

**AR:** So that literally when [00:40:00] the opening began and the guests were coming in, I was still up on a 14 foot ladder arranging the ceiling lights to get 'em just right. Because I understood how shadows should fall on these works and things like that.

**HFC:** So did you do this for each venue when there were traveling exhibitions? Did you travel with the exhibition and each time it was reinstalled?

**AR:** Not all of them, but like, when, when the show from Tokyo went to Tübingen, Germany. We then went over to Germany to do that there.

**HFC:** Okay. But after, like, for example with the Tokyo show, it traveled around Japan. You didn't travel around Japan with the show?

**AR:** No, no. We instructed a Japanese crew on how to do it.

**HFC:** Okay.

**AR:** I had like 20 Japanese guys working under me.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** And they begged me to slow down.

**CS:** Watching carefully.

**AR:** Because I was jetlagged, but I was pushing them beyond what they were accustomed to doing. He said, "You Americans work too hard."

**HFC:** Okay. Well no, but that's really, that's really interesting. So, on these big shows --

**AR:** And we got paid very well for going over there.

**CS:** Yeah, not [00:41:00] only that, when we did the show in Tübingen, it was sponsored by Mercedes. So we got a car and took a long drive.

**AR:** They just gave us a car to use for --

**CS:** How long did we --

**AR:** We went to five countries, six countries.

**CS:** And I said, "Well, now -- drive a Mercedes, what if something happens?" And he said, "Oh, just go turn it in and get another one."

**AR:** I said, "Don't we need a contract, some kind of paperwork?" And he said, "No, no. Just call us."

**CS:** "Here's a car."

**HFC:** Wow. Wow.

**AR:** It was a -- a very fast car.

**CS:** That was fun.

**HFC:** That does sound fun.

**CS:** It was fun parking it, going away and coming back and seeing the crowd like, look, looking at this car. [laughs]

**HFC:** This must've been a particularly fancy Mercedes.

**CS:** It was a really nice car.

**HFC:** Yeah. [laughs]

**AR:** That was in Italy. That was in Italy and -- Lago Maggiore. We went all over the place.

**HFC:** Wow. So was this explicitly -- I know Tom didn't like to travel. Was this explicitly the reason that he didn't go and he sent both of you in his stead? He didn't wanna travel? He didn't feel like [00:42:00] going? It was, it was so -- because he didn't wanna get on a plane because he --

**CS:** He was terrified of going.



**AR:** He had panic attacks when he flew.

**CS:** You know, he just wanted to be in his studio.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** The first time we went to Paris, he was taking the Concorde.

**HFC:** Oh, he did go?

**AR:** Yeah, he went to Paris on the Concorde thinking that he would have less jet lag if he got there faster. [laughter] And we tried to say, Tom --

**CS:** Tom, it's the same.

**AR:** -- time doesn't revolve around you. But that's his typical way of thinking, is that the clock would slow down if he, so he would get there. The world would be a different time when he got there faster.

**CS:** But he really felt ill, you know, he just --

**AR:** He was terrified of going.

**CS:** We had to go visit him in his hotel room because he was -- felt sick.

**AR:** Yeah. He felt ill in the hotel and we had to go kinda like calm him down --

**CS:** Encourage him.

**AR:** -- encourage him, tell him, you know, he said, "The [00:43:00] kids aren't eating anything. There's no

McDonald's." So we -- we took the whole family to our favorite café in Paris and got them the equivalent of hot dogs.

*Saucisson. Saucisson is a French hot dog.*

**HFC:** Yeah, yeah yeah.

**AR:** And -- 'cause we had been to Paris several times. We had friends there. 'Cause we were big travelers and he didn't get it. I had to actually say to him "Tom, you know when you go to another country, you take yourself along. You don't leave yourself home. You will be there. You'll still feel okay." And he kinda, you know, he listened, but I don't think he believed me. But then when he went to London a couple years later, he was much better.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** He was much better. Although -- well, another French show we had to finish up hanging the show because he couldn't do the second day of installation. So I'm confusing which show that was, but maybe it was [Marie France?]. And we would always take [00:44:00] these occasions to have a free trip to Europe, to Europe or Japan.

**HFC:** Of course.

**AR:** And then take a week to travel around by ourselves.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** And they would pay us a per diem and -- for our labor, and then that would be enough to finance the rest of the trip and come home with a few extra thousand yen, that kind of thing.

**HFC:** That's amazing.

**AR:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We, we worked it.

**HFC:** Yeah. Hey, you gotta do it, I mean --

**AR:** Just like Candy worked the summer vacation. And he, he went with it and he --

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** -- it worked for -- symbiotic. It worked for that.

**HFC:** Symbiotic, yeah. Yeah, yeah. So I wanna, yeah, I wanna go back to the studio for a second. There's one other thing, or there's another topic, a bigger topic that I wanted to talk about, because you both were there for a very extended period of time, right. As I understand, it was basically '77, '78 until 2004. Right?

**AR:** Right. Except I was gone for six years, until I ran out of career.

**HFC:** Okay, [laughs] six years. When was that? [00:45:00]

**AR:** Well, I turned it over to Candy in '78 and I came back in '84.

**HFC:** Okay.

**AR:** And Tom was kind enough to let me come back because I was doing house painting, wallpapering, carpentry, and I hated it. I literally dropped a -- a wallpaper razor on my nose and almost cut my nose off.

**HFC:** Oh, God.

**AR:** And that's when I said, "I can't do this anymore. Please, please let me come back, Candy." And she was so kind. [laughter] And then a couple years later, she brought in Monica. And you know that story.

**HFC:** I mean --

**AR:** You don't know everything about that story.

**HFC:** I guess I don't -- well, I didn't know -- from the story that I've heard, I didn't realize you -- explain to me how you brought in Monica. Tell me about that.

**CS:** We were at an opening at Janis.

**AR:** Monica was our friend. She lived downstairs.

**HFC:** Oh, yeah.

**AR:** The second, our second loft. She and her band moved in [00:46:00] downstairs. Were kind enough to work on headphones when we asked them to.

**CS:** So, I said to Monica, "Come to the opening. I'll introduce you. Tom will wanna draw you and you can make enough to go to Europe."

**HFC:** Okay. Gotcha. [laughter] Okay.

**CS:** It was a joke. I mean, it was a joke, but --

**AR:** It was a joke.

**HFC:** Yeah, yeah.

**CS:** Because she had this hairdo that was exactly what, you know, straight across bangs in this thing.

**AR:** She knew that Tom would fall in love.

**CS:** Yeah. I said, "That's perfect." That's perfect. And so that's what happened. She,

**AR:** But give the details.

**CS:** I don't know if I remember all the details, but okay. We're out there --

**AR:** She dressed up.

**CS:** -- crowded opening, she dressed up.

**AR:** Black dress, pearls.

**CS:** And we're in the room with a -- and like that, we hear the elevator open, Monica steps out, and Tom's like [turns sharply] -- boing. [laughs]

**AR:** And we had told a lot of people that, that we had this plan. So, when Monica got off the elevator, about 10 people went, [gasps] . [laughter] And that directed Tom's attention.

**CS:** [laughs] Yeah, [00:47:00] okay, well, they, they had a conversation and that was over. And then, but then I think the next week at work, he said something like, "Your friend that I met, you think she would model for me?" [laughs] Gee, I don't know, Tom, I'll ask her.

**AR:** Bingo. So it was a bit of a conspiracy, but it was --

**HFC:** Wow.

**AR:** -- it was a friendly one. We were trying to help Tom too.

**HFC:** And a very successful one, apparently, because --

**AR:** For everybody concerned. Because Monica needed a better job than she had at the time.

**HFC:** And then she --

**AR:** She told you that.

**HFC:** Yeah. Yeah. And then she became central to his work at that point for quite a while. Yeah.

**AR:** Yeah. Her work at the studio was, she did a lot of the painting and color mixing, things like that. But she was also -- she interacted with people very well. On behalf of Tom. So people would come in and Monica would chat them up and -- and put them at ease. And then when Tom was ready to do the business, he didn't have to do the schmoozing, which he didn't like to do.

**HFC:** Gotcha. [00:48:00] Gotcha.

**AR:** That's why he didn't go to openings and he didn't -- he didn't network and stuff like other artists.

**CS:** Well, he did originally before we knew him.

**AR:** Before we knew him.

**CS:** He didn't really didn't like doing it.

**HFC:** So, were you all doing some of that networking for him before Monica? Was that another thing that you kind of -- no? Not so much. Yeah.

**AR:** No, he did that for himself.

**HFC:** Yeah. So, I mean, that actually, that is -- the Monica thing is actually directly related to what I was gonna ask, which was just kind of, since you were at the studio for a long time, talking about how it changed in terms of who worked there and how it developed. So it sounds like Monica was the first sort of -- after you all started in '77, '78, Monica was the first new person really to come in?

**AR:** Yes.

**HFC:** Is that right?

**AR:** Yes. Yeah. We -- she modeled for us first, by the way.

**HFC:** Really?

**AR:** Oh, yeah.

**CS:** Well, we had a drawing group.

**AR:** We had a drawing group and she, she needed --

**HFC:** Oh, she did mention that.

**AR:** [crosstalk] Yeah, when she came to the city, she needed immediate work. [00:49:00] And so we, you know, hired her.

**HFC:** Gotcha.

**AR:** A little bit and did what we could to help them succeed, because they were wonderful people. Did you ever listen to The Lost Tropics?

**HFC:** I have listened to The Lost Tropics. [laughter] I have listened.

**AR:** We listened to it a lot. [laughter] We went to their recording sessions, we went to CBGBs religiously.

**CS:** Came up through the floor.

**AR:** Yeah. Oh, and it came up through the floor, yeah. Right. So we heard a lot of Lost Tropics, but they were good.

**HFC:** Okay. That -- well, then I have to ask, so if you went to CBGBs religiously to see the Lost Tropics, if you could, this is slightly off topic, but I do want to know. Like, what was a Lost Tropics show like? What was Monica like as a performer?

**AR:** There's video.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** I took it.

**HFC:** Oh, really?

**AR:** Yeah, I had a -- I had a camcorder in 1984 and I was recording all the CBGB stuff and they have copies of that. I can't find it, but Monica has some. It was dark in there and smelly.

**CS:** Always jam-packed.



**AR:** Jam packed. They [00:50:00] would go up on stage and, and Monica would be in a white t-shirt and, and a black skirt or something with tights or -- white t-shirt and tights, 'cause she did not wanna project, "I'm a sex object." She wanted it to be about her music and her voice. And a lot of people urged her, you know, dress up, show your tits. She wouldn't do it. So respect for that. And they would put on a great show. The audience would cheer. And it was loud, it was flashy, it was kinda reggae-based.

**HFC:** Right. That's what I got.

**CS:** I remember the night, the night that Roma Baran --

**AR:** [whispers] Oh, right.

**CS:** The produce-- producer? Is that what she was?

**AR:** She worked for CBS -- no, no. For --

**CS:** Some record company. Anyway. Came in with Laurie Anderson. Right. They came into the CBGBs to hear the Tropics.

**HFC:** Wow.

**CS:** And we were all like, [jaw agape]. [laughter]

**AR:** And they pointed -- [00:51:00] they pointed Roma out to us and I sidled up next to her and I said, "Don't you think they're great? You should sign them." And they did. [laughter]

**HFC:** Amazing. Okay, so to go back. So Monica was there, and then who were the other people that started to join the studio? How did things develop after that? At that, you know, through the '80s and '90s.

**CS:** I was by myself all that time? Six years. Really?

**AR:** Yeah.

**CS:** Nobody else?

**AR:** Was there an intern? Did Georgina come in? No, not, not --

**CS:** Georgina.

**AR:** She was there later.

**CS:** He occasionally had interns, but they, they never, they didn't really work out, you know, people --

**AR:** They were alone.

**CS:** -- they had credits for coming. They couldn't really do stuff.

**AR:** And Tom loved that Candy was so quiet.

**HFC:** Mm. Really?

**CS:** I just, he would barely know I was there. I'd go and do my stuff.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** But then, then he started -- his career was really booming and he wanted to put out more work. [00:52:00] And so, uh, you know, he wanted to have, you know, to free me up to do more color mixing and fabricating, working, stuff like that. He brought in more people to paint editions. And that was Kevin Kelly and Jeffrey Sturges. It's funny, 'cause the day that Jeffrey came to the door, I opened the door, he knocked on the

door, I opened the door, he said, "I'm here. Tom hired me."  
And he walked in the door, said hello, and Tom looked up and  
said, [whispers] "Who's that?"

**HFC:** [laughter] So he didn't remember that he -- yeah.

**AR:** He didn't remember that he hired Jeffrey, but, but Jeffrey  
worked there for a while. I don't remember how long. And then  
Cindy Tower, we brought Cindy Tower. She was the assist-- she  
was the receptionist at the gallery that I was with in SoHo.

**CS:** And she had worked for Red Grooms.

**HFC:** Oh, okay. Uh-huh.

**AR:** I was with the Soho Gallery and -- which didn't last very  
long. And she had worked for Red Grooms and we liked  
[00:53:00] her. We liked her work. We just didn't know that  
she was unmanageable as a studio assistant. So, she lasted a  
couple of years and then had to move on when Tom sort of  
culled. He laid a lot of people off because the art world  
crashed.

**HFC:** Oh, when was that?

**AR:** 2000, I believe. It was a big down in the art world. And  
so, he -- but there was another.

**CS:** Somebody else?

**AR:** 1990 was another art crash. I'm confusing the two now.  
Which one was -- you know what, it was 1990 when, when he did  
that layoffs. And he also cut our pay. Which he was giving us  
more and more and more raises and raises and raises. And then  
he said, "Too much. You're making too much." And we were, so

we didn't argue, but he, he gave us a cut in pay [00:54:00] and we figured that would change and he'd start again. But for 10 years, he didn't. For 10 years, he paid us the same amount when inflation was starting to bite. And after the 10 years, we were starting to get grouchy and grumpy. Other things were happening with people who came in and were stealing from Tom.

**CS:** Right. Were really taking advantage.

**AR:** You know the story, but I'm not gonna name any names 'cause I don't wanna get sued, but people stole a lot from him.

**HFC:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AR:** And we had very good radar for cons, con artists, and Tom was super trusting. He assumed everybody was as honest as us. You know, we would never steal from him in any way.

**CS:** He gave people keys.

**AR:** And he gave people keys and he let them walk out with things on loan. And that's when I started with the in-out book, because I saw things going out that weren't coming back.

**HFC:** Okay. So the in-out book that you're describing [00:55:00] is a much later [addition?]. The thing, one of the other big topics that we haven't gotten to yet that I wanted to ask you about was his record-keeping. So the in-out book, that is something that you started in like the, the '90s?

**AR:** At the end of the '80s, and then -- he had a receipt book. But if anything came back, he didn't like, do anything to the receipt.

**HFC:** Okay. He just put it --

**AR:** So, he kept no record of it coming back. So I said, "No, you need an in-out book." 'Cause it sounded better than out-in book. And I created those. And so, anything that went out had to be written down and signed. And then when it came back in, it had to be canceled.

**HFC:** Gotcha.

**AR:** So -- and that worked. And it made it hard for people to steal from him. But, but just lemme finish a story about the 10 years of no raises. One day, he had this very nice guy from Cooper Union mopping the floor and he was paying [00:56:00] him like a nice, nice amount. And he said, "I'm gonna give so and so a raise," and I lost it. I, I, I had a breakdown. I had a breakdown, and I started like, flailing around the studio saying, [raises voice] "You haven't given us a raise in 10 years, and inflation is cutting into what we can't, you know, how are we ever gonna get outta here, right? If we don't, if we can't save money anymore." And we're good savers.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** And after a few minutes, I went [gasps] [laughter].

**CS:** Oops.

**AR:** This was at the end of the day, and Monica was like, [laughter] standing in the corner, like turning white. And Candy was like, Hm, you know, this is interesting. And then we just went home and we came back the next morning.

**HFC:** So he didn't react?

**AR:** He didn't react. And we came back the next morning and he said, "Sit down, we gotta talk." And we thought, Oh, this is it. We're outta here. [00:57:00] Finally, we're outta here. But we didn't have enough money then to like, quit or anything.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** So we were starting to think, Oh, what are we going to do now? And he sat us down. He said, "Well, I had a long talk with Claire, and I think you're right. And so I'm gonna give you a 15% raise and 10% every year from now on."

**HFC:** That's --

**AR:** And that's how we have this house.

**HFC:** [laughs] Yeah.

**AR:** Also in our final loft, we didn't pay rent for five years because we were being tortured by the landlord. So, we withheld rent. And so, that gave us the down payment for the house.

**CS:** And we won -- we won -- we got to keep the rent because of the court.

**AR:** Got to keep the rent.

**HFC:** Really? Wow.

**AR:** And Tom's generosity and our unfort-- misfortune with the landlord, which was hell, enabled us to move out of the city in 1989, which is when we moved here. [00:58:00] But what was your question? [laughs]

**HFC:** No, no. I mean, you're actually taking me through some important parts of this, but yeah, I think now that we've talked about the kind of way that the studio changed over time, what I actually wanted to go back to though was this issue of record keeping. Because one of the things that I've been really focused on in my work is on the ledger books and the registration numbers. And when, you know, we've all talked to people at the studio, one of the things that we consistently hear is that Candy and Allan were instrumental in actually kind of solidifying that system, of the registration numbers, of the ledger books. So can you talk a little bit about like, what that -- where that was at and then how you kind of worked on it? Or like, what was your role in that?

**AR:** Well, as well as the in-out book, if anything was sold, it would be noted in the new [00:59:00] ledger book.

**HFC:** Yeah. Yeah.

**AR:** There was the old ledger book and it was -- that was pretty much finished, but the new ledger book was carried on and Tom started it. But I would make sure that anything that was sold or came back or whatever was notated in both places. And then in the late '90s, well, Claire gave me their first computer when they were done with it, their little Mac. Wait, what was that called -- the Apple 2?

**HFC:** Oh, it was that old. Wow. That's pre-Mac.

**AR:** Yeah, it couldn't do anything.

**HFC:** [laughter] That can't do much.

**AR:** It had a memory of 400 kilobytes.

**CS:** Yeah. It was pretty much a typewriter, a fancy typewriter.

**AR:** But it made me familiar with computers. Because I couldn't buy a computer at the time and I didn't want one, I didn't think I had any use for it. But then I said, I told Tom he needed to computerize and we got our own real computer, a real Apple computer in 1997. [01:00:00] By 1999, we knew we were gonna leave. We had a five year plan and we were socking away all our money. And we, we decided that we would go for five more years, save up, but we wanted to take our brains, which Tom really depended on. You know, sometimes he would say, test your memory, "Where is such and such?" And we would always know where things were.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** Accumulated knowledge over time. But once we left, we thought, he doesn't know any of this stuff. So I wanted to put it all in a computer. And I convinced him without telling him the five year plan, because he wouldn't have liked it. [laughs] A little bit duplicitous, but I told him he needed to have all his computer, his records computerized. And so, we brought in, we got a computer and I designed the original inventory program that Jeffrey then redid [01:01:00] when he came. So we, we, we brought in a guy -- at one point I started doing all the data entry. And he didn't like me sitting there all day in front of the computer. Also, I was digitizing all the photos, everything was getting scanned and digitized. Everything we knew, our brains, I was trying to put into this computer so he would not be in any way inconvenienced when we left. And we also started email and everything, so that you would have communications with galleries, you know, instantly instead of everything having to be done on the phone, long



distance to Europe and all of that. We got everything up and modernized.

**HFC:** Gotcha. But also in terms of the, like the actually assigning things, numbers themselves, like deciding that, you know, the abstract works would have this registration number or, you know, I'm thinking about series that developed during the time that you were there rather than things that predate you. Like, did you -- were you coming up with those, you know, that, that [01:02:00] say, you know, the steelworks would be like a number, S dash something. Like, were those things that you --

**AR:** I heard other people say that that was my system.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** I don't remember doing that.

**HFC:** Okay.

**AR:** But sounds like me, because I was the studio organizer at the time. I wasn't the boss, even though Kevin Kelly called me Sarge. But I was a task master, but I, I -- I had a sense of organization that worked for Tom's sensibility. And so I was just riffing off of his sense of organization. This is what Tom would want it to be. Like, S number. It made sense. My own inventory system does the same thing.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** You know, I have a similar system that I kind of, I stole Tom's software and -- [laughter] I borrowed Tom's software and started my own inventory system. But I wanted everything to be [01:03:00] smooth if and when we left, and when it came time

to us leaving on schedule, because Candy inherited some money. We, it was our idea to bring in Jeffrey.

**HFC:** Oh, okay.

**AR:** To take over my responsibilities.

**HFC:** So you had stayed in touch with him in the interim?

**AR:** Yeah. He worked at Nancy Hoffman Gallery.

**HFC:** Okay, yeah.

**AR:** And we, we knew him. We kept in touch with him. And he was coming in and replaced Tom's photographer when he died. And that's a whole other can of worms, a whole other story. But I worked with Jeffrey every time he came in to light things, and he would take the much improved transparencies.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** And I thought Jeffrey could handle computer work. I thought he could do everything that I was doing as far as studio organization. So I -- a year before we left, I told Jeffrey, in one year, would you like to come to work -- back to work for [01:04:00] Tom? I will bring you in before we leave. And Jeffrey agreed. And so, once we told Tom we were leaving, belatedly, we also said, Jeffrey's ready to come in and do the work. And so, he agreed to that and Candy suggested --

**CS:** I also recco-- was the gallery closed or something?

**AR:** Janis was closing.

**HFC:** Yeah, Janis was closing.

**CS:** And Bri-- we knew Brian from -- Janis.

**AR:** From working Janis. 'Cause he installed all our shows.

**HFC:** Oh. So, you suggested Brian as well.

**CS:** So I said, "Well, hire Brian. He needs a job. He can do stuff."

**HFC:** Gotcha. Okay. So you also brought in Brian then. Okay.

**AR:** So we brought in Monica. Jeffrey. Brian.

**HFC:** Yeah. Yeah. Right.

**AR:** The other people we, we weren't very supportive of, because we wanted, we didn't want Tom to feel hurt when we left. Because we had, you know, if we had warned him, then he might have gone flailing around looking for other people. And we thought we knew what was best for him. And then the [01:05:00] five year plan happened, and we left at the end of the season in 19 -- in 2004. He was already ill, but we had no idea he was gonna die.

**CS:** We had no idea it was that --

**AR:** We didn't think he was gonna die.

**CS:** Well, he shouldn't have.

**AR:** He shouldn't have. It was an accident.

**CS:** It was an accident.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** He died of a hospital-borne infection --

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** -- after a successful heart operation.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** And we -- and we felt --

**CS:** I think -- was it the day that we said we were gonna leave is when he told us he was having surgery.

**AR:** Yeah, maybe.

**CS:** After we told him [laughs] -- I mean --

**AR:** And we still saw him that summer.

**CS:** If he had spoken up faster, we probably would, we probably would've hung around.

**AR:** But we told him we were available for any memory problems or -- or anything that he needed. He, he called us a few times. "Do you know where this is? Can you help with that?" We, we did that. And we -- so grateful for everything we had gained from him that we uh, we didn't want him to think we had [01:06:00] abandoned him. But he may have.

**CS:** I don't know, but some -- somebody --

**AR:** I felt guilty. She didn't.

**CS:** One of his friends was kind of accusing us at one point. We had a conversation and she was saying, "You left him when he did so much for you." And I said -- I had to say, "You know, we did exactly what Tom would've done. We learned it from him."

**HFC:** And what do you mean by that when you say that?

**CS:** Take care of yourself.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** [pauses] [crosstalk] He didn't use people. He --

**CS:** You know, we wanted, we were painters. So we wanted to -- as soon as we were able to be here and be painters, that's what we did.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**CS:** Which is, you know what, like that story I told you about the high school kids. That's -- he didn't even say goodbye to them. [laughs] He just left. And they were all sort of hurt. Hurt feelings.

**AR:** We also suggested that Kate come in and do Candy's job.

**HFC:** Oh, interesting.

**AR:** Because she was a painter.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** She was a good [01:07:00] painter. She doesn't paint anymore, but we were impressed with her painting. We curated a

show up here and we put her in it. And we thought that she could take over Candy's color mixing and things like that. And so, she came in like a year before we left. And we didn't tell her we -- her, we were leaving.

**HFC:** So when Tom died after you had left, did you become involved in any way in, in all the kind of changes that happened immediately after that or, you know, when --

**AR:** Not in the slightest.

**HFC:** Not in the slightest. Okay. Gotcha. Yeah.

**AR:** Slammed the door behind us.

**HFC:** Gotcha, gotcha. Yeah.

**AR:** And I still have dreams of working for Tom. 18 years later, I still have -- dreams, nightmares -- of having to go back to work for Tom in the new studio, or even in the old studio, or in some phantasmagorical studio. Where I've been gone for a long time, but I have to [01:08:00] pick up where I left off. And these, these are, these are night sweat type dreams.

**HFC:** Wow.

**AR:** I don't wish it on you.

Thank you.

You know, it's like those dreams of you didn't do your homework. You, you didn't study for the test in high school. Everybody has those. So.

**HFC:** Yeah. Yeah. You still have those dreams?

**AR:** Uh, no, it's switched from the high school test --

**HFC:** That's -- yes.

**AR:** -- to working for Tom.

**HFC:** To working for Tom. But yes. Do you still have the Tom dreams?

**AR:** Yeah.

**HFC:** Wow. Yeah.

**AR:** Not lately.

**HFC:** No, that's good. So, well, there, there's two things that I, that I, I wanna ask about.

**AR:** She doesn't, by the way, she never.

**HFC:** You don't have those dreams?

**CS:** No.

**HFC:** Yeah. It doesn't sound like you had those dreams even when you were working at the studio either. Yeah. Yeah.

**AR:** I should mention that the last year or so, I was so desperate to get outta there that I kept staring at the front door wondering if I could make a run for it.

**HFC:** But, but, okay. So with -- I'm just [01:09:00] curious, with everything that you've told me about working there --

**AR:** It was a great job --

**HFC:** It was a great job.

**AR:** -- that I couldn't stand.

**HFC:** So, why?

**CS:** Yeah, why?

**AR:** Because I didn't wanna be working for another person. I wanted to just work for myself. I'd had enough of working for other people.

[break in audio]

Candy was easygoing compared to me. As you can tell.

**HFC:** [laughs] It does seem like work at the studio impacted you, both of you very differently.

**CS:** ' Cause I was on my own. I was mostly on my own. I had my little projects that, in fact, I mean, all this was going on down the far end of the studio. I didn't even hear most of the stuff.

**HFC:** So sort of, it sounds like consistently, you were sort of having very specific kind of -- you were doing an edition or you were working on this. Not kind of overall managerial or administrative stuff.

**CS:** Not, no. None of that.

**HFC:** Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

**AR:** Also, the forklift, that was for me.



**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** I [01:10:00] told Tom, I, I was getting older, I couldn't lift them anymore. They were getting heavier and I was getting older. I said, "I can't lift these anymore." So, at first he had -- that's why he brought Kevin Kelly in, to help me lift things onto the wall. And I didn't wanna end up with, you know, back problems and stuff. And then finally he got the forklift, Mr. Lifty.

**HFC:** [laughs] I might, I don't -- have we seen this forklift?

**JN:** I don't think we have.

**HFC:** I don't think we've seen this forklift.

**AR:** It's there in the studio. It should be. But, but you know, it was designed so that the work would sit on the two forks, and it would bring it up to height, and then we only had to do the last two inches to get it on those carefully designed nail holes that we worked out with the fabricators. And that, that saved my back and, and kept me working there. You know, Tom -- Tom didn't wanna have windows in the studio. He wanted to have complete control of the light. And I said, [01:11:00] "I cannot work in the studio where I don't know if it's day or night." So, he put the windows in. And the exhaust fan, I insisted on the exhaust fan, things like that. So I, I watched that for us and Tom watched out for himself. And it -- worked. It worked for all those years. And we loved him.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** We did. Except the times that we were angry at him.

[laughter] But --

**CS:** Inevitable.

**AR:** And, and he treated us like family. And he even sometimes called us Lane and Kate or --

**CS:** Well, we were his studio family.

**AR:** -- or Jenny. Candy was Jenny, I was Lane, and Monica was Kate. Sometimes. And -- [pauses] and for many, you know, for many years we would visit him in the country and dine with them and swim with them and boat with them.

[break in audio]

We were very protective of him, but he stopped treating us like family, and he started treating us like workers at one point. And that happened with Robert Motherwell, too. You know, [01:12:00] he stopped having lunch with me and started sending me out for sandwiches, things like that. [laughs] After a while you get tired of your assistants.

**HFC:** I mean, it's a long time to be working with somebody. I mean, it, it it, there's a kind of --

**AR:** [20 years and 26 years?]

**HFC:** Yeah. That's a really -- and it's --

**AR:** Three days a week.

**HFC:** Three days a week. But it's still a very close working. I mean, it sounds like, yeah, you had your own space, but a very close working relationship. I mean, it's not that many people in the studio.

**CS:** When I first worked there, he used to bring me lunch.

**HFC:** Really?

**CS:** Claire would make --

**AR:** Salmon. Sandwiches?

**CS:** No, no. Turkey.

**AR:** Turkey. Oh.

**CS:** He used to -- Claire used to make two turkey sandwiches and he would bring in a paper bag and I would have to sit and have lunch with him until, I don't know how, I don't know how I finally got out of it. [laughter]

**AR:** Well, we all started going out for lunch.

**CS:** Well, it was me -- I went out.

**AR:** -- at a local restaurant.

**CS:** I went out by myself. I went down, you know --

**AR:** Prince Street.

**CS:** I wanted to leave for an hour, you know. Go and have a slice.

**HFC:** Oh, so you [01:13:00] originated a tradition that now we have all been part of to one degree or another, which is the going out to lunch every day.

**AR:** And the four o'clock break time. Or four-thirty break time.

**HFC:** Four-thirty. Yeah, it's four-thirty.

**AR:** That was Candy.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** Yeah.

**CS:** I would go down the street and have pizza and a lot of times I'd bring -- he would ask me to bring him back a slice from Ray's.

**AR:** We worked ten to six, because we couldn't get to the city on Tuesday mornings from here by nine. We didn't wanna wake up that early. So, he changed his work schedule an hour, because we could get there by ten. Very, you know, sweetheart. Generous guy -- who did whatever worked best for him. He would not help our careers. And some artists helped their assistants to get into galleries, to meet people, to network.

**CS:** He, he did a tiny bit.

**AR:** Half-assed it. He didn't really [01:14:00] want us to leave.

**CS:** He sent me to a couple people with, you know, when we used to go -- people used to go around with slides.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**CS:** In the olden days. [laughs]

**HFC:** Yeah. Did you ask him for help? Or did --

**AR:** That was inappropriate.

**HFC:** Yeah. Mm-hm.

**AR:** For instance, we could not -- we didn't take advantage of any of the connections we made except Jacques Kaplan through Tom, because it was inappropriate.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**CS:** No, but he, you know, he'd call up Holly Solomon and said, "Will you look at this -- this person's work?" Or he called up Ivan [ Karp].

**AR:** Yeah, but we always thought, he also said, "But I don't really wanna lose them." [laughs]

**CS:** Well, I heard -- other people would ask him to do that, too. Other people that, you know, would come in and say, "Can you, can you re-- you know, recommend somebody?" And then, I would hear the -- [laughs] I would hear the phone call when the person left. "You don't wanna look at this stuff, do you?" You want, can you, you know, can this person make an appointment? I know you don't really wanna look at this, but. So it wasn't -- [laughs] it [01:15:00] wasn't all that helpful.

**AR:** That's good to know. I'm glad to hear it. And you should know that when he was writing his will, he took us aside and he said, "I just want you to know that if some -- anything happens to me, you'll always have a place to work." And we went, [ groans] Oh, Tom, you mean we're gonna have to keep working for you after you're dead? [laughter] And that didn't happen with us, but it did happen with Monica.

**HFC:** Yeah. It did happen. Yes. That is true.

**CS:** I can't believe she's still working there.

**AR:** [whispers] She's still there. Way longer than we -- I don't even know, what is it, 28 years or something like that?

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** Everything that she said is true. I, I listened. I fact checked it. Even Jeffrey. [laughs] Everything he said.

**HFC:** There was something that I did wanna go back to before we finish up, and we talked a little bit about it with you, Candy. Mostly in relation to your potential influence on Tom's work. But I, I wondered [01:16:00] if in all of your time, both of you, working with him, if you felt any particular relationship or kinship between your own work and things that he was doing. Or there was, or if you -- you know, how that -- you know, 'cause you're around his work all the time. You were, you know, physically involved with it. Were you ever kind of seeing it as something that was important for how you were thinking about your own work or, or, yeah. I'm curious.

**CS:** [pauses] I don't think so.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**CS:** Plenty of other influences. It -- it was a job. And like I said, I wasn't there because I admired his work. I was just there because there was a job.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** You know how Jeffrey was so scholarly about Tom's oeuvre?

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** We didn't do that. [laughter] We, we, we, we were not, we -- we did not ju-- [01:17:00] first of all, the one thing that Jeffrey said that wasn't true was that there were no critiques of our work.

**HFC:** Oh.

**AR:** Tom didn't crit. He looked.

**HFC:** Okay. Tell me. Yeah.

**AR:** He -- maybe for them. But for us, he would look at the work and go, "Hm, hm, I like that." And that's about it. Um, there were no critiques because he always treated us as contemporary equals. And we viewed him as that famous artist whose work we do not judge. Because if we became involved in whether we liked what he was working on or something like that, that would kinda interfere with our usefulness there. And so, we kept a distance from his -- him as an artist and just dealt with his art manufacturing.

**HFC:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** We were his studio manufacturers. And, and that [01:18:00] gave us a distance so we could go home and only think about our own work. Which is what Candy's expressing.

**HFC:** That's really interesting. So the distance actually itself was really important to both of you. To maintain that distance was important.

**AR:** Yes.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** Not personal distance, but career distance. We had to keep telling ourselves, well, if we were as lucky as him, we would be as good as him. Even though we couldn't prove it. But that was the way we kept going.

**HFC:** Right. I can definitely see how being involved so intimately with someone's work all the time would make you potentially wanna keep a distance from it.

**AR:** Yes. But we totally respected his achievements.

**HFC:** Right.

**AR:** Right?

**CS:** Mm-hm.

**AR:** Yeah, sure.

**HFC:** Yeah. Well that, and that actually leads me to the last thing I wanted to ask you, which is a similar -- the last major topic that I [01:19:00] wanted to talk with you all about was like, it's a question I've I asked -- you've heard me ask Jeffrey, you've heard me ask Monica about it, Carroll Janis in various ways. But yeah, how -- I know you have a different approach to his work than a lot of people. How would you describe, not in your own work, but just in general, art historically, aesthetically, you know, what is important about Tom Wesselmann's work? Like, just, it doesn't have to be, I'm not looking for like, an objective answer. I'm just saying like, to you, when you think about his work, you know, what is, what comes to mind as what you think is of most importance in terms of, you know, his legacy or what he's done. I'm just curious what you think.



**AR:** Got anything? 'Cause I have to -- I talk too much.

**CS:** His legacy, I don't know. Well, I thought the most important works were those enormous 3D[01:20:00] --

**AR:** *Standing Still Lifes.*

**CS:** -- multiple, multiple canvas. That were so impressive.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**CS:** In a room.

**HFC:** And what was it about them that, I mean -- they are impressive. What was it about them that you thought was particularly impressive, that really made them stand out?

**CS:** I don't know, I just never saw anything like that. I never saw anything else like that. Um. And they were beautifully painted.

**HFC:** It's true. Did it have something also to do with the way they occupied space? The way they --

**CS:** Yeah. They fill, fill the room and --

**AR:** Scale.

**CS:** Yeah. The scale of it.

**HFC:** So, for you, those were works that --

**CS:** I always thought that those were way more important to me than any of the metal works.

**HFC:** Hm. Mm-hm. And that's because --

**CS:** Which is what -- that show, that show at -- Gagosian?

**AR:** Yeah.

**CS:** That was wonderful.

**AR:** *Standing Still Lifes*.

**CS:** When they got out all those *Standing Still Lifes* and spread them around in a -- in a big enough place. That was great.

**AR:** And we installed those.

**HFC:** Oh, you did? [01:21:00] For that show?

**AR:** In -- we installed them in Tübingen.

**HFC:** Oh, in Tübingen.

**AR:** A couple of -- and also in Tokyo.

**CS:** But they weren't in a big enough place.

**AR:** Right.

**CS:** Had to -- Gagosian was so much better. The way it was laid out, and -- you could really see them in the big room.

**HFC:** Yeah, 'cause they really require negative space around them, right, to really function.

**CS:** Oh, yeah. They're so imposing.

**AR:** And you want me to comment on --

**HFC:** Yeah. I'm curious, too. Yeah.

**AR:** Alright. First of all, I think history will decide long term. Just like I, you know, in my canon, I don't do anybody recently deceased or alive today. 'Cause I think history has -- takes time to work. And I always liked Tom's work. I liked his nudes and I liked his figures. I was never a big fan of the faceless women. 'Cause -- I didn't think it was sexist, but I like faces. I like faces [01:22:00] with all the parts. But I, as soon as we were working for him, I canceled my subjectivity, my objectivity, my -- my judgment of his work. Because I didn't wanna spoil the job for myself if I thought he was doing something bad or something good. I was aware that he had a manufacturing studio and I think sometimes the best work comes out of somebody working alone. And so, I might have been critical of his production, and yet I was glad to be part of it.

Same way Cindy was with Red Grooms. You know, that was exciting for her. And I, I thought he was as good as most of the others, the Pop artists and people like that. So I respected that. But remember, I worked for Motherwell and Wesselmann, and Motherwell left the Janis Gallery when Wesselmann came in, saying, "I can't be in the same gallery with Tom."

**HFC:** [01:23:00] Really?

**AR:** Now, Carroll didn't tell you that story. [laughter]

**HFC:** He did not tell me.

**AR:** But you might go back and check with Carroll, because it wasn't just Wesselmann, it was the Pop artists.

**HFC:** Mm-hm. Right, right. That doesn't surprise me.

**AR:** I think that was a mistake for Motherwell, because he went to Marlborough [Gallery] and they ripped him off. So. But that's all other stories. And we really appreciated Tom. We liked that his work was out there in the world. Sometimes we felt like it took up space that maybe there might have been room for us in, you know, in a --

**CS:** Well, that's not his fault.

**AR:** No, it's not his fault. But --

**CS:** It's just the way that --

**AR:** In a metaphorical way, you know, it's --

**CS:** -- it's just the mechanism of the whole thing.

**AR:** -- that, that famous artists aren't always famous because they're the best. The cream doesn't always rise to the top. There's a selection process that takes place from, by people with power and money. And some people are chosen and some people are left out. And we understood that we were the left [01:24:00] outs, even though we had bits of career. And we've, we understood that sometimes good, you know, merit, sometimes you're chosen on merit. But it gets very muddy and cloudy about who deserves and who is overlooked. And so, our experience was from that point of view. Tom's experience was, he had a joke about -- uh, he had a cartoon, actually. You know about the cartoons?

**HFC:** I do.

**AR:** Yeah. Candy used to have to bring them to the *New Yorker*. Before he got messengers.

**CS:** I used to take packages to the *New Yorker*.

**AR:** Yeah.

**HFC:** Wow.

**AR:** But he had a cartoon that he made that was the Metropolitan Museum drawn out with a -- a caption that said "The Metropolitan Museum of No Work by Tom Wesselmann." And he thought he deserved, you know, his own wing. And so, his ego was huge. [01:25:00] And you had to respect -- you had to appreciate a guy who was such a nice, kind, gentlemanly guy with an ego the size of the Titanic. Maybe I shouldn't say Titanic, 'cause it never sank. [laughter] And that's what it takes to get to that position. You need that ego. We didn't have it. I didn't have it. And so, I'm a little bitter, but mostly just appreciative for the life that I've had. I've had a great life, too. I always got to make my own work. And, and that's one benefit of having the day job. What else? And when we needed references for the mortgage, mortgages, for our apartment that we owned at one point.

And, and for this place, he wrote the most outrageously over the top complimentary reference of -- how we could work for him forever. And we were gonna make more and more money [01:26:00] every year, which turned out not to be true. [laughter] And even though we didn't have, like, a standard, regular job, we could absolutely make any payments. And uh, so he helped us with our credit rating. It was a beautiful letter. We can't find it.

**CS:** The guy -- yeah, I wish we had it. The guy -- [laughs] I think was astonished. "He really likes you!" [laughter]

**HFC:** Alright so, yeah. The one, the one last funny question. This is actually one of the first -- I think the first time I encountered this was like, maybe --

**AR:** And then I have something else.

**HFC:** Cool. Ok. Good. Good. Yeah. Was the first time I was at the studio. And there, like, on -- I think it's like an easel or something. There is a pillow. And written on the pillow is a note, [Spilner laughs] yes, that says "Candy's ass pillow." Like, what is the story with this pillow? And why -- it's still there, by the way. It has not left.

**CS:** I know. I [thought?] I lost it. [laughter] [01:27:00] I think I wrote on it last time I was there. I signed it or something?

**HFC:** Oh yes, I think you did sign it. Yes, I think you did.

**AR:** What were you -- you were uncomfortable sitting on the stool and getting backaches. So you got the pillow.

**CS:** I had to go to a chiropractor because of those stupid chairs that he had. They were really uncomfortable. I mean it does, it does something to your -- the twist. So I had a pillow. It was my pillow. [laughs]

**AR:** There were other things.

**CS:** I have those chairs. I still have to -- I still have to put something on 'em because they, something about the way it twists your back. They're bad.

**HFC:** Yeah. Yeah. They actually --

**CS:** They're meant for sitting at a desk, or they're not meant for working at a table or --

**HFC:** That makes sense.

**AR:** We also had things like -- the leftover paint on the palettes would go on cans and bigger and bigger, and, and we built towers out of dried up acrylic paint, like four feet high. There's one up in the barn, yeah. And a pair of painter's pants. We [01:28:00] started just putting it on the pants, putting on the -- finally the pants could stand up by themselves. [laughter] And that's up in the barn. I wore it as Halloween costume once. Dressed as a, as a --

**CS:** A paintbrush.

**AR:** -- an artist impaled by his paintbrush. And we -- we used to do Halloween costumes that were very elaborate.

**HFC:** Did you go to the studio in these Halloween costumes?

**AR:** No, no. Local. Local parades and parties.

**CS:** Yeah, we won the prizes. [crosstalk]

**AR:** We won the prizes so much that they stopped giving it to us, saying you've had too --

**CS:** They told us you can't have any more prizes. [laughs]

**AR:** And then there was the lexicon. You haven't seen the lexicon? If you are interested in studio practice -- do you remember the joke back in the ni-- in the '80s? "Yeah, when

you look up stupid in the dictionary, there's a picture of you."

**HFC:** Right. Mm-hm.

**CS:** So that was a -- we kept making that joke in the studio.

**HFC:** Okay. [laughs]

**CS:** Which was blah, blah, blah. There's a picture of [01:29:00] you.

**AR:** And we did that with Monica and we did uh, "When you look up slut in the dictionary, there's a picture of you, Monica."

**CS:** Or you look up Poptart and --

**AR:** Oh, Poptart, that was it. Poptart.

**CS:** If you --

**AR:** So, so finally, we --

**CS:** So we would, so we had an old dictionary. We, we put the thing in and a picture of --

**AR:** We'd put a picture of Monica and -- and a definition of Poptart, or something like that.

**CS:** That was a running joke for years. It's --

**AR:** And each one of us would, on their birthday, would get an addition in the lexicon. And it's still there.

**HFC:** It's still there?



**CS:** The dictionary --

**AR:** It should be.

**HFC:** Okay, well, I have to see this.

**AR:** It was a little black dictionary.

**CS:** I asked Monica if it was still there, and I said, "Next time I come, I'm gonna steal it." [laughter]

**AR:** Because there was a lot of funny jokes in there. [pauses] Well, it's really interesting that you guys are focused on Tom Wesselmann's world in a way that, you know, is rarely done for people. It's like -- it's like you're his biographers, in a way. He wrote his own [01:30:00] biography, of course.

**HFC:** I know.

**AR:** Candy's sister typed it for him.

**HFC:** Wait, really?

**CS:** Yeah. She -- he gave her the manuscript and she typed it.

**HFC:** She typed it.

**CS:** And she really wished that she could have made corrections, but she wasn't allowed. [laughs]

**AR:** This is, this is someone with a PhD in art history that's typing.

**HFC:** Oh, wow.

**CS:** She's typing up the manuscript.

**HFC:** Your sister is an art historian?

**CS:** Yeah.

**HFC:** And, and continued to do art history after --

**CS:** Yeah.

**AR:** She's retired now. She had a full, full career.

**CS:** Professor.

**AR:** Architectural history, too.

**HFC:** Okay.

**AR:** So, yeah, I wanted to make sure you knew about the lexicon.

**HFC:** Okay, well now we know.

**AR:** It was all -- it was jokes. It was -- we, we were like jesters and entertainers. Like I said, at one point he was coming up with titles for his hundreds of songs, and we would suggest titles, jokey titles, you know. But at one point he bought a title from Monica [01:31:00] after we had made so many suggestions for titles. So we stopped giving him titles. [laughter] And they would do the music in the studio. And one of the people he was doing music with in the studio was a real suck up who walked out with art. And then tried to sell it on the market. And they were recovered. And he -- he made fakes and those turned up and they were recovered. And this guy -- Tom refused to prosecute. He would not -- he never prosecuted anybody. Even though they stole from him crazy. And -- nice guy. Trusting person.

**HFC:** Yeah.

**AR:** Sometimes it was warranted

**HFC:** [laughs] And sometimes it was warranted.

**AR:** Yeah. Any more questions?

**HFC:** You said you had another thing?

**AR:** Well, that was the lexicon.

**HFC:** The lexicon. Oh, okay. No, I think I am -- okay.

**AR:** If you have any more [01:32:00] questions, just like the January 6th committee, [laughter] you can ask us follow up questions and --

**CH:** In September.

**AR:** -- and, and we will send you answers as, or you know, we can send you voice texts --

**HFC:** There you go.

**AR:** -- to add.

[END OF AUDIO FILE]