

The artist interview: an elusive history

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The history of the artist interview is a tantalizing subject, not least because of the breadth of associations with other histories that it involves and invites, such as with journalism, broadcasting technology, psychoanalysis, performance, and literature. Yet, exactly on account of this constellation of associations, it is a decidedly slippery subject, difficult to grasp. In this paper, I discuss this impediment to the writing of a history of the artist interview—outlining the sheer quantity of material involved—and then offer some thoughts on how to productively move forward. Along the way, I give a summary historiography, noting how the topic has been reinvented with each decade from the 1990s onward. This pattern is visible in the conferences of our art history organizations and institutions, in panels held in 1996, 2004, 2006, 2013, and 2019. Connecting the dots between these and other explorations of the artist interview, I propose that we begin to envision the writing of its history as a collaborative endeavor and offer suggestions for what form such a collaboration might take.

Part I: An abundance of interviews, and so many kinds!

An overview of the sheer range of artist interviews provides a clear sense of what anyone would be up against in trying to tell the history of this method of communication. The following outline of types of artist interviews is meant to reveal their extent—though it is in no way intended to be comprehensive.

To begin with published interviews with artists, such works are a mainstay of journalism, as is often noted, populating newspapers and periodicals alike. They appear most commonly as straightforward discussions, but it is not so unusual to encounter a satirical approach, as in (to offer a random example) the mid-twentieth-century U.S. artist Ad Reinhardt's 1965 'auto-interview', in which he answers 'yes' to each of his own questions until we come to the last one, to which he responds, 'no'.¹ Also common are cases in which the interviewer polls various artists on a

This article builds upon some of the history and ideas I explored in three previous publications: 'Writing New Histories in the Interview', in *New Histories*, ed. Lia Gangitano and Steven Nelson, Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1996, 40-44; 'Work into Play: Andy Warhol's Interviews', in *Andy Warhol: Work and Play*, Burlington, VT: Robert Hull Fleming Museum, The University of Vermont, 2003, 10-31; and 'Through the Looking-Glass', Introduction to *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Collected Andy Warhol Interviews*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith, with an afterword by Wayne Koestenbaum, New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004, xi-

particular topic or question: for example, Jean-Claude Lebensztejn's 'Eight Statements' on Henri Matisse (*Art in America*, July-August 1975) or Lauren Cross's interviews with African-American quilters, featured in the film *The Skin Quilt Project* (2010) discussed by Cross in the present volume.

Collections of interviews, in the form of books, are equally plentiful. These collections might or might not contain previously published interviews. And they can be divided into a various sub-categories. As with newspaper and magazine interviews, books of interviews might focus on either a single artist or a group. Single-artist interview publications themselves come in distinct formats. Some feature one interviewer, such as David Sylvester's highly regarded *Interviews with Francis Bacon* (Thames and Hudson, 1975). Others bring together multiple interviewers, such as the selection of interviews with Andy Warhol edited by the poet Kenneth Goldsmith, *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews* (Carroll and Graf, 2004). A compilation of interviews with several artists, *Portraits d'artistes* (Éditions Marcel Seheur, 1927), edited by Jacques Guenne, was taken from interviews he had conducted for the journal *L'Art vivant* (an enterprise Poppy Sfakianaki explores in this issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography*). One of the earliest collections in English is with various artists, Selden Rodman's *Conversations with Artists* (Devin-Adair, 1957). This format became increasingly popular from the 1980s forward, important models being the art critic Jeanne Siegel's *Artwords: Discourse on the 60s and 70s* (UMI Research Press, 1985) and *Artwords 2: Discourse on the Early 80s* (UMI Research Press, 1988); each of Siegel's books was soon

xxxi and 403-09; and also in the paper 'Making Meaning: Andy Warhol's Interviews', in the symposium 'Paroles d'artistes', Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 11-12 April, 2013. During 1995-96, I was a Member and National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J., to pursue research on the topic of the artist interview; I continue to draw upon the research I completed during that year, including for this article. My thanks to the organizers of the panel on the artist interview at the 2019 Association for Art History conference in Brighton, Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher, and to the fellow participants, for a collegial and rewarding exchange of ideas and information. I also would like to acknowledge the generosity of members of the audience who shared materials with me, and most especially Chiara Ianeselli and Heike Roms. A special thank you to Jean Wainwright.

¹ Ad Reinhardt, 'Reinhardt Paints a Picture', *ARTnews*, 64:1, March 1965, 39-41, 66; reprinted in *Art as Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, ed. Barbara Rose, New York: Viking Press, 1975, 11-12. The 'auto-interview' or 'self-interview' constitutes a separate sub-genre with its own history. Already in the late nineteenth century, writers used this approach. A notable example is 'Mr. Oscar Wilde on Mr. Oscar Wilde; An Interview', *St. James's Gazette*, 18 January 1895, 4-5. On Wilde's 'self-interview', and some early twentieth-century instances, see Sarah Fay, *The American Tradition of the Literary Interview, 1840-1956: A Cultural History*, PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 2013, 70-71. The tradition continued later, drawing upon developments in recording technology, and an interesting example in the field of literature is James Dickey's *Self-Interviews*, recorded and edited by Barbara and James Reiss, New York: Dell, 1970.

republished with a more high profile press (Da Capo), which is suggestive of the popularity of the artist interview genre at the time.

Occasionally, the introductions to these compendia are enlightening, sometimes providing significant contextual information and even contributing information and analysis relevant to the history of the artist interview. Such introductory essays are among the multitude of materials that should be consulted to write a proper history of the artist interview. But such works typically have been omitted from the handful of existing published studies of the subject. This is an understandable omission, as these essays are scattered about and not obvious works to consult.² Furthermore, insights into the artist interview are found in myriad writings beyond those specifically about interviews. How does one begin to harness this vast array of existing work?

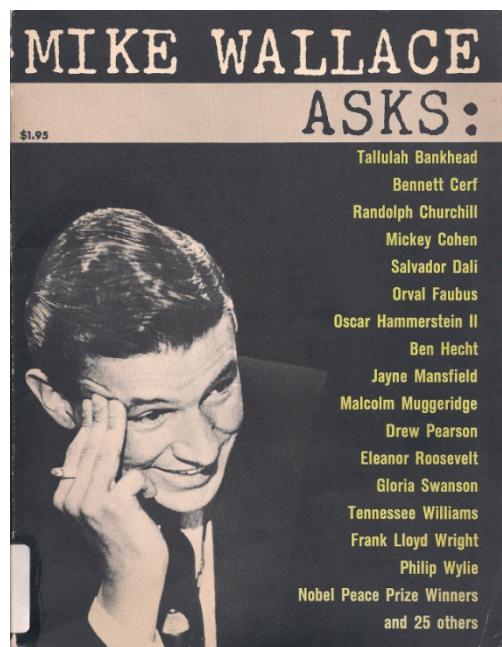


Figure 1 Cover, Charles Preston and Edward A. Hamilton, eds., *Mike Wallace Asks: Highlights from 46 Controversial Interviews*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958.

In addition to books of artist interviews, artists are sometimes included in collections of interviews with celebrities from various fields of endeavor. A notable example is *Mike Wallace Asks* (Simon and Schuster, 1958), a collection edited from TV interviews (fig. 1). The subtitle of this book, *Highlights from 46 Controversial Interviews*, exposes (shamelessly and with deliberation) a sensationalist sales pitch,

² As Linda Sandino observed, 'oral history in art and design has...been disparate and dispersed', in 'Introduction: Oral History in and about Art, Craft, and Design', in *Oral History in the Visual Arts*, ed. Linda Sandino and Matthew Partington, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, 1.

not surprising for material derived from television, yet also sometimes found in art journalism, where either the interview or the artist is billed as 'controversial'.³ Among the 'controversial' interviews included in *Mike Wallace Asks* are ones with the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright and the provocative Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí.

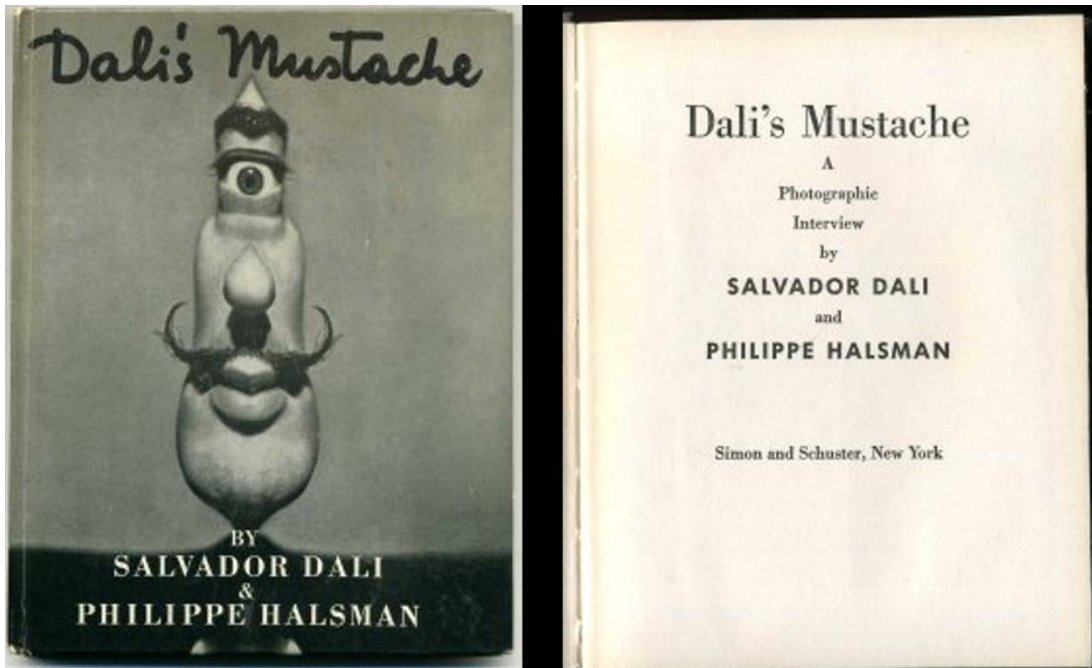


Figure 2 Cover and title page from Salvador Dalí and Philippe Halsman, *Dali's Mustache: A Photographic Interview*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954. © Halsman Archive

Dalí is especially significant for the history of the artist interview, on account of his contribution to the conceptualization of the form as a work of art, together with the photographer Philippe Halsman, in the 1954 book *Dalí's Mustache: A Photographic Interview* (fig. 2). 'Interviewer' and 'interviewee' are given equal billing on the title and copyright pages. The collaborative nature of the endeavor, suggested by this dual authorship, is a feature to be picked up later in this study. The Q and A within the book is hilarious—pure entertainment, posing, and artfulness. Two examples will suffice to illustrate the point. When Dalí is asked, at the start of the interview, 'May I ask you a few questions?' the reader turns the page

³ See, for example, Hrag Vartanian, 'Artist Denied Right to Paint in Prison', *Hyperallergic*, 28 June 2012, where 'a controversial interview' on Swedish television with Odd Nerdrum is reported; <https://hyperallergic.com/53592/odd-nerdrum-prison/>. One of the first analyses of the literary interview, which takes a critical position toward the genre and its tendency towards sensationalism, associating its rise with the rise of television and radio, is Bruce Bawer, 'Talk Show: The Rise of the Literary Interview', *American Scholar*, 57:3, Summer 1988, 421-29.



Figure 3 'Yes, but don't try to uncover my secret', from Salvador Dalí and Philippe Halsman, *Dalí's Mustache: A Photographic Interview*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954 (1994 ed., 11). © Halsman Archive

to find this answer: 'Yes, but don't try to uncover my secret' (fig. 3); the photograph accompanying his response says as much as the words, with Dalí's eyes looking at us sideways as if suspicious, his brow furrowed, and his mustache standing up as if on end. Further along in *Dalí's Mustache*, and continuing the thematic focus on the titular facial detail, Halsman asks Dalí, 'What do you think of communist growth during the last hundred years?' His response? 'From the point of view of hair on the face, there has been a steady decline' (fig. 4). Again, the photograph is as important as the accompanying words to the comic effect of the answer: medallions sporting portraits of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Georgy Malenkov dangle from Dalí's beard, each less hairy than the next. (On links between photography and the interview, more below.) Interviews conceived as works of art are a fascinating sub-genre that Andy Warhol particularly mastered.⁴

⁴ On Warhol and the interview as an art medium, see Wolf, 'Work into Play', Wolf, 'Through the Looking-Glass', and Lucy Mulroney, *Andy Warhol, Publisher*, Chicago: University of

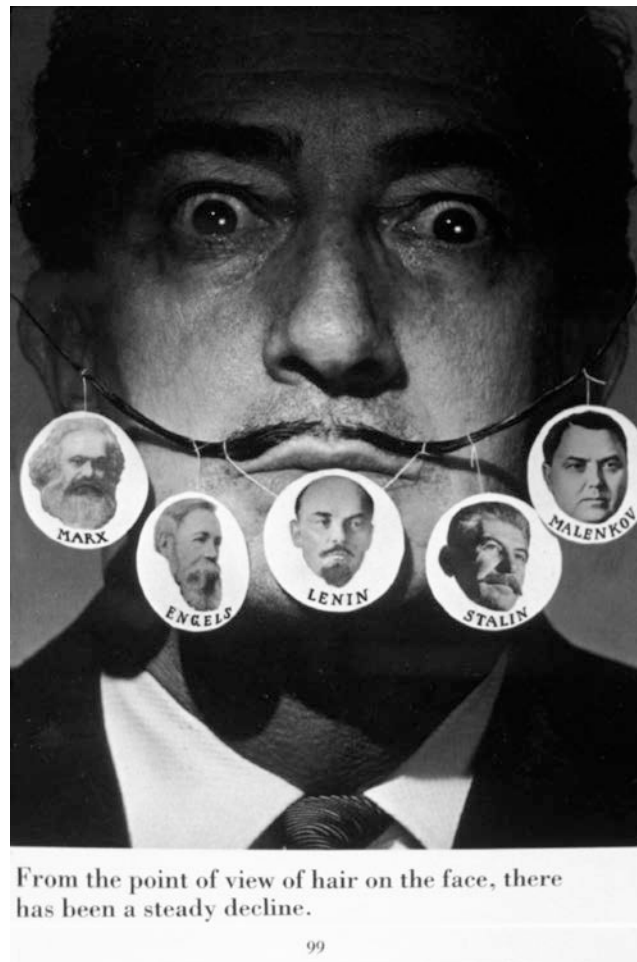


Figure 4 'From the point of view of hair on the face, there has been a steady decline', from Salvador Dalí and Philippe Halsman, *Dalí's Mustache: A Photographic Interview*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954 (1994 ed., 99). © Halsman Archive

Beyond published interviews, there are sound-recorded interviews of various types, a result of significant technological developments of the twentieth century. These interviews might be broadcast or not, filmed or tape-recorded. Filmed versions often contain staged sets that look to be borrowed from talk television, with a table and two chairs moved into the space for the occasion. These objects were put into a gallery within the Philadelphia Museum of Art for an

Chicago Press, 2018, 109-12. Regarding the interview as art, see also Michael Diers, 'Infinite Conversation—Kunstgeschichte als Gespräch und Interview', in *Legitimationen. Künstlerinnen und Künstler als Autoritäten der Gegenwartskunst*, ed. Julia Gelshorn ('Kunstgeschichte der Gegenwart schreiben' conference proceedings), Bern: Peter Lang, 2004 especially 119-22 (Diers' essay is reprinted with the title, 'Infinite Conversation, oder: Das Interview als schöne Kunst betrachtet', in *Das Interview: Formen und Foren des Künstlergesprächs*, ed. Michael Diers, Lars Blunck, and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2013, 27-51.)



Figure 5 Screen shot from Robert D. Graff (producer and director), Richard Leacock (photographer), and Carl Lerner (film editor), *A Conversation with Marcel Duchamp and James Johnson Sweeney*, NBC Television Wisdom Series, originally aired 15 January 1956 as *Conversations with Elderly Wise Men*.

interview by the curator and expert on modern art, James Johnson Sweeney, with Marcel Duchamp, filmed in 1956 (fig. 5).⁵ (As several of my examples will have by now suggested, the 1950s was a watershed moment in the history of the artist interview, at least in the United States, a phenomenon that would be important to consider in writing a proper history of the artist interview.) The standard table-and-two-chairs format seen in the Duchamp-Sweeney interview continues to be used routinely today, as seen, for example, in the 2018 interview with visual artist Carolee Schneemann at the Getty Research Institute by Anja Foerschner (fig. 6).⁶ The role of the setting is an understudied question, valuable to consider when analyzing filmed interviews.

Oral history interviews, intended primarily not to be broadcast or published, but rather as primary source material, make up a significant sub-set of sound-recorded interviews with their own, extensive history. The Oral History Program of the Archives of American Art was established in 1958 (again, note the 1950s date)

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzwADsrOEJk>.

⁶ https://primo.getty.edu/permalink/f/19q6gmb/GETTY_ROSETTAIE4320831.



Figure 6 Screen shot from *In Conversation: Carolee Schneemann on Her Art and Archive*, interview with Anja Foerschner, The Getty Institute, 20 March 2018, Institutional Archives, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2018.IA.18). © J. Paul Getty Trust

and the Archives' website offers a sense of the breadth of the enterprise: using 'interviews' as the search term brings up 2389 oral histories (most with artists, but some with curators, dealers, and other figures of significance for art history), with 1176 digitized items.⁷ Even a superficial overview of these interviews invites questions relevant to the history of the artist interview more generally: why are certain artists selected to be interviewed and others not, and what does this selection mean for the writing of history? Several of the Archives of American Art interviews were created in an initiative of the 1960s called 'New Deal and the Arts', which aimed to preserve the history of artists who worked within the federal art programs of the 1930s.⁸ This purpose shaped the selection of artists and creates an interesting linking and overlay of two time periods of social upheaval in the United States. Another pattern that emerges when focusing on the selection of interviewees made during the 1960s reflects directly on the civil rights movement. In the year 1968, several prominent African-American artists were interviewed: Emma Amos, Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Hughie Lee-Smith, Norman Lewis, and Hale Woodruff. Only one artist on this list is a woman. Perhaps to remedy this oversight, Faith Ringgold and Howardena Pindell were interviewed four years

⁷ https://www.aaa.si.edu/search/collections?edan_q=interviews&op=Search. These numbers are from 9 September 2019; they continually grow.

⁸ See <https://www.aaa.si.edu/inside-the-archives/the-new-deal-and-the-arts>. This New Deal interview initiative was the result of a 1961 conference; see Richard Cándida Smith, 'Modern Art and Oral History in the United States: A Revolution Remembered', *Journal of American History*, 78:2, September 1991, 599-600.

later, in 1972.⁹ Oral histories, like published interviews, need to be studied within the broader context of history in order to yield the most informative and enriching analyses. As Richard Cándida Smith observes, '[o]ral history in the fine arts can help unravel the ways aesthetic choices, shaped by personal and institutional self-images, interacted with other aspects of society to create our cultural inheritance'.¹⁰

Part II: An abundance of associated fields

A probing, enriching, and informative history of the artist interview would need to take into account not only a vast array of artist interviews—the extent of which is suggested in Part I of this study—but also a wide range of associated materials. First among these are interviews within other fields, whether in other creative disciplines, such as literature, music, acting, or film, or whether in other kinds of areas, such as politics. The first published interview in journalism, at least in the U.S., was long ago traced to 1859, to a conversation between religious leader Brigham Young and *New-York Tribune* publisher Horace Greeley, which as published even included the Q and A format that would become popularized in the twentieth century.¹¹ George Turnbull, who proposed this 'first', thoughtfully recognized the possibility of a different origin: 'Perhaps some day some inveterate browser in faded files will discover a published American interview earlier than Greeley's'.¹² Indeed, interviews with literary figures apparently go back still earlier,

⁹ It has been noted that after the New Deal initiative, '[r]ecent projects have recorded the experiences of women and non-white artists'; Smith, 'Modern Art and Oral History', 600. In its first few years, among the handful of artists interviewed in the Oral History Program of the Archives of American Art, only one was a woman, Isabel Bishop. This imbalance fits well with our preconceptions of mid twentieth-century America. However, the earliest Oral History interview I found, of 1954, predating the project itself, also was with a woman, Elizabeth D. Lochrie. The recording was made by Lochrie's daughter, Betty Hoag, who would soon become one of the first interviewers in the Oral History Program. Moreover, the pattern of subjects interviewed going forward into the 1960s holds some real surprises as we discover that a large number of women were interviewed, several by Hoag (reminding us of the potential importance of the interviewer). The many women interviewed between 1961 and 1968 are now either famous (such as Lee Krasner and Louise Nevelson) or forgotten (Belle Baranceanu and Doris Emrick Lee, for example), raising the question of the role of the oral history interview for posterity and reminding us not to be reductive or to over-generalize when assessing patterns in the history of the artist interview.

¹⁰ Smith, 'Modern Art and Oral History', 606.

¹¹ George Turnbull, 'Some Notes on the History of the Interview', *Journalism Quarterly*, 13:3, September 1936, 272-79. Other analysts of the interview have drawn upon Turnbull's study; see, notably, Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image, or What Happened to the American Dream*, 1961; 25th anniversary edition, published as *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, New York, Atheneum, 1987, 15. The interview emerged in the United States, from which England and France adapted it, according Boorstin, *The Image*, 16.

¹² Turnbull, 'Some Notes on the History of the Interview', 279.

and these have a close kinship to ones with artists. In an important study of interviews with writers, Sarah Fay traces the first literary interviews to Charles Dickens' 1842 US tour, which, she notes, coincided with the rise of journalism and the 'celebrity author', and with the emergence of the portrait photograph (the connection to the history of portrait photography is a fascinating strand for the field of art history).¹³ New 'first' interviews keep being discovered. The historian Vanessa Schwartz, in a study of late nineteenth-century French mass culture, *Spectacular Realities* (1998), proposed that the first interview in the French press dated to 1884, while museum curator and director Christoph Lichtin, in *Das Künstlerinterview* (2004), found an earlier instance in France of an interview with an artist, from 1880.¹⁴ Lichtin's book focuses on the twentieth-century, and includes case studies on familiar figures such as Henri Matisse, Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, and Gerhard Richter. It is more an episodic accounting than a history, but makes headway into viewing the topic from an historical perspective and also devotes a chapter to the intersection of the interview with other fields, including journalism, linguistics, oral history, psychology and psychotherapy, and criminology.¹⁵

In its associations with multiple fields, the artist interview is similar to the artist's monograph as it developed in the nineteenth century. In his study of the artist's monograph, Gabriele Guercio noted that, 'as a form of writing and as a discourse, the nineteenth-century monograph never completely attached itself to a particular discipline; rather, it maintained a certain freedom of approach, absorbing and reworking the influences of different practices and discourses'.¹⁶

¹³ Sarah Fay, *The American Tradition of the Literary Interview*, chapter 1, 'A Snapshot and a Sketch', 15-43; and, on the links to early portrait photography, 24-26. See also, on the literary interview, and its connections to the writing of literature, Rebecca Roach, *Literature and the Rise of the Interview*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. For a succinct overview of the history of literary interviews, and the etymology of the term 'interview', see Anneleen Masschelein, Christophe Meurée, David Martens, and Stéphanie Vanasten, 'The Literary Interview: Towards a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre', *Poetics Today*, 35:1-2, Spring-Summer 2014, 5-8; they propose that the modern interview was invented in the United States, citing various earlier studies that have drawn this conclusion (see especially page 6 of their article). But they note that the first literary interview, earlier research suggested, occurred in France in the 1880s (but see Fay's discussion).

¹⁴ Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 40-41, and Christoph Lichtin, *Das Künstlerinterview: Analyse eines Kunstprodukts*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2004, 17-20. See also, on the origins of the artist interview in the French press, Poppy Sfakianaki, 'Artists' Confessions to Tériade in *L'Intransigeant*, 1928-1929: The Construction of a Public Image', in *The Mediatization of the Artist*, ed. Rachel Esner and Sandra Kisters, Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 63-65.

¹⁵ Lichtin, *Das Künstlerinterview*, chapter 3, 37-56.

¹⁶ Gabriele Guercio, *Art as Existence: The Artist's Monograph and Its Project*, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2006, 45. Guercio describes the artist's monograph as malleable in form (5), of a 'polymorphic character' (19, 45, 136-7, 289). The following account by him of the

Like virtually anyone who has thought about the history of interviews, Sarah Fay came to the topic through her work as an interviewer. Prior to writing a history of the literary interview, Fay had had some experience conducting and editing interviews, including for *Paris Review*, a publication with a central place in the history of the interview (about which more momentarily).¹⁷ It is this hands-on experience that leads to all the questions, as Fay observed.¹⁸ The artist and writer Alexandra Handal also articulated this unintended consequence of conducting interviews, noting that oral history fieldwork ‘left me with a number of conceptual, formal, methodological, and ethical questions to consider’.¹⁹

Of course, a significant distinction exists between interviews with writers and interviews with visual artists. Language, the medium of the interview (with that of Fernandel, discussed in the next paragraph, being an exception), is also the medium of the writer, but not the medium of the visual artist (traditionally, at least). This distinction gives the artist interview a different kind of status, as something *more than*, or *extra*. For the writer, on the other hand, the interview constitutes another work using the usual medium and materials of the interviewee. Despite this difference, the history of the artist interview is tightly bound up with that of the literary interview, and, as noted already, artists have conceived of interviews as a component of their work.

As with the artist interview, the 1950s is a key decade for the rise of the literary interview, especially with the founding of the *Paris Review* in 1953, with its ‘Writers at Work’ interviews a regular feature.²⁰ A selection of these interviews was even published as a book during this same decade, in 1958.²¹ Interviews with actors—high-profile celebrities in particular—abound in the popular press.

artist’s monograph could apply equally to the artist interview: ‘the model internalized and transformed the discourses of several disciplines, driven by an anarchic method in its overall attempt to interweave life and work’ (220). I thank Richard Woodfield for referring me to Guercio’s study.

¹⁷ One example is Marilynne Robinson, ‘The Art of Fiction No. 198’, interview with Sarah Fay, *Paris Review*, 186, Fall 2008, 37-66.

¹⁸ Fay, *The American Tradition of the Literary Interview*, 1-3. In the introduction to her dissertation, Fay includes an excellent overview of the scholarship on the literary interview in the U.S.

¹⁹ Alexandra Handal, ‘Chronicle from the Field’, in *Oral History and the Visual Arts*, 45.

²⁰ The importance of the *Paris Review* in the history of the literary interview, with its Q and A format, is discussed in Fay, *The American Tradition of the Literary Interview*, chapter 5, ‘The Literary Interview Branches Off into Two Distinct Forms’, 135-71. In this chapter, Fay makes note of previous discussions of the centrality of the *Paris Review* in this history, considers the financial incentives of the journal to include a regular interview feature, discusses the role of the journal’s first editor, George Plimpton, assesses the place of the *Paris Review* interviews in defining ‘modernism’, and underscores their far-reaching influence on the rapid spread of the published interview.

²¹ Malcolm Cowley, ed., *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, New York: Viking Press, 1958.



Figure 7 Philippe Halsman and Fernandel, 'Silent Interview: French Comedian Needs No English to Sum Up the State of the World', *Life*, 27 December 1948, 88. © Halsman Archive

Life magazine regularly carried interviews generously illustrated with photographs, a notable instance being the interview with Marilyn Monroe published just a few days before her death in August 1962.²² Indeed, Halsman and Dalí's collaborative book, *Dalí's Mustache*, has its roots in *Life* (to offer just one example of the important role of the popular press in the rise of the artist interview, and even in its most creative manifestations). Six years prior to the publication of their book, in 1948, Halsman created a 'Silent Interview' with the French actor and comedian, Fernandel, whereby Fernandel responded to questions through facial expressions alone, often to great comic effect (if in a few instances also reflecting the blatant sexism typical of the time) (fig. 7). When asked, 'we hope that you have tasted our California champagne?' Fernandel squints in a clear—and funny!—expression of distaste. The *Life* 'Silent Interview' was transformed by Halsman and Fernandel one year later into a book, *The Frenchman: A Photographic Interview with Fernandel*, an obvious forerunner to *Dalí's Mustache*, even in its characterization not as a 'silent' interview, but instead as a 'photographic' interview (fig. 8).

²² Richard Merryman, Interview with Marilyn Monroe, *Life*, 3 August 1962.

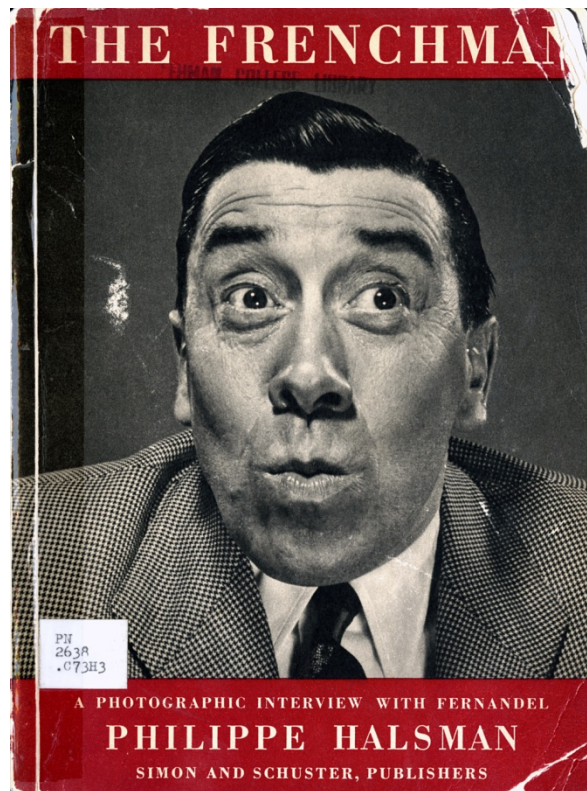


Figure 8 Cover from Philippe Halsman, *The Frenchman: A Photographic Interview with Fernandel*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949. © Halsman Archive

Going hand-in-hand with the rise of interviews within popular culture was the rise of broadcasting technology, and its history would be a central element of the history of the artist interview, as intimated in Part I of this study. What is the role of developments in radio, television, the various film media (celluloid, video, digital), and tape-recording (the evolution of recording devices, the miniaturization over time of tapes and their transformation from reel-to-reel to cassette, the rise of digitized sound recording)? How do these developments affect the content of interviews, ideas about their veracity, and other aspects of their making and reception? These are but a few questions relevant to the fundamental links between technology and the rise of the artist interview.

The 'Q and A' format of the interview also has wide-ranging associations with various fields that emerged in the early twentieth century. First and most obvious among these, and often noted in critical writings on the artist interview, is Sigmund Freud's 'talk therapy'. An unusual study of the oral history interview from this perspective considers the similarities between it and the 'clinical relationship', and specifically, 'transference'.²³ Johanna Burton and Lisa

²³ Karl Figlio, 'Oral History and the Unconscious', *History Workshop Journal*, 26, Winter 1988, 120-32.

Pasquariello, in their introduction to a 2005 group of articles on the artist interview based on a College Art Association conference panel of the previous year, observe that psychoanalysis 'can offer some telling clues' in its similar structure and promise of revelation.²⁴ As Julia Gelshorn later put it in an article of 2012 in *Art Bulletin* on the artist interview, following up directly on Burton and Pasquariello's point, 'the artist interview promises to uncover hidden personality as well as to give access to the secrets of a work of art, thus appearing to address directly our desire for meaning'.²⁵ How this expectation might correspond with a general cultural awareness of psychoanalysis, for example, or how the histories of these two forms of conversation overlap and converge, are questions waiting to be examined. What else might be said beyond making a general association between these two modes of conversation? And other forms of psychological therapy also have associations with the interview that might be investigated, such as 'transactional analysis', which emphasizes talk and exchange within the world, beyond the confines of the therapist's office. This approach was popularized with Thomas A. Harris's *I'm OK, You're OK*, of 1967.²⁶

Equally significant for the subject of the artist interview as developments in psychology are those in the field of sociology. A notable example is Erving Goffman's highly influential 1956 book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.²⁷ Goffman characterized the very nature of our identities as performative – performance isn't enlisted solely to present a false self, in other words. We play different roles in different public contexts, whether at work or at a store, for example. Goffman's study came out in the same decade that saw the emergence of performance art. The first Happening took place in 1959, to name a key example. (We come again to the central place of the 1950s in the history of the artist interview.)

How performance art and the artist interview are linked, and at times merge, is a significant strand to consider in the history of the artist interview. The interview as a mode of performance has been touched upon by various writers. Within literary studies, there is even a book-length study devoted to the topic, one of the earliest extended analyses of the interview, *Performing the Literary Interview*,

²⁴ Johanna Burton and Lisa Pasquariello, "'Ask Somebody Else Something Else": Analyzing the Artist Interview', *Art Journal*, 64:3, Fall 2005, 48.

²⁵ Julia Gelshorn, 'Two Are Better than One: Notes on the Interview and Techniques of Multiplication', *Art Bulletin*, 94:1, March 2012, 32. Gelshorn's study also was published in German, in *Das Interview*, 263-83.

²⁶ Thomas A. Harris, *I'm OK, You're OK: A Practical Guide to Transactional Analysis*, New York: Avon Books, 1967.

²⁷ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre, 1956.

by John Rodden. Rodden views the interview as a form of public performance, focusing on interviews from the second half of the twentieth century.²⁸

While developments in the relatively recent fields of psychology, sociology, and to some extent, literature, encourage us to think about the artist interview, and the interview generally, as modern phenomena associated with uniquely modern areas of study, it is equally important to remember, and to appreciate, the connections to earlier—sometimes much earlier—areas of endeavor, especially in their Q and A format. Dialogues in the form of conversations go back at least as far as the philosophical Socratic dialogues composed by Plato (427-347 BCE).²⁹ During the renaissance, Giorgio Vasari, in his highly influential *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550; 2d edition, 1568), claimed to have acquired some of his information from conversations with Michelangelo. It is widely believed that these assertions are, at best, rhetorical devices, but nonetheless the value Vasari placed on recording conversations with Michelangelo foreshadows the modern practice of interviewing artists, as has been noted.³⁰ Vasari's use of seemingly spontaneous, colloquial language (a common practice among Tuscan writers of the time) also would seem to be a harbinger of the modern interview.³¹ Moving forward in time, in the late the eighteenth century, a compendium of 'conversations' with the renowned polymath Samuel Johnson appeared.³² The early

²⁸ John Rodden, *Performing the Literary Interview: How Writers Craft their Public Selves*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.

²⁹ The nineteenth-century journalist Henry W. Grady is quoted as stating that 'Socrates introduced the custom (interviewing) on the streets of Athens', in Raymond B. Nixon, 'Henry W. Grady, Reporter: A Reinterpretation', *Journalism Quarterly*, 12:4, December 1935, as quoted in Turnbull, 'Some Notes on the History of the Interview', 277.

³⁰ On Vasari's claim that he acquired information about Michelangelo directly from the artist, as well as his use of the material in Ascanio Condivi's *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti* (1553) for his second edition of the *Lives* (and, also of interest to the topic of the artist interview, Donato Giannotti's dialogues about Dante's journey to Hell of 1546 in which Michelangelo is an interlocutor), see Michael Hirst, 'Michelangelo and his First Biographers', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 94, 1996 *Lectures and Memoirs*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, Oxford University Press, 1997, 63-84. My thanks to Lucia Farinati for referring me to this and other studies of Vasari. For discussions of how Vasari's *Lives* both is and is not a forerunner of the artist interview, see Matteo Burioni, 'Der Bauchredner Michelangelos: Giorgio Vasari und das Kunstgespräch', in *Das Interview*, 52-69. See also Diers, 'Infinite Conversation—', 115-17, and 'Infinite Conversation, oder:', 36-38. Also, Oskar Bätschmann, 'Beneditto Varchis >>Lezioni<< oder: Der Wettstreit der Künste. Eine Umfrage aus dem Jahr 1547', in *Das Interview*, 71-98.

³¹ For Vasari's use of colloquial language (and its resulting transformation into technical terminology within art history), see Anna Siekiera, 'Note sul lessico delle *Vite* di Giorgio Vasari fra la Torrentiniana e la Giuntina', *Studi di Memofonte*, 15, 2015, 112-13. <https://www.memofonte.it/studi-di-memofonte/numero-15-2015/#a-siekiera-note-sul-lessico-delle-vite-di-giorgio-vasari-fra-la-torrentiniana-e-la-giuntina>.

³² *Dr. Johnson's Table Talk; or, Conversations of the Late Samuel Johnson*, London, Printed for GGJ and J Robinson, 1785.

nineteenth century gave rise to art exhibition reviews in the form of dialogues, such as Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim's dialogue of 1810 on Caspar David Friedrich's *The Monk by the Sea* (1808-10) and Auguste Jal's *The Artist and the Philosopher: Critical Conversations on the Salon of 1824* (1824).³³ Jal's work is especially interesting in the way it implies a link back to Plato's Socratic dialogues in its title. With the rise of the artist monograph in the first decades of the nineteenth century, authors increasingly put a premium on drawing upon artists' own words, approaching one step closer to the practice of the artist interview. For example, Charles Robert Leslie, in his *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable* (1843), noted that he aimed 'to give an account of Constable's life and occupations as much as possible in his own words'.³⁴

A thoughtfully researched history of the artist interview also would need to include some discussion of what's been said about the interview generally. What critical writings about the interview exist in other disciplines? What insights do they offer for our purposes? A critical perspective on the interview has been circulating since at least the early 1960s, when the historian Daniel J. Boorstin labeled it as a prime example of a 'pseudo-event' — that is, an event created solely for the purpose of being reported.³⁵ 'Typically', Boorstin explained, 'it [the pseudo-event] is not a train wreck or an earthquake, but an interview'.³⁶ Offering an alternative to the 'pseudo-event', social scientists such as social psychologist Elliot G. Mishler and anthropologist Charles L. Briggs insightfully and usefully describe the interview, which plays a uniquely central role in their disciplines, as a 'speech event' (a term borrowed from the linguist Dell H. Hymes) with its own, usually unacknowledged, context.³⁷ Context is key to this concept, and its significance for the artist interview will be picked up a little later in this study.

³³ Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, 'Verschiedene Empfindungen vor einer Seelandschaft von Friedrich, worauf ein Kapuziner (Bei einer Kunstaussstellung)' (1810), *Iris: Unterhaltungsblatt für Freunde des Schönen und Nützlichen*, 20, 28 January 1826, 77–78; Auguste Jal, *L'artiste et le philosophe, entretiens critiques sur le salon de 1824, recueillis et publiés par A. Jal*, Paris: Ponthieu Libraire, 1824.

³⁴ Charles Robert Leslie, *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, reprint of the second edition of 1845, London: Phaidon, 1995, 230, as quoted in Guercio, *Art as Existence*, 56. Guercio (55) observes that works such as James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) had an enormous influence on Leslie's approach in drawing heavily upon first-hand sources such as conversations, letters, and other similar documents.

³⁵ Boorstin, *The Image*.

³⁶ Boorstin, *The Image*, 11. On the relevance of Boorstin's ideas for Warhol's approach to the interview, see Wolf, 'Through the Looking-Glass', xxii-xxiii.

³⁷ Elliot G. Mishler, *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1986, chapter 2, 'Research Interviews as Speech Events', 35-51, and Charles L. Briggs, *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Interview in Social Science Research*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. The term 'speech event' comes from Dell H. Hymes, 'Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting', *Journal of Social Issues*, 23:2, April 1967, 8-28.

In addition to instances, like Boorstin's, and later, Mishler and Briggs', of a critical approach to the interview, there are 'how-to' books on conducting interviews in various fields, going back at least to the 1930s. For survey and poll-type interviews, there is Stanley Payne's *The Art of Asking Questions* of 1951, which is still in print.³⁸ There are publications on how to conduct FBI interrogations.³⁹ Moving into the twenty-first century and the age of the digitally recorded interview, the sheer abundance has led to the publication of a how-to book on organizing and cataloguing interviews, Nancy MacKay's *Curating Oral Histories*.⁴⁰ All these works would be fruitful source materials to consider when writing a history of the artist interview.

Part III: Historiography

In the abstract for the 2019 Association for Art History conference panel, *The Artist Interview: An Interdisciplinary Approach to its History, Process and Dissemination*, which was the basis for the present publication, Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher rightly note there is 'no history of the artist interview as a critical genre in its own right'.⁴¹ Only episodic progress has been made on the writing of this history since the very same observation was made, over twenty years ago, in the abstract for the session *The Interview with the Artist as a Genre: History, Function, Theory*, which I organized at the College Art Association annual conference of 1996 in Boston: 'Within the field of art history, no...critical investigations of the interview—or even a history of it—exist, despite the fact that the artist's interview is ubiquitous'.⁴² (The 'ubiquity' of the artist interview is registered in virtually all the published studies on the subject that have come out between 1996 and today.)⁴³ At that time, I had hoped to write just such a history. But soon I found myself lost in a labyrinth of nineteenth-century French art journals, as I desperately tried to figure out when artist interviews might first have been published. Keep in mind that this was well

³⁸ Stanley L. Payne, *The Art of Asking Questions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.

³⁹ James R. Ryals, 'Successful Interviewing', *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 60:3, March 1991, 6-7.

⁴⁰ Nancy MacKay, *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*, Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2007, with a second edition issued by Routledge in 2016.

⁴¹ <https://forarthistory.org.uk/our-work/conference/2019-annual-conference/the-artist-interview-an-interdisciplinary-approach-to-its-history-process-and-dissemination/>

⁴² Reva Wolf, *The Interview with the Artist as a Genre: History, Function, Theory*, session abstract published in *Abstracts 1996*, College Art Association 84th Annual Conference, Boston, 361.

⁴³ Rhea Anastas notes, for example, that the artist interview is 'an underexamined genre of writing in art...despite the fact that the artist interview is a form we experience as entirely familiar due to its ubiquity'; 'A Response', *Art Journal*, 64:3, Fall 2005, 78. In another example, Linda Sandino states that the 'ubiquity of the interview format and the advent of the interview society as the means to revealing a true self has become a matter of inquiry itself', in 'Introduction: Oral History *in and about* Art, Craft, and Design', 9.

before the digitization of such publications, making such a search all the more futile an exercise. As I sat on the floor of the library, flipping through issue after issue of a range of periodicals, I was tormented by questions that, as a single individual, I simply could not be equipped to answer: what if the earliest artist interviews were published *not* in France, but in Germany or Italy—or Japan? How could I possibly master all the languages required to properly pursue the topic? How many years would it take to flip through all the relevant journals and newspapers, not to mention the range of related materials, mediums, and histories that I wanted to consult in order to write a solidly grounded history? Too many years, I finally concluded. The subject was unruly, and I had set an impossible task for myself! As I came to accept this disappointing conclusion, focusing my efforts instead on more circumscribed studies of the artist interview in which I was able to weave in some preliminary findings on the artist interview more generally (a discussion of interviews with African-American artists for the exhibition catalogue *New Histories*, and two essays on Warhol's interviews),⁴⁴ lodged in the back of my mind was the possibility that in the future an opportunity would emerge for a collaborative effort, as a team, on the history of the artist interview.

Before following up on this possibility, a brief overview of what has been written on the artist interview between 1996 and today is in order. The first thing to say is that there has been a striking growth of interest in the topic. Christoph Lichtin's, *Das Künstlerinterview* of 2004 is notable for its aim at outlining something of a history of the genre. A handful of collections of case studies on the artist interview have appeared in the past twenty years. Most of what has been written focuses on post-WWII art of the U.S. and, to some extent, Europe.⁴⁵ Johanna Burton and Lisa Pasquariello's College Art Association panel and subsequent *Art Journal* feature on the topic is a case in point. The discussant for their panel as well as for the publication, Rhea Anastas, observes that it is a genre on 'the rise since the 1960s'.⁴⁶ Certainly, the artist interview as a genre has ballooned during this period. Still, quite a few interviews existed earlier, and amplifying that history would give us some useful, broader perspectives for understanding the phenomenon. Burton and Pasquariello's panel and *Art Journal* issue do not offer histories so much as useful ideas about and attempts to understand the artist interview conceptually or in light of post-WWII U.S. art criticism. For example, the essay by Gwen Allen on

⁴⁴ 'Writing New Histories in the Interview', 'Work into Play', and 'Through the Looking-Glass'.

⁴⁵ Two collections of case studies and thematic inquiries, in addition to those already mentioned in this study, are Dora Imhof and Sibylle Omlin, eds., *Interviews: Oral History in Kunstwissenschaft und Kunst*, Munich: Silke Schreiber, 2010, and Jérôme Dupeyrat and Mathieu Harel-Vivier, eds., *Les entretiens d'artistes: De l'énonciation à la publication*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013. On the tendency of studies of the artist interview to focus on the second half of the twentieth century forward, see also Sfakianaki, 'Artists' Confessions to Tériade', 62.

⁴⁶ Anastas, 'A Response', 78.

interviews in *Avalanche* magazine, which was published from 1970 to 1976 as an alternative to mainstream art journalism, proposes the interview as a kind of 'anti-criticism', meaning an anti-formalism—a putting of the artist, removed by the formalist analysis promoted by Clement Greenberg during the mid twentieth century, back into the art.⁴⁷

Perhaps building on the 2005 *Art Journal* discussion, in 2006, a panel of the Association of Art Historians (what is now the Association for Art History) at the University of Leeds was held with this title: *The Artist Interview: Contents and Contentions in Oral History/Art History*. The call for papers for this panel asked many of the same questions considered in the present discussion.⁴⁸ The papers were case studies ranging from BBC broadcasts to *BOMB* magazine interviews, from oral history projects to discussions with South African artists, from the sound in recorded interviews to interviews as a 'conservation strategy' for contemporary art.⁴⁹ The focus was squarely on art from the 1960s onward.

⁴⁷ Gwen Allen, 'Against Criticism: The Artist Interview in *Avalanche* Magazine, 1970-76', *Art Journal*, 64:3, Fall 2005, 51. Perhaps paradoxically, the interview as a rejection of formalism is a kind of alternative to Tom Wolfe's 'the Word'—writing overtaking the visual aspects of art—in his satire of mid to late twentieth-century art, *The Painted Word*, which, like *Avalanche* magazine, appeared in the 1970s. Wolfe did not discuss the artist interview in this scathing caricature, but its growth in popularity at the time might be seen as related to his schema, one that culminates with the emergence of conceptual art: 'late twentieth-century Modern art was about to fulfill its destiny, which was: to become nothing less than Literature pure and simple'; Tom Wolfe, *The Painted Word*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975; cited from the Bantam edition of 1976, 107. My thanks to Richard Woodfield for suggesting the relevance of Wolfe's book for the history of the artist interview.

⁴⁸ The call for papers for this panel, which was held from 5 to 7 April 2006 at Leeds University, was published in 'Lifelines', *Biography*, 28:2, Spring 2005, 373-74. See also <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=archives-nra;8d1aab14.05>. The conference was chaired by Jon Wood, Rob Perks, and William Furlong. Furlong's *Audio Arts*, a sound journal he established together with Barry Barker, that came in cassette, and later CD, form, and was put out from 1973 to 2007, is central to the history of the artist interview; a selection of the *Audio Arts* interviews was edited and put into print in *Speaking of Art: Four Decades of Art in Conversation*, ed. William Furlong, New York: Phaidon, 2010. Thanks go to Jean Wainwright, who served as an interviewer for *Audio Arts*, for alerting me to the 2006 AAH conference panel.

⁴⁹ The full programme included: Judith Bumpus on BBC interviews; Nell McClister on *Bomb* magazine interviews, Cathy Courtney on the Artists' Lives Project; Noor Nieftagodien on conversations with South African artists; Brian Winkenweder on Robert Morris and the 'e-interview'; Silvia Kolbowski on interviews and conceptual art; Avis Berman on the role of the interviewer in oral history; Phyllis Tuchman on interviewing artists; Robert Proctor on the 'self-reception' of the architect; Jennifer Goodell on interviewing gallerists; Ysbrand Hummelen and Tatja Scholte on interviews as a 'tool for the conservation strategy' for contemporary art; and William Furlong on 'hearing between the lines'. Thank you to Jean Wainwright for sharing with me a copy of the programme from a 2006 online posting that is no longer available on the web.

Likewise, Julia Gelshorn, in the 2012 *Art Bulletin* article, does not give any real sense of the history of the artist interview before the 1960s. The following year, a conference at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, *Paroles d'artistes*, continued this contemporary art focus.⁵⁰ Keeping with this trend but expanding the parameters, also in 2013, a book on interviews relevant to contemporary craft and design was issued, *Oral History in the Visual Arts*, edited by Linda Sandino and Matthew Partington (based on a conference of 2010 at the Victoria and Albert Museum).⁵¹

Other collections of essays of recent decades have moved beyond a sole focus on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, even while that time period is still the most prominent topic. These collections include *Legitimationen* of 2004 and *Das Interview* of 2013, with their discussions of Vasari, early broadcast radio interviews in Germany, and interviews with Marcel Duchamp, for example, along with studies of more recent interviewing practices such as Hans Ulrich Obrist's long-term 'Infinite Conversation' project and also a German version of Gelshorn's *Art Bulletin* article.⁵²

A recurring topic in studies of the artist interview, related to the already noted connections with psychoanalysis, is the ways in which it both plays on and invites the association of the personality with the art.⁵³ In this respect, the artist interview is a cousin of the artist's monograph, which, Gabriele Guercio observes, already with Vasari but increasingly beginning in the nineteenth century, 'was structured in a way that suggested interconnections between that artist's life and works'.⁵⁴ Tim Griffin, who has conducted many interviews, contributed an essay to the 2005 *Art Journal* issue in which he called attention to the scripted quality of interviews that can develop when artists have been interviewed often (they tend to repeat and to have canned answers).⁵⁵ Their art ends up being interpreted through

⁵⁰ The *Paroles d'artistes* programme is posted at <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/resource/cxB6eK/rk4qXRd>. The talks covered the oral history projects at the Archives of American Art and British Library, thematic issues such as women artists and the interview, film interviews, the interview as a living archive, and interview practices of the 1960s, and studies of the interviews of Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol.

⁵¹ Sandino notes in the introduction to this book of essays that it applies the term 'oral history' broadly, to encompass published interviews as well as other forms; Sandino, 'Introduction: Oral History in and about Art, Craft, and Design', 2. Sandino earlier had edited a collection of articles on oral history for an issue of the *Journal of Design History*, 19:4, Winter 2006, which includes articles on oral history and graphic design, architects, disability studies, ceramics, and critiques.

⁵² I am grateful to Heike Roms for calling my attention to these publications.

⁵³ See, for example, Gelshorn, 'Two Are Better than One', 37.

⁵⁴ Guercio, *Art as Existence*, 6, and, on Vasari as a precursor, 14-15, 31. See also Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995, especially chapter 8 on Donatello.

⁵⁵ Tim Griffin, 'Method Acting: The Artist-Interviewer Conversation', *Art Journal*, 64:3, Fall 2005, 71.

a personality that is captured in the interview, a point leading Griffin to this question: 'What insights do we gain if...we consider the interviewing scenario as a performative space?'⁵⁶ The association of the interview with performance had been considered in previous studies—notably, John Rodden's *Performing the Literary Interview* of 2001—and Griffin sharpens the focus, proposing that we view the interview 'in terms of Constantin Stanislavski's...theories of Method acting'; interviewees perform characters with whom they identify.⁵⁷ Building on this proposition, but taking as a cue an unfinished essay on the interview by the French philosopher Louis Marin (published posthumously in 1997), Julia Gelshorn states that a written conversation is a form of 'fiction', and 'always a construction to be analyzed'.⁵⁸ Warhol's approach to the interview looms large in the background of all these studies (as the very titles of some articles on the subject reveal: 'Ask Somebody Else Something Else', words taken from a 1964 interview with Warhol and other artists, and 'Two Are Better than One', a play on the title of a Warhol painting, *Thirty Are Better Than One*).⁵⁹ Warhol's self-conscious, often evasive approach, as a routine subject of interviews, drew attention to the interview as artifice, thereby suggesting its significance as an unstudied yet large and meaningful topic.⁶⁰

Then there is the question of editing, which can be understood as an important facet of the interview as a construction. For Gelshorn, in editing, 'the authentic voice sometimes turns out to be a complete fake'. The significance and effects of editing can vary drastically. In fact, the role of editing in the production of published artist interviews is worthy of a book onto itself (and more), so complex are the questions it raises. Often, interviewer and interviewee work together on editing a conversation for publication. In some instances, the artist plays the role of primary editor. Gelshorn shows how the painter Gerhard Richter totally re-wrote several passages of what he said in a 1999 interview in the process of preparing it for publication.⁶¹

Two of the most often-quoted interviews with Andy Warhol were dramatically edited for publication, the discovery of sound recordings has revealed. One is an interview of 1966 with the journalist and photographer Gretchen Berg,

⁵⁶ Griffin, 'Method Acting', 72.

⁵⁷ Griffin, 'Method Acting', 72.

⁵⁸ Gelshorn, 'Two Are Better than One', 32.

⁵⁹ A chapter is devoted to Warhol in Lichtin, *Das Künstlerinterview*, 71-92. Warhol also looms large in Diers, Blunck, and Obrist's edited collection, *Das Interview*; a perusal of the index to this book yields more page numbers listed for Warhol than for any other name or subject.

⁶⁰ See Wolf, 'Through the Looking-Glass', xii-xv.

⁶¹ Julia Gelshorn, 'Der Künstler spricht—Vom Umgang mit den Texten Gerhard Richters', in *Legitimationen*, 127-47; Gelshorn includes a picture of a page of the edited interview manuscript (page 145), and it is fascinating to see how dramatically Richter has reworked his words.

published in *The East Village Other*.⁶² Another, of 1963, with the curator Gene R. Swenson, first appeared in *ARTnews*.⁶³ Jennifer Sichel, who discovered the remarkable tape recording of the Swenson interview, raised interesting questions about the drastic editing of the recorded conversation.⁶⁴ Analyzing such editing, as Sichel has done, is valuable and can offer extraordinary insights into the artist, the interviewer, the publication, and much else. When examining how an interview was edited for publication, it is important to keep in mind that more often than not such interviews were *not meant* to be transcribed and published exactly as recorded. Direct and extensive discussions of homosexuality in the tape-recorded conversations were omitted from the published interview, as Sichel noted. The concept of the interview as a 'speech event' offers a tool for appreciating that the context of the recorded conversation between Warhol and Swenson is one thing, and the edited interview, another. The time period in question, furthermore, is part of the 'speech event' context. It would be impossible to imagine a mainstream art magazine like *ARTnews*, in 1963, including an open discussion of homosexuality. As Linda Sandino put it, there is a 'double interpretative operation' in studying an interview: the context of its making and its editing.⁶⁵

In fact, the edited version of the interview that *ARTnews* published can be understood as remarkably revealing of Warhol's sexuality—well beyond what one might expect to find in a mainstream art magazine of 1963. Although the word 'homosexual', as Sichel shows, was prominent in the taped discussions yet removed in the published interview, Warhol revealed his sexual identity in this interview in another, only mildly coded, way. This revelation came in Warhol's suggestive discussion of the French, openly gay mid-twentieth-century writer Jean Genet: 'When you read Genet you get all hot'. Genet's explicitly homoerotic works had at the time recently been translated into English.⁶⁶ Warhol's literary reference is an indirect yet explicit acknowledgement of his own sexual identity and would seem to have been a deliberately indirect form of disclosure. In the pre-edited, recorded interview, as transcribed by Sichel, Warhol even clearly suggests that references to

⁶² See Matt Wrbcian, 'The True Story of "My True Story"', in *Andy Warhol: A Guide to 706 Items in 2 Hours 56 Minutes*, ed. Eva Meyer-Hermann, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 00:56:00-00:57:00.

⁶³ G. R. Swenson, 'What Is Pop Art? Answers from 8 Painters, Part I', *ARTnews*, 62:7, November 1963, 26, 60-61.

⁶⁴ Jennifer Sichel, "'Do you think Pop Art's queer?'" Gene Swenson and Andy Warhol', *Oxford Art Journal*, 41:1, March 2018, 59-83.

⁶⁵ Sandino, 'Introduction: Oral History *in and about* Art, Craft, and Design', 10. Sandino emphasizes the importance of context throughout this introduction, drawing upon several works by the oral historian Alessandro Portelli.

⁶⁶ Translations of *The Thief's Journal* were issued in 1954 and 1962, and of *Our Lady of the Flowers*, in 1957 and 1963. On Warhol's interest in these publications, see Reva Wolf, *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip in the 1960s*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997, 110-17.

homosexuality in the interview *should be* indirect.⁶⁷ Even when heavily edited, an interview can have a 'truthfulness' of its own, even if it in no way resembles the actual recorded discussion, which in many cases would be best understood as a kind of raw, working material.

This point about how we understand the accuracy of published interviews is made by Scott MacDonald, who has interviewed numerous independent filmmakers. MacDonald views the published results of his labors as literature (but maybe not 'fiction', thinking back to Gelshorn's term), using as his models the engrossing dialogues found in novels. He works closely with the interviewees in editing the interviews for publication as he aims to 'fabricate a written conversation that is...readable'.⁶⁸ He argues that often an exact transcription of the interview, paradoxically, contains 'very little of what the filmmaker actually meant to say, or seemed to mean to say' and that such transcription 'tended to obscure meaning'.⁶⁹ His thinking is perhaps in some ways more nuanced than and ahead of the discussions in our own field in appreciating the complexity of the genre. It would be fruitful to pursue such a vision when considering how to advance the study of the artist interview and its history.

Part IV: A way forward

Given the myriad inherent challenges that the topic poses, how is it possible to write a history of the artist interview? What approach might be taken to overcome the obstacles presented by the sheer abundance of interviews and related materials, not to mention editing and other contextual issues? First, as suggested in the above discussion, it is especially useful to think of the published artist interview as a 'speech event' or as literature, and not as 'fiction' (though it can be that, too). Conceiving of it as a 'speech event' leaves room for appreciating contextual questions and also the 'stratified approach' whereby the interview can be understood on various levels.⁷⁰ Second, it is necessary to consider the history of the artist interview as a collaborative project. Scholars working on different time periods, with distinct media, studying distinct cultures with different languages could draw upon their own areas of expertise, building upon each other's

⁶⁷ See Sichel, "'Do you think Pop Art's queer?'" 66.

⁶⁸ Scott MacDonald, 'An Ethics and an Aesthetics of Interviewing', *Cinema Journal*, 47: 2, Winter 2008, 126.

⁶⁹ MacDonald, 'An Ethics', 126.

⁷⁰ Linda Sandino advocates for a 'stratified approach' in 'Introduction: Oral History *in and about* Art, Craft, and Design', 2. In this approach, four levels of significance, which can operate within a single interview, are to be considered; performance-oriented narrative, content-oriented document, subject-oriented life story, and theme-oriented testimony. Sandino takes this approach from Alessandro Portelli, 'Oral History as Genre', in *Narrative and Genre: Contexts and Types of Communication*, ed. Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson, London and New York: Routledge, 1998, 27.

findings—facts, historical insights, and ideas—in ways that allow for covering many more bases than a single researcher could manage even in an entire lifetime. Ideally, this collaborative project would be housed at a research institution, whether a university or a museum-based center for advanced study, and would be funded for a sufficient number of years to permit completion of the work.

A model for this kind of collaborative approach, coming from the field of literature, is a recent multi-authored article, 'The Literary Interview: Toward a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre', in which scholars of English, French, and German literary traditions bring together their areas of expertise in order to advance our knowledge and understanding of the literary interview and its historiography.⁷¹ They note that the research on the literary interview is 'scattered' and sometimes hard to find,⁷² a situation that, as noted earlier in this discussion, is equally the case for the artist interview.

The interview itself is, fundamentally, a form of collaboration, as Philippe Halsman and Salvador Dalí proposed in their declaration of a joint authorship of their 'photographic interview' of 1954, and as others have suggested. For example, Elliot G. Mishler noted in his study of research interviewing that 'the discourse of the interview is jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent'.⁷³ In studies of the artist interview, the significance of the collaborative aspect of the genre has been discussed in various ways.⁷⁴ In their analysis of the literary interview, Masschelein, Meurée, Martens, and Vanasten point out that the distinct collaborative aspects of the enterprise (the dialogue, the editing) 'undermines classical authorship in several ways' and that the published interview 'hides a complex and flexible distribution of authorship'.⁷⁵

With a collaborative approach, working as a community, real headway could be made in writing a synthetic history, and not only episodic chapters, of the artist interview in its full complexity.

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⁷¹ Masschelein, Meurée, Martens, and Vanasten, 'The Literary Interview', 1-49. Their study focuses on four themes: genre, authorship, discourse, and authenticity.

⁷² Masschelein, Meurée, Martens, and Vanasten, 'The Literary Interview', 1 and 11.

⁷³ Mishler, *Research Interviewing*, 52.

⁷⁴ Two examples are Wolf, 'Through the Looking-Glass', xv-xvii, and Gelshorn, 'Two Are Better than One', 35.

⁷⁵ Masschelein, Meurée, Martens, and Vanasten, 'The Literary Interview', 21 and 23.



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