

#6  
artists methodology

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JON: So we have a real polarity here, though. Because we're talking about art first of all. And we discussed, like last time, or the time before last time, problems of art, problems of formalism, <sup>and</sup> romanticism and so forth. And then <sup>we</sup> ~~you~~ talk about a methodology at the same time which is, if not opposed needs a prior justification which we struggle to give it. This is not for copying...

WOODY: Everything is for copying. It interests me.

JON: I've tried to write about this. I've done thirty of forty pages. And what I find is that I always - there's virtually nothing in the field ~~for~~ <sup>'m</sup> me to - I can respond to feelings of excess that are going on and feelings of disinterest and all of these things which is my personal reaction to things. But those ideas that I find so compelling - this is not yet at the level of images - when I ~~try~~ try to express the urgency or importance of them, I find that I'm talking to a world that might have first of all no point of communication with the ideas, secondly no point of communication with the urgency of those ideas. And so whereas it's completely justified to myself in my own personal reactions, as a means for a dialogue with those people, which is everybody else, I find it almost impossible to establish this. And ~~that~~ <sup>is that</sup> secondly, <sup>examples of</sup> when I look for work that ~~some~~ <sup>somehow</sup> embody these ideas ~~for~~ <sup>with</sup> I'm left holding nothing. There's nothing.

WOODY: ~~I'd like to~~ <sup>Let me</sup> comment on ~~that~~ <sup>this</sup> because I've also come to the conclusion that ~~whatever~~ whatever we've been doing has the same stigma. That we are continuously open to improvisation. Continuously trying to catch what's actual ~~to~~ to us, what's not actual to the discipline. We in fact try - I like that idea which you brought which is of discipline - <sup>you</sup> try to bring a set of requirements, let's define the discipline, the elements of it, but very soon we kind of drifted away from ~~it~~ it. I can understand from my <sup>viewpoint</sup> because for me discipline is something of a past. That's what you have dealt with, at a certain point you ~~have~~ rationalized or dismissed. That means I'm continuously caught in what's actual to me. And I'm unable of course to look at it as a discipline. That would mean we would have to freeze or stop our interest in contemporary alignment of our thoughts and just look back. That's probably the opposing mentally we are not able to look back and evaluate something from that scientific or historical viewpoint. So I guess it would be impossible for us to do ~~the~~ <sup>that</sup> job. I was hoping that ~~we~~ you would have the strength or the

reason - the line of reasoning to deal with it <sup>with</sup> as a discipline, but...

JON: There's a real double bind here, though, which is that we are within art <sup>and</sup> - that's undeniable. We can redefine it as we go along, of course, which we've all been doing. But secondly is that our methodology is just full of shit. Because when we seek to define these parameters these are parameters that - and this is relevant of course - these are parameters that allow our minds to focus on certain problems which are our subjectivity or emotions or <sup>reactions or</sup> whatever have brought us to these things. If this is clear at all. So that for me the notion of bringing a methodology into this <sup>whole</sup> is kind of a perversion on one level, yet on the other hand it is the aspect of rigor which I'm somewhat ambivalent about. Because ultimately I think the real issues exist not so much in the ideas as the communication that goes on between the tape or the maker <sup>and</sup> or the audience. And that's another interesting thing which is that - one thing I noticed while reading through ~~me~~ what's now a hundred pages of transcripts is that we have never spoken really of that communication with the audience. It's always been the maker alone in his loft or in his studio in his home or whatever, who communicates with the system. And he communicates with the machines and <sup>he</sup> ~~we~~ makes a tape which is a statement but there is absolutely nothing about those codes of thought or those modes of communication that <sup>are contained</sup> ~~maintain~~ within the tape and how they will communicate with the audience and what that communication within the means that the tape does it ~~will~~ means. And that's a very interesting <sup>kind of</sup> presupposition. That we were so set on being scientific that we've eliminated that other quality - that other side of the equation.

STEINA: Do all disciplines have that concern?

JON: Well Science is a personal reflexiveness which is the scientist who tries to discover a fact. Which is fine when you're dealing with perception because these things are in some sense factual. But as soon as you try to broaden your scope - which is something I think we're <sup>inherently</sup> trying to do, is broaden it beyond issues of perception, - then you have to deal with things that are not facts but effects or codes or whatever. And that we've completely ignored this aspect. And that might be the aspect that's so important.

WOODY: But you see if you take ~~express~~ astronomy which you would call <sup>2</sup> science - the subject of astronomy today in the sense of broad popularly appreciated subject is the black hole. What is it? It's a hypothesis.

JON: It's a very compelling hypothesis.

WOODY: If you look at the most interesting scientific work <sup>deals with</sup> ~~it is the~~ DNA. Which is effort to disclose a code.

STEINA

STEINA: Yes, but it is strangely non-exclusive. Because he talked in the beginning about the exclusivity, also in the second speech about the maker and the machines as exclusive and that he was concerned that he was maybe writing this forty pages for a very - you didn't use the word exclusive - for a very narrow...

JON: Sure. What I think I mean is that you have to take other people's presuppositions and you have to be in them, you have to put yourself into them and then say that "These are my presuppositions, and maybe you should have these presuppositions because if you follow.... Maybe you should have my presuppositions because if you see your presuppositions then maybe what might be the next step of what you're saying might fit very well into this. And this might be very relevant. And yet I don't find that.

STEINA: With what you said, black holes, and DNA, it is somehow - I don't know <sup>h</sup> ~~how~~ - it is not exclusive. It is something you read about in Time Magazine <sup>even</sup> even in worst publications all the time. It has become a part of the property of the population- anybody who's interested. Whereas this field... *it's still totally exclusive.*

WOODY: Art used to be like that. People would assign to it particular metaphysical qualities then they would go congregate to the concerts. But I think what you're talking about is also rooted in ~~that~~ there's a schism which is between the culture as we perceive it and activity as we do or keep on doing. Because you said it was about art. It was about art as long as we agree among <sup>st</sup> ourselves that this is art. But in fact we have ~~not much~~ <sup>no such</sup> choice because the split between what is or we expect from art, also we have <sup>the</sup> a demand on art which would be <sup>explicit</sup> expressive, much more broader, much more satisfying, but what we do is all the denials of that. It is kind of today as it looks like we have a luxury of not dealing with the application of art. We can divorce totally the usefulness of art from the activity. And if you sit in the basement and just do that particular investigation between you and the ~~machin~~ <sup>g</sup> - within itself, that is fully justified because in some sense it is the moral attitude. That you don't have the

controls to manipulate the society and you don't want to have the controls. Because the other art, the official or the legitimate or the big art was interested, and still is interested in manipulation.

JON: So maybe one important difference is that I'm not interested in manipulation but what I am interested in, is in... Let me go back and put this into real sentences. What I am most interested in is modes of thought. And what I see... My huge disappointment with art as a whole is that the modes of thought are very very old. That the modes of thought that go into the making and the modes of thought that go into the viewing, ~~or the~~ experience of them, <sup>they go back</sup> are very old - hundreds of years, sometimes. I'm interested - and this is allied <sup>with</sup> ~~to~~ but not identical <sup>to</sup> with matters of convention. - You know, artistic convention. This is similar but they have overlapping areas. ¶ What I see the function of is <sup>of</sup> the artist - which is also that of the scientist and the philosopher and all these things. In many ways the boundaries are not all that strong. - is that <sup>it</sup> ~~is~~ his job to find ~~to~~ ways that advance - and this is not in any sense a thing <sup>of</sup> with progress - but that challenge and question and then assert new ways of thought. New modes of seeing. new <sup>modes</sup> ~~ways~~ of experiencing. And this has very much to do with your work in the camera <sup>obscure</sup> ~~obscure~~. You, too, had seen that this mode and I have some questions about it that I'll approach, but you <sup>saw</sup> ~~had seen~~ that <sup>S</sup> ~~this~~ thing was very old and here we have ~~this~~ tools that will enable us to form new paradigms of the world through an observational mechanism which is not just our eyes or the spatial concerns that our ears give us or our touch or whatever. And that all these things are there and can be <sup>re</sup> coded. Thought and experience can also be <sup>re</sup> coded. For me this is the whole thing.

WOODY: Again so-called science has these realities. That it deals ~~with~~ for example <sup>with</sup> space. And that is the utmost boundary of our space - imagination. Or the science deals with DNA which they feel they challenge the Creator. ¶ They think this is <sup>a total</sup> ~~an~~ attack on God. They <sup>Av'</sup> established these very large...

They've set up that mythology as a very powerful one. That the competition between the individual and a large, or larger, or largest system. That's what they practice. Art does not have this dimension in a way. What fascinates me about art is that art is still the struggle of an individual with an individual. Like the feeling of the competition ~~with the~~ <sup>not</sup> between... the sense of compete just to survive in the neighborhood of another man. Science does not have that because they rather look many light years outward instead of looking at their neighbor. And if they look at their neighbor, or course, they look at his DNA structure which has nothing to do with him because

he's just going to pass away, Eventually the common mythology will be assembled and God <sup>eventually</sup> will be transpired. (? transparent)

JON: So what happened when ~~the~~ Copernicus finally decided that the earth revolves around the sun? What happened when...what's another good example? What happened when Nils \_\_\_\_\_ (Bore ?) decided that there might be this principle of complementarity that operates and <sup>h</sup> that changes everything, perhaps the way that we should look at the world. What happened when they developed non-Euclidean geometries? These are very particular and direct and relevant questions to <sup>the way that</sup> ~~how~~ we construct the world.

STEINA: These are the highest creative moments of an individual.

JON: Of the culture as well.

STEINA: Copernicus, I don't know in what kind of environment he worked, but Borg (?) worked with a lot of other scientists. Einstein. Suddenly they just crossed the boundaries and <sup>find profound</sup> ~~found~~ this truth. And <sup>then</sup> they are ~~working~~ I think very close.

JON: What they also do is that they <sup>same</sup> realign all those coordinates that we've been operating under. That I think is...

STEINA: But hasn't art done it too? Like say cubism and certainly brought a whole new way of seeing that was never seen before?

JON: Well, I think the renaissance did. I don't know if there's been anything comparable.

WOODY: I still find that the theories of heliocentrism or geocentrism I don't like - it was known to some people in Egypt that there <sup>is</sup> a heliocentral system. But it was <sup>comfortably (?)</sup> ~~constantly~~ forgotten because it did not fit into the definition of an individual because he cannot share heliocentral system.

JON: What do you mean by definition of an individual?

WOODY: So, before Columbus it wasn't known - it was known ~~is~~ of course that there was actually a sphere but it wasn't on the map that way. It wasn't proven, it wasn't accepted, it didn't <sup>become</sup> ~~get~~ commercialized. Eventually after that, of course <sup>was</sup> the impulse to find a shorter route around the globe. So there was a notion of it. But that we find ourselves confined on a sphere, it was very important to make it commonly acceptable and challenge all the dogmas of the Bible, <sup>of</sup> whatever. Today, of course, that is not a problem any more. We are trying to find <sup>different</sup> ~~the same~~ boundaries, like the beginning of time

That's kind of a common problem that magazines write about.

JON: Yes, but what is <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ paradigm that causes the confrontation with the individual?

WOODY: It depends how much an individual can take as not being individualistic. There's a continuous shifting the boundary of ~~being~~ an individual as a self-protected or self-controlled unit. This struggle between something larger than him, have always perpetuated his relationship between <sup>an</sup> ~~the~~ individual and God because it seems to be a direct report. The distance was kept in a way abstract but also concrete. Today also we're trying to somehow define the place of an individual contrary to the large systems ~~because~~ like \_\_\_\_\_ But again, I put <sup>art</sup> ~~it~~ into that particular category which has a human dimension. Contrary to <sup>the</sup> ~~times~~ when art was interpreted as totally metaphysical or God-like activity. I think this is the only area in which we can still assemble a respectable set of problems and compete with each other as human beings. Because we are not competing with a discipline, of course historically it is. Art is <sup>historically</sup> ~~a~~ discipline. But as activity, there's not a value on contemporary activities. Nobody ~~really~~ knows ~~how~~ who's really <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ good artists. That comes later. But the activity itself is a subject of many competitions - in a moral sense, in a craft sense, in ~~em~~ contemporality on some qualities. That kind of definition of individual viewpoints interests me.

JON: What I think maybe is that it's the only activity where the detail is manageable. You can circumscribe your fields of operation to your own liking. You can do that. And that you are then able to choose those relevant aspects and this <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ simply in the working ~~aspect~~ question of information flow and also extension to other areas. So you are able to manage what is for science <sup>a</sup> ~~a~~ <sup>right now</sup> mass of detail that no man can comprehend. It is impossible. That's interesting because it's not a suspect operation that you can circumscribe your world - it becomes an affirmation, both of - you know, asserting the <sup>in</sup> ~~in~~ individual as you said, and also an affirmation of some kind of coherence that <sup>e</sup> ~~e~~ exists within this huge ...

WOODY: I would say holism or whatever. That's what I had a feeling for at a certain time, that why we practice art is that we <sup>can</sup> ~~we~~ break down this notion of a discipline, in some sense is very well-kept, it's very successful. We can suddenly take, put it together and <sup>that</sup> ~~pro~~claim art as activity is all-encompassing and it deals equally with every aspect of it. No other discipline probably has ~~e~~ such a privilege even if they claim - of course <sup>today</sup> all the disciplines today claim to be inter-disciplinary. Especially the

brain studies. They say you don't know one component of thought process then you are lost. But in a pragmatic sense everybody has his own field to work on and they are very much satisfied, very much successful, of course. <sup>Because of the</sup> ~~There's a~~ division of <sup>the</sup> labor. But of course in art also it becomes <sup>difficult</sup> when people group in particular directions and establish a particular structure.

STEINA: But they always have.

WOODY: They always have.

JON: Well, the workshops...the workshops of the <sup>early</sup> Renaissance...

STEINA: They always have grouped. An artist <sup>has</sup> always <sup>d</sup> has to have his fellow artists be his first audience, his ~~first~~ or her first audience, to start some incestuous...look at any school, in music and in picture-making. Art needs <sup>it</sup> too, even if they are anarchists or enfants terribles or whatever. That's interesting, because in science it's obvious. In art it's not ~~ee~~ obvious <sup>u</sup> but it's the same. I think it's just human.

WOODY: Again, so it's human...

JON: Tell me. do you think <sup>k</sup>, this is another question of why video, is it for you a kind of nexus? A connection point? A junction of all these things? That you can, given <sup>that you're using</sup> this equipment and the operational possibilities, of your own mind, of the culture, of all of these things - that video gives you this availability, this...There's a word I want but I can't think of it - to all these things.

WOODY: First of all I would say to pick up or select or stay with a discipline in art means that you have to respect to a certain degree the discipline.

JON: The history of it?

WOODY: Your personal <sup>attitudes.</sup> Of course it's also based on ability. Some one knows how to paint <sup>then</sup> and eventually <sup>may</sup> develop a liking for that and find it respectable. <sup>at's one</sup> ~~There's more~~ condition. The second condition is what can an individual practice freely. It's a territorial demand. To be in a free territory. I found these both in video. First of all it was a freer discipline. It was totally undisciplined. ~~S~~econdarily I could sense that it has great relevancy to what I appreciate as general philosophy. <sup>Because</sup> It had the mystery, it had the power, it had all the equipment of obscure undefined modes. All the interesting undefined area which I could be totally secure, unthreatened.

STEINA: But specifically it had the timing element.

WOODY: Yeah, it does, but these are things...

JON: These are things that came <sup>eventually</sup> later.

WOODY:...that came eventually later... Because the education...

IN  
STELLA:...but maybe they ~~came~~ <sup>were there</sup> before...

WOODY: That might have been an instinct.. It was the greatest mystery I could encounter. Because let's say like sex at a certain age is the great mystery...

JON: But that passes very quickly.

WOODY: That may pass very quickly. But suddenly there was this cultural entity which was ~~titled~~ totally undefined.

JON: All right. Because what I like about video most is that it will tell you things. If I had to paint and I had to make these things where every <sup>was deliberate</sup> ~~mark is important~~, then it would be for me, simply a rendition of what I am or my ideas or all these things which ~~is sickening~~ <sup>would sicken me</sup>, totally. That I have no desire to represent myself to an audience. But I do have the desire, which is very much, to ask certain questions. Both of the audience and the equipment and the equipment is a way for me to ask questions and then to get an answer or further questions for other people from it. I do not have to impose completely my subjectivity on <sup>my</sup> canvas. Which is important to me.

WOODY: That has two ends. One is that you ~~h~~ can step away, or <sup>to</sup> ~~get~~ a certain distance from the <sup>as</sup> enterprise, to explain, to have the message, to have the truth which people expect from Art. Strangely enough they ~~are~~ continuously <sup>are</sup> frustrated that there is a lack of answers there. And they somehow find it in the ~~past~~ arts. They always find important answers through the man of the nineteenth century. They say "Dostoevsky understood" and we will accept ~~it~~ <sup>it</sup> because he did understand something which they didn't understand before. I also like very much to step away, or to step further or be in the distance with this duty, to interpret, to just say. Because I know I rationally know these answers. But there's a whole different generation of artists, your contemporaries, who are more innocent. I just realized the other day I was painting some ridiculous layout of a printed circuit board and I found this incredible passion of painting and I realized it could be so <sup>so</sup> ~~so~~ personal in the sense of a message. It could just be the same fascination with this material. It's a metallic paint. Weight ~~it~~. It's very heavy. And this substance just told me alot about the material, about the matter itself. You find this in every discipline. I'm sure that

sculptors must be thrilled <sup>by</sup> knowing <sup>that</sup> there is a \_\_\_\_\_ structure behind the stone. So you can probably project into the universe through any discipline. ~~You~~ <sup>We</sup> just privilege that for ourselves. Electronics...

JON: What I think I love very much about music and dislike intensely about painting and video, is that when you're performing music, it's gone ~~wene~~ once you've done it. So you don't have to hang around and watch it. Video, on the other hand, saves itself and it is magnificent...

STEINA: Not necessarily.

JON: Well you don't have to turn on the tape recorder, but it is magnificent, like you said, having this immediate response in performing music, where your breath is the message. Whereas in video - and once you've done it and whether you've done well or badly and whatever you've said, it's gone and it's genuinely immediate.

STEINA: Are you talking about solo performance or with a group?

JON: I've never played with an orchestra.

STEINA: So you play alone?

JON: I play alone and in chamber groups.

WOODY: Do you improvise, or is it written music?

JON: Both.

WOODY: You see we have to consider the code. Once the music is coded, <sup>in</sup> notated, <sup>ion</sup> then you have to find that the code is equally important to preservation of such an activity as improvisation. Improvisation on one side is the immediate product. The interpretation, it may be what holds the tradition of music together. So that is forever.

STEINA: That is forever. Every performer will pick ~~u~~ up the style of seventeenth century music <sup>eighteenth</sup> or ~~sixteenth~~ century.

JON: There are many ways to - this is not at all relevant, but have you heard the le performance of the musical. It is an absolutely new kind of interpretation.

STEINA: Well, I'm waiting for it. That's the only piece by ~~bee~~ Bach I can't stand. But what you touched on were two things, that's why I was interested. First is the scoring, where you interpret and strangely enough we are almost like born with it ~~a~~ or ~~b~~ we get it from somewhere - I don't know where - we know how to interpret ~~the~~ different music differently. We change styles when we go to another page and we look at it it's a different

So that's sort of very strange. And video isn't a score yet, but it will be.

WOODY: Wait a minute. The image, what I call camera obscura image, is a very definite score. In this time of image-making, television image derived from photographic, <sup>own nature is</sup> it's a score.

STEINA: Oh. That's nice.

WOODY: That's how I look at it. It has its own style <sup>in</sup> and time and period... It has everything <sup>that</sup> it has to have as a score.

STEINA: But it is not planned out on paper, like Mozart who went out for a walk and came home and had a whole symphony composed. He just had to write it down.

JON: It doesn't need a further step for ~~it's~~ its realization. but that's a very subtle difference.

WOODY: Okay. I would have to think about it more.

STEINA: But the other thing that I was going to bring up was the group <sup>On the west coast.</sup> improvisation. Because that was the dream of \_\_\_\_\_ . He wanted to bring people together and have them turn various knobs and hold the lens of the camera for the people and do this and go into this incredible concert where everybody would be harmonious and they would make this masterpiece by being a group and creating together exactly on musical concept of group improvisation. In a way that <sup>actually</sup> brought the center down. It was an impossible dream. But it shouldn't be so impossible should it?

JON: I don't know. People don't relate to - image is so less penetrating than sound. It doesn't enter your <sup>sub</sup>conscious the same way. It's obvious music just enters, <sup>you can't shut</sup> ~~it comes through~~ your ears, and it gets there. Sound requires an act of will to subsume, music requires one to listen too well but it has a much more...

WOODY: It has something to do with the simplicity. If you deal with a simple image, slowly revolve it, the way music is, because music is so abstract to us, but we can structurally analyze it, analyze the structure - it is a ~~ey~~ simple system and it's a finite amount of elements that somehow <sup>we</sup> can comprehend as <sup>3</sup> structure fully and almost all the time. But if you deal with image, since it's so dense, <sup>and</sup> ~~it~~ has so many levels of meanings, that's how we get jammed and we refuse in fact to view it as a simple experience. But if ~~we simply~~ the simplify the amount of elements in the

visual sense, and its modes of evolving - you know, the dynamic structure, we can eventually arrive to a genre which is very much...

JON: I'm not so sure.

WOODY: But we don't want that. We read images differently.

JON: R Exactly.

WOODY: We like a short-cut, we like a symbol which flashes only at one time, provides a paradox. That's the victory of film, cinema, that it became such a brief statement.

JON: You see, I don't - it's funny, the harmonies of ~~the~~ image, the flat-out stuff - speak to us almost as the ~~same~~ harmonies of music but there's no <sup>in image</sup> melody ~~here~~. Or it's not that Brakhage may have been able to do it at some point and still does. But that it doesn't speak to us in the same - one doesn't perceive images rhythmically, or over time in the same way without an immense act of will and a huge amount of training.

STEINA: I'm sorry I think that's the only thing that the image can do is be rhythmic. See <sup>if</sup> you see a silent film and something happens that's very rhythmical then you make your ~~ee~~ own sound to it. Then you start singing in your <sup>head</sup> certain melodies or something...dum dum because the image is going dum dum. And you know. That's the only thing where I can interpret image as sound. Whereas ~~if~~ you listen to a Beethoven symphony you imagine platforms and structures and corridors and there is incredible architectural build that you can see. Whenever you want to you can see <sup>good</sup> ~~in~~ music.

JON: this is really trivial. But I'm thinking of \_\_\_\_\_ (Gwynn's) remark ~~that in..~~ What was the name of that tape? Sweet verticality? Remember when he was talking about how he wanted to create a rhythmic structure but he simply could not see images ~~as~~ rhythmic. And we go through Hollywood with all its immense invisible cutting. The rhythms affect you, but <sup>they affect you</sup> on the level of commenting on what is pictured. And so it's not perceived in any way the same way. It's ~~perceived~~ seemingly always not in terms of abstraction, like music is, <sup>the</sup> rhythm in music, but rather as commentary on the subject matter.

WOODY; But if you look at Sharits' work, it's just totally different.

I'm talking of that level of signification which eventually allows you to see as rhythmical or <sup>as</sup> harmonic and it's simply we haven't been looking at film that way. We have been looking at film as life, real life, whatever that heritage of camera obscura is, <sup>that</sup> how we interpret photographic art.

JON: Because we learn to see it as continuity

WOODY: Not only that. We demand that that is to us certain truth, and we ~~what~~ it, in fact, abstract. We want to associate that with a certain reality and that has been through my whole life, film has been until recently for me the most - after photography - the most realistic or most convincing reality. I always look at painting as something totally divorced from reality. Music is totally abstract of course. Sculpture becomes immensely artificial and dance is the most decadent and distant naturality. So film has substituted this particular ~~need~~ <sup>meanings</sup> and ~~we~~ we look at films. *this way*

STEINA: I remember John Whitney's film, Arabesque, because it was remarkable because it was all sound structures, but he had put ~~sound~~ <sup>Some</sup> external sound to it, and he had picked, ...he had cut the ~~tape~~ film to that music which had nothing to do with the sound structures that he made from frequencies.

JON: Except ~~that~~ <sup>for</sup> the most clichéd kind of rendition we get from those images because they're arabesques so he took - was it Indian or Eastern music?

STEINA: Something like that.

JON: So that is the most clichéd kind of...

STEINA: but if I could only have heard the original sound, the frequencies that made ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> spirals and everything.

~~WE~~ WOODY: But the simplicity again, because it was a finite set of elements *that you* ~~to~~ comprehend <sup>ed,</sup> just made it that way, made it musical. If ~~he~~ <sup>h</sup> would use photography, because <sup>if it's</sup> for me any photographic image is beyond simplicity even if it's a tree or a stone because you immediately question these things, like where is it, why is it, what color, what day - all those questions which will keep you busy forever just looking at a single image. In those dynamic structures

[Here the tape speeds up and becomes very difficult to understand.  
I will be happy to decipher it if you think it may be useful - Jan]

## SIDE TWO

STEINA: So what is a trivial picture?

JON: So first of all, to defend myself, maybe the problem with the sixties <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ that the experience was ... let's say that the reaction was so much against the art product that they wanted to completely dematerialize the experience. I do not at all believe that. Because I feel that this process has to come <sup>ment</sup> ~~in~~ very directly and fairly concretely as well, on modes of perception that we can bring to normal life, ways that we would decode our normal everyday experiences so that there has to be image material there because we go through life with image material or sound material or touch material, other things. But that what I don't want is to present things <sup>which</sup> ~~that~~ are hermetically sealed outside of this <sup>like</sup> - painting. A certain kind of painting. Most kinds of painting. What I want is to posit ideas which the audience... which can realize and then transfer in a very direct and so forth way to ... in their rendition of these everyday ~~experiences~~ going through life. I have been an utter failure.

WOODY: It's very hard to justify cubism as passing on kind of a message.

<sup>Sure. It's completely abstract</sup>

JON: And when they talk about it they always speak of it as deriving from...relativity theory...or whatever

<sup>And</sup> WOODY: It has been disputed. When I grew up which was the fifties culturally <sup>they were</sup> ~~it was~~ still disputed. There were schools which would deny cubism as being at all valid. Modernists. Not true modernists, but socialist modernists. But going back to the mythical sixties, I think it was the only way to de-establish art as activity. Because the artifacts <sup>or art,</sup> ~~of~~ the official art was understood to be controlled by the galleries, by the establishment. So that was a pure escape <sup>and it</sup> ~~that~~ was agreed on by the rest of the society and it even ~~is~~ produced a product, like <sup>produced</sup> maybe <sup>or</sup> alternate consciousness that could sell hash pipes. Mandalas, posters <sup>a</sup> or certain music which contains so many of those processed codes that they did not have to spell <sup>be</sup> ~~it~~ <sup>ed</sup> out so explicitly. So it created also its reality so to speak. So it wasn't only an intellectual, it was a totally agreed on possibility of non-reality as being totally real. So I think ~~ex~~ the whole generation...especially the musicians, welcomed that <sup>tremendously</sup> ~~totally~~ because suddenly to reject the whole ritual of sitting by a piano in your black dress and all the rituals of performing could <sup>have</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>en</sup> <sup>just</sup> simply disregarded. And it was a beautiful possibility.

But of course it just went ~~the way~~ <sup>with</sup> of time. Time today requires, or it seems to ~~be~~ <sup>but</sup> me again...we are all confined <sup>in</sup> to our own imagination about what's needed.

JON: Sure. This is also completely beside the point but I see punk rock and that whole culture ~~which~~ <sup>that</sup> derives from it as something absolutely which is ~~completely~~ alien to me. Yet I am precisely of that generation. And here I see some people I respect very much in New York City getting into this. And I have to ~~ask~~ ask myself - and this relates back to the initial question ~~that~~ opened this - is that I have to ask myself how ~~is~~ is it that I can make known to these people why these things are so compelling and why ~~they~~ they should be important to them? And that's a real problem. Not as a social thing but that <sup>obviously</sup> now we're in completely different territories. Because this work has nothing whatsoever to do with punk.

WOODY: I see this total schism. I see the cultural split is complete. Between what's called avant-garde and what's called pop. Popular. Because avant-garde is now mutating into ~~what's~~ popular. Like if you take Prairie Oysters. Of course it was always inherited in this alternate culture model to <sup>also</sup> pervert or invert the avant-garde, legitimate avant-garde. It never really had the guts to do ~~it~~ it because it was self-protected milieu. You couldn't really commit <sup>a</sup> suicide. Today it's more legitimate because avant-garde is becoming in a way a nuisance as a social Set-up.

JON: That's funny because I thought for a long time,... Somebody said, "So this is avant-garde video" and I had to say "But there is no avant-garde any more." And now all of a sudden were in the position of being the avant-garde and so are a number of other people in movements. And so here you ~~to~~ have something which from what was the art, contemporary art, has moved to pop. And so here we find that this serious and now strikingly traditional and classical <sup>kind of</sup> mode of investigation becomes one of a number of serious works that are continuing.

WOODY: It's only in the moral interpretation because avant-garde is a need for each time to interpret what is the most progressive - of course there really isn't the political meaning of the twenties and thirties, <sup>\*</sup> but still there is no other term - what's called contermpo-

\* JON: ... the most extended...

rary is ~~was~~ usually established already. Contemporary <sup>music</sup> may mean \_\_\_\_\_ (Lutaslavsky) or it may mean Jerry Hiller. The need to label things "avant-garde" will always exist. But now what we call the most minimal or formal, formally most insisting; that's what usually moves it into total isolation. And more and more I have to respect that particular branch which is defined morally. Again, it's the monkish type of existence which we have been talking about last time.

STEINA: The term video for individual expression, or any kind of independent video that's not meant for any purpose. ~~But~~ Jon is right, there can't be any avant-garde, there couldn't possibly be an avant-garde but we identify with people in other disciplines who are not commercial, who are sort of making it as their own...

WOODY: ~~Like~~ Like us in independent cinema, I think the transposition of let's say means of production, equipment and cameras from <sup>legitimate</sup> Hollywood to personalized medium which is equally or maybe more respected - of course it's also defined morally. Like Jonas Mekas put a total definition of that in a moral sense. The same struggle that industry has brought video into in a way state of glorification, because it was alternate to the industry - to the establishment, and in fact it also established an individual, an investigator of what was before centers, experimental centers...

STEINA: See first it was called "alternate medium"

WOODY: ...Again it goes towards the basic idea that it <sup>is</sup> was continuously defined in the role of the individual in these activities. That's what my only concern is, even if I'm leaning toward total a-social model <sup>of existence</sup> ~~in the distance~~. Still it's more interesting to me to define what I'm doing as an individual within that, than find the duties towards the society.

JON: See I want to find out about these models that you're using. Because they're astounding to me.

WOODY: Which ones?

JON: Well, the ones that relate to the individual versus ~~the~~ society - I would never see it this way, nor express it this way - the one that always comes back to commercialism as a point of comparison, ~~the~~ means of production. I would never ever kind of put this whole endeavor

or endeavors into that kind of framework.

STEINA: Why not?

JON: Because it seems to me that I am - this is something else, I'm really asking Woody about it seems socialism. It seems like particularly dialectic and socialist terms to put it in. I would not because <sup>would</sup> I tend to see whatever work the individual does as both symptomatic and indicative and derivative of society. I would see the individual as inherently within that.

WOODY: It's true, based on my experience, that everything so-called progressive or unique can be institutionalized. For example like socialism or communism. <sup>was</sup> Communists were outcasts at a certain period then they have been instrumental to the socialist change and they totally disintegrated into the most unbelievable status quo I've seen. The same happened to the so-called avant-garde artists in my culture. They became ministers of culture, some of them, they eventually became powerful...You must understand, it was a very positive movement. Communism took over from the old guard, which was the corrupt mill owners or whatever. Suddenly it was an unbelievable morally justifiable act.

STEINA: They put artists on a life-long pension.

JON: Tell me, this is 1946.

WOODY: 1948 actually, officially. But that happened in every kind of post-revolutionary country. I was preceding that. Especially in the fifties, my idols of avant-garde - poets for example - became totally associated with the status quo. So I had no tolerance towards anything that can be institutionalized or made into a status quo. And the only defense is an individual who's unable to conform. Not because he's strong but because he's or she's weak. Because there's no options. That is very important. These options ~~can~~ can be brought up by different <sup>needs</sup> means, by interest. Like I'm interested that in certain areas there's no interest, the society has no interest. Because that makes me in a way unconformable. In other ways I'm <sup>extremely</sup> completely conformable. Even ~~the~~ <sup>has</sup> video <sup>became</sup> a new status quo and I had to reject it. I now cannot accept myself being associated with what's called video. Because in fact I'm not, ~~in~~ I'm interested in all different aspects. This con-

tinuous escape of any conformism I see as <sup>the</sup> only self-defence towards the whole possibility.

~~WOODY:XXX~~

JON: <sup>So</sup> How do you see yourself as building the institutionalization of that which will follow you? Your video is very important in this, it established almost a ~~sh~~ school - not quite that - but a school of video.

WOODY: It was the innocence in a way. It was the unpredictability, in fact it was the <sup>(ance?)</sup> ~~e~~ obscurity. It just became obvious later. But when we practiced it the most, when I believed in it the most, it was the most obscure. There's a lot of personal justifications for that. <sup>It may never happen.</sup> It may happen only once. It happened to me the first time, because my <sup>true</sup> first interest was in poetry but I was facing an unbelievable amount of past - formally and linguistically. So video was ~~the~~ a lucky experience for me. But again I believe every generation has it's own window. Because your time hasn't even come, I feel. Jon. This is just an introduction to something ~~e~~lse for you.

STEINA: But Jon, I'm very interested in how you see the interaction of individual and ~~the~~ society.

JON: I can only watch myself as a manifestation. I guess I have no real belief in absolute freedom - absolute nonconformity. I see very little freedom. This book, Darlington, which is possibly somewhat off-the-wall, somewhat excessive, nonetheless posits that the culture has evolved in various ways because people have been fucking like rabbits for centuries. It's about genetic combination of different peoples. And he makes a fairly convincing case - there are many questions I have, especially about his patterns of reasoning. And so here I am in my culture. And I grew up in New York City and I go to the Museum of Modern Art or the Metropolitan every day for five years during my most impressionable period, and I go to Carnegie Hall and I go to the Village Vanguard and all of these things. And then I read these books and I go to this High School and my parents are like this and then I do something which is maybe out of the mainstream. Maybe not. So I see myself as in complete conformity with that culture. I might be a little <sup>bit</sup> off to the right side or ~~the~~ left side, but I am nonetheless a manifestation of that culture and that history. That whole product. It was amazing to me

when Morton was here. Because I had a lot of...I had a number of hours of discussion with him. ~~And~~ I realized that I and he had virtually nothing in common. None of these basic kind of intellectual things that allow people to talk, except to have a good time and to compare their complete differences. That we had none of those common factors. That he had come from a completely different culture than I had. And held none of my suppositions, nor my categories nor my frame, modes of reasoning nor even the need to ask the kinds of questions that I do. And so that was very very interesting to me. Jane as well.

STEINA: Well that <sup>what</sup> has been also very interesting to us always about Phil. But I was <sup>so</sup> surprised in this interview <sup>that</sup> he seemed to me to be different.

JON: He was talking about things where you had to conform which are institutional matters. That's part of it.

STEINA: Because I agree with you. Culturally he's miles away.

JON: Right. And I can only respect him for many reasons, So here is Phil Morton <sup>who is</sup> making video tapes in Chicago, which we know these people they're not far away, we can talk about certain things. But when it came to talking about broader issues, I was a manifestation of my culture, which was far more European than his, and he was a manifestation of his culture which is very very American. Such as I think you never find in New York City.

WOODY: So what do you think <sup>what</sup> he represented more, conformist~~?~~ existence or more individualistic form of existence?

JON: Well I can't see it in those terms because he is conforming to his culture where he derives it - from C.B. and from <sup>the</sup> midwest and <sup>the</sup> southwest, and he's from a rural area. He grew up in western Pennsylvania. He's conforming to his. AND I am conforming to mind. And what's more, he's conforming extremely concretely. His experience is very concrete, his tapes are very concrete.. Him writing a letter to General Motors about his van. And the things that I thought are hugely abstract and they're abstract because I grew up and went to the Modern and listened to music of a different kind which did not deal with human emotions. Things like Bach for instance, and earlier music. And so I had been trained that art <sup>and</sup> in experience were to be these <sup>fairly</sup> very abstract kind of qualities. And that he had been trained that these things are personally involved

and very direct. And then all the categories that he brings to think about it. He's not concerned that his image processing performances aren't deep. He's concerned about the ~~p~~ experience that goes into that performance and I'm concerned about the product and that's a huge difference.

STEINA: But at the same time you are on the same ~~th~~ side, the two of you.

*In a way.*

JON: That's why I chose him as an example.

STEINA: He's an interesting subject. He's also interesting for another reason that he ~~is~~ has changed his culture. Because dressing up like a Texan and cowboy boots and with the hat has nothing to do with Pennsylvania, Allegheny County. You know, it's just south of us here, ~~that's~~ where he grew up. So he has transformed himself into the dream that he had to be a real Westerner and he does it genuinely and thoroughly and I have to actually admire him for it because he does it even to that \_\_\_\_\_ . But he ~~does it~~ is on the same side as us because in a way he has no career at the institution. It is his life-support only. And he is an individual man. So because I divide people <sup>like</sup> as Woody does also in these two categories: those who will work for others and those who will create for themselves. And it becomes apparent in every art movement. There are the commercial artists in <sup>any</sup> everything. You can pick sculpture, painting, draftsmanship, anything... writing. It doesn't matter what it is. We will always some of us be on this side and others <sup>people</sup> will be on that side. Because we know our colleagues who started with us who were just eager and waiting to get into the commercial world and they just are there all right.

WOODY: I would say there is a set of unabilities that make ~~individuals~~ individuals. Unabilities to succeed in a particular job, for example. Many people that have, even the best of the artists you respect, certainly must have at one time...like Leonardo here, very <sup>huge</sup> great ambitions to become enormously powerful <sup>and successful</sup> individual. But there was a set of unabilities. Like he couldn't finish anything. Other possibilities which eventually isolated him and provided this moral, <sup>which</sup> ~~what~~ we call now moral background from being strong individual. These are the confusions which I like to

think about because I grew up through a culture which was defined as a power struggle between the establishment and the individual. During Occupation you could get killed because you <sup>would</sup> just write a poem. This society doesn't do that. In this country they would just look at you as kind of ridiculous. The same in socialism, it became very difficult to even play music. Organ music was banned for a long time in Czechoslovakia. See you must understand, these are the conditions which I ~~find~~ <sup>found</sup> now so bizarre. But they were very much real. And I found out of course the culture <sup>there</sup> had been created through those codes. Everything, ~~like~~ almost everything, like if you take Beethoven's works, not ~~even~~ <sup>only</sup> Eroica and others, had these political codes - literature is full of those. Even Kafka of course, so cryptical. And all were interpreted and I grew up and I interpreted them for myself as such. Very much coded, <sup>in</sup> individual proclamations. And they had nothing to do with conformism because <sup>the</sup> conformism there is so clear - it's <sup>called</sup> bourgeois. Which here <sup>again</sup> doesn't make ~~any~~ sense because the American way is different. The longing for conformity here is in a way the positive one. Like to be, to congregate with the whole nation. ~~It is not~~ There's no political affiliation. It doesn't mean it's immoral because it goes with the power structure. In ~~East~~ Europe inevitably it has always been ~~the~~ linked to the power structure. Even religious structures. So that's why I cannot respect the American longing for large, huge popular culture.

JON: What happened to Dubcek \_\_\_\_\_ (~~XXXXXXXX~~)

WOODM: Oh, he got a post in Slovakia..

JON: I mean when he came in. When did that government emerge? There must have been a complete...

WOODY: First of all he was a Slovak, which was at that time in a way an independent view. Because everything from Bohemia was discredited. So he gained a <sup>certain</sup> kind of political independence. Slovakia has always been more politically independent since they've been oppressed for so many centuries by the Hungarians. So it was a whole political...

JON: So, had Dubcek stayed in, and remained powerful and relatively free you would have had a complete realignment.

WOODY: It would be a free election, so to speak. It doesn't mean it would be a free alignment...

JON: <sup>I mean</sup> But these cultural alignments that you're talking of, <sup>which</sup> are that in America the power structure is not inherently something not to be.

Except for those people who dedicate their lives to being part of the power structure. Had the political conditions in Czechoslovakia remained free, or freer, then in fact those ideas would have changed. WOODY: They would dissolve into more decadent esthetic issues. Then the formalism would again come as an important one because it would split the society into bourgeois art and non-conformist formalistic art for example as it many times was. But here I see analogy, this only kind of conformist art is associated for ~~its~~ <sup>example with</sup> funding through state institutions or federal institutions and through a gallery - that's a different system. But I'm extremely interested, that's why - again I'm in a territory of kind of a moral question <sup>ing</sup> because we have been tremendously supported through the state, and also we get some money from the federal government. So I find this an interesting area to study. And it at least binds me into that investigation between the state and the church and an individual because I don't want to be part of the commercial world which is here just, totally just. It's a service and you create<sup>'re</sup>, but you work for money - you exchange the goods. I don't ~~want~~ find that more moral. In fact I'm in a double bind, this string of relationships...

JON: Why are you doing tv programs?

WOODY: That's what we are <sup>also</sup> trying to do now. There's no boundary. I'm finding more and more <sup>that the of</sup> image technology as experience - video - is over. It's becoming more and more our hobby. It's becoming <sup>e</sup> more and more exclusive. But that opens us tremendously.

JON: How has it become exclusive?

WOODY: Because the concerns of that medium right now are becoming so complex they are less democratic than video. Video was not much... there was not many mysteries...

JON: Wait, the concerns <sup>of</sup> in video are very complex, you're saying. I'm misunderstanding you.

WOODY: No. I'm saying that any involvement in computer brings me into totally exclusive areas of science. Everything is \_\_\_\_\_, I have to rething everything. <sup>The</sup> Freedom <sup>of</sup> in video is in a way over, become confined as a discipline. I can only face it a hobby. I cannot face it as a profession.

JON: Well, what I think thought<sup>is</sup>, and tell me if I'm wrong, You have

posed to yourself one great problem - maybe a few more, maybe two or three - and that you have explored it in video and found that video perhaps did not have the means to answer it or that you gave up somewhere because there was <sup>this</sup> another tool that seemed, <sup>that</sup> like ~~it~~ might be more powerful. And that this great problem <sup>is,</sup> which we've discussed, ~~involves~~ <sup>alternate</sup> modes of ~~electronic~~ visualization in some way. <sup>Then</sup> You've defined it in more specific terms. And I wonder if this is not <sup>a kind of</sup> an act of irresponsibility. This computer. And that your real concern is not with the hardware or <sup>the</sup> system performance or any of these, but this one very important and crucial problem. And I wish somehow that you would specify this, much more precisely than you have <sup>to</sup> been.

WOODY: I don't think it's possible to specify it. I think <sup>it's like</sup> ~~as far as~~ video ~~it~~ was an overwhelming experience ~~as far as~~ of absolutely no sense. It had no modes to control socially, or as a survival mechanism.

JON: I met you in 1974.

WOODY: Right. At that time...

JON: At that point w you were not innocent.

WOODY: At that time I could have kept on making video as I could. I would <sup>even</sup> probably <sup>a</sup> even bring <sup>in</sup> subject of narrativities. And I would probably deal with video as medium that I could master, I could manipulate, and I could think about emotions and all those codes that can <sup>then</sup> be imparted onto the audience. But I didn't want that. I was trying to avoid that possibility. But naturally, <sup>since I was</sup> I'm still more interested in the relationship...just going through the possibility of technology being explored. It's basically an exploration of this technological structure. <sup>Since</sup> Of course it had a consistency, it was like going from video. It was a natural evolution, which is also a problem I think. Because if it comes naturally then maybe it should not be followed that way. But it brought me another set of mysteries which I was very much interested in exploring but they were not visibly exchanged <sup>socially.</sup> ~~so~~ like video was continuously exchanged. We showed, <sup>and</sup> we saw, we could implant some of these processes on other people's minds. In this case it is not so. It is much more subtle. It's much more a larger discipline and it's much more complicated.

JON: It's much more removed, as well.

WOODY: That's right. I think it's even more important, it's actually an important job. I view it as a job this time.

JON: I guess I really can't believe you.

STEINA: Believe him what?

JON: Believe the terms ~~he's~~ <sup>that Woody's</sup> putting these things into. Because I really think you're motivated by very specific - I mean, they're very general but very definite - things that you want to discover and prove. I think discover, that doesn't relate to the technology <sup>so much</sup> as a ~~mean~~ means of exposition. And I think you're really a philosopher in a way. I could be completely wrong about this, but I don't think so. This <sup>also</sup> should not be transcribed...

~~It doesn't matter.~~  
WOODY: We can always cut ~~it~~ out.

JON: But...I see you talking in very abstract terms about large questions. And then it seems to ~~me~~ me that for you ~~to~~ to bring ~~up~~ up it down to revealing the technology is an absolute trivialization of these terms. Because it seems that what is fascinating in the technology to you - like this violation of the camera obscura principle - is only something <sup>which</sup> that the technology makes available to you in a fairly immediate <sup>kind of</sup> way.

WOODY: It made <sup>so</sup> itself obvious. The critique so to speak was so instant - like a hammer directly in the middle of my forehead, that I just couldn't cop out of it. I couldn't say, you know I couldn't see that. <sup>It was</sup> The greatest cultural challenge of the \_\_\_\_\_. So I took it as a passion but also as a total provocation. This thing just obviously shattered all the ideas about coding <sup>an</sup> image and meaning. It is only the condition that allows me to think that I have an option, see? If I wouldn't have an option, if I would be involved innocently in a totally - in a concrete level in the material, then I would not have time to think about it. I would be doing what you described. I would be doing investigation, I would like to specify the language. But fortunately, or unfortunately I had a period of a shielded existence. The good conditions. I have the good conditions for also thinking about it, <sup>if</sup> which is ~~a~~ of course also a dangerous situation because you start exchanging the activity for thought processes and if you ~~start~~ start appreciating them, those thought processes, They become very elaborate. They have their own heirarchy. You start exercising ~~all of them,~~ <sup>both and when</sup> that's ~~why~~ you get close to the term of being

a philosopher. But it's also because I don't have the controls ~~of the~~ <sup>would have</sup> over image which I am eventually going towards. If I ~~had~~ the controls, I wouldn't mind exercising them and I would make images and I would say "This is what I'm doing" <sup>anyway.</sup> Because after all there are two schools, they say that philosophers are these people that are frustrated artists. But the other school says there are many good artists but there are very few philosophers.

JON: When you speak of <sup>dramatic</sup> genetic details, what are the ~~role~~ revelations <sup>that are in</sup> ~~the dramatic details?~~

WOODY: They are very physiological, it's very hard....It's like when you are a child the first time you see an insect, do you have any interpretations. It's a phenomenon which you immediately code and put into your bank. That's what happens to me whenever I see <sup>the</sup> ~~an~~ event which I have never seen before.

JON: So it has no signification.

WOODY: NO. You can speculate about ~~it~~ what it is later. You can maybe categorize it to a certain degree. But when it happens it simply adds somewhere, some information. It just stays with you. And that's what I mean <sup>the</sup> ~~by~~ process. That's what I call the process, just putting it into those banks. but how you get them out, if it's verbal or institutional attitude, <sup>or</sup> ~~it's~~ an image; It's a whole different story. That I found difficult. Because it brings <sup>it</sup> ~~you~~ to the moral dilemma. If you have a duty to communicate <sup>them</sup> ~~that~~ or if you don't. Or if you believe that it could be passed on people... I mean, what is your function?

JON: But it seems to me that ~~if~~ when you see like an insect, you invent entymology. You invent a conception that places this insect somewhere within that conception. And in a way... You're always left holding the bag when an engineer has been talking because engineers have this conception of their machines that if you see a dramatic detail - and I'm <sup>completely</sup> not sure I'm <sup>completely</sup> understanding the nature of it...

WOODY: I think I used the term dramatic detail...

JON: Yes, it's a good... is that you develop a conception that encompasses that dramatic detail. So I'm not sure we're talking about that. We had <sup>And</sup> the dramatic details of perceptual thresholds at one point. So we encompassed the conception... we developed a conception that encompasses perceptual thresholds. And those were to us amazing things - what

flicker can do.

WOODY: Yes, but <sup>we can go</sup> further, We can say that the true dramatic detail is for example the hallucinatory process. For example, for me, <sup>deep</sup>sanity has always been my normal state. Like hallucination was a total revelation. It was something that totally altered my - it <sup>was</sup> a dramatic detail.

JON: Well it's not a detail.

WOODY: It's an experience that brought a whole new set of esthetic values. And in a way that's what I would say. The rest, the activity around has that area in my interpretation. It's deposited in that set of experiences. For some people, Christianity may be the same kind of profound detail that is <sup>times</sup> ~~somehow~~ overwhelming.

JON: But no, the christianity is the conception as is the hallucination. No, that's interesting. I think that the hallucination and e the christianity are the conceptions that posit like the dramatic detail of communion. It's funny. I've never taken communion, but I've been there - of course I've had friends that have - and that is to me my image of christianity, is communion. Because that is the only part of the whole thing that's relevant to me. That is the dramatic detail of ~~that imparts~~ the whole conception and of course that imparts the conception. This is somewhat irrelevant.

WOODY: Yes, we could discuss that has something to do with us, that's Jesus Christ...

JON: You eat his body and drink his blood...

WOODY: Goodness and love. It has many kind of mysteries, it's not so simple. I ~~some~~ <sup>times</sup> cannot stand it, I many times cannot stand it. But ~~eh~~ there are details that I have to admit are metaphysical.

JON: So where are we going?

WOODY: So.

JON: <sup>Do you</sup> think we should go back to the hardware?

WOODY: Yes. You should <sup>probably</sup> pursue the original line. It's the only way we can keep it together.

JON: I wonder. You see the questions that I ask myself about this are the questions <sup>of</sup> ~~that~~ the urgency to other people, <sup>the</sup> questions of <sup>the</sup> communication, and... This whole endeavor has to me - not the discussion, but the things that prod the discussion - has to me a fairly clear direction, but one

which I'm e discovering as I'm going along. And one of my primary requirements is that in some sense these things that I do must be real. They must speak of things...I do not want to exercise my imagination as ~~a~~ <sup>the</sup> primary product in any way. In fact, I will invariably hold it back because <sup>I think</sup> it's not <sup>what</sup> ~~the thing~~ I want to do, it's not the things that have currency, it's of no interest to other people. I find it completely suspect right now. What I find most important is that it be disciplined because it's too easy to lapse into art and imagination. And <sup>that</sup> equally, that it speak of things which are real not only to myself but to other people. So it is very ~~easy~~ easy to found it in the hardware of course. Because you can speak of the hardware processes and these are in some sense verifiable. You can found it in perceptual things because these ~~things~~ are likewise verifiable. But then I have to say that once you have dis....I still believe ~~that~~ in some way in the transcendent quality of art. And this is not so much to transcend our earthly hell to go to a ~~heavenly~~ paradise of esthetic rapture but instead that it must leap outside of its primary substance which is the image, and communicate on a level that <sup>exists</sup> outside of ~~the~~ <sup>it</sup> image. The image cannot only represent what is, it also must stimulate to other levels of perception.

WOODY: Yes, but such a set of conditions cannot survive the creative process. That's too many conditions imposed. There has to be...

JON: It's a form of constipation?

WOODY: Yes, there has to be...There has to be kind of a low behavioral slip. There has to be a passion in which you violate all the cultural notion. In fact, it has to overwhelm you to the certain degree that you can believe it, and you can actually like it.

JON: This is the conflict.

WOODY: Later of course you can reject it...

JON: Sure. The conflict is that given the whole thing about things being real in some way, then I still have this conflicting paradigm that it must transcend. <sup>And</sup> I think maybe you have thrown that off. You are content with the product on it's kind of most basic level of what it is and how it works...

WOODY: I have a e very simple explanation. It's not in your control. You're at the mercy of the rest of the people. You're a totally dependent on what's the audience agreeing with you, what the critics... It's just no way that the security can ever be obtained. There's not security in this predicament. Only security ~~that~~ you have is you know that what you do is good. And you have to forgive yourself for everything that you have bet~~r~~ayed and you have to somehow - ~~to~~ you <sup>can</sup> have ~~to~~ force yourself to find the time - but eventually you have to accept yourself as what you do is good.

STEINA: I know how I do it. I just believe that since I make a tape I must have got the point, known what I was doing. And then you go through all of those <sup>stages</sup> ~~phases~~ of doubt. Especially in front of other people and then you go <sup>through</sup> "Why did I do it?" " " and "Why am I showing it" . But you just have to believe in those first <sup>instincts</sup> ~~instants~~, it's the only thing you've got. And that may be wrong, but that's not again mine to judge, really. I can't. I mean, I do. I don't release everything I make, but once I have, it's out of my hands. But you thing that \_\_\_\_\_, it's very funny.

JON: I also think the bulk eraser is the videomaker's best friend. That's another matter entirely. Do you understand what...not to posit this as a set of conditions, but to posit the conflict within all of this.

WOODY: What you are searching is the meaning...

JON: What I find is that when I go through all this and say this is how I will talk to other people, and then I have to say I can tell them ~~about~~ this and this and this and this ~~+~~ and this is why I did this and so forth, then you still have to have a point which is on their territory. Which is the territory...

STEINA: Which is never the point <sup>of</sup> why you did it...

JON: Frequently not. Which is in any case something which deals with those art qualities that aren't normally considered in some sense either humble or God-like - what's the word? I can't think of it. - divine... That it has in some, one of those ways, still has <sup>this kind of</sup> ~~that~~ transcendence - it must transcend it's primary material. I find nothing in the curriculum

of our culture or cultures that specifies that all of this is important.

WOODY: You just made a confession of twentieth-century man. That...

Everybody's searching just why in fact they should live one day longer.

JON: That's a real problem

~~MOOREY~~:

STEINA: And the only way you can...

JON: It may be the primary motivating factor of the twentieth century.

STEINA: of every century.

JON: No, I think more now.

WOODY: It could be because in fact for me the true art as we believed it, is truly was over by the twenties...

JON: Sure, and Beethoven is so appealing to me but who can write Beethoven any more?

WOODY: Of course we have to admit that art as we have it located in our own mind is not practiced any more. What other justification we have,

nobody else has given us any other reason. Even I grew up in a system

which explained it very well, it was the socialism, the communism ~~they~~ <sup>still</sup> gave me that substitute for Christianity. And it sometimes can

do it. Or some people still believe in those ideas and Christianity

comes and explains this also from time to time. But there's a per-

petual possibility that someone is desperate there will be an answer.

<sup>the</sup> But sober people, the people that can face it, have to <sup>eventually</sup> agree then that

there is no interpretation. There's no answer to it. And that's

what you are describing. Is to believe in what you do a priori, it's

impossible. You have to somehow...you have to be insecure. <sup>The</sup> Insecurity, <sup>is</sup> you can <sup>eventually</sup> accept as

total insecurity ~~you have to accept as~~ the only state that ~~is~~ possible.

Because insecurity has possibilities. Maybe what you do is divine. Or

maybe it is absolute. <sup>But you</sup> ~~like we~~ cannot be sure, otherwise...

STEINA: I mean, thank God that Beethoven wasn't by any means secure.

He didn't believe what he was doing. He stopped composing sometimes for

years. And the way he scribbled over and scribbled over his manuscripts

shows that he wasn't happy with what he came up with. But you see what

frightens <sup>is</sup> ~~angers me is people~~ ~~are~~ the people who make this and make this and all

those people that make the bullship. They seem to be absolutely satisfied

with what they're doing.

WOODY: They seem to be happy because..

JON: Because they're in it for money. And a certain quality of life.

WOODY: But when we accept that art is making money, then ~~they~~<sup>we may</sup> become totally understandable and happy and ~~rich~~ rich. We can have a purpose. But that's ~~kind of~~ what I said before. This situation in art is totally divorced from the realities like good exchange. In my own mind, or my own circles indeed there may be still artists who take it as a commercial possibility and ~~struggle~~<sup>they</sup> on that level so maybe ~~there~~<sup>that</sup> is the answer.

That we should find a way, we shouldn't find any way, skip it.

STEINA: But I hate the ~~way~~<sup>idea that</sup> ~~the~~ artists <sup>will</sup> always ~~has~~<sup>have</sup> to dialogue with the generations after them and not with their own contemporaries. It seems to be sort of a rule because it's a totally ridiculous rule. Because they should only actually be for their own contemporaries and ~~they~~ then they could die because eventually we're all ~~de~~ going to die and the sun is going to cool out...

WOODY: There's no ~~series-ii~~ serious life anyway, because it will cease one w day and probably never...

STEINA: I'm thankful for the artists of the past but at the same time <sup>I resent</sup> why wouldn't they be big superstars while they were living? Why did they also have to be half-~~re~~jected and die in poverty and stuff like that?

WOODY: Let's turn it around. I can say ~~that~~ if we realize w that what we do is the most artificial, has very little to do with reality, then why not, why can't we exercise the utmost artificial, the most rational and anti-rational. It becomes eventually a task just to perpetuate your activity beyond the point you know it has just no meaning, is <sup>even</sup> actually art. Why shouldn't you overcome this total rationalization of a total \_\_\_\_\_.

JON: Because I grew up in a culture without a sense of duty. There is no duty anywhere in my background. And I cannot give credence to any ~~talk~~<sup>talk</sup> that depends upon duty to justify it.

STEINA: But you are an absolutely duty-bound fellow. By your own creation.

JON: Only those things that I find give me reason to be that.

STEINA: But why do things give you reason to be that? Where does that motivation come from? Or where does society's motivation come from and what's the difference?

JON: Well, it comes from places <sup>which</sup> that of course I can't justify. Things that are relevant to me <sup>somehow</sup> and speak to me directly and deeply and importantly, of course.

STEINA: So what is the quality, better or worse? What is the quality?

JON: Which quality? You mean, what is that thing <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ speaks to me?

STEINA: No, of you defining your own, not being brought — .

JON: What I mean to say though that if I saw these things as a task which I have dedicated my life to to perform as a duty <sup>is</sup> that I have said ~~that~~ I will no longer consider that I must have a priori justification But that I will instead say to myself that I will select the most artificial, the most exclusive, the most irrelevant stuff and I will follow it for as long as I live with absolute dedication. I would then be selecting for myself an artificial duty. There is, in my culture, in that part of the world in ~~that~~ society where I grew up, in all my values there is absolutely none of that sense. Duty is to me something which does not exist. It's possibly the legacy of the sixties but it goes back farther than that. It's an interesting thing, I mean that's very interesting. That that's why everybody didn't go to Viet Nam.

Is Because of the sixties, <sup>T</sup>There was no sense of duty. And those people who said they should go said it is their duty to fight for American ~~so it's~~ <sup>wonderful and</sup> which is free and happy and gives you a lot of money and cars and so forth. But my culture never gave me any of that. sense.

WOODY: It must have given you a sense of competition.

JON: Competition. There's a lot of that.

WOODY: That is, in a way...

STEINA: More than in any other society...

WOODY: There must be a driving force which is beyond a duty, see.

JON: <sup>then</sup> But on the other hand competition is the sort of thing that we

unlearn to have

WOODY: It's a sordid affair. If it's still the motivation for you to survive or compete and deal with these thoughts then it is giving you

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a reason to live.

JON: See I don't want to be the best, because I can't be the best. Right?

WOODY: That is a very strange...

STEINA: Why <sup>c</sup>an't you be the best?

JON: Because....

END OF TAPE SIDE TWO