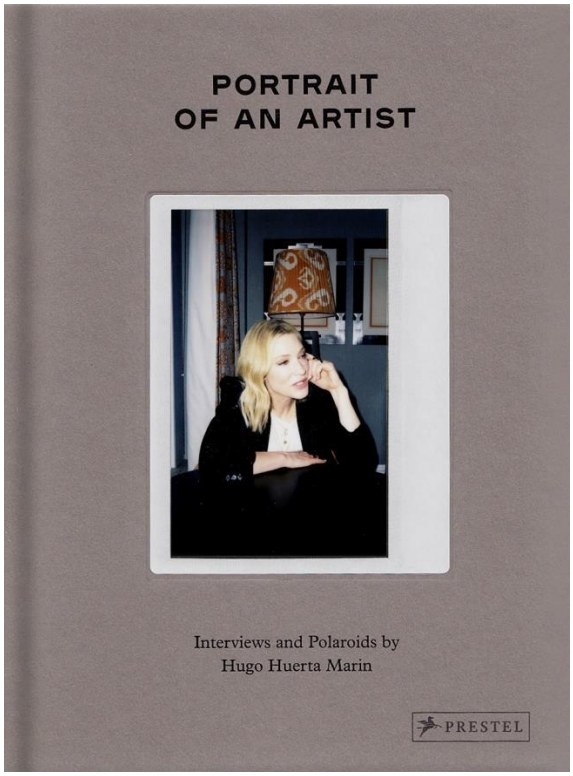

Leseprobe

Hugo Huerta Marin

Portrait of an Artist

Conversations with Trailblazing Creative Women

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Seiten: 424

Erscheinungstermin: 27. September 2021

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Inhalte

Zum Buch

This remarkable book brings you face-to-face with an incredible selection of pioneering women who have reshaped the creative industries.

From legendary visual artists Yoko Ono and Tracey Emin, to groundbreaking musicians like Annie Lennox and Debbie Harry, to fashion giants such as Miuccia Prada and Diane von Fürstenberg, this collection of original interviews and Polaroid photographs of almost 30 trailblazing women spans creative industries, nationalities and generations to bring together a never-before-published collection of leading voices. Featuring an astounding range of names including FKA Twigs, Isabelle Huppert and Rei Kawakubo, this book creates both a portrait of each individual woman and – collectively – a powerful portrait of the impact of women on the creative industries.

Each pioneering creative is interviewed and photographed by the Mexican artist Hugo Huerta Marin. The women speak openly with Huerta Marin about their challenges and joys; their vulnerabilities and their triumphs. Cate Blanchett reflects on the differences between acting on stage and in film; Marina Abramović discusses her most radical piece of performance art; Annie Lennox reminisces about London in the 1970s; Carrie Mae Weems discusses the relationship between race and photography —these and other conversations are further brought to life by Huerta Marin's candid, intimate Polaroid images. These photographs, which allow readers to lock eyes with their subjects, reflect the natural tone of each conversation, allowing the reader rare insight into the lives of these renowned artists. Inspiring and revealing, this collection of interviews and photographs gives readers an unparalleled connection with some of the most fascinating women working in the arts today.

Autor

This book is dedicated to my biggest influence
and inspiration, my mother Alicia.

Hugo Huerta Marin

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST

Conversations
with Trailblazing Creative Women

PRESTEL
Munich · London · New York

INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, the portrait has served to depict the idols of ancient civilizations—kings, deities, emperors, and heroes—down to dictators, rabble-rousers, colonizers, and those who wielded their power for more dangerous ends. It has been the territory of the sculptor, the painter, and the photographer. Yet the concept of portraiture has evolved its intricate character over time.

I have always been interested in this concept and in how artists have depicted history through portraiture; in the elitism and formality that is historically associated with the portrait, and the question of who should be captured in it. I have always wondered what ancient faces would have looked like in life—what we are today is quite different from what we were a thousand years ago.

Growing up in Mexico City, in a Catholic and conservative society where women are often treated as inferior to men, I was raised by a mother who showed me a different reality, and who—alongside other powerful women leading my way—helped to expand my consciousness. Art is no exception; there are countless female artists whom I look up to and who represent an endless source of inspiration to me. Their work shakes the structures of established belief systems and questions the norms we are conditioned to accept.

Years later, when I moved to New York, I was introduced to the performance artist Marina Abramović and soon afterward I began working with her. After this event, the world as I had understood it no longer existed. Marina broadened my horizons on a personal and intellectual level and made my world immeasurably bigger. One late summer night when we were working in upstate New York, I had a strong desire to take her portrait. I wanted to capture her essence through a lens, but also through her words, in the most candid way possible. The conversational side of that study was more successful than I had ever dared to hope. Out of this experience came the idea of creating portraits of the many other pioneering female artists who have reshaped the creative industries in a significant way.

And so I did …

Over the course of seven years and countless journeys, I asked Marina Abramović, Cate Blanchett, Annie Lennox, Miuccia Prada, Anjelica Huston, Carrie Mae Weems, Diane von Fürstenberg, Yoko Ono, Tracey Emin, Catherine Deneuve, Shirin Neshat, Ann Demeulemeester, Tania Bruguera, Rei Kawakubo, Kiki Smith, ORLAN, Julianne Moore, Inez van Lamsweerde, Charlotte Gainsbourg, FKA twigs, Uma Thurman, Isabelle Huppert, Jenny Holzer, Debbie Harry and Agnès Varda if I could take their portraits. I asked to meet them in their homes, studios, theaters, galleries, or places where they felt comfortable, in an attempt to get to know them better. I wanted to ask each of them questions about their oeuvre, but also to pose them a series of the same specific questions in order to get a sense of the differences and similarities between their experiences.

There are traces of every woman I have portrayed in me as an artist, and each of these encounters has left me with an intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and psychological inheritance that I will forever carry with me. At its core, this book is about artists. Artists who broke the mold. Artists who changed the game. Artists who smashed something down in order to build something up. Artists who fractured the boundaries of what art can be. Artists who challenged the status quo. Artists who questioned the thoughts, attitudes, and desires determined by society's dictates. Artists who are representative of a larger community. Artists who opened the path for other artists. Artists whose voices will resonate throughout the future generations. This book is about art, beauty, desire, pain, success, repetition, exposure, fame, shame, death, sex, repulsion, attraction, rebellion, spirituality, race, heritage, gender, and religion. Most of all, this book is a portrait of some of the pioneering artists who I believe helped shape the world as we see it today.

MA

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ
NEW YORK, 2014

NA

Born in 1946 in Belgrade, Marina Abramović is without question one of the most influential artists of our time. Since the beginning of her career, she has pioneered performance art. Exploring her physical and mental limits, she has withstood pain, exhaustion, and danger in her quest for emotional and spiritual transformation. She was awarded the Golden Lion for Best Artist at the 1997 Venice Biennale. In 2010, Marina had her first major U.S. retrospective and simultaneously performed for over seven hundred hours in *The Artist is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She also founded the Marina Abramović Institute (MAI), a platform for immaterial and long-durational work, to create new possibilities for collaboration among thinkers of all fields.

How can I begin to describe Marina? She loves white walls, she collects crystals, and she is fond of buying trees for her house in upstate New York. Perhaps the best way to describe her is through a piece of advice she gave to me once. One time when we were both in Brazil, I was hesitant about participating in an Ayahuasca ceremony. I asked her if she thought I should do it, as I knew that her own experience with Ayahuasca hadn't been pleasant, and instead was Kafkaesque. She replied: "Nobody's life has changed by somebody else's experience." I guess that says it all. Perhaps the best way to describe Marina is that she exposes herself to life.

HUGO HUERTA MARIN:
You are a pioneer of performance art and you brought it into the mainstream. What do you think is the future of performance?

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ:
Performance is one of the most transformative forms of art. It never dies, even if at times it seems it has completely disappeared from art practice. It appears again in very unusual ways,

and in all its splendor. If you look at its history, it's difficult to determine where performance as a medium began. How far back do we look? Do we start with the Surrealists? Dada? The Futurists, or Fluxus and the Happenings? Do we talk about the theater and [Jerzy] Grotowski or Tadeusz Kantor? Do we think about [Joseph] Beuys or Nam June Paik? There are many points of reference where performance has come and gone, but the peak of performance came in the early seventies as a form of conceptual art called Body art. It originated with Vito Acconci's idea that "the body is the place where things happen." That became the sole idea of Body art.

However, in the late seventies, performance eventually lost its force when the act of performing took its toll on artists. They began to prefer working in secluded studios over constantly being in front of the public, which took a lot of energy out of them. This, along with pressure from the art market to produce work that could sell, moved performance artists to explore new mediums such as painting, sculpture, mixed media, videos, and so on. It was interesting to see how these works became figurative, and how certain elements of performance art were still evident in them. Artists like [Sandro] Chia and Francesco Clemente, along with others from that generation, painted literal images that could be looked at as a score of a performance. During the eighties, when many people died in the AIDS outbreak, it seemed as if the entire art population, along with performance art, disappeared. At that time, artists were working mostly with video. After that, performance art began to be a part of the nightclub scene — what you witnessed in all those clubs in London, Paris,

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MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

and Berlin was performance at its full force. One of the leading performance artists from that period — and in my opinion, the most talented — was Leigh Bowery. Bowery invented a completely new style of performance art by incorporating theater, dance, and video back into the performance. Then, Tino Sehgal arrived on the scene. He was a choreographer and a dancer, and he created an entirely new set of rules for performance art that involved very large audiences. He was able to work continuously throughout the different time periods of performance art.

I believe performance art is like a phoenix, dying and being reborn from its own ashes over and over again. Every generation has had a different attitude toward performance art and how it should have pushed the limits more. In my opinion, in the future it will firstly need to deal with the idea of immateriality as a result of the present incredible movement in technology and media. Moreover, I believe

that performance art will move toward sound. The noise movement is quite important because to me, it seems greater in its immateriality and deals directly with emotions. I don't know where performance will go. I don't even know what I'm doing right now, or what it should be called. Sometimes we don't have labels for the new things we do, and so we need to take the time to understand what kind of label we should give it. OK, that was a long answer (*laughs*).

HHM: That was a great answer. You have talked about the sacrifices that "the cause" implies. What is the biggest sacrifice you have made for your art?

MA: The biggest sacrifice I have made is to learn how to make art and still be very conscious of my own energy, and realizing that I can't have a normal life, a normal family, or normal things like everyone else does such as children and a fireplace, or knitting sweaters for my grandsons. This is something that I can't have; you just can't have it all. But at the same time, I don't see this as a sacrifice because I always wanted to make art more than anything else.

HHM: Who owns the performance? Is it the artist? Museums? Oral history? Art history?

MA: First of all, I think this question should be directed at any art piece. Performance is like any other work of art. Artists produce the work, but sometimes they can be very selfish in that they don't like to give their work away. For example, they will work on a painting but will

never “finish” it because they don’t want to separate themselves from their own work. In my opinion, that’s not the right attitude. I think that once a work is completed, it doesn’t belong to the artist anymore: It belongs to everybody else. An artist must be democratic. Art has its own life that is detached from the creator. Of course, you can say that if a collector or museum buys the work, it therefore belongs to them, but good art is transcendental, and it belongs to everybody.

HHM: Why is pain so important for the artist?

MA: I think pain is important for everybody. Human beings have two general fears in life: the fear of dying and the fear of pain. Artists from every culture and civilization in history have dealt and deal with this in different ways. Pain is the door to perception; it is the door to consciousness. We are so afraid to confront it, but once we do, we are able to understand it, and when we can understand it, we can control it and no longer fear it. When we don’t have fear, we are liberated and feel confident within ourselves. We are all inevitably going to die, but if we don’t feel fear, we can die with a smile on our faces.

HHM: Do you fear death?

MA: I’d be lying if I said I didn’t. At the same time, I have worked hard on overcoming this fear, and I think about it almost every day. At this very moment, sitting here at the Sean Kelly Gallery and giving this interview, I would have to say that I do not fear death. However, if I were in an airplane during turbulence or bad

TO ME, THE MOST RADICAL PERFORMANCE IS ALWAYS THE LAST ONE

weather, I would definitely fear death, because it's an instinct that cannot be controlled. But I've come to terms with it. We are closer to death every single day, and that is very important to remember. That way, we can appreciate life more.

HHM: What has been your most radical performance?

MA: Performance is not easy; I must train my entire body for it. For the performance *The Artist is Present*, to the outside world, I was only sitting in a chair. But that required extensive preparation. I needed to train my body like a NASA program. For an entire year, I didn't eat lunch once, so I wouldn't produce acids in my stomach. Normally, through conditioning, the body learns that it will be fed around lunchtime, and therefore produces acids. If you don't eat lunch, your blood sugar level goes down, and as a result, you can get sick. I spent an entire year drinking water only at night in order to suppress my urge to pee during the day. You must train your body to finish the work. To me, the most radical performance is always the last one. I mean, I'm currently doing *The Generator* and I'm not even performing. Instead, I'm sitting with you and doing an interview. It is radical, you know? If you think about it,

you are here in a commercial gallery where you have to see something, hear something, or buy something. But instead, you can't hear, you can't see, and you can't buy. It's kind of insane, but at the same time, it pushes the limits. In my world, nothing is impossible. You must relate to yourself and the pure experience: this is important. I don't know if I can go any more radical after this piece. But you never know what might happen (*laughs*). This is what brings you back to your true self.

HHM: In your work, why is the process more important than the result?

MA: Because the result comes anyway. The process is more important because it is a journey wherein you change and don't necessarily see the result right away. The more difficult the journey, the more strength and energy it requires from you, and the more you appreciate it. The journey is to make the change, not the destination.

HHM: Is documentation part of a performance?

MA: Absolutely. In the early seventies, I created art without documenting anything because of the radical belief among artists that documentation was not part of performance art. But later, I changed my mind and realized that, while performance is indeed an art form, documentation is the only reminder in history, apart from the people present in the piece, and it can leave a trace of something that happened in the past. Even the pharaohs demanded documentation and had it engraved on the pyramids. Why shouldn't artists or performance art have the same right?

HHM: You seem to perfectly understand Franz Kafka's statement: "Remain quiet, still and solitary. The world will freely roll in ecstasy at your feet."

MA: I do. That quote is so important because it's true, and it's actually for this reason that *Nightsea Crossing* was created. If you believe that you are just sitting motionless on this chair right now, you are wrong. In reality, you are moving — the earth is spinning and rotating around the sun, as are all the other planets in the solar system. The sun is moving inside the galaxy, and the galaxy, in turn, is moving inside the universe. There is so much movement happening already that if you move within it, you are actually missing the essence of being in one place. Because once you are there, in that moment, all will be revealed to you — that's the effect.

HHM: Artists and philosophers argue that there is a lack of spiritual approach in contemporary art. Do you agree?

MA: I think that good art always has a spiritual component, but there is also a lack of good art to begin with. Every century has had about three or four great artists, and the others just follow in their footsteps. Every great artist, from every generation, from every century, who has created great art and has sent a message that transcended time, has used a spiritual element in their work. Otherwise, the art would not have an impact and would not transcend. The juxtaposition of good work with the spiritual element is essential: It gives you the depth that you need to understand, and future generations can reuse it again and again.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT ARTISTS CREATE WITHOUT COMPROMISE, WITH HONESTY, AND DO THE BEST THEY POSSIBLY CAN

HHM: Do you think that art should raise philosophical questions?

MA: Art should not just raise philosophical questions, but should raise every possible question. Even if a question doesn't have an answer, it should be asked anyway, because the right questions already contain the answers in themselves. But there are still a few questions that we don't have the answer to: Where does life come from? Why are we on this planet? What is this all for? Who are we? Every generation of artists is constantly trying to answer these questions through their work, with more or less success, but in the end, we still don't have a definitive answer to any of these questions: We are absolutely in the dark.

HHM: Will there be a form of legacy left for the young performance artists of the future?

MA: I don't know. It's not for me to say, nor is it up to them to decide. But it is very important that artists create without compromise, with honesty, and do the best they possibly can. One important thing to remember is to be humble

because we don't know what the future will bring. But if I've left some form of legacy behind, that means my entire life was worth it.

HHM: The concept of beauty is crucial in the history of Western art, and it has been reflected in your work. What is your concept of beauty?

MA: My concept of beauty is definitely not conventional: for example, that the color of a painting needs to match your couch or carpet. My idea of beauty can be disturbing. Beauty can be ugly. Beauty can be found in things that are not symmetrical. Beauty can be decomposition: worms eating flesh. Beauty doesn't have a definition. What is important is what moves you, and sometimes people have a different approach to that. It can simply be a ray of sunlight coming through the dusty window, and you see particles of dust floating in the light. It can be incredibly beautiful, but it's just dust.

HHM: You have travelled extensively. Is there a place you can call home?

MA: No, I don't have a home. I don't have a studio either. I hate studios and believe they are bad for the artist. I think they make artists lazy and redundant. I like to go out and do research. I love to go to places away from civilization where they don't have Coca-Cola or electricity. Those are my favorites! I'm interested in nature, in different cultures, in people who have something to tell us that we don't already know. I expose myself to life and get my ideas that way. I think the planet is my home. If you've travelled as much as I have, you know that once you settle down in a steady place, you become

claustrophobic. I would love to go to space and see how the earth looks from there. I believe that nomadic life is the only way to explore and stay curious. I can sleep under a table. I can sleep anywhere. I have traveled around India in third-class trains where I had to sleep standing up, and I loved it. The only place you can truly call home — and one you know better than any other, yet don't know completely — is your own body.

HHM: Is there a place you haven't been to but would like to visit?

MA: There are two places I have always been interested in: Mecca, which you are forbidden to enter if you are not Muslim, and Athos in Greece, which you can only visit if you are a man.

HHM: Why Mecca?

MA: To me, Mecca is such an interesting place because it is absolutely powerful, a "place of power." If you see images of that odd, black structure [the Kaaba], there is constant movement around it, a permanent tornado of human activity, which I find fascinating. The energy never leaves the space, and it is always regenerating itself. Some myths say that inside there is a meteorite, or the remains of an alien spaceship, or knowledge.

HHM: You have said that you don't think of yourself as a feminist. Why?

MA: I think there is a new movement: a new feminism. In my opinion, the word "feminist" has been overused and has resulted in

misunderstandings. There are other aspects of the feminine that I find much more interesting. I've been working with shamanism and with Tibetan Buddhism, and when you reach a state of enlightenment, or a state of clarity of the mind, it's interesting how the body becomes more feminine rather than masculine. The change in that energy pattern is very important for men, because their masculine energy sometimes results in hardness and violence. On the other hand, there is more of a balance between nature and spirit in feminine energy, and we are likely to achieve a more spiritual state of mind. So, to develop this feminine side, men must embrace high spirituality. I'm only interested in feminism in the strong connection that femininity has with nature: for instance, the way Planet Earth is perceived as female, and how it is considered a mother. I believe this gives our souls much more clarity. But feminism and how it relates to the idea of division between the sexes — I'm not interested in that. I believe it is important to understand the male aspect and the female aspect in relation to spirituality, as both men and women possess feminine and masculine energies.

HHM: Do you believe in art, or do you believe in artists?

MA: Neither. I believe in human beings, no matter the profession. Human beings have so much potential. I don't care if you are an artist, a shoemaker, or a street cleaner. What's important is understanding who you are.

HHM: What are your thoughts on the rise of the artist as celebrity?

MA: It is a side effect; it comes as a result of your work. It's important not be attached to it, but rather to be aware that it comes and goes. You should take the best of it and create a platform so you can be heard. As a result, your work can have a deeper influence on people. As a celebrity, you have power, but that power can be very dangerous and can destroy you. The negative aspect is that the people who were initially fond of you and your work begin to hate you because you've become a rock star — when in reality, they were the ones who put you in that position (*laughs*). For instance, you might end up being criticized for working with a fashion designer. I find this negativity interesting; I believe they want to see you suffer and struggle. I couldn't pay my electricity bill until I was fifty, but now I can.

HHM: At what point in your career did you feel like you were a successful artist?

MA: The moment when I was featured in *Sex and the City*. With my permission, an actress portrayed me on the show. It was at that moment that I knew I would become part of the mass culture. The day after the show aired, I went to an expensive vegetable store near my house in Amsterdam. They had delicious strawberries, but they were so expensive. I almost never went there — because I never had any money in those days — and the sales lady, who knew me from before, looked at me and said: "Oh! Please take these strawberries for free. We saw you on *Sex and the City*!" And I remember thinking, "Wow! This really works!" (*laughs*).

HHM: (*laughs*) Do you worry about being overexposed?

MA: Yes. It's really hard, especially now when there is so much work to do. Being exposed also has to do with the energy you are projecting. There are moments when I'm fine and I have energy, but there are other moments when I am really low on energy, empty. That can be dangerous because the work suffers as a result. That reminds me of something my old teacher once told me; that we should learn "holy selfishness," which is a very good term. I asked him what it meant and he replied: "You have to withdraw from everything in order to rebuild your energy." You can shine like the sun, but if you don't have that kind of energy, you are like a black hole sucking everything in, and that can be lethal.

HHM: What inspires you the most?

MA: Nature. It is definitely something that we have to spend more time with, by going to unpopulated landscapes, waterfalls, rock formations, mountains, volcanoes. Oh! I love volcanoes. I could just sit and watch them while they erupt for hours. You can understand things from life by just sitting and watching. You can have thousands of sensations just by looking at the night skies.

HHM: Do you have any recurring dreams?

MA: Not anymore. I used to have a strange one: There were people inside a house in the forest, and I had just gotten back from a very long trip. I arrived at the house to find a big celebration, and everyone was happy. It seemed like a permanent party where I recognized every single person — but only in the dream and not in reality. It was a recurring dream, but one detail that changed is that I would arrive

at the house from a different place each time. Eventually, I stopped dreaming it for a long time, but then I had the dream once more. This time, however, when I arrived at the house, everyone had grey hair and looked very old. After that, I never had the dream again.

HHM: What are your thoughts on the big international art exhibitions such as documenta or the Venice Biennale?

MA: The big group exhibitions worked in the seventies, but I don't think they work anymore. In my opinion, everybody is tired of the big biennales, big art fairs, big exhibitions. I think people are looking for something different, and I am trying to figure out what that could be. In my opinion, one of the most important exhibitions has always been documenta as opposed to any biennale. Biennales happen every two years, and documenta happens every five. Five years is a good period of time within which something can happen and when artists can create new work. Two years is definitely not enough. Artists need time, just as a good wine needs time to mature.

HHM: What is the most honest thing you can say about yourself?

MA: I'm not fake. I'm kind of a real thing (*laughs*). When I'm tired, I am tired. When I'm desperate, I'm desperate. When I am sad, I'm sad. I don't pretend to be somebody else. I am who I am.

C

A T

E

Cate Blanchett is an Australian actor, producer, humanitarian, and dedicated member of the arts community. She also holds Honorary Doctorates of Letters from the University of New South Wales, the University of Sydney, and Macquarie University. Cate Blanchett is equally accomplished and celebrated on the stage, having led the Sydney Theatre Company as co-Artistic Director and CEO for six years alongside Andrew Upton. Her countless extraordinary film performances have garnered her three BAFTAs, two Academy Awards, and three Golden Globes.

It was shortly after 4 p.m. on a hot May afternoon and I was waiting for Cate Blanchett to arrive at the Whitby Hotel in New York. I am not usually star-struck, but hearing Cate's Marlene Dietrichesque voice in the hallway made my hands sweat for a second. She was lovely, sharp, and forthcoming. She also turned out to be the sort of person who spices up conversations with so many intellectual references that it was sometimes challenging to keep up, yet there was nothing arrogant about the way she discussed artists, writers, playwrights, and directors she likes. She is a rare and unique artist whose talent and convictions enrich both screen and stage. She has played Katharine Hepburn. She has played Bob Dylan. She has played both a homeless man and the Queen of England. In person, Cate still retains an ethereal quality that is rare in this current fast-fame-obsessed era.

CATE BLANCHETT:
I was looking into that building before (*points out the window*). Is there grass in there? It reminds me of an installation I saw where there was a whole garden inside a room. You stood in this contained expanse … the experience was tranquil and beautiful but somehow full of anxiety.

HUGO HUERTA MARIN:
It is abandoned. It is visually powerful.

CB: I love that. You don't see much abandoned in Manhattan anymore. Every inch is already taken, claimed.

HHM: I am curious to know more about some of your influences.

CB: OK. How do we do this?

HHM: I wanted to know what makes a good script or an interesting project for you?

CB: Well, it depends. If you're talking about film, I have read some incredible screenplays that have made worthwhile films. But for me, ultimately, it's the quality of conversation. Whom are you going to be in dialogue with? Whom are you responding to? Who is looking down the lens? Who completes the atmosphere? Whom you are performing opposite is particularly important on stage because theatre deals so much with those moments of suspension between people. That's why I love dance — it's the moment when someone, something, lifts off. In film, it's the moment when someone is presented with a choice and you watch them winding it up before they land and make a decision. The bare bones of the story are really important to me. The character is totally immaterial and secondary, so it has never been an issue for me — the size of a role or whatever. In the end, if the story is interesting and the other people whom I am around are interesting to work with — and I have been lucky enough to work with some very interesting people — then I'm hooked.

HHM: In all of film history, who do you wish would have directed you?

CB: Ingmar Bergman, I would have to say.

HHM: I once read that David Lynch's cinematic style is inspired by Francis Bacon's paintings. How do you think art influences film?

CB: I can see that … It's a distillation of influences, isn't it? We are talking about the moving image, but a still frame of a movie can be an extraordinary painting. I mean, look at Richard Prince. But, there is a cross-referencing between the moving image and the still image. Personally, I never know where the moment of connection or inspiration is going to come from. Frequently, it comes from visual imagery, or sometimes from listening to John Cage, [Franz] Schubert, or Laurie Anderson, the sound of a storm — something that will set your brain and your heart racing. I remember talking independently to Katie Mitchell, who is a wonderful theatre director, and to Liv Ullmann, who each introduced me to a Danish painter called [Vilhelm] Hammershøi. They talked about his influences on them, the way he would set up a frame, and how he rarely painted figures from the front. Instead, he would paint rooms with doorways through which you'd see other doorways, and then you'd see a space with a lightwell and a person on top. It was all about how and where you placed the person within that frame.

HHM: That's interesting. I once read that Caravaggio invented Hollywood lighting while incorporating shadows into his paintings.

CB: Quite possibly. His sense of directional but emotional light was, is, extraordinary. Shadows are wildly exciting places. I am really interested in theater in found spaces, but also in what people conceive to be conservative theater, which happens in a proscenium arch because a proscenium arch is a framing device. So I find it fascinating what someone being *Upstage Left* as opposed to *Downstage Right* means, and what *Center Stage* means. I've learned a lot about the intersection between theater and film through working in the proscenium arch.

HHM: Would that be the main intersection between working in theater and film?

CB: Well, in the proscenium arch, you have a big, huge framing device in which you move bodies in space, and people often say, "Oh! You know you have to make yourself much smaller when you work in film, theater is so exaggerated." But the thing is, I find that working in both mediums has been very instructive. I feel I can use a wide shot much more effectively, having worked in the theater. You know, that was the thing about Bruce Beresford's *Tender Mercies* — it is all shot in wide shots and therefore the actors have to use their bodies in more expressive ways. Then, when he comes in to a close-up, they quite simply don't have to move as much. But also, the intimacy of the close-up is useful in the theater. You still want to have that same level of vibration when you are in a two-thousand-seater auditorium because you have to play for the people in the front row and the people in row XXX up in the balcony.

HHM: I read that you once said there was something shaman-like about being an actor.

CB: Oh, yes, quite possibly.

HHM: That it can produce a great amount of superstition in terms of how you connect to it. It reminded me of something I learned in Brazil about acting: how the Brazilian concept of acting is deeply connected to shamanism, healing, and incorporation.

CB: It is an ancient art form. I went to Delphi with my children and when you go to the amphi-theater there, you stand on the stage in that huge outdoor auditorium and you can whisper and still be heard. The acoustic is so profound that actors in ancient Greece could bring an audience down to a sort of micro level and channel the energy in that space, from body to body. I think the reason a lot of people are fearful of the theater is that you are really implicated as an audience member: You are asked to bring something to the evening, and you are exposed in a way. As an actor on stage, you are channeling the energy you receive from the audience, and I think you are much more disconnected or dislocated from your audience when you are working in film — it's a much more private and intimate, isolated experience. I'm not saying one is more important or more profound than the other, but I definitely feel that there is a very acute awareness of your audience when you are on stage. That is what I love about going into these old theaters in the West End. Because

ACTORS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PARIAHS, AND IN SOME WAYS — CERTAINLY IN THE FILM INDUSTRY — THEY HAVE BECOME GODS

of the cost of the real estate, what goes inside those spaces can be a little bit creatively safe but still — the paint on the walls, the history of the souls and the stories that have been told there. I think you can't help but channel that history.

HHM: I find what you just said about ancient Greece very interesting. It reminded me of the Mayan pyramids in Chichen Itza — a handclap in front of the stairs of the Kukulcan Temple produces an echo that sounds just like the Quetzal bird. It all seems to have a strong connection with performance and shamanism.

CB: Yes! I also think it's interesting when new theaters are built. Strangely, the acoustic quality is often really poor. I mean, I went to drama school but I've always thought that it's really important as an actor to have control and to channel the flexibility of one's voice, so you can play with that acoustic. But in theaters that have been built recently, the visuals are considered, but the quality of the acoustic is not.