

Joan does Joan:

<https://livestream.com/hampshirecollegemedia/nomorenicegirls/videos/141556773>

<Applause>

Joan: The switcher! The old switcher! None of my work would have been possible without this device [gestures towards switcher]. It would have been different if it were digital because all of the effects you saw were done in real time. In all those chroma key shots, you had to make the body hit the rear ground in real time at the same second. There was a roll in playing the material you had collected from T.V. or whatever and there was a performance space in the studio and you just learned your lines and then hit a certain spot in the space and the roll in would play and you had to do it until the two things happened at exactly the same time. And I just don't think it would be as much fun to do it all in post. I just don't--digitally.

Kara: [snapping and laughing] I agree. So, we were going to do the bio because there may be some people here who don't know you. Seems impossible, but true. Before I do that, I just want to make sure so I forget is to really thank folks in Media Services and John Gunther, John Bruner, John Marty...

Joan: And Neil, always Neil.

Kara: ...and Neil who's running the sound, and Che who is running the documentation. And we are live streaming though I don't know the URL.

Joan: But Crescent, in California, is watching.

Kara: Right on. So, for those of you out there who have not met Joan Braderman, and for those of you who did, let's do it. Joan Braderman is a Professor of Video, Film, and Media Studies. She holds a B.A. from Harvard and an M.A. and Masters of Philosophy from New York University. Her award winning art videos and documentaries like the now classic *Joan Does Dynasty* and *Joan Sees Stars*-- which we've seen in the screening--have been shown on T.V., internationally, in galleries and museums, universities, and festivals. Including the Whitney Biennial, the Edinburgh Film Festival, The New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center, and on London's Channel Four. Her works are in permanent collections such as the Museum of Modern Art, NYC, the Stedelijk in Amsterdam, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. A founding member of *Heresies*, a feminist publication on Art and Politics, writing about her work has appeared in such journals as *The Village Voice*, *Time Out*, *The Independent*, *Afterimage*, and *The Guardian of London*. And publications such as *Illuminations* and *Central Guide to Video Art*. She's received grants and fellowships from sources which include the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council of the Arts, The American Film Institute, Mass Council on the Arts, The

Macarthur, and The Fulbright Foundations. She's taught at the School of the Visual Arts, at NYU, the Boston MFA, London Institute, and in 1996, was awarded the Cootman Chair (3:20) of Visual Arts at the University of Hartford. And we know her because she taught here at Hampshire College for many years. Her interests in camp, glamour, the relations among high and popular arts and in media democracy continue in her artmaking and teaching.

<Kara looks at Joan>

<Joan smiles>

Joan: That's it.

Kara: Yeah, right on! I mean this is the short one...

<audience laughter and applause>

Joan: No crying in there.

Kara: Yeah, no crying in there.

<audience laughter and applause>

Kara: So, Joan and I started this conversation about a month ago--or longer--when I started pulling your arm to do this. What we thought would be really important would be to talk about Feminism and video and Joan is the person to talk to about that. One of the things that came up in our conversation was this idea of the feminist narrative, of independent media, and of video as technology. I am really excited about your genealogy of video, of how you would lay out the arch of this medium.

Joan: Well, that's a small question to start with, Kara.

<audience giggling>

Kara: Well, it is a question

Joan: It is a question, and I laid it out that way because I would say as far as a work life goes and my personal life as well, those are the two paradigms that articulate my world, really. I wrote an article--which if you get interested you can read--it was in the archive for the future in camera obscura called "Feminism and Video in the View from the Village" which is where I was when I was starting graduate school at NYU and got really involved in the Women's Movement which I had just dabbled with before that and saw those things being born in a certain way and overlapping in really interesting ways. For many of you here, you're in my generation, and for those of you who aren't, maybe it's a shock. But

as I traveled with The Heretics I found that younger people didn't really know anything about life before the Women's Movement and as much as it seems that we didn't get anything done, we do have some female professors now. And most of us did not have a single female professor, certainly in our time at graduate school and perhaps as an undergraduate as well. When I went to Radcliffe, I had one female teacher the four years I was there and she was a T.A. in expository writing which is not the most prestigious position that Harvard had to offer. Anyway, when I was traveling with The Heretics also, young women would say "Well how do you distribute your work," "How did you get The Heretics out," for example you certainly when you started out, you would first call the gender studies department, right? At universities.

<audience laughter>

<Joan laughs>

Joan: Some of you are laughing because (spanish) because there was absolutely nothing called gender much less, gender studies. And there wasn't African American Studies or Women's Studies. There weren't any of these studies, there was just Literature, and History, and the same-old, same-old. It was very interesting but it had very very large gaps in it and it was the women's movement along with the civil rights movement that began to fill in some of those gaps. So, when I started teaching at the School of Visual Arts in 1973, I remember telling my dad "Well, I'm going to teach this class called Women and Film" and he said, "Women and Film? Why aren't you teaching a class called Dogs and Film or Cats and Film?" I mean he just didn't get it. At all. There was no [hand gestures pointing inward], why would you put those two words together at all? And then shortly thereafter, my mother, who did get it, started teaching at the National Museum for Women in the Arts. She was standing at the bus stop to come home one day and a man approached her and said, "Why are you people doing this museum? I mean, there are plenty of women down the street in the Mellon, in the National Gallery, right there." And my mother, who was very flirtatious and could win over anybody on anything by the end of a conversation said, "Well that's true, but you know, just name one."

<audience laughter>

Joan: And the man looked at her flat out and he scratched his head for a while and he said, "Oh! Joan Miro!"

<audience laughter>

<Joan laughs>

Joan: So, that was the one he could name. That is a portuguese man. Who is a marvelous painter but is not any other gender other than white and male. Well, white is not a gender, well sort of is but anyway...

<audience laughter>

Joan: So, we saw our job as opening up that history. As we were doing that, there was this very new kind of storytelling emerging. When it first came into our hands, it was not storytelling. Our first experience of television--and I was too young to really remember a first experience of television--How many people here remember the beginning of television? Some of us do, yeah. You turned it on with the family and it was a drama, or a comic, or some news. The young women I talked to as I traveled had no idea that there had been three channels and the news consisted of three white men saying the same things. And that was it. That was the news. Three channels. Three white guys. Same stuff. It's still the same stuff but there are more different colors and different kinds of people saying it. It's a very different world and certainly the internet has changed that. Although, as we now see, the internet both opens doors and legitimizes voices like say, Breitbart News, sorry Mirna (9:59), which helped get our new president elected. It levels the playing field so that Breitbart News has the same legitimacy or not as MSNBC or not. It's a mixed bag, the internet. I also think that it would be difficult tonight to say anything without talking about the election and I was thinking about it as I drove over here because there is almost no conversation except the election. I'm gonna continue to try distracting you with feminist video after a few words. The phenomenon of Trump is fundamentally, for me, a phenomenon of the mass media in its most hideous and egregious way because they have spent the last years legitimizing coo-coo people and pretending that they're normal citizens or legitimate candidates for office or the like and presenting us lies as if they were not lies and you can name all the rest of the things that go on all the time in the name of Freedom of Speech. God knows I would support Freedom of Speech until my dying breath. For those of you who are familiar with the argument, it goes, do you let the Nazis march on Sochi? Which is this old argument, and Sochi was this Jewish Suburb and do you let the Nazi's march there? And for me, the answer was always, "Yes," because they would be coming and looking with me--you saw that I was very involved in organized in the 70's--next. I wanted the freedom to march and to speak as well as the Nazis did so I think you can't have it both ways. So, Trump gets to use the media too, and did. Anyway, this will come up again as we talk but I want to finish with this intro thing about feminism and video. Feminism and video are both words that are representations, right? The word, "woman," is a representation which feminists have been trying to change or strip away the meaning of for many years. For example, many years ago, femininity was something that might have been seen as transparently identified with the word, "woman." I remember when the first book came out by this french feminist--whose name I'm not going to remember right now--called, *I Am Not a Woman*, every one of us at that age remembers that. I didn't know what that meant at first but what she was doing was rejecting that representation of herself because of all the unfortunate things associate with it. And, I'm pretty sure that a lot of those, whatever, 42% of the white women with no college education or whatever who went to the polls and voted for Trump never understood the Women's Movement and

maybe they were looking to bring back something they thought we maybe killed like femininity. Which, many of us did not want to kill, but that's how we were perceived. As wanting bland sex, and no lipstick, and no femininity certainly. If you see what I mean, it's kind of an arbitrary thing. Video, is another form of representation. Video is an electronic form and the reason video began to be accessible to individuals like me, for instance, when it did, in the late 70's--it had been around for a few years then. Basically, we were accepting the detritus of the networks, the beginning of making new kinds of video every minute that a cooperation could come up with, a new format had begun and when one format was gone they threw them out the window and artists or feminists or whomever would come and catch these things and make things out of them. Then the first PortaPacks--do people remember PortaPacks? You probably had one, Neil. It was a thing you hung over your shoulder and allowed you to be a unit with sound and video possibility. You could collect both images and sound on your one body which was the tripod of the suspension thing, or whatever. And, it was that cable between the sound grabber and the image grabber that allowed independent video really to begin and that started in a network, some guys who were experimenting whose names you would know but I can't remember them--because I'm really old [audience laughter]--I knew them before this but I can't remember them now! Invented this cable that went between the sound and image collector machines so what happened was that this...

LOST SIGNAL

LOST SIGNAL

LOST SIGNAL

Joan: ...I really did not have any faith in myself with respect a camera or a deck so I took a class at Harvard where it was the only class offered in film and there were 15 people in the class and there was one woman and that was me. As you can see, I'm a big loud mouth but I was afraid of opening my mouth in that class because I knew I would reveal how deeply stupid and ignorant I was about technology. And, you know, guys go around and they're always talking about RS1600 VVD blah blah [audience laughter] So, I really wanted to learn all that shit and get it down so I could say all of these numbers and technological reference and feel legitimized by it. But, video is manageable but it's not easy, it's something you can do yourself. You can repair it yourself if you're mildly clever, but this was an attraction for feminists of that period. The other thing that was a huge attraction was the possibility of representing individual subjectivities, and not having to answer to corporations which felt they had to represent wide numbers of subjectivities, of course, as far as I'm concerned there are only about ten people who want to see another robot's head explode, but, I don't know [shrugs]. The whole business of what women brought into the art world that you were seeing some of the people in my movie talk about included the possibility of narrative. With video, we were able to make more extended forays into representing personal things, representing narrative things. I remember when I saw my first Yvonne Rainer (17:48) movie at the Bleaker Street in New York (17:49) and here she was, and I realized that I never read a book with a

female character speaking for herself, ever. And, I was an English major. This was very poor, this was very bad. These kinds of revelations were just beginning and there was an attraction between women, critical women, and feminist women and a medium which seemed as if it offered a lot of possibilities for revealing all the other stories that had not been told that began when I began.

<audience applause>

Kara: At some point, we wanted to move into how you then approached teaching, but I don't want to skip over your art practice. One of the things watching the reel, is that your work is so prescient. There are all these moments where you're like "Oh, we're here again," or, "Oh, you were ahead of it," or, "Oh, you knew." And then that also shows up in how you're taking hold of the technology and how you're using it. And so, for me, the way that you're intervening into the aesthetics and the actual medium itself--while revealing all these layers of information--of T.V., or of the movies, or of the National Inquirer. I'm curious if you'll talk a little bit about how some of them were made or where the collective process is in there or what it means for you to have this legacy of intervention.

Joan: When you talk about the aesthetics, give me an example.

Kara: Well, I had a conversation with Sinene (19:50) about *Joan Does Dynasty*, and both of us were saying, "Yeah, you know, that might be a tape we have probably seen more than any other tape."

Joan: [Laughing] I'm sorry.

<audience yells, "don't be!">

Kara: Don't be! We gladly show it to our students and share it and go back to it, and see parts of it here. Okay, so in one of the pieces, maybe *Joan Does Dynasty*, punk is the other side...

Joan: Yeah.

Kara: So, I don't know that I would necessarily say your aesthetic is, "punk." But, I would say that you're really ripping open the screen and putting yourself into it. You're using green screen in a way that very few people were doing then and are not doing now in order to reveal, conceal, push back, open up, tear it open, and play. Also, it reveals all your humor while being really scathing and the critique is both what you're saying, the critique is what you're pulling out of the images from television, from the movies, and the

critique is in the actual making of what the form ends up being. That for me, is the aesthetics of the work.

Joan: Well, Chroma Key, I think, is a kind of collage that you can do with video. In other words, if you were thinking about painting, the equivalent in video would be Chroma Key because you can combine a lot of different materials quite easily by blocking off different parts of the screen. A friend of mine once said, "So, are you wanting ME to identify with YOU who is disgusted, or who is happy, or is this about my identification being represented there in the form of you?" And I had never thought of that. That never occurred to me. But, certainly pieces like *Joan Does Dynasty* are about spectatorship. And, one of the things about having at least two different layers, is that there is a possibility of having several different maybe contradictory voices. Like Donald Trump's personality.

<audience laughter>

Joan: Whatever it may be, which I'm sure we have no clue about at this time. Think about it, if you have several different decks, or several different kinds of layers of material, and film and video now are regularly layered and put together so there is a sponge like effect among the mediums and the thing that's different in a sense is not the mediums themselves, so that when you combine say, as I do in *NMNG*, one of my worst pieces, when i combine layers with video, photographs, and books, with all kinds of other things. The possibility is there for contradiction, for irony, for the main kinds of strategies that I use in the voice that I use everywhere else, so there's a kind of consistency about my work. You don't see that so much in the documentaries you saw here. I'd call them non-fiction because "documentary" is such a slippery and unfortunate word since you're never seeing anything real on the screen. It's tempting and seductive, but it's just not there. Those, somebody would be making something and there seemed some kind of a pressing need. Like, Congress was about to vote \$50,000 more to the Contras who were invading the north of Nicaragua, where you saw us in *Yali*, a little town in the north. It was very kind of [claps hands syllabically] immediate. The vote was coming up, and we thought we had a way of getting video seen both on PBS and by the congress, where it was actually show, the *Tell Them For Us* piece I made with a fabulous technician at CBS named Jane Laurie, the first camerawoman at CBS in the union. We would shlep up there and she would have come from work and there would be nobody there. She was worried because I was not allowed to touch a machine because she was in the union and I was saying "No...No..." and I would go over to the little 440 and try and make my own changes, but I really didn't want to get her into trouble so I wouldn't touch the machines and that's how things are broken down in the Hollywood mode of production where there was still some sense of fair play about work. We had to actually go against the principals of my grandfather when we would try to get people to act for us for less money than their unions would guarantee them. They wanted to do it and we wanted to do it but you had to kind of think about it because you were basically union-busting if you

wanted to use an actress, who couldn't be seen anywhere and was dying to be on any piece of film or video, but in order to work for us they had to kind of go against their contract. But, anyway, that aesthetic that you're talking about in JSS starts--I don't know if you remember--it starts with me actually bursting through the screen. An effect that Dana Master, who co-directed that piece with me, came up with. What we did was literally hang a big sheet up and project that FBI thing on it and then we tried it over and over again because it wouldn't work right at all. I had the Statue of Liberty thing and I would just go busting through the big sheet of paper and hope that we had another piece of paper in case it was absolutely screwed up, or the timing was off. But, I wanted to burst through the screen. And, as you heard several times in the work, I do think that T.V. is like surveillance. I do think it's a way for people who you don't like to watch you. That of course, has to do with advertising and all kinds of things. It's easy to say, and harder to explain but I do think that's true. That's also part of my aesthetic: this idea that there are eyes everywhere. That I want with those Mexican Wrestling Masks, that I learned about from my then-partner, Manuel DeLanda, who worked with me on JDD. Those masks are those cut-out things. They're Mexican Wrestling Masks and we thought that would be a good way to give the sense of being able to move through the screen both ways: so that I could see through it and you could see through me. Therefore, there were a lot of layers both laterally--in other words, at the level of collage--and in the illusion of space, in 3D space which was what you would be seeing through if you looked through the Mexican Wrestling Mask, that haptic space which is the basis for all illusions and all realistic representation. I wanted to show that to be a constructed space. So, that was the intent there. So, that's a few strategies that we used. The other thing that you said about strategies was about collectives, and I was in a collective called Heresies and I was in thousands of video collectives which were hell. [Laughs] but we really tried to, as Goddard said [in fake French Accent], "To make the right thing in the right way. [Laughs].

Kara: Will you name some? Since not everyone knows all of them, will you name some of the video collectives?

Joan: Yeah, well the one that you probably know best is Paper Tiger, and Paper Tiger was the producer of NDD and Dee Dee Halleck, who just founded Paper Tiger TV, and for those of you who don't know it: started in NY and had branches all over the country in cable access stations where groups formed who wanted to make their own critiques of the media and use the cable access stations which had signed something that made a promise to serve the community. Yet, the association of independent video and film makers had to go to congress and demand that be honored because they weren't necessarily going to do that. But all the cable stations you assume are there had to be fought for. They weren't just like, "Oh, here's your nice cable station," no. It was like, "It says right here that you're supposed to fucking give us a video production studio," and many people had to fight for those over the country. One of the ways of doing that was to start a project like Paper Tiger which would be the incentive to fight to get your studio

so that you can make work, so the old man down the street can make work, so that everyone can make work. Because, as you know, cable companies are printing presses for money. It's nothing to them to build a studio, it's absolutely nothing. And, it's the least they can do for monopolizing the air that we breathe because they own it, they own all of the air here. You're borrowing their air when you breathe.

<audience laughter>

Kara: Yes, I'm going to take a breath of borrowed air. I really want you to be able to talk a little bit about your teaching practice and collaboration and I really want everyone to know that it's 5 minutes to 7p.m.

Joan: Ah, oh my god okay, let's wrap this up.

Kara: Yes, so let's wrap this up. But maybe, you could share a little bit about your collaborations or how you take on training people or what it means.

Joan: It's a very important question...

Kara: Yeah.

Joan: ...because one thing it did was teach women to get over it about the technology thing. I mean, we would have never thought of this before and when you watch the credits roll, you know still that in the movie theater it's still going to be almost all men. You know that. I'm waiting to see first a cinematographer credited as a woman, that's what I'm waiting to see, or first AD or second AD, you know there are a few there. What made it possible to come up with the idea of breaking crews down into say, crews of women in a section of a course, was the experience of seeing over and over girls in a group, a mixed group of young men and young women, and they were there but they had this tentativeness that I had. They'd gotten themselves into film school, they'd gotten themselves into this course, they'd gotten themselves into this group that was making a movie but there were still guys there with big mouths who were strong and saying "Blah blah...677, 956, 700." And they were doing that and saying, "Hey, yeah, let's make a movie for our course project, let's make a movie about a gang rape in an office, what do you think?" And you know, there was some disagreement about that. This actually happened at the School of Visual Arts when I was teaching. But, in order to break through that hierarchy of both skill sets, and who had the louder voice, and whose agenda it was, I just realized I couldn't have, the same way that movements begin and you need to be private for a while so that people can empower each other to speak in mixed groups. You had to also do that in film class and have a women's crew in order to make the young women to feel powerful enough to have their voices heard, to hold the camera once, to be the editor, to come up with the script idea. Otherwise, they'd be shotted down because it was a men's world then, and I'm hoping it's changed a little bit,

but as you saw in my movies, I still think a lot of what we are experiencing--including the election of this monster--has to do with the backlash against our movement. So, that's one thing that happened. A whole bunch of other ideas that are feminist as they grew empowered teaching. You could teach a class called not just "Dogs and Film," but you could teach a class called, "Women in Film," then, you could have a classroom which probably would be mostly female, where women's voices, then, were easier to hear and were not as stifled and not as intimidated. There would also be always, at SVA--where I taught before I came here--there would always be guys. I would say, "Why did you take this course?" And the women would say, "Oh, I thought I could maybe be a filmmaker even though I'd never seen a woman filmmaker before," and the guys would write, "I heard there were some really hot chicks in this course," or whatever word was then. But, what they meant was kickass, what they meant was tough women, and what they meant was smart women. And they were looking for them and they thought, "A film and women course" might have them. And that might be very...thrilling. [laughter] So, those are a bunch of ways that worked. then, at Hampshire...well, when I got to SVA they didn't care what I did and the president of the school said when I wanted a promotion, "Honey, you could be a duchess if it doesn't cost me anything." And all my friends and my peers were associate professors so I said, "I think I'll take that," and he said, "Fine." So that's how I got my first promotion--I'm just revealing this now that I'm retiring. Because, when I came to Hampshire, I was able to make a deal based on the president of this private school saying, "You can be whatever you want to be as long as it doesn't cost me anything." Anyway, at SVA, things were quite different and it was a very different student body. Most of the students were the first ones in their family to go to college and it was a very sad story. And, I felt like a hustler (34:08) because I was going in there teaching them filmmaking and I would say, "Do you know anyone in a Union?" and they would say, "Huh?" There was no way you were going to get in a union at that point unless your uncle was Mike Nichols or something or, you know, there were all kinds of catches--about at least being in the industry--that no one had ever told them. And, I felt like I was just springing bad news if I told the truth but I felt I had to tell the truth because they were spending their lives and all their money for these classes. Yeah, I wanted to teach with other people, I wanted first to teach Theory and Practice. I thought, "Why teach people to push buttons when they can read the manuals? That's stupid." [Laughter] Luckily for me, at Hampshire we have the most fabulous technical support staff. I would not have been able to stay here at all without John Gunther...where's John?

<applause>

Joan: In the back! When I first got here and wanted to shoot something in the studio everyone said, "Oh, I don't know, that's weird, or, that's kind of a mess." And John Gunther said, "Let's go!" and he's been saying "Let's go!" ever since. And he's just a brilliant, brilliant man who's always ahead of the curve knowing about what technology is out there and what to do with it and knowing about the possibilities for saving money and

saving time and helping kids and he's the best and so is {other} John. I just want to give you another hand. [Applause] And the same goes for Kane Stuart (35:48), Kane are you here? Kane Stuart runs this building and the photo program (indistinguishable 35:54). [Applause] And, Neil, [applause] has been in media services for a million years and when I didn't have a movie to show, he would climb up anywhere in that library and find me some weird movie from 1933 made by Dorothy Herzner (36:06) that there was no way that the class was going to happen without *Dance, Girl, Dance* and he would go find it so, he's a gem also. And Andrew, are you here? Andrew? So, he's not so great [Laughter], no he's great [audience laughter] he's just not here. And then, in terms of collaboration, in addition to the theory practice model, which for me was essential. Teaching ideas along with technique, essential. If you know how to use all the tools and you haven't got an idea in your head, you're going to make a stupid movie or a stupid video. And, it happens all the time. In Hollywood, every single minute, and also elsewhere. So, we did the two at the same time. What's wrong with that? Thinking it was kind of like chewing gum and walking. So, ideas as well as technique with a support staff because it does take time to learn this endless...I've learned now sixteen different ways of editing, I've counted them. In my house are seventeen different formats of video and film. I don't know what's going to happen now with digital if they're gonna just sit now or what. We'll see because you can always make something new to make them buy something else but, whether it stays the same basic model or not, we don't know. Collaborating is also about co-teaching and working with other people which, here at Hampshire, has been just a delight. Abraham and a bunch of my other colleagues are here, and Kara, and Susan Douglass was going to fly out here but she was so depressed about the election that she canceled her talk at Harvard and stayed in Michigan. She was the one who hired me. There are a million stories about the ways that didn't work because things were beginning and no one knew where you put video. Did you put it in the Art School? Did you put it in Communications?

Kara: Did you put it in the Basement? [laughter]

Joan: Did you put it in the basement? You did! You put it in the basement! And also, the screenings were all in the basement. So when you went the museum, they said, "Oh you want to see video! You go behind the bathroom, and you go...[gestures far away]" It was fun though, being at the beginning of things, and I like being at the beginning of things, so, maybe we should begin dinner! [laughter]

Kara: Yeah!

<audience applause>

Joan: Does everybody have a ride?

Kara: Dinner is at the Red Barn.

Joan: Does everyone have a ride to the Red Barn? ANd would they like one if they don't?
You can walk to the Red Barn but it's nice to have a ride!

<audience applause>