

University for the Creative Arts
Research Project Portfolios

The Artist's Voice

By Jean Wainwright



Project Details

Name of Researcher:	Professor Jean Wainwright
Name of Output:	The Artist's Voice
UCARO link/s:	https://research.uca.ac.uk/view/projects/The_Artist=27s_Voice.html
Output Type:	T – Other, multi-component output comprising a journal article and three accompanying artist's interviews published as chapters
Year and mode of dissemination:	<p>CHAPTERS</p> <p>Wainwright, Jean (2016) 'Holding Hands with History: Conversation with Morten Viskum' In: Paparoni, D. (ed.) <i>Morten Viskum: Works 1993-2016</i>. Milan: Skira. pp.87-153.</p> <p>Wainwright, Jean (2019) 'The Seductiveness of Endless Possibilities' In: Jamal, A. (ed.) <i>Robin Rhode: The Geometry of Colour</i>. Milan: Skira. pp.55 -71.</p> <p>Wainwright, Jean (2020) 'Noé Sendas: The Shape of Things to Come' In: Silverio, J. (ed.) <i>Noé Sendas: Vanishing Acts</i>. Milan: Skira. pp.26-34.</p> <p>ARTICLE</p> <p>Wainwright, Jean (2020) 'Small Lies? Authenticity and the Artist Interview' In: <i>Journal of Art Historiography</i> (23). ISSN 2042-4752</p>
Key Words:	Interview, voice, ethics, art history

Synopsis

'The Artist's Voice' is a research output by Professor Jean Wainwright comprising an article and three chapters. The article, 'Small Lies? Authenticity and the Artist Interview', published in the *Journal of Art Historiography*, explores the ethical, art-historical and methodological questions raised when conversations with artists are edited for sound clips or transcribed for books and catalogues. The article is based upon four case studies, one of which is Wainwright's own interview with artist Morten Viskum, which is one of the three accompanying chapters in this output. The other two chapters are also recent interviews conducted by Wainwright, with artists Robin Rhode and Noé Sendas. They relate to and

further illustrate the key issues articulated within the journal article: how the intentionality of interviewer and interviewee and the psychological, sociological and egotistical implications of what they 'say' raises questions for the legacy of an artist's practice. Together, the article and the interview-chapters are a summative output from Wainwright's ongoing research on and through the artist interview.

The supporting portfolio sets out the publication details of each research component and explores the research context, questions and process that underpin the output as a whole. It presents PDFs of the article and the three interview-chapters.

Details of the Research

Research context:

Since 1996 Wainwright has amassed an extensive body of work surrounding the artist interview. She has a personal archive of over 1,600 recordings with artists including Sutapa Biswas, Tracey Emin, Susan Hiller, Carolee Schneemann, Frank Stella, Bill Viola and Yinka Shonibare MBE. Many of these interviews have been published. Wainwright became one of the primary interviewers for Audio Arts between 1996 and 2009 and 177 of her Audio Arts interviews can be heard on the website of Tate, which acquired the archive.

Wainwright's experience of the 'conversation' methodology led to her current investigations into the 'authentic' artist interview, and her article 'Small Lies?' draws upon and analyses this extensive experience in order to reflect upon and further develop the artist interview as a research method. It considers the ethical implications of interview practice in the field of the arts, with a particular focus on how an artist's voice is mediated through the process of transcription or the selection of excerpts. The article began as a paper at the 2019 Art Historians Annual Conference, after which it was revised and developed by Wainwright for publication in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Art Historiography*.

Research questions:

- Should the reader of an interview be aware of how much has been 'tidied up' or redacted?
- Does it matter that what the reader reads is only a version of the authentic truth of the original interview?

Research Process:

In the article, Wainwright uses her own interview with Morten Viskum as one of her case studies. This interview was published in the first monograph on Viskum's work, *Morten Viskum: Works 1993-2016*, edited by Demetri Paparoni (2016). In her article, Wainwright examines the months-long process of determining the psychological underpinnings of Viskum's work and the effect this had on the interview. For example, the controversial nature of Viskum's work presented challenges for Wainwright as interviewer, and also seemed to affect Viskum as interviewee, as he took pauses to carefully consider his

words. The article also draws attention to the editing process in which two interviews conducted in different cities were spliced together to create the appearance of one seamless conversation for publication.

The interview with Robin Rhode is situated within the monograph *Robin Rhode: the Geometry of Colour* edited by Ashraf Jamal (2019), which focuses on Rhode's work in Johannesburg. Wainwright's conversation with Rhode is an in depth discussion of his working methodology and the challenges that he faces. The interview took place over three days in Rhode's studio in Berlin and highlighted the challenges of an extended edited interview. The edit had to retain authenticity, emotion and Rhode's integrity from voice to page, when tone, inflections, nuances, emphasis, accent, pauses and interruption are removed.

Lastly, the interview with Noé Sendas is positioned within *Noé Sendas: Vanishing Acts* edited by João Silverio (2020). Wainwright's interview with Sendas traces the artist's career from his formative years to date, with sections devoted to particular series of his works. Unusually, this interview was conducted by telephone and email, and Wainwright's challenge was to organise on the page a seamless authentic conversation which may contain 'small lies'. Sendas' response (published as his concluding answer) was particularly pertinent for Wainwright showing that sometimes an artist does not 'have an answer', and that is OK.

Research insights and contribution:

All three of Wainwright's artist interviews included in this output were published in larger volumes, devoted to Viskum, Rhode and Sendas, published by leading fine art publisher Skira. Each interview provides new insights into the work of the artist interviewed, whilst also providing insights into the often overlooked processes and implications surrounding the artist interview, contributing to the analysis and conclusions of the 'Small Lies' article. Wainwright argues that in the ebb and flow of conversational desire and ambition, even a 'literal' transcription can contain 'small lies', and is just one possible version of what was said, and even, by whom.



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COVER IMAGE

Wainwright's recording equipment