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(23) Bruce 65th Johns - Recomp lighting design for Duchess - Bunny Studio

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See also:

Log, pp 1-11: Broadway loft - pets
How he works
Collage - collaboration
Silkscreen paintings

Touring in the VW, Bob and Steve would fight a lot - combative arguments. There's a strong competitive streak in Bob that makes him rise to every sort of challenge -- it was like a couple of adolescents. Sometimes he would make a really bitchy remark. But mostly he was great fun to be with. He and Steve and Debbie and Alex would sometimes stay out late at night drinking, which also bothered Merce and John.

Merce had an annoying way of saying that somebody (Bill Davis, eg) was "too bright to be a dancer." Thanks, Merce.

[illegible] You've got to remember that on tour one becomes a little mindless. Also, he'd do those drawings with lighter fluid,

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Ivan Karp - lunch 1/12/78

Bob when younger "had the most beautiful physical presence of anyone I've ever known. He gave off a sort of celestial light."

Older artists were annoyed by his work but not really antipathetic, as they were in the case of Lichtenstein. Bob represented a challenge to older art. His rough surfaces, his use of things he'd pick up off the street as collage elements, his images from ads and news photos. Bob's juxtapositions and Jasper's emblems were the new imagery.

[illegible] days around in the early days, not saying much but paying close attention to the details. Bob's methods were slapdash; when something involved a craft like dying costumes, Jasper would usually do it (he says he did everything). The breakup with Jasper occurred during the summer of 1962 at Connecticut College. Jasper was there at the beginning. There began to be talk about Bob and Steve. That fall Bob and Steve were living together and Jasper was out of the picture.

Carolyn loved Bob, as did everyone in the company, but she never got too close to him -- not as close as Alex and Debby Hay, for example. She was always a little scared of him, the dark side, the uneasiness. (At Jasper's opening she saw him after long absence, he was quite drunk, and before she knew what was happening he bit her thumb so hard she thought he was going to take it off). But on tour everyone liked being with him because he was such fun. And always so generous, buying meals and presents for people. (Later, John accused him of trying to buy the company; Carolyn said if that were true, which it wasn't, it would reflect badly not on Bob but on the dancers).

Bob never conferred with the dancers about costumes etc. He'd bring something he'd done, and then they'd have to figure whether it would work or not. She thinks Jasper must have dyed the costumes for Nocturnes.

Bob took over the lighting duties in Canada - his real tryout. It was a little awkward because Nick Cernovich, who had done Merce's lighting before, was up there working for James Waring, and he very generously came and helped Bob learn the ropes, told him the names of the lights etc (Carolyn thinks Bob was a little distressed because Nick was so nice; Nick had been quite hurt when Merce dropped him).

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villa with his wife and his boyfriend. Also has a son, whom he likes very much. Leo could never sell him. He made his reputation in Europe, and still gets higher prices there.

The American achievement in the visual arts is the most significant event in world culture since the second world war. This is generally accepted without being understood. The only possible challenge to the sustained achievement of American painting is rock and roll.

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Carolyn Brown - 1/5/78 lunch

Ray Johnson took them to meet Bob the first time, in his first studio on Fulton Street. She remembers the studio as being like a barn, high up and all exposed wood, no plaster, almost no windows. He was starting on the red paintings, and working on "Charlene." Said he was afraid he'd lose all his friends because if you'd liked the black paintings you wouldn't like the red. Soon after that (this was 1951) he started to work for Merce.

Jasper was always around in the early days, not saying much but paying close attention to the details. Bob's methods were slapdash; when something involved a craft like dying costumes, Jasper would usually do it (he says he did everything). The breakup with Jasper occurred during the summer of 1962 at Connecticut College. Jasper was there at the beginning. There began to be talk about Bob and Steve. That fall Bob and Steve were living together and Jasper was out of the picture.

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Winterbranch

"Alex and I were running around backstage with lights off their stands,

it was the closest thing to being in the dance. I felt it was like night lightning (ie, rather than driving at night). There was no light plot or plan; it was different every time."

Aeon

RR used dry ice and water to make smoke.

either had to accept it totally, as he had always accepted everything else in Bob, and thereby approve of it, or else reject it totally, and with it Bob. They are no longer as close as they were, to Cage's great sorrow.

Cage, at the same time, is also saddened to realize that the R. who works with Cunningham and himself is a domesticated animal, that it is the conservative being now present in the Cunningham situation. The "wild, wonderful Bob," the rebellious being that Cage always admired, is now present in the work R. is doing with the Judson group. R. has composed music for the Judson (using the voice of the

the light in the dining hall. It was a sunny day, and there was an impression of great clarity and openness. The chairs were arranged neatly.

Bob seemed to have great confidence at Black Mountain, and some people resented that.

RR With Cunningham

Sometimes his sense of time (or lack of it) seemed a problem, although it never was in terms of performance. "Anything that wasn't a performance, you sort of just hoped he would get there in time."

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As lighting designer, Bob had little technical knowledge but he managed in spite of that to do amazing things with very little. His sets for Story looked easy enough, but once he couldn't be there -- it was in Minnesota -- and John and Merce did one, and "it just looked dumb." "What was wonderful about Bob was that he loved dancing, and had great appreciation and respect for people who did. At the same time he didn't cowtow to our grumblings. In the days when we toured in the VW bus he was good at games, at picnics; he and I would make up stories to tell each other -- for a while we each had a horse, and we'd tell long stories about the condition of our horses. You've got to remember that on tour one becomes a little mindless. Also, he'd do those drawings with lighter fluid,

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(Kluver)

Bob and Jasper. When they broke up, Bob was a wreck for a long time. A real breakdown. "Like a lovesick girl." It was Jasper who left Bob, but not over someone else. When they would meet on the street or elsewhere, Bob would go to pieces all over again, unable to handle Jasper's sarcasms.

[illegible] never be anyone but himself.

Jasper in a way formed himself in opposition to Bob. Because Bob liked Paris he decided he didn't, etc.

Bob took self-discipline from Jasper. Jasper took many ideas from Bob. Jasper was critical, but he loved Bob's work.

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Bob and Jasper (Heard)
Both were beautiful, joyous, "so attuned to one another that sometimes it was hard to tell who was who."

Jasper changed, to protect himself. Became guarded and inward. Jasper is much more fearful than Bob, who could never be anyone but himself.

Jasper in a way formed himself in opposition to Bob. Because Bob liked Paris he decided he didn't, etc.

Bob took self-discipline from Jasper. Jasper took many ideas from Bob. Jasper was critical, but he loved Bob's work.

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<u>MONTREAL</u> ~~Relationship Now~~ (Cage, re RR)

A trifle strained -- they are slowly surmounting the bad feeling that arose during R's first lighting stint with the Cunningham company. On opening night in Montreal, with a big, 50-minute work scheduled for premiere, Bob was nowhere in sight. He was stage manager as well as lighting man. Cage went down to conduct orchestra not knowing where he was, thinking he might be off drunk. R. was in fact in the orchestra, to see first few minutes from there, but no one else knew. The performance went off fairly well, though unprofessionally. Afterwards, Cage met R. backstage and told him, in a fury, that he had no sense of time. Cage still feels that R's action was unforgiveable. R. was very upset by Cage's roughness. Cage says he did the Amsterdam "Time Painting" as a reaction to this. It nearly destroyed the friendship. Cage felt he either had to accept it totally, as he had always accepted everything else in Bob, and thereby <u>approve</u> of it, or else reject it totally, and with it Bob. They are no longer as close as they were, to Cage's great sorrow.

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Viola Farber - 1/4/78

Met Bob first at Black Mountain, where she was a student before she knew Merce. Probably 1951. Bob was also a student "but he didn't study anything -- oh yes, he did; once he took Russian from a woman on the staff who had been told she would have to leave unless somebody took her course, so Bob and Cy took it, at least they signed up to take it." Bob was doing black paintings and white paintings that winter, also some blueprints. "He seemed kind of shy and extremely nice. I certainly didn't think of him as being wild. He would do all sorts of lovely generous things for people. Once I remember we were outdoors somewhere, and I said I had to go in and do dish duty; Bob said 'No you don,'t,' and went and did it for me, insisted on it.

That summer Merce and John came to Black Mountain, and there was the "event." Viola doesn't remember thinking of it as terribly unusual, because everything that happened at Black Mountain was unusual and new. "None of us was aware of being present during a historic occasion." What she remembers most is the light in the dining hall. It was a sunny day, and there was an impression of great clarity and openness. The chairs were arranged neatly.

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RR With Cunningham

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Viola Farber (cont)

and the whole car would stink.

John and Merce did most of the driving, sometimes Carolyn, never Bob. Bob was generally sunny; sometimes he got angry, as everyone did, but he never sulked. And he was extravagant in all sorts of ways (not financial) -- he really was wild then. "Bob bridged the gap between us and the grownups -- meaning Merce and John/ -- in a way. He would have none of that." Once later, after the world tour, Jasper took Viola to lunch to ask what had happened, why everything was breaking up; she said one problem was the rel. between Steve and Bob, and Jasper said, 'Oh, you mean like the president and the file clerk.' Jasper had that feeling of a heirarchy, but Bob never did. (Merce did too -- the idea of "everyone a soloist" was an ideal, not a reality).

In the early days the company was more of a family. That changed with the world tour, when Lew Lloyd and David Vaughan came on and Merce started to deal with the dancers through them. "We used to be together a lot more socially, dinner and movies and things like that. And there were certain times on tours when you could have wonderful conversations with Merce."

Viola danced sometimes with Paul Taylor, but never any question that her main commitment was to Merce. She remembers one beautiful duet he made for her and Peter Saul, with a set by Bob in the form of a large scarf, brownish velvet on one side, and the other side a rich green -- they spread it on the ground to make a meadow. Called "May Apple."

The world tour was where it came apart. Bob's success at the Biennale meant that whenever they got off a plane the repotters would all rush to him. Somewhere in Europe the rumor started that they had run out of money, and Bob said, "Well, old Bob will take out the crayolas." Things like that bothered Merce. Viola hurt her foot on the tour (she had previously been bitten on the foot by Sweetie, Bob's kinkajou, while feeding it -- Bob and Steve had gone to Florida to buy her a mate). After the return home, Bob and Steve left the company, and so did Debbie Hay. Viola stayed on because she didn't want it to seem she was part of that defection. She left in spring 1965.

Of Bob's own dance work later, she found it interesting. She and Steve Paxton were the "couple" in Construction of Boston(which did not seem very interesting). "I think Bob has terrific theatrical sense. The reason I didn't enjoy being in those things was that I really love dancing -- I much preferred looking at them to being in them.

"Brazos River"
Videotape Viola did recently with Bob and David Tudor. It was not an easy collaboration, "but we did it, and it was fine." Viola and Bob had always wanted to do something together, and with David. Fort Worth Museum subsidized it, together with the local public TV station. Bod did set and costumes: a black wooden floor. Distribution not arranged yet. Bob wanted it shown on commercial TV. Viola would like that too -- feels it would benefit by cutting and by commercial breaks. It was done in a great hurry. Bob in control room during taping.

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Victor Ganz

Bor

Bob and Jasper

Victor said once, and still believes, that everything Bob does, eventually Jasper is going to do it. The influence is simply tremendous. Just recently (winter 1977) Victor heard from Betty Parsons that Paul Taylor had an old piece of Bob's, made for a dance in 1957 (only one performance, at the YMHA), and unseen since, that he now wanted to sell because he needed the money. Victor went down to his studio. A very tall, freestanding piece, with various elements, including a broom attached to a canvas, with swipes of paint (this was TK years before Fool's House). He said at first that it was really a museum piece, maybe he could interest Ludwig, but then he got home and without even thinking about it went to the tool box and got out a measuringtape and found it would fit in his dining room, where it now is -- he bought it.

Once Bob came with Billy Kluver to the apartment, to talk about Victor's buying something for the New York Collection for Stockholm. Victor had just bought Decoy, which was hanging in the dining room. After their talk, Victor said he'd recently bought a Johns, would Bob like to see it, and they went into the dining room, and Bob said Oh yes, he'd got a glimpse of it through the door, "and for a minute I thought it was one of mine."

In the Ganz bedroom, on either side of the bed hang Jasper's White Numbers (19) and RR's "The Lily White," (1950 - his earliest surviving painting).

Once Jasper and Victor were talking, and Victor said Bob really was the greatest livingpainter, "excluding you of course." Jasper said quite seriously, "No, including me."

Victor and Sally went down to the Washington RR show on a Saturday after the opening. They were looking at one of their pictures, and Sally said there was something odd up in one corner, reaching up to touch a bit of plastic, and suddenly a huge voice right behind them boomed out "Don't touch the paintings!" They both jumped a mile. It was Jasper, with Mark and Janie C. Lee. Later they all went out to lunch together. Mark and Janie had to catch a train, they separated, and the Ganzes went back to the show. They met Jasper again there. "He was really looking."

At the lenders' opening to the Johns show at the Whitney, after the black tie dinner, Victor was chatting with Jasper and some others. He could sense that Bob, who hadn't made any contact with Jasper all evening, was screwing up his nerve to approach. He did, holding oout his hand, and saying something about how much it meant to him, how he couldn't express his own feelings over seeing the work again. Jasper said in his coldest tone, "Leave it there." Bob walked away.

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(Cunningham Notes) ②

so that they just have to take things off."

Space

The idea of flexibility really dates from Black Mountain. For that event, the first happening, the dancers had to undergo all sorts of trials before they got to the stage. (get more on this)

"I think it all has to do with space. The whole idea of relativity, that nothing is centered or fixed in nature, that everything is moving. Most of our traditional ideas about dancing have come from the notion of a fixed point to which the dancer relates. ~~[illegible]~~ Nowadays the feeling is that you can be ~~[illegible]~~ anywhere, and that anywhere you face is all right too. Every point on the stage can be interesting, can be used. (see intvw in Ballet Review, re Summerspace)

"If you read books on the dance, you ~~[illegible]~~ find all sorts of theories such as the theory that stage right is more powerful than stage left. We wanted to get rid of all that, and one way we found ~~[illegible]~~ was just to get rid of scenery and drapes, ~~[illegible]~~ lift up everything. Once out in Wisconsin, at Beloit College, we found we were to perform in a ~~[illegible]~~ basketball court. The people out there had hung a lot of drapes to frame off a performance area, and there was all that marvellous space being wasted. We asked them if they couldn't just take away the drapes, leaving the posts because we needed those for lighting, and it worked wonderfully. You don't have to worry about framing. Actually, now, the best way to frame is with light. Even for entrances and exits. I feel that it's good for a dancer to be seen and then not seen, but there must be some way that this can be done by using light.

"You see, they have all this trouble with modern theaters like the ones at Lincoln Center, turntables that don't work and things like that. I think the real problem is that they're trying to combine mechanical and electronic technology. Now, there's a theater outside of Stockholm where everything is done by cranks -- a perfect 18th century theater, with the most elaborate mechanical system of slots for each of the different sets to drop down, and everything works perfectly.

"One of the things that somehow has to happen with theater is a whole new thing about space. Getting rid of drapes is a step in the right direction. But they simply haven't figured out how to make theater flexible with the new electronic technology. They still just try to do the old things in new ways."

"Dancing is difficult because it takes up so much room. Light is so good because it fills up a space but you can still go through it. I never liked the idea that stage light should be dramatic, should be used to heighten things. I always felt it should be like daylight, that it should strike where it might, and not focus on one aspect. Bob Rauschenberg more or less agreed with this feeling. He thought of lighting in flexible terms, a layer here and a layer there, like brushstrokes. Painters understand light, and by and large most stage lighting engineers don't. With Winterbranch, for example, I said to Bob wouldn't it be nice if it were like night. Not moonlight, but the quality of artificial light in the dark. He knew just what I meant."

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Steve Paxton - by 'phone 1/13/78

Born and raised in Arizona. Met Bob in the summer of 1961 at Connecticut College, when the Cunningham company was there. Steve had been a scholarship student at the Cunningham studio for a year or more, and that summer he was invited to join the company. His relationship with Merce before that had been "incredibly pleasant, partly because he never told me what to do. In the company that tended to disappear -- I had the sense that I was expected to assume responsibility and to get along, but not to be Merce's friend."

Jasper was working with Bob at the time/ He was very reticent, very private.

"There was really an incredible amount of love and respect among those people. But by the time I joined the company, the relationship with Merce was mainly professional. Everything came through the work."

Montreal - Bob very upset by John's and Merce's getting so angry with him. It was sort of a misunderstanding. Bob saw his job as that of lighting designer -- he didn't realize he was expected to fulfill another function backstage. Bob was just doing it the way he painted, without being aware of the complex social structure within the company. Also, Merce and John were never very clear about what you were expected to do -- they expected you to just know.