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Transcript: Talking Art with Germano Celant and Allan Schwartzman

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Charlotte Burns: Hello and welcome to In Other Words. I'm your host, Charlotte Burns, and joining us is the renowned art historian and curator Germano Celant. Hello Germano.

Germano Celant: Hi.

Charlotte Burns: And Allan Schwartzman.

Allan Schwartzman: Hi.

Charlotte Burns: Germano, it has been 50 years since you wrote the essay "Arte Povera: Notes for a Guerrilla War", which includes the lines: "No longer among the ranks of the exploited, the artist becomes a guerrilla fighter, capable of choosing his places of battle and with the advantages conferred by mobility, surprising and striking, rather than the other way around". It also includes one of my favorite lines: "the important thing for Kounellis is to focus on the fact that Kounellis is alive and the rest of the world can go to hell", which I think is just great. You were suggesting that the artists were recovering freedom and self-expression through their art. Do you think that they succeeded?

Germano Celant: Today it would be impossible to have 11 horses in a gallery, or to have a parrot—a living parrot—in an exhibition. But, at the time there was the idea that you can take whatever was available, because you were poor. So, poor art means also that you have no money to buy canvas, and you can use whatever you can find.

Charlotte Burns: You coined the term Arte Povera to define and promote the movement. Allan, you're known for being one of the first Americans to recognize that this was an area of art that was overlooked.

Allan Schwartzman: Well, I came to it at a different point in time, so my guess is there were several generations of Americans who connected with the work. When I started working on developing collections 20 years ago, I was working with a collector who was interested in looking in areas where other people weren't and where there might be value opportunities.

For me, growing up as a young art historian, our view of Modern art was that written by the Museum of Modern Art. And the Museum of Modern Art's canon said that Modernism essentially, and this is very a simplified version of it, was born in Paris. It had a few moments in Italy, in Russia, in Germany, but essentially, it was a Paris-born movement and then, after World War II, great art came out of the United States. So, we thought: "Okay, this area is over-collected, the prices are beyond what we could do, let's look at Europe and see what was going on there and see if that had been overlooked". And indeed it became a wealth of material for us to discover. Certainly in the 1980s, as a young curator and writer, I had seen numerous exhibitions in American museums of Arte Povera artists. There was a great Mario Merz show at the Guggenheim, which I can still see the installation in my brain.

Charlotte Burns: There have been so many moments in which people have looked at art from Europe, and Italian art specifically. In the groundbreaking exhibition "When Attitudes Become Form", [Alighiero] Boetti's work *Me Sunbathing in Turin on 19th of January 1969* (1969) was on the floor of the Bern Kunsthalle next to works by Bruce Nauman; Kounellis installed bags of grain in a stairwell and Mario Merz showed *Igloo with Tree* (1968-69). It's interesting to think that happened then, and yet we're still talking about how those artists haven't been fully understood in their proper context.

Germano Celant: Because art history has to be rewritten. The idea that American museum or the Museum of Modern Art did the history based on formalism, only Cubism—that was the only one that can pass through because it was not politically engaged. And every movement—Constructivism because it was Communist, Futurism because it was fascist—so, anything that has some ideology has been completely canceled. And, the action painting and the Abstract Expressionists cancel all this kind of content.

In order to understand European art, especially Italian, you have to understand Futurism. Futurism is a total language that includes not only painting, but the idea about changing the world: fashion; design; sexuality. And, if you don't understand that, and you don't rewrite history in a certain way, the idea of the political engagement of the art, you don't understand what's happened today. Let's say the generation of Kaws, the graffiti artists—they are acting in 360 degrees, and the American history is being done only [around] the formal object that stays in the house. That's a decoration for the apartment. It's a commodity. It's not a political action.

When you think about Mario Merz—when we installed a show at the Guggenheim, the painting didn't fit because they were so big. He said: "Fold it." So, that's the attitude, this kind of elastic condition of the work that can adapt to any condition and follow more the material than the rigid object.

There was a time when Lucy Lippard did an eccentric abstraction with the material. Louise Bourgeois—all these elements are a part of history that I am trying to re-underline. [Leon] Golub said Pollock was a mercenary of the system because he canceled all the tragedy of America. The content completely erased: any political element; any war; any tragedy. Europeans—we live with tragedy. We live with decadence. Poverty. War. You never had the war. We had the war. We have ideologies.

So, this kind of complexity has to be reanalyzed in order to say: "Uh oh. What's happened?" After 1964, naturally with the Rauschenberg prize at the Biennale, the history changed. There were no more European shows in America. No more. After, Leo Castelli would say: "Either you come to live in America, or you're nobody".

Charlotte Burns: Allan, what do you think of that?

Allan Schwartzman: I agree in many, many ways, but I also have slightly different views of some of this.

Charlotte Burns: Right.

Allan Schwartzman: I completely agree that so much of Minimalism was rooted in formal concepts. Even if the artists were not addressing the issues of the market, they were themselves addressing the issues of the object. And their parallels in Europe, especially in Italy—it was content driven. It came out of life. It had a sense of it fitting within a certain socioeconomic realm, which automatically gave it a naturally political content.

I do see Conceptual art as being inherently political. There were ways in which American artists of the late 1960s were internalizing social movements, the anti-war movement, through their very rejection of the object. But, yes, the specific content was not itself political, but the more lasting work is that which has been the most poetic. And, then when you have an artist like Chris Burden whose work was political, it fell outside of—

Germano Celant: Or Hans Haacke. You remember, you know when he was political about speculation in New York about construction, [it] was canceled.

Allan Schwartzman: Exactly. It literally—the museum rejected the project they commissioned, and that was a very meaningful defining point in this country for where institutions reside in relation to ideas or what the limits are in commitments to artists.

Quite recently, Kai Althoff's show at the Museum of Modern Art challenged the museum in terms of how they see themselves functioning precisely because he was doing an exhibition violating certain norms of how art would be presented and understood what was a serious challenge to the institution.

But, because of the way we were putting together a collection, I was seeing parallels more than differentiations. I've always said that Fontana was as significant in postwar European painting as Pollock in postwar American painting. And, the way I looked at it is that without the atomic bomb, maybe Jackson Pollock wouldn't have existed in the way he did. And, similarly the exploration of outer space created a world experience that was parallel to Fontana piercing the canvas and thinking about the space beyond the physical space that we can see and measure.

Germano Celant: But, what has been removed, the Fontana environments. That was an important contribution, the use of fluorescent light in 1952 before anybody. This kind of history—because he was connected with Futurism—was important but was never documented, never reproduced in any magazine. Only recently the contribution of Fontana and Burri has started to be recognized because of the material element. But, again, they connect themselves with [Enrico] Prampolini, which was a very important Futurist who did a collage of materials.

When I did the Arte Povera book, it was everybody—American, French—because it was a moment of sensibility they were sharing. Also, Sol LeWitt or Dan Flavin we didn't consider Minimal. We were considering it using incredible material that was available. Fluorescent lights. Kounellis was using the parrots.

Charlotte Burns: Right.

Germano Celant: It was just open. We didn't have the distinction, but it was in a certain way a fight between Minimal and the Arte Povera because it was a little bit anti-minimal. There was also that the idea the object is a performing object, changing time, and has life. That was a very radical point because American art was very rigid. Was kind of frozen. And, if you think about a mirror of Pistoletto that you reflect and change all the time, they have the different attitude, which is time and process being part—[it's a] more European sensibility. I don't try to distinguish one against the other. But [I] try to make it kind of very clear that the stability requested by the market or the collector—because you don't want have broken glass with the kids. You don't want to have electricity.

Charlotte Burns: Yes.

Germano Celant: You don't want to have an animal to feed. Okay, it's part of the work, so you have to take care of the animal. So, this kind of thing was more European because there was no market.

Charlotte Burns: Right.

Allan Schwartzman: I think this is the key issue, is that most of American art in the postwar period and its value has been defined by the marketplace.

Charlotte Burns: Yes.

Allan Schwartzman: And so, in the 1980s, after we went to see the Documenta of 1982, which made American viewers aware of just how significant contemporary art was in Europe, which we really hadn't known despite the fact that numerous European artists had shown in the United States. But that seemed to have passed with the generation. There are certain kinds of inefficiencies that don't work for the American market, in the same way that Sigmar Polke didn't join a gallery in a traditional way made him less easy or even possible to understand and absorb through the market in the way that Richter could be.

Similarly, I think that someone like Giulio Paolini, who to me is an incredibly important artist, who's making conceptual art before we have the term conceptual art, and he's virtually invisible in this country. This world is dying for retrospective. If a museum were to do a comprehensive show, it would be a revelation, but we just don't see it. The Merz show was a revelation, but Mario has kind of disappeared from New York.

Marisa [Merz] was not very visible because she refused to travel here. Recently, there's been a major retrospective, and America discovered her in her early 90s, this huge figure since the late 1960s. [Giuseppe] Penone has had a greater presence because of a consistent relationship with Marian Goodman Gallery, who has found a way to navigate between domestically and larger scale works. Artists like [Giovanni] Anselmo have been visible, but kind of invisibly visible.

Charlotte Burns: Right.

Allan Schwartzman: Boetti seemed to always attract the attention of the market sooner. And maybe that's rooted in the fact that so much of his work is two-dimensional as in the tapestries—

Charlotte Burns: Yes.

Allan Schwartzman: —that have a relationship to painting. I mean that they are like painting and can be displayed like painting.

Charlotte Burns: Why do you think that some artists have been more popular than others in the US?

Germano Celant: Pistoletto is known for the mirror but not for the second work, *The Minus Objects* (1965-66). Just think about radicality: for us, at the time, the best compliment was you go to a one-person show, and you think it's a group show. The market doesn't accept that.

Allan Schwartzman: Yes.

Charlotte Burns: You said 50 years ago—and I think it's more true than ever—"once you create an object, you always have to remain by its side. That's what the system commands. This expectation is never to be frustrated, and once an individual has assumed a role, he has to continue to perform it until death." And then in the next paragraph you say: "Mass production mentality forces him to produce a single object that satisfies the market to the point of saturation. He is not allowed simply to create the object and then to abandon it to its destiny." That could have been written yesterday.

Allan Schwartzman: It's actually really interesting now that I'm thinking about it, you look at a figure like Bruce Nauman, who most people of my generation would say is the most significant American artist and the one who has had the greatest influence over next generation artists.

He worked in many, many different forms: objects; video; bronze traditional sculpture; or non-traditional materials for sculptures that are almost by their nature temporary in their physicality.

He's always been revered above all others, but in recent years, where his focus has been more in video, where it hasn't been as productive, the work remains highly valued by curators, but there are whole new generations of collectors who have emerged who don't value Bruce Nauman because they haven't had enough contact with it.

That's one of the things that happens in this country. There's a fine line between something becoming so special that when that rare work comes forward, everybody's waiting for it, and where the market kind of forgets about somebody because they're simply not as present as they once had been. So, I would expect that the upcoming Bruce Nauman retrospective at

MoMA has the possibility of being a revelation to a whole new generation of viewers and collectors.

Germano Celant: I have to say that when Bruce did the show—they had done an anthology at the Whitney in 1972—he was taken apart. It was totally massacred because he was incoherent, too many languages. I remember talking with Marcia Tucker, and they were shocked because he had too many arrows.

Allan Schwartzman: Too complex.

Germano Celant: Too complex.

Charlotte Burns: Too many arrows. It's a nice way of saying it.

We've spoken now a little bit about America and the—

Germano Celant: Yes.

Charlotte Burns: —art market. I was asking a European art dealer recently why were some Italian artists better appreciated than others. One of the things he said was the perception of corruption being part of the Italian art world. That there is a sense that there is corruption in the Italian art world. How much of that is real and how much of that is misplaced?

Germano Celant: What do you mean corruption?

Charlotte Burns: I think he meant that things are less formal in business interactions in Italy.

Germano Celant: Oh yes.

Charlotte Burns: And there's possibilities for, he specifically mentioned, money laundering.

Germano Celant: No, there is a lot of uncertainty in the work itself, in the material. Burri is a good example. People were concerned. Like the beginning of photography, we thought it would disappear, so Burri would be destroyed if you touch it.

So, the corruption of the material is not a laundering thing because there was no market. I remember Cy Twombly selling for less thank $100 a painting, and I remember talking with Fontana when I was a young student, and he said: "Oh, Germano, I got an offer to sell 50 drawings." And I said: "Oh, Lucio, great. That's fantastic. 50 drawings." "They offered me $50."

Charlotte Burns: Oh wow.

Germano Celant: That was the time. It was totally a different situation. There was no speculation. We never had a museum—contemporary—so there was no market. So, all this kind of thing became a little bit underground, the collector was impassioned, but only the one that was concern about their value was [Giuseppe] Panza di Biumo. In fact, he shifted from the lira to the dollar because he knew the dollar was powerful, so he bought a lot of American art, not Italian. There's no Italian Art in the Panza Collection except one or two, which is very interesting.

Allan Schwartzman: Interesting. And he did make statements about how great postwar art is American art. That to him was the new frontier.

Germano Celant: Yes. That was a new frontier but also the new power. He was smart to understand that Paris was not anymore the power, 1962 was over already, and he recognized immediately Rauschenberg. He was informed because [John] Cage came to Milan be part of the program, and he said: "I have friends, Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg", and Jasper was too expensive already for him, but Rauschenberg was easy. So, [Panza] wrote to Ileana and Leo earlier and he said: "Can you send me pictures?" And they said: "Who's this guy? Where is this? Nowhere?" And they sent about 10 pictures. He bought everything through the pictures because it was not so expensive.

Allan Schwartzman: The collection starts with [Jean] Fautrier and then immediately jumps to Rauschenberg.

Germano Celant: Immediately. [Emilio] Vedova and Fautrier

Allan Schwartzman: To get back to Burri for a minute, there's also another condition here which is really totally practical. In a way he should have been a more natural artist, at least starting with the early work for the American market than some other artists.

But, this is an artist where there wasn't access to great material. There was in the recent years in which this market has developed, let's say the past 30 years, Burri had given the greatest works that he kept to his own foundation, which is in the not most accessible part of Umbria. Unlike somebody like Fontana or [Piero] Manzoni, there's a great difference between the great works and the okay works. Most of what came out into the international market were not great works. There wasn't enough connection to the material to see it as something to rediscover, and it wasn't until the Guggenheim show, which

happened to be very finely curated, that Americans woke up.

Germano Celant: The main problem of the market in America but also the art historian is the only knowledge they have, especially the young generation, they start from the American point of view while there was no knowledge of American art in Europe at all.

Allan Schwartzman: There tends to be the belief here that the first time we see it is where it begins.

Germano Celant: I remember a big discussion with Benjamin Buchloh about Duchamp. Duchamp was still alive in 1968, nobody knew what he was about. He was an old guy doing strange things in multiples. Art historians, they try to say: "Oh, 1966, Duchamp was a key element." Nobody knew.

Allan Schwartzman: There is no American artist who's viewed as more American an artist than Rauschenberg, but there are quotes from Rauschenberg himself about going to the studio. It's the combines are directly influenced by the [Burri Sacchi series].

Charlotte Burns: This idea of exchange between America and Europe—we had a special edition for the Fourth of July, and we asked several people to write about America and culture. Max Hollein said actually there is so much more European Art in America than there is American art in Europe, and it's very hard for Europeans to understand America.

You read a culture though its culture. People in Europe don't understand what American landscape painting means, how it's fundamentally different than English landscape painting, tied to ideas of nationhood in a way that English landscape artists are not. We assume that there has been deepened, broadening knowledge, but actually that exchange between America and Europe is still not incredibly deep.

Germano Celant: And with the globalization, you have to reconsider the history in a complete new way. Today, you have to approach every culture in a total way, otherwise you don't get it. Otherwise the confrontation is only formal. That's a big mistake. But what the market tries is you have white background. You don't see any historical reference. You don't see any dates. The market doesn't want to have a frame of reference.

Allan Schwartzman: And yet at the same time, the market today is starved for re-examining what had been overlooked, and so now the market for postwar Japanese art has picked up out of nowhere, for postwar Latin American art has been growing very steadily. Certainly, the American art historical interest in art from the Middle East is developing its own momentum. And yet, postwar Italian art, which we probably knew before all those others, remains in this kind of flattened state.

Even the Boetti show—when I saw the retrospective in London at the Tate, I thought it was fantastic for so many reasons; it made clear to me for the first time the difference between works like the Mappas, which were intentionally done over a long period of time and again and again, and then other works which were singular. He was making very specific points that defined him as an artist. When it came to New York, it was edited in such a way that my understanding of the artist disappeared.

Germano Celant: Look at the change of catalogue of Sotheby's. Before, there was no history. Now, it's becoming a historical book. The need of historization is becoming more and more important.

Charlotte Burns: Germano, you've been the leading expert on Manzoni's art for a very long time. I want to ask you what it was like working on the last catalogue raisonné. It included many more works than the previous catalogue. How do you approach the assessment of work in the case of an artist whose art has been known to be copied, whose style isn't as definable as, for example, an artist like Lichtenstein. How do you judge that?

Germano Celant: It's a very simple operation. When you do a catalogue raisonné, you don't only do the image. I did just a few months ago the Mimmo Rotella catalogue raisonné, the first volume. You create a team, a chemical team. You create a research operation. It's not only the document of history, but I use the university for chemical reaction of and analysis of the stone—if there is a river stone or whatever it is—the stone that Manzoni did. The canvas. The only thing you cannot control, and that's the difficult part of Manzoni, is the cotton. Cotton has no history. It's without date.

It's archeology: to dig and to find a fragment and to analyze the fragment, the machine, the document. You're lucky sometimes there is a photograph. But sometimes the artists, they are doing copies themselves, okay? And naturally, that's difficult. Especially that generation because it needs so much money. The famous [Giorgio] de Chirico saying: "Why you buy this 1918? I can do today the same thing."

Allan Schwartzman: Is this a factor in why Rotella, who has been more visible internationally, has not met the market level of his peers?

Germano Celant: Yes. Because the problem of Rotella that he signed date, especially when he started to be famous

because of the cinema poster, so he was buying back the poster of the time, or doing copies, and signing 1963, '61, '62. Sometimes he was signing a poster with—I call it "www"—which means it's been done in the computer. And the collector says: "Oh, why do we date it 1995 instead of '63?" And we say: "Look, this has been done by a computer." So, there's a way of controlling.

And actually that was the corruption, I would say. Corruption of the artist: the idea to make money finally. Another important artist, Arman, he did a lot of objects and made himself the market. And that's why his values—people are afraid.

Going back to Burri, he was selling one painting a year. He said to me: "I don't need any more money. I can live with one painting." So, that's why he was not around too much. And he was selling to friends, people he trust in order to control his market. If somebody were trying to sell, he would buy it back.

Allan Schwartzman: So, there's another aspect to this. Let's say in the work of Mario Merz, where he would make an igloo, the next time he made an igloo he took elements from this igloo and put it into that one so the idea of how to date these works is, in certain ways, irrelevant. And there are many works that have been made that no longer exist in whole. They've been cannibalized.

Charlotte Burns: Refashioned.

Germano Celant: Yes. The story of Mario is that he was—he told me—he was going to the collector when he was still kind of Informel or Abstract: "Can I get the painting for a few days?" And the collector said: "Oh sure, no problem." And then after a week he was returning the painting, it was another painting. And the collector said: "Well, this is not my painting." He said: "No, because I painted it over because it needs to be alive." So, there was this idea of recycling, changing. That's the idea of life.

Also the problem is space. Collecting changed after a certain period. And people are doing large works that were not accepted by any private collector. Nobody had the idea like the recent collector to buy any space for a collection. They were at their house.

Allan Schwartzman: So, in this country, someone like Richard Serra began working on a very large scale because there was very inexpensive real estate in New York—Alanna Heiss who was finding them and providing them to artists to do whatever they wanted to do. So, once the doors opened to work in a certain scale—

Germano Celant: The public mostly.

Allan Schwartzman: Exactly.

Charlotte Burns: Yes.

Germano Celant: Not private.

Charlotte Burns: Germano, I wanted to ask you about your title at the Fondazione Prada, which I think is one of the best titles that I have ever seen. You are the artistic and scientific superintendent of the foundation. What does that mean?

Germano Celant: It means that for 20 years I was director of the foundation and we were doing one show a year in the space in Milano, and then when Miuccia and we decided to enlarge the foundation and to create this huge complex. It's a village. I didn't want to be director anymore because it's bureaucracy. I never want to be director. I want to be curator, and I want to spend money. Nobody is director there. We don't want to have curators. So, we are open to any collaboration. So, no director and no curator. If you have a good idea, come to us, we can do it. So, it's not bureaucratic.

Rem Koolhaas, Miuccia and me, we decide it's a good idea. So, let's do it. It's more elastic. It's more open to any new idea.

Charlotte Burns: It's a delightful title, and it sounds like a really great structure, too.

You are one of the leading curators and authorities of our time, and you're working with one of the leading collectors of our time, whose known to have a strong personal vision of her own. How does that collaboration work with Prada?

Germano Celant: It's a family thing. We start 1994, so it's about 23 years. And the company was very small. She was afraid to be controlled by me. I was afraid to work with fashion—this compromise, that the world thinks you are selling out to fashion, it's not true. We become friends, Miuccia, she is the godmother of my son, and Patrizio [Bertelli] is is the godfather of my son. So, it's kind of family situation and we fight, we discuss, every day. It's two people stimulating each other. She is more advanced than me because she is more radical. Fashion shows, they are done in three weeks. So, we have to do shows in three months sometimes. This kind of extreme situation is very healthy for ideas. Being private she said: spend, but spend well, which no museum will tell me this.

Charlotte Burns: I have a question for both of you. You've worked with artists who have realized wildly ambitious, large-scale projects. Allan, notable examples would be found at Inhotim, and Germano, a recent example would be *The Floating Piers* (2016) by Christo and Jeanne-Claude in Italy. How do you work with artists and bring out of them their biggest dreams?

Allan Schwartzman: There are certain artists who work well under a commission or a site-specific condition, and there are others that don't. So, part of it is understanding who is best left on their own and who can be inspired by a situation. Most people who talk about commissioning artists say they invite the artist and they ask them what they want to do. To me that was never the best way to go about it. My feeling is that artists live in a permanent state of freedom, and they don't need you to give them more freedom because that is already what they do.

So, it begins with an idea of looking at a site and a set of conditions and thinking of who as an artist can really evolve something within their work that would take on special meaning or presence because of this site or set of conditions. And then it is about entering into a dialogue.

Oftentimes ideas go in a very different direction than what the initial impetus was, but you have the spark of a way of thinking that opens the door for that. But at the end of the day, if you're going to have to produce really successful work on a large scale, you have to understand the artist, understand how to coax out of them the best that they have, and also to have trust in them that they are ultimately going to be able to fulfill the greatness in themselves.

One of the first artists I did a commission with was Robert Irwin. The curator who I had great respect for was telling me: "Oh, you really shouldn't work with Robert Irwin. He's a very difficult artist. He sounds very reasonable, you're talking about doing something in a specific area, and then the next thing you know he wants to appropriate more and more, and it goes beyond what it is that you may want to do."

And my experience was, there is no artist who has a clearer sense of what's right for his work. And he's always right. Yes, maybe there are some artists who get into territorial issues and lose track of what brings out the best in them. But with Bob, it was about getting out of the way and allowing him to fulfill the best version of his vision. It just so happens that this is an artist who I think is pretty flawless in that he doesn't take on a situation unless it's the right conditions for him.

Charlotte Burns: Germano?

Germano Celant: Miuccia, Patrizio Bertelli started the foundation because they want to support sculpture. At the time, 1993, everything was from especially in the moment of Neo-Expressionism, the painting. Nobody was paying attention to sculpture. And when I came in, in 1995, I said, Miuccia, Patrizio, let's go to see what is my way of dealing with space and we fly to see *The Lightning Field* [by Walter de Maria] and the *Double Negative* [by Michael Heizer]. And from then on, I said, the money you can provide is for impossible projects."So, it was in '95, nobody was saying to an artist: "What is your dream?"

When I did Biennale in '97, there was no budget for new installation, only transport insurance because that was the mentality: the object you carry from one space to another, like you do in an auction. It's transport. You don't create breaking walls through the office. So, we start to commission. We did a lot of specific site projects in the space for about 15 years. Nobody was investing at the time.

Also because we get the best collection, because people cannot take [these works] in the studio, so they left to us as a donation. So, we have incredible about 20 major environments by Carsten Höller where they were not recognized as contemporary art. Then we moved to the idea to finish this impossible or troublemaker's idea that people do a specific project, and we create the foundation like it is now.

In 1976, I did the history of environment at the Venice Biennale, I worked with Doug Wheeler, Robert Irwin, Michael Asher. It's easy to work if you have the same sensibility, and you trust them, and you explain to them: this is the budget. They don't go, they understand.

And this kind of situation is still difficult to realize. If you think about it, Bob still has incredible projects, or Doug Wheeler is being recognized by Zwirner, but the market for environment doesn't exist.

My dream was I try with friends to do a museum of environments. It would be unique in the world. You start from Futurism, [Ivan] Puni, you start with Duchamp—you can have also historical, material, you can have design. But you need huge amount of space, palaces and funding. But, it would be unique.

Allan Schwartzman: This was part of the thinking behind Inhotim, which is that the greatest limit on art collecting is not the price of the art, but it's the price of housing the art.

Germano Celant: That's it.

Allan Schwartzman: So, if you can get the land affordably and you can build architecture that's suitable for the preservation of art at an affordable level, artists will always commit to lifetime opportunities. When I met Bob, he didn't want

to come and see the site to do the commission. He said: “Look, the last two decades of my life I’ve gotten 23 commissions and 22 were canceled.” So, to him these were acts of impossibility, and why waste the time on it? And it’s only in the last few years that he’s actually had more opportunities to be able to fulfill these lifetime visions.

Germano Celant: It would be an incredible journey. It’s like the Sol LeWitt retrospective or drawing. That’s an incredible show. You become a sanctuary. You mentioned studio—you can have reconstructions. When I did reconstruction of “When Attitudes Become Form”, that was a sanctuary. Everybody has seen pictures but had never been there. People were so emotional. We discovered that the show was very small and the myth was enormous. Why was the myth enormous? Because the photographer had a big angle to take the picture. So, the room seems enormous.

Charlotte Burns: It’s like real estate.

Germano Celant: Exactly. You know why New York has not got this kind of museum? Because the cost of the land. And nobody is visionary.

Allan Schwartzman: That’s the difference between the thinking behind Dia and then its reality today. Which is fantastic, but the amount of real estate that they were assembling in order to have single artist locations was phenomenal.

Germano Celant: I remember *The Earth Room* (1977) and *The Broken Kilometer* (1979). For a European, coming here to have an apartment full of earth? God. Miracle.

Allan Schwartzman: And for us going to Count Panza’s, where he did create environmental works through the old stables of the property, that was an amazing experience because who else could do that?

Germano Celant: And that’s easy for Europe because we have so many abandon buildings. You have this kind of collectors who can recycle their own building.

Charlotte Burns: That’s the same thing with Marfa in that—

Allan Schwartzman: It’s interesting that it hasn’t happened here because this is a country that has space that no other country has. And that’s what led artists out of the studio in part to begin with. So, it’s an idea that’s ripe for development.

Charlotte Burns: Here or Australia.

Germano Celant: Oh yes, any place. You know. That’s—

Charlotte Burns: And Germano, are you looking at young Italian artists as well?

Germano Celant: Sure, yes. What I learn from an artist like [Luciano] Fabro, he said: “In order to judge an artist, you need 30 years to see if it is important or not.” I’m not waiting 30 years. I don’t have this kind of time. But I’m looking to young artists in order to help, not to judge, because that gives them the opportunity. And gives the opportunity to freelance, because I’ve been freelance all my life. I never was part of institution, also with the Guggenheim link I was 30% my time [Germano was the senior curator of contemporary art between 1989 and 2008]. I never want—I never had an office for 20 years at the Guggenheim. Never. Just to be free with my bag. So, I’m supporting young artists. I’m also taking the risk to do big books of the young artists.

Charlotte Burns: Yes.

Germano Celant: I hate group shows. I did the last group show in ’97 at the Biennale Venice. I did in six months, because I was forced. But I like one-to-one. Otherwise, you cannot have 100 love affairs in the same time.

Charlotte Burns: No. What are you working on coming up?

Germano Celant: I just did Chicago research with H.C. Westermann, about the Chicago Imagists, and I’m working next year for the Prada Foundation about a show 1918 to 1943, which is Italian art during the fascist period, reconstructing spaces of installation—let’s say Biennale Venice, the room by [Mario] Sironi or [Felice] Casorati, or the Room with [Felippo Tommaso] Marinetti—recreating spaces. And in 2020, I am working with the Jewish Museum about a show 1962 to 1964, which is I think the shift period. About Dance.

Allan Schwartzman: Exciting.

Germano Celant: About dance music, everything. Just all the 360 degree languages.

Charlotte Burns: I’m just going to mention that if you want to go see “Nuvolo and Post-War Materiality 1950–1965” that’s on show at Di Donna Gallery until 26 January. And “Ileana Sonnabend and Arte Povera” at Lévy Gorvy is open until 23 December.

Thank you both so much for being here. This has been a real pleasure. It’s so fascinating.

Germano Celant: Thank you.

Allan Schwartzman: Thank you.