



CONTEXT AND MEANING IN THE WORK OF JEFFREY RUBINOFF



Context and Meaning
in the Work of Jeffrey Rubinoff
Proceedings of the 2014 Company of Ideas Forum

Context and Meaning in The Work of Jeffrey Rubinoff
Proceedings of the 2014 Company of Ideas Forum
of The Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park

Editor: Karun M. Koernig

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PREFACE

This book is the record of proceedings of the 7th Annual Forum held at The Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park. The purpose of the forum is to provide scholars and students an opportunity to discuss the context and value of the work of sculptor Jeffrey Rubinoff. Since 2012 each forum has also explicitly furthered the understanding of art as a source of knowledge.

In 2014 the forum provided the opportunity for a group of historians, art historians, and cultural historians working on a book on Rubinoff, to gather insights for their respective chapters. It was the first forum in the series to dispense with the traditional paper presentations, in favour of a series of six dialogue questions posed by the book's editor, Cambridge University art historian and BBC broadcaster Dr. James Fox.

Starting from an understanding of art as a source of knowledge, Dr. Fox steered the discussion towards art historical issues in interpreting Rubinoff's work: his formative historical and geographic context, artistic lineage, use of the natural environment, and the origins of meaning in his work.

For Fox, unravelling the concept that there is knowledge in art is a worthwhile and exciting intellectual endeavour:

“Art ... is a source of knowledge ... but I think it is more than that. I think it is knowledge, but it is a different kind of knowledge.

It is not a knowledge that can necessarily be expressed in any other way.

It is not the kind of knowledge that can necessarily be reduced to words, and I think that is what makes art so important.

We think through looking.

We think through experience.

We think through feeling, rather than necessarily through a rational series of words and language.

And I think that is what makes, for me, this sculpture park and art in general such a thrilling and intellectually challenging experience.”¹

— Karun Koernig, Curator

1 Dr. James Fox, 2014 Company of Ideas Forum dialogue.

QUESTIONS FOR THE DIALOGUE SESSIONS

Dialogue Session 1

How important is the sculpture park to understanding the sculptures within it?

The Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park is a vast arena. It covers 50 hectares and contains more than 100 of Jeffrey's sculptures—all of which have been carefully positioned by the artist himself. How can we make sense of the park? What are its principles? How does it differ from other comparable sculpture parks? How does it affect our experience of the individual sculptures? Should we view it simply as a setting for the work? Or can we see it as a work in its own right?

Dialogue Session 2

Is there anything particularly Canadian—or North American—about Rubinoff's ideas and work?

Jeffrey Rubinoff is a Canadian. His work, which is largely site-specific, is meant to be seen within the context of a very Canadian landscape. Can we, therefore, call it Canadian art? Does Jeffrey share anything in common with other artists working in this remarkable environment? Or is it more useful to think of him as belonging to a North American, rather than Canadian, school of art? Or should we abandon national identity altogether, and think about him in a very different way?

Dialogue Session 3

How important is the sculpture of David Smith to understanding Rubinoff's development as an artist?

Rubinoff himself admits that he owes a huge amount to the important American sculptor David Smith. Indeed, his Series One works bear an uncanny resemblance to Smith's famous Cubi sculptures from the 1960s. What is the nature of this relationship? Why did Rubinoff look to Smith? What did he learn from him? And are there any other sculptors to whom we might try to compare Rubinoff?

Dialogue Session 4

Is Rubinoff a Cold War artist?

Rubinoff was born in 1945, at a crucial early moment in the Cold War. His favourite film is *Dr. Strangelove*. He is obsessed with the military industrial complex. His work at times reminds us of disused military technology. And he has taken up residence in a region that is filled with draft-dodgers. Is he, therefore, a Cold War artist? If so, what are his perspectives on the Cold War? How do his views differ from other artists of his generation?

Dialogue Session 5

What are the meanings of Rubinoff's work? If so, where do they come from?

Since the advent of Post-Modernism, scholars are no longer certain about the origins of artistic meaning. Does Jeffrey Rubinoff produce and control the meanings of his work? Do those meanings reside in the objects only? Or are those meanings made instead by the people who visit them, and are thus different for different visitors? If the answer is all three, which of them is the most legitimate?

Dialogue Session 6

Do we need to know Rubinoff's ideas to appreciate his work?

Jeffrey Rubinoff is fascinated by ideas that, on the surface, seem to have little connection to his work. Do we, as viewers, need to engage with those ideas in order to understand and appreciate the sculpture? Or is it ever valuable to distinguish between the artist as thinker and the artist as maker?

2014 FORUM DISCUSSION PANELISTS

Mark Breeze

Mark E. Breeze is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker, Harvard-trained architect, University of Cambridge-based academic, and the founder of the architecture, film, and photography collaborative REPEAT DIFFER. At the University of Cambridge, he lectures on architectural history and theory, teaches architectural design and film, and researches the interrelationships between the moving image and contemporary architectural practice.

Peter Clarke

Peter Clarke completed his BA in 1963, his MA and PhD in 1967, and his LittD in 1989, all at Cambridge University. Clarke was reader in modern history at University College, London from 1978 to 1980, lecturer in history from 1980 to 1987 at the University of Cambridge, fellow of St John's College, Cambridge from 1980 to 2000, tutor at St John's College from 1982 to 1987, reader in modern history from 1987 to 1991, and professor of modern British history from 1991 to 2004. Clarke was elected a fellow of the British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences in 1989. He was master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, from October 2000 to 2004. Peter Clarke has published twelve major books on aspects of British political history in the late 19th and 20th centuries, including *The Keynesian Revolution in the Making 1924-1936* (1988). He is the author of Volume Nine of the *Penguin History of Britain*, "Hope and Glory, Britain 1900-1990." He writes regularly on history and politics for *The Times Literary Supplement* and *The London Review of Books*.

James Fox

James Fox is a British art historian and BAFTA nominated broadcaster. Fox is a fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and specializes in 20th-Century art at the University of Cambridge History of Art Department. Fox received a starred first class degree in history of art from Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He then undertook an MPhil on British Modernism, and a PhD on history of art entitled “Business Unusual: Art in Britain During the First World War, 1914–18,” both at the University of Cambridge and funded by the AHRC. In 2009, he was appointed as a Research Fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge. He joined Gonville and Caius College in 2010. He has been a visiting scholar at Harvard University, and at the Yale Center for British Art at Yale University.

Karun Koernig

Karun Koernig is a social development specialist with over twenty years of experience. From 2008-11, he held the position of forum director for The Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park, and in 2012 accepted the position of curator. In 2015 he became the general manager of the park. In addition, he holds the position of head of operations for the Water is Right Foundation in Frankfurt Germany, which funds water and sanitation projects globally. He is also a UN-HABITAT consultant in Nairobi, Kenya, working on strategic policy in relation to urban youth livelihoods. Karun Koernig graduated with honours from Simon Fraser University, where he majored in political science.

Joan Pachner

Joan Pachner, a David Smith scholar since the 1980s, has published and lectured widely on the artist’s work. She pioneered the study of the artist’s photographs in an essay in *David Smith: Photo-*

graphs 1931-1965 (1998). She has also lectured and written about the artist's life at Bolton Landing in the Adirondacks, notably the lecture 'The Concept is Primary. The Medium is Secondary,' part of the program *A Sculptor's Eye: David Smith & Photography* in 2006, and has contributed to such publications as *The Fields of David Smith* (1997) and *Painted Steel: The Late Work of David Smith* (1998). As an independent art historian, she specializes in modern sculpture and lectures at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Barry Phipps

Barry Phipps' work as a curator is concerned with the relationship between artistic practice and scientific research. In keeping with a wide ranging academic background, which is rooted in fine art, as both an undergraduate and lecturer, and includes research in continental philosophy (Warwick), history of art (Oxford), and the history and philosophy of architecture (Cambridge). Barry has conceived and organized a number of multi-disciplinary exhibitions, including the highly acclaimed *Lines of Enquiry: Thinking Through Drawing*, and *Beyond Measure* exhibitions at Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge. Most recently, he curated *Intersections: Henry Moore and Stringed Surfaces* at the Science Museum and Royal Society, London. He continues to lecture and write on a number of interdisciplinary and art-related topics.

Jeffrey Rubinoff

Rubinoff completed his BA and MFA in the 1960s in the United States, returning to Canada in 1969. His one-man shows included the Helen Mazelow Gallery, the Ontario Science Center, the Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park, Queen's Park Toronto, York University, and Two Sculptors New York. In the past two decades he has concentrated on group historical exhibitions, including works by sculptors David Smith, Alexander Calder, Anthony

Caro, Mark di Suvero, Nancy Graves, George Rickey, Beverly Pepper, Tony Smith, and Robert Murray. In 1973, Rubinoff purchased an 80-hectare farm on Hornby Island, off the west coast of British Columbia, Canada, for the eventual establishment of a sculpture park. Living and working on-site, he has created over one hundred sculptures, constructing each piece alone in his studio from Corten or stainless steel. Located in the former barn, the studio is uniquely equipped with a one-man steel foundry, making it possible to cast the complex shapes seen in his later series.

Frances Stonor Saunders

A few years after graduating in 1987 with a first-class honours degree in English from St Anne's College, Oxford, she embarked on a career as a television film-maker. *Hidden Hands: A Different History of Modernism*, made for Channel 4 in 1995, discussed the connection between various American art critics and Abstract Expressionist painters, and the CIA. *Who Paid the Piper?: CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (1999) (in the USA: *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*), her first book, developed from her work on the documentary, concentrating on the history of the covertly CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom. Stonor Saunders' other works reflect her academic background as a medievalist.

Maria Tippett

Maria Tippett (born 1944) is a Canadian historian who won the Governor General's Award for English language non-fiction in 1979 for her biography of Emily Carr. Raised in Victoria, Tippett travelled through Europe after high school before attending Simon Fraser University. She earned a master's degree from Cambridge University, and a doctorate in history from the University of London. Tippett was a member of the editorial

board of *Arts Canada*, *Art Focus*, and an Arts Journalist fellow at The Banff Centre in 1988. In 1989, Tippet was a guest curator at the London Regional Art Gallery in London Ontario, and in 1992 she was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. She received honorary doctorates from Windsor University in 1994, and from the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University in 2006.

David Lawless

David Lawless is pursuing an MSc in Biodiversity, Conservation & Management at the University of Oxford. His research focuses on evolution, integrative biology, and the management of protected areas. David has also worked with Parks Canada as a naturalist and interpreter, using art and science as a way of connecting visitors to national parks. His additional interests include the history of science, evolutionary ethics, and music. He is now pursuing his PhD at the University of Toronto.

Jenni Pace Presnell

Jenni Pace Presnell earned a master's degree in art history from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and was in residence at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in 2010. She is a PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia in post-war architecture and urban planning, focused on media depictions of peripheral social housing. She is interested in cultural and architectural heritage, particularly the preservation of modern structures and landscapes. She is currently a lecturer on modern-contemporary art and architectural history at Greenville Technical College. Pace Presnell is experienced in exhibition planning and installation, as well as museum archives, registration and public programming.

David Wallace

Following undergraduate and postgraduate study in theoretical physics at the University of Edinburgh, David Wallace continued research at Princeton University as a Harkness fellow. In 1972 he was appointed as lecturer in the Physics Department at the University of Southampton. In 1979 he returned to the University of Edinburgh as Tait Professor of Mathematical Physics.

He was also director of the Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre. He was vice-chancellor at Loughborough University for 12 years, from 1994. He moved to Cambridge in 2006, as master of Churchill College, and in 2011 as NM Rothschild & Sons Professor of Mathematical Sciences and director of the Isaac Newton Institute.

He is a former president of the Institute of Physics, and treasurer and vice-president of the Royal Society, and has served as a member of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, and as an expert to the European Commission in a number of areas.

More recently he has served as chair of the Council for the Mathematical Sciences in the UK, and as a member of the management board of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. He was awarded a CBE for services to parallel computing in 1996, and knighted in 2004 for services to UK science, technology and engineering.

He is married to Elizabeth, and they have one daughter, Sara.

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2014 FORUM AT THE JEFFREY RUBINOFF SCULPTURE PARK

By Dr. James Fox

I want to begin by thanking Jeffrey and his partner Betty for generously hosting us here at the Sculpture Park once again. It is not always easy to have guests. And it is particularly difficult when those guests happen to be a rowdy bunch like us. And I want to thank Karun for organizing our proceedings with his trademark diligence and precision.

Most of you know me by now. This is my fourth time to Hornby Island. I've been coming here every spring since 2011, and I am now beginning to feel like something of a local.

Now why do I keep coming back? It is not only because of the seaplane. It is not only because of the fantastic food and drink we get served here. And it is not only because of the beauty of the island, and this part of the world. I keep coming back because I think what we have got going on here is pretty unique.

To my knowledge, it is very rare indeed to find an artist who has single-handedly produced such a huge body of work. And then had the ability to keep ownership of that work, to curate it, and to display it on such a vast terrain, exactly as he wants. And it is even rarer to be welcomed by that artist, to be able to discuss and debate what happens here with him. In my opinion, these forums at the Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park are a unique opportunity for anyone who is interested in art—and the psychology of the artist—to learn a lot.

And then there is the work itself. Now we are going to discuss Jeffrey's sculptures in some detail over the next couple of days. And I hope we are going to disagree about them, about their form, their meaning, their significance. But I think there is some remarkable art in this park. I am particularly obsessed with the great Series Three and Four, both in Corten steel. For me, they have a beauty and a complexity that belongs only to the very finest sculpture.

They remind me of those giant anti-tank defences that were used during the Second World War, lining the beaches at the Normandy landings. But they also have a purely formal logic. As with so much of Jeffrey's work, the series unfolds like a single line of argument across multiple sculptures. As with the way that technology becomes more efficient over time, or natural organisms evolve over millennia, Rubinoff adds features, removes them, plays with them, pushes his forms, his facets, his joints, until all that can be said has been said, the series ends, and a new one begins.

In my opinion, an artistic site of this size and importance needs to be talked about and needs to be written about. It only has not been because of its geographical position, far away from the great cultural capitals of Europe and the United States. And it has not been because Jeffrey has chosen to reject the art market, the art world, and work on his vision in isolation. But these forums help us talk about what's going on here, with openness, with honesty, with intelligence. And they also give us an opportunity to write about what's going on here.

Now as many of you know, I am here to oversee, to assemble, and to edit a book—the first book—about Jeffrey's work. This book currently has the rather unimaginative working title *The Art of Jeffrey Rubinoff*. I am pleased to announce that it is under contract now with Douglas & McIntyre, a major publisher of academic books here in Canada.

The book is a collection of essays from academics and writers in various fields. And all of them are given liberty to respond to the park, and the art within it, in their own way. If you remember, I brought four authors to the park last year: Dr. Aaron Rosen, from King's College, London; Dr. Tom Stammers, from the University of Durham; Dr. James Purdon, from the University of Cambridge; and Dr. Alex Massouras, from the Tate in London. All of them delivered fantastic pieces, which you will have the opportunity to read and discuss over the next couple of days.

Aaron Rosen attempted to connect Jeffrey's ideas as well as his art to his Jewish identity. And I am pleased to say that the piece also found its way into the Jewish Quarterly, where it was lavishly illustrated and very well received.

James Purdon wrote a fascinating essay that placed Rubinoff's work within a broader study of the cultural associations of steel.

Tom Stammers wrote what we all agree was a staggeringly erudite essay that explored intersections between Jeffrey Rubinoff's cultural ideas and those of the Enlightenment.

And last but not least, Alex Massouras, himself an artist, produced a very poetic study of the importance of the ruin in Jeffrey's work.

These are just the first four. I will be writing an essay about those old favourites of mine, Series Three and Four, that I mentioned earlier. Dr. Maria Tippett and Prof. Peter Clarke, both of them regulars here on Hornby, will also be contributing to the book. Jenni Pace Presnell is going to be producing a really detailed chronology over the summer that will sit right at the front of the book, and will be a great help to future researchers. And Prof. Jay Winter at Yale, who did so much to get these forums up and running, has agreed to write a foreword.

But now I would like to introduce the four writers I have brought to Hornby this year. I will proceed alphabetically. So I begin with Mark Breeze. Mark is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker, a Harvard-trained architect, and a University of Cambridge-based academic. He has practised architecture in Beijing, Boston, London, and New York, working with Norman Foster and Colin St John Wilson. And back in 2012, he was producer, architectural consultant, and field director on the internationally acclaimed documentary about the rebuilding of Ground Zero, which he made with Discovery Channel and Dreamworks, under Steven Spielberg. Here, he plans to write something about the architecture and spatial dynamics of the sculpture park itself.

Next, we have Joan Pachner, who has joined us from the United States. Joan is an independent art historian who specializes in modern sculpture and lectures at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She is one of the world's leading authorities on the work of David Smith—an artist to whom Jeffrey owes so much. She has written widely on Smith's life and work, and her most recent book, which I believe was published at the beginning of last year, was a stunning volume on Smith, and was published by Phaidon. She comes with the blessing of the David Smith Estate, and I hope she can tease out some of the connections between the two artists in her essay.

Next, we have Barry Phipps. Barry is a British curator who has taught and studied philosophy, art history, and the history and philosophy of architecture at Warwick, Oxford and Cambridge. Barry, who is interested in the relationship between artistic practice and scientific research, has conceived and organized many exhibitions in the United Kingdom. And, as curator of the Churchill College art collection, where he and Jeffrey met, he runs his own kind of sculpture park, one that includes a series of great artworks, including a monumental piece by Barbara Hepworth. I am hoping that he might write about Jeffrey's working methods.

And last, but by no means least, is Frances Stonor Saunders. I have admired Frances' work for some time, so when I by chance met her at a dinner party last year, I quickly pounced. She is one of the most respected cultural commentators in the United Kingdom. She started her career as a filmmaker, and then in 1999 she published a remarkable book called *Who Paid the Piper?: CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, which showed how the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom bankrolled and supported a large amount of American Abstract Expressionism. As a Cold War specialist, as well as a specialist in many other things, I am hoping Frances will want to write a piece about Jeffrey Rubinoff within his Cold War context.

So now I have introduced the writers, I would like to very briefly outline how this forum will work. The first important thing to note is that we have dispensed with the usual format of papers being delivered. Many wonderful papers have been delivered here over the years, but I felt that the result was a lot of talking at this end of the room, and a lot of listening at that end of the room. And what I want to achieve this year is a lot of talking all around the room. I want us to all have a much more interactive conversation, as equals.

To do that, you will see I have structured the dialogue sessions six questions. These questions have been chosen for specific reasons: they are varied enough that they allow us to explore a wide range of issues pertaining to what we see at the park; they are phrased so that they can invite many different registers of response—'high-brow' and 'low-brow', theoretical, personal, and anecdotal; and they all focus on issues that our individual writers will eventually choose to write about.

I will begin by elaborating on the questions, then Jeffrey will respond briefly to them. And then the floor will be open to everyone here. Now it may be that the writer connected to that

subject would like to lead that discussion, or say something first. But it is also important that everyone feels comfortable to speak. It doesn't matter if you are an academic or not. It doesn't matter if you have an intellectual point to make, or a personal observation.

EDITOR'S NOTE

REGARDING THE FORUM DIALOGUES

The following dialogues were recorded and transcribed in their entirety.

Some comments were omitted, to emphasize those most relevant to the discussion. In limited cases, the order of the comments was rearranged to emphasize a continuing line of inquiry.

Editorial interventions in the text consisted of adding punctuation, changing word order, adding words, and removing unnecessary parenthetical phrases to make each speaker's intent clear. Colloquialisms and filler phrases were removed. Quotations and titles of written works and names of authors were checked and corrected where necessary.

To maintain clarity and narrative flow, no typographical indications of these edits were used in the dialogues.

Full transcripts can be made available upon request.

All errors in interpretation remain the responsibility of the editor.

Subsequent editions may include changes and corrections requested by dialogue participants.

WELCOMING REMARKS

Jeffrey Rubinoff: This is the seventh forum since we began, and I would like to welcome everybody. We have a wonderful collection of papers here from last year's forum that individually are unusual, but when taken collectively shows us the diversity of the reaction to the work, and I think that is a terrific thing. Many thanks to James for that, because he's the one who suggested that we take this approach.

This year we have a new group of writers, and of course our intent is to have the same kind of freedom of expression within their essays.

I appreciate this wide diversity of ways looking at the work as we go into these conversations today. I do not want to dominate the conversation—I have no interest in that, because I have so much interest in hearing what others have to say about the work. But I will comment on a few things that maybe people wouldn't have thought of, in relationship to the discussion questions that James Fox has posed.

James Fox: The Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park is an extraordinary place, and these forums, I think offer a unique opportunity for anyone who is interested in art, or interested in the psychology of the artist, to learn a huge amount. So that is why I keep coming back—I learn more and more every single year.

Then of course there is the work itself. Now, we are going to discuss the work over the next couple of days and I hope we are going to disagree about it—that is my ambition anyway. I hope we can disagree about its form, its meaning, its significance. But I think this park contains some genuinely remarkable art. I remain obsessed with the great Series Three and Series Four pieces, those huge Corten steel pieces.

For me, those pieces possess a power, and a beauty, and a complexity that is the hallmark of the very finest sculpture. As with so much of Jeffrey's work, his series unfold like a single line of argument, over multiple pieces. As with the way technology becomes more efficient over time, and organic natural organisms evolve over millennia.

In my opinion, this park is a site of such cultural importance, and is such a rare thing, and it is of such scale, that it needs to be talked about. It needs to be written about as well, and that is obviously the point of these forums. I think the only reason it has not been written about, the only reason it has not been talked about much, is partly because of its geographical position. And I think it is partly because Jeffrey has rejected the art world and the art market that provides the institutions, that enables these things to be discussed.

DIALOGUE SESSION 1

James Fox: So the question for this session is: “How important is the Sculpture Park to understanding the sculptures within it?”

How can we make sense of the park? What are its principles? How does it differ from other comparable sculpture parks?

For those of us who have actually been to other sculpture parks, what’s different about this one or how it works? And what’s similar?

Most importantly, how does the park affect our understanding of the individual sculptures? If the sculptures were moved to different parts of the park, or to different places altogether, how would that change those pieces?

And should we see the park simply as a setting, a beautiful setting for this great art, or should we see it as a kind of art work in its own right?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I would like to overlay something that I have probably never said before, so this is why it will go right to the originality of the park.

The land was bought 41 years ago with the understanding that, like David Smith, I would likely end up with 95% of my inventory, and that I did not want to have any orphans.

The first order of business was to work the land, and remove the little fences and other things to have a vision of the land itself,

which automatically turned towards what the conceptual sculptors were doing.

That included Walter De Maria and his *Lightning Field*, and James Turrell's *Roden Crater*. Michael Heizer was out in the middle of the desert working on a project, probably for the last 40 years, as well. So there were a number of conceptual sculptors I was aware of, and I had this large piece of land, which seemed almost like a large three-dimensional canvas.

However, I decided on a different way of approaching the project itself.

So the first thing was locating a spot, which is right outside of the barn, where each piece could stand on its own. This is really important, because I foresaw that the pieces should and could still go to show.

I was always waiting for a turnaround in the art market—for it to come back to the historical sense of what sculpture was. The purpose in beginning this project was to restate the importance of art history itself rather than undercutting it, in order to build avant-garde work.

And so there was an important choice at that particular point, which was, Do these pieces stand on their own?

It did not matter what size it was, if a piece could stand on its own in this environment, then I felt like it was a strong enough piece on its own.

There was a particular spot that I chose to photograph the work, just outside the barn. The incredible sculptural environment there has the ability to squash a piece, which is not something you would think of, once they are seen collectively.

So at the beginning, I wanted a very different project than the other sculptors were doing, which was dedicated to a single project. That has meant that some pieces might inevitably be sold, so they couldn't really be placed on the property as part of the permanent park.

So siting the work in those early years was not one of the questions. Rather it was putting the land together in such a way that it could be used as a park. This is something that has been going on since 1973, and really done intensely since I've met John Kirk in 1987, and we have drained it and done all the other land shaping.

- - -

In the 1990s, I was doing the smaller pieces and they are easier to show.

A friend of mine and I set up a gallery at 18th and 6th Streets in New York in which we did historical shows. We chose pieces or had pieces chosen for us that were part of our own history. We had incredible shows where we could show all the way back to our own history in Modernism. They were either contributed by artists, or contributed by dealers, and it was a time when the dealers themselves were having troubles in selling small sculpture. So having the work available for showing was one of the most important parts of that particular stage.

In about 1998 I was finally disgusted enough with New York that I started to place the pieces on the land here. Placing the pieces here meant finding the exact right sites for them; if the site was not exactly right, then we would re-landscape the site to make it perfect for those pieces. The pieces would 'ring in' into certain areas of the park. So this period from which you see the interrelationship of the work and the park was from 1998 on.

It was not something that was conceived of from the beginning. From the beginning, this land was meant to be a repository for work that would go to show as I did many times, and would come back. So I kept the work collected in a small area just above the barn in order to be able to have it accessible, grab it, and send it off to show.

So in 1998, we really began to spread out the work in the park. But because I had been party to every aspect of landscaping within the park, I understood where the correct siting might be.

I would just spend time thinking, well, where should this piece go, and we would try it.

In most cases, we could find the place where the piece ‘rang in,’ but in several cases we found that we couldn’t find it, and that the piece was in the wrong place. It would just be very upsetting to me; I couldn’t stand it—John knows this.

So we would find another site, until eventually we found the place for that piece to ‘ring in’ to the rest of the park. So that is how pieces were sited in the landscape of the park.

So in the beginning, the idea was not to dedicate the work to a single use, but rather to dedicate the work to a continuation of art history, the challenge of art history itself being the basis of a creative run.

So when you look at the park, you have to account for this history and that it could have spread either way. In my mind both things were going on in parallel at the same time.

Peter Clarke: Jeffrey, a couple of times at least you seem to place great emphasis on the unique problem of siting a particular piece of sculpture. And yet it seems to me that when we go into the park, it is the grouping of the series that also has a great significance. Could you just reconcile that and explain what you really meant there?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Each piece was done one at a time so that it was an evolutionary statement. After the third piece of the first series, I determined that rather than ever having five, or six pieces going at the same time, such as when I did the earlier work, I would do one at a time.

Since, after the third piece, I felt like I had crossed the threshold into original art using this history. Building on this evolutionary history then, each piece would have to have add something that was never part of the work before. And that was measurable.

That is the reason why I saved even the first several pieces. I knew as an avant-garde artist, those first few pieces were career breakers—the kiss of death from a dealer is that you are ‘derivative’.

It is actually ridiculous, since every other artist forever has relied on his predecessors. Only moronic avant-garde novelty can possibly come up with the concept of ‘derivative’.

But in any case, I knew that that would be the kiss of death of that first series. But what I also realized was is that if I was going to dedicate myself to the growth of this history, then I would have to be able to demonstrate how the pieces grew one at a time. And so the grouping of the series is such that it can show that part.

By keeping the grouping of the work in order of series, at least in the first area, then each one of those pieces can demonstrate its particular change.

Since the commitment was to the question of whether or not art history could provide a creative run, then it should become self-evident. So each piece became an argument in our history for that originality.

Joan Pachner: Did you ever consider showing the work of others?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Yes, the difficulty is that once the work became placed, it took up all that space. So now the only space I have left is for the pieces that I actually I am working on currently.

Joan Pachner: What kind of changes would you envision? What do you think is going to happen as trees grow, what do you do with them?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: We calculate quite a bit on those trees, on how they will they grow, where they will grow, and what we will do when they grow.

We planted the perimeter with trees to block out the power lines.

So we know which trees will grow to which height and when. We are now expecting that 50-foot power poles will be put in one day.

So we are calculating the trees for that to match that particular circumstance.

We found that when we planted these black pines they are self-pruning. They grow to maybe 25 feet high, and then the tops fall off. This is absolutely great if you want a low set of trees.

For example, if you plant a fir out in the open, chances are it is going to spread out and only grow to about 30 or 40 feet. Eventually we may have to trim some of them, so we are very aware of these patterns all the time.

Barry Phipps: I am really interested in the process of siting the work. When you talk about having a sculpture in the wrong place, and then changing it, could you elaborate about what was considered wrong with the site before you changed it?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: That is really interesting. I know only that it would irritate me and make me very agitated and very upset. Some of these pieces were right in my path to the studio. So I was upset every time I went to the studio and every time I left the studio.

Barry Phipps: I mean, is it visually something that is out of kilter with the landscape?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Absolutely. It is just the wrong place for that piece. The first piece of Series One was placed right after it was created, and it has never been moved. So that piece hit the right space. It rang in and there has never been a reason to move it; the same applies to the third piece. So they have never been moved, but the other ones have all been shifted around one way or the other. Very often I question, Does this piece work with any sense of longevity? So the siting is part of the whole composition and I ask, Is this siting working within the composition?

Now the other thing is that I've tried to do is to site the pieces so that you see them individually from the maximum number of perspectives. So the object is to have as few clustered together as possible.

James Fox: Barry, as someone who also has to position sculptures in spaces, do you have any principles you use? Or are you just thinking of the best site for an individual sculpture, and doing that one by one? Or are you thinking about a path that you might take through the work, or a perspective of a larger whole?

Barry Phipps: All of those things in fact. I was thinking about this yesterday when we arrived and Jeffrey was talking about counterpoint, because that is one of the basic principles of siting the work. You want to play off things either symmetrically or asymmetrically. You create both an independence for each work, but also a context of a wider setting.

Joan Pachner: And are there principles attached?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I think it is pretty instinctual; you have to have this ability to perceive visual counterpoint. It is like, for example in aural counterpoint, being able to hear all the voices involved.

Joan Pachner: Is that something the artist would share with the curator?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I would love that to happen and it does happen at times.

So the people who can site sculpture really have to have the ability to compose within the realm of visual counterpoint. And it is not just the visual counterpoint of the pieces going into a white cube. That is the smallest part of it. It becomes much larger once you take the pieces out into the natural environment.

Mark Breeze: I have a more fundamental question, of what is the sculpture park? I mean is it Hornby island? Does that include Vancouver Island? I ask because the park is on such an open site, framed by the very distant view of the mountains from millions of years ago. So it is ambiguous where the edge of the park is.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: The visual counterpoint is actually infinite, so yes you are dead on, there are no limits to it. I agree with you, there are no edges. I will admit to one thing, I have been very proprietary with the views over the property, and so we have screened out the neighbours. So that the park has a sense of its wildness all

the way around and on all of our borders. The original farm was bare land, fence post to fence post, and that has all been changed by the planting that we've done.

James Fox: So you are curating the views both in and out?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Yes.

Dick Goldman: I have a local response because I started seeing the park from way up there on top of Mt. Geoffrey. I originally thought there were cows here and it was a farm, but then the cows never moved. And then over time we got to know Jeffrey and Betty, and got closer to the works over the decades and spent more time here. So one thing I would suggest is to come more often and in different seasons, because to me, the pieces and how the viewer relates to them, change so much between May and October.

Not only do they change as they would normally as you walk around them, but also as the weather and the light change throughout the day. This, at least to me, changes how I see them and how I feel about them.

James Fox: John, I wonder what you think, as one who knows this park at all seasons. Do you think that the effect on the sculptures changes throughout the year, depending on the seasons?

John Kirk: Absolutely, I was talking to Mark about how you are seeing the park grass at the greenest of greens right in May. Now everything is growing and the leaves are on the trees. But if you come here in September, everything is brown. There is no attempt to water the grounds here. So in September, the park goes into its fall state of hibernation.

And of course, there is the changing light. In late fall, the low sunlight changes the art completely, different shadows. A couple of weeks ago this spring we were viewing the sculpture, and the shadows that were being cast with the early morning lights were incredible. You do not get those shadows in the fall.

You suddenly have two pieces of sculpture, the real piece and then the shadows. Throughout the whole year into the winter you get gray light and so you have no shadows, so the pieces can glow so very much.

Maria Tippett: Jeffrey, you told me, and I quote, “Once I spread the works out, I realized I would never move them again.” What would happen if the director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) came along and said, we would like to give you a big show?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Where would they show them? That is an interesting question, because the park will live on in perpetuity, so I am fixing the spots. Each and every piece now is locked down to its spot using GPS waypoints, because otherwise in the future they could be moved. I realized that their locations have to be fixed.

Maria Tippett: We do see the vista and the sculptures against the vista and how beautiful that is. But I remember on one of the tours you were talking about Mount Geoffrey. I always think that makes this place very special, because a lot of where you have sited the work plays off different angles in the mountain. So it would be hard to move some of them from where you've put them, in relation to the mountain.

Barry Phipps: My question remains, whether you can take the sculptures out of the park and put them somewhere else and still have the same or similar relationship with them?

James Fox: This is a question that goes to the curators now. Obviously the sculpture park and the beautiful setting have a huge and wonderful impact on the sculptures. But as curators, can it be quite intimidating if the environment in which you are siting the work is so overwhelmingly beautiful? Is there a risk that it can overwhelm the artworks within? You probably do not have that problem with the White Cube Gallery, but it would be interesting to know from a curator's perspective.

Joan Pachner: I have two comments. I spent the better part of ten years in and out of Storm King Art Center, where I still go, and that is one of the few places that has a commensurate point of view, where there are some works that are site specific.

Some works have the land adapted to the pieces, and there are many different environments within the overall park. It also was oriented towards a distant landscape. At one point, the park

actually owned its mountain viewscape, which it sold to a nature conservancy that agreed to preserve it in perpetuity.

So it really completely is on the same wavelength. If a work of yours were to go to a place like Storm King, that would be a unique instance of a like-minded place. But I cannot imagine it going to almost any other setting.

There are other sculpture parks, and most of them are oriented in sort of a British modeled interior rather than oriented to the exterior. I often think part of the problem people have with David Smith, is when his works are exhibited indoors.

I find them so naked because there is missing not just context, you've got a skeleton and no skin. It is just half a body. There are very few places I could imagine your work because the relationship here is so integral to the finished product.

James Fox: One of the things that I thought about when I first arrived was the Wagnerian concept of the 'Gesamtkunstwerk', the complete work of art.

It is about the artist's desire to control the conditions in which their art is seen, because these things are often made in the studio, which are the perfect conditions in some respect. Are we to think of the park as a complete work of art in that sense?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I think that we have to now. That is part of it. The first time I sent a piece away, was the piece that went to Marlborough in New York. That was a crowning achievement from Hornby Island. I hadn't even set the pieces up, they were sort

of hanging around, and when that piece left, it was like missing a tooth. I never recovered from that piece being moved, until I actually brought it back here. It was very painful, actually, and it was not even set up in any type of context or anything. I just missed that piece. So given the choice, I would think that I would keep them together. MoMA is welcome to come here.

Joan Pachner: I disagree with everyone. I could see your work in a gallery.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Well, it was designed to be able to live alone if it could survive this environment. This is a crushing environment for a sculptor, it is not a compatible environment at all. It offers so much, that the work itself seems so small, and so human, and so paltry in this environment. But if the piece is strong enough, it can stand on its own. So yes, you can show it on its own, but I cannot imagine it now.

Joan Pachner: We have taken icons for example, and paintings that were parts of frescoes, and hung them up on the walls of galleries. There has been that transition.

Barry Phipps: Just a small factual clarification here, Jeffrey. Is it literally true that there is not a single piece in this sculpture park that was made before the sculpture park existed?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Only these lower works were made off site. This is the early work.

Barry Phipps: That work was prior to the sculpture park?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Prior to being on Hornby. So it depends on when you want to mark the start of the sculpture park. Was there a sculpture park when I bought the land as a farm? Well, it was really meant to be a life repository for work.

At what point did it become a park? I think after I started working it.

Then it became the issue of it of whether or not the land itself would be the art, and to do a conceptual piece on the whole thing. I was imagining planting roses or sweet peas, and how I would do the planting so that you could see it from the air. That was when I was farming.

So where does the park begin? From my point of view, it was from the time that I bought it, but not really as an identity, because it did not have the work to become the identity.

James Fox: I have a question for Vaughn Neville. Vaughn, it is slightly different for painters, isn't it? How do you feel about selling a painting or seeing a painting go to show?

Vaughn Neville: There are a few that I wish had back, but sometimes I need to make a buck to keep working. I find this issue of siting really interesting too. It is a very intuitive thing. A painter runs into this, too. You can do a group of paintings that you like, and then you put it in a certain place and it just doesn't work. Then you just change around the placement, and it works.

Last summer I had a client that kept coming. He wanted a big piece for his brand new house. They are rolled up. These big things are on stretchers and he'd take them home and at least 3, 4, or 5 times he'd come back and I would say, "You know there are other artists. If you are not finding the right piece, it is okay for me, you know." But he kept digging, and then he finally found a piece that looked like it actually belonged in his house, like it was meant to be in his house. That is a curious sensibility about artwork.

Mark Breeze: I am still trying to define what we mean by sculpture parks. What I am interested in is the question of, is this a park for sculpture, or is it a sculpture park for people?

Because it is an incredibly powerful experience coming here for the first time, and it feels very solitary and sort of incredibly personal. You move from sculpture to sculpture, but there has never been a sense of scale, perspective and other human interaction given by seeing crowds of people moving through it, and interacting and responding to it in their own way. You experience the sculptures in nature and not with people.

I think that there is something very powerful about that, and also the way you are curating it to be very controlled as well. It always remains a very powerful experience. It is not a mass attraction.

I am interested in whether that is a deliberate approach, that you only want five people here at once. Are they supposed to move all together, or is it supposed to be a very personal route around the work, followed by the next person?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Being in a small place, you know that there are only going to be a limited number of people who are going to go through the park more than once or twice.

So what we have done is have distinct openings. Before this year we would open three times per year, to the public. Throughout the year I would volunteer to take very small groups of people on artist accompanied tours, which allows them to see the work the way that we are talking about.

It is like walking through the woods in a small group.

But then there are the public openings, when several hundred visitors attend.

When my partner Betty and I visited Storm King back in 1986, we went on a Sunday from New York City. It was an incredibly beautiful October day and there couldn't have been more than twenty people in the entire park, which is much larger than this one, which was really quite incredible. We had the feeling that we could actually look at the work and walk around. What was your impression at that point, because there were very few people in the park, do you remember?

Betty Kennedy: Yes, I do recall that, because I had never seen sculptures sited that way on such a large piece of property before.

Those were early days in setting up this park. Being able to walk through some of the tall grass and watch it moving the way we do here. That was quite a magnificent experience.

Joan Pachner: That was actually during the early days of their tall grass program. You actually have to come back because it has matured quite a bit.

Betty Kennedy: What I wanted to also add on the question of these public openings, was that we have these wonderful volunteers in Heather, Susan, Vaughn, Dick, and John, who are out on the land making sure that people do not go into the pond, do not climb on the sculptures, do not go into our house. There can actually be anywhere up to 100 people at a time walking around, and it is quite wonderful.

Karun Koernig: In fact I was just going to say on the openings that we have had, it is quite a different scenario, because we have children, dogs, and many people milling around, and people sitting down next to a sculpture or talking. So it is a much different visual experience.

We do not have openings in the spring, because the main tourist season is the summer, but for this forum it is a perfect time, both because of the greenness and light, and the academic calendars. So you are all seeing it in a bit of a different way than most visitors.

Craig Willms: I am most interested in how we talk about siting and 'site specific' in the sculpture park. I mean, 'site specific' I think is a term that is not thrown about; there are different degrees, such as 'site adjusted' or 'determined'.

Various people here have said, Well, I can imagine Rubinoff's sculptures in very few other places, or, maybe in the gallery, or, maybe many places.

One of the essays in James Fox's forthcoming book brought up the *Tilted Arc* controversy. In the case of *Tilted Arc*, it is one place or it is no place. It was built for the site. It loses everything once it is not there, and in fact it was removed, cut up and stored, and Richard Serra's not allowing it to be anywhere else.

It seems you speak of 1998 as being some kind of turn, where you start permanently siting the sculptures. What series were you working on at the time? Where exactly was that series placed in the park? It would be very difficult to site or show anywhere else, considering that you've done a lot to manufacture these sites as well, in some cases.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I would have been working on Series Six at that time.

But the sculpture sites were all planned independently at one point or another; however, it was less the case that the sites were specific to the pieces. It was a matter of finding the right piece for the specific sites that already had been designed and built.

So up until 1998 we were still creating sites. We would have a flooded area that needed a pond and so it needed good drainage.

If you put the pond in, you could then take the earth out of that pond and accentuate the natural contours of the land, and have a better site for a piece of sculpture by virtue of actually draining the property. So you'd have both things working together, and that was going on well into 2000. Once I realized the park was full, I went into the upper regions, which were far more difficult to deal with.

What was important about 1998 was that I was fed up with New York.

My proposition was that you make it in New York or you do not make it anywhere else. So my only interest was to show the pieces in New York, partly because there were people in New York who knew who David Smith was. They were just so much more knowledgeable about sculpture there than anywhere else that I had been. So it was a 'New York or nothing' proposition.

We had exhausted New York by 1998. We had our own show of these little pieces that anyone could buy and fit in their apartment, and they weren't expensive. We did not sell them. We did the same type of show with the Beadleston Gallery. He was right at 57th and 5th across the street from Tiffany's. He did not sell anything either. Nothing was selling, and if nothing sells, in a dealer's mind, that is it. They are not museums. They do not redo.

So in 1998 I said, Forget about New York. It is time to come home. It is time to concentrate on what you had planned all these years anyway.

Jenny Pace Presnell: I would like to add to the original question. How important is the sculpture park to understanding

Jeffrey's assessment of art history, and his efforts to intervene in or contribute to it?

I think I understood the principles of visual counterpoint here for the first time ever, after repeated visits. I think using the first piece in Series One as an introduction before you go over to the hill and see the whole park unfold, is a really wonderful summary of counterpoint.

Jeffrey makes a point of asking everybody to just stop and walk around that piece and understand why the top planar piece is situated exactly where it is. And then we can think about how it reflects the changing of seasons.

I think what would have surprised me in the first couple visits, I now immediately begin to see when I come here. I now see counterpoint in the landscape, which thanks to Jeffrey, now I see everywhere.

I see now how Jeffrey has engaged with the cave painters or Michelangelo. This particular thread of art history that he has identified, is really being key to understanding the humanist impulse to creating harmony in our relationships with one another and in our institutions. I think it is really important to come to the park repeatedly if possible, to develop a nuanced and layered appreciation for Jeffrey's thinking and his efforts to engage. I do not see this as possible outside the park now.

Karun Koernig: There is a piece in Series Six that I really like, Series Six – Cleo 2, which is a tripod piece with a sphere and it is very, very reed-like. The photo that Jeffrey took of it has these bulrushes in the background whose colour even echoes the Corten steel used in the sculpture.

There are references to naturalistic images and subject matter that becomes really obvious in later series around the 1998 time-frame. Jeffrey, how much did the site, or natural features of the site inspire you at that time?

I am also thinking about colour, because there are very specific colours of this landscape. Maybe this Canadian landscape is part of your perception, the blues, the slate blues in the water and mountains. When we are working on designing graphic materials for the park, I know that slate blue is a color that you like me to use. How do the emerald greens and the specific colors of the trees relate to the sculpture?

Then there are formal aspects of the sculpture of that time that become naturalistic: Series Eight, which is the 'vertebrae series', and Series Six, which echoes the body plans of the creatures of the Burgess Shale, which was of course first discovered in British Columbia. Are these valid connections in your mind or just something we are seeing?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I think it is valid, but it is one of those things that have become my breathing environment. I breathe it, and it becomes very hard, unless I am out of it, to be as strongly aware of it, because it is just part of what it is that I do.

I really felt like those pieces were really just incorporated into this sense of growing out of the landscape.

DIALOGUE SESSION 2

James Fox: The question I would like to pose is, is there anything particularly Canadian, or North American, about Rubinoff's ideas and work? Jeffrey Rubinoff is a Canadian and his work is meant to be seen within the context of a very Canadian landscape. Can we therefore call it Canadian art in that way?

Does Jeffrey share anything in common with other artists working in this remarkable environment?

Or is it more useful to think of him as belonging to a North American school of art?

Or really should we abandon national identity altogether, and think of him in a very different way?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I would like to think that art history is international obviously. So I wouldn't touch this question with a 10-foot pole myself.

Maria Tippett: Jeffrey is, to my mind, a Canadian sculptor. Several things happen in Canada that we should take into consideration. Up until the Second World War, and even before, Canadian painting was dominated by landscape paintings. Some of you may have heard of the Group of Seven. Landscape painting was sort of a nationalist thing. After the war, Canada very much turned its back on Britain and wanted to forge a closer relationship with the Americans.

There was this school of art called the Emma Lake School in Northern Saskatchewan, and every summer they would meet. And from the late 1950s on, people like Clement Greenberg came up, and Barnett Newman came out of this school.

Out of this school came someone named Robert Murray from Vancouver, who is their painter, but became a sculptor, and Ronald Bladen also from Vancouver.

Both of those artists then went to the United States, made their careers in the US and lived in the US, and subsequently died in the US. When Jeffrey was studying in Oklahoma, Robert Murray came down and gave courses. So, this was a circular thing.

This is just one little example of what was going on in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Canadian artists were going down to the United States. Some of them stayed, some came back. Jeffrey went there too for education, but he came back.

There were also local artists in London, Ontario—Walter Redinger and Ed Zelenak—who Jeffrey exhibited with. I found a photograph in *Canadian Art* from 1970, of one of your first exhibitions in London, Ontario, the Co-op Exhibition.

And one of your works is there, it is hardly recognizable, but it is quite interesting.

So we have to be careful with influences. Jeffrey saw his first Antony Caro exhibition in Toronto when he set up his studio in 1971. And we could go back to Barnett Newman's broken obelisk from 1963. So, there are all of these influences.

Before the war, many Canadian artists would go to France, if they were French Canadian, or to London. After the war it was to the

United States. That did not make them American artists, just because their influences were international.

Mark Breeze: Jeffrey, do you see yourself as North American or Canadian? Hornby Island is on the very edge of Canada. A lot of people came to Hornby Island in the 1960s and 1970s as a rejection against American foreign policy.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I have to say that I see art as not really having any borders.

I was very unhappy when the Canada Council was set up in 1967—here was a chance to create an international market for Canadians. At the time Bob Arlinger, Ed Zelenak, Bob Murray, Ronald Bladen were equal to anything that anyone was doing in the world, and I felt that a terrible error grew out of the creation of the Canada Council.

Firstly, it was meant to be a political entity that pre-empted and co-opted that radicalism in Quebec. The radicalism in Quebec was about saving Quebec culture from North American culture. And so the way to get rid of these radicals was to buy them off.

So part of it was already automatically political on that basis. The rest of it was fairy dust for the rest of Canada. And in that fairy dust for the rest of Canada, I really thought that the wise thing would have been to put the money into bringing in international artists to show with Canadian artists.

That would have been the best use of the money, because it would have shown Canadian artists alongside international artists, and

shown the ability of Canadians to stand on their own internationally.

Instead, it became an imitation of the CIA in the 1950s, part of a state supported avant-garde. I find that to be horrible, because as the market commodifies art as a monetary value, so too nationalism commodifies art as a political value. I think that they are equally bad for art history.

I saw how that happened in Europe. The first glimmer and dream of the European Union was around 1953 or so. Once you look to a common currency and a common government, the thing that you had to sell that with was preservation of culture.

Once you did that, you now had bureaucrats picking and choosing what art was, and the concept of freedom in terms of the art was already owned by the politics. So, that is the secondary aspect of commodification that I rebelled against.

So I do not care whether they call it Canadian art or not, makes no difference to me. I wanted to recover the idea that art belongs to humanity, and not just to some type of nationalist political goal, which I think is really, really bad for art.

Maria Tippett: Just to add to that, Jeff, the Canada Council really started giving out money about 1959.

But one thing that happened in Canada that we haven't addressed, is the Canada Council's support of Native art, of Inuit sculpture, and of Northwest Coast Indian art. A lot of money from the Canada Council went into that, and also that is what the public wanted.

It was to a certain extent guilt-driven because of how Native Canadians and Inuit had been treated in the past. And that art form, that sculptural art form of the Inuit, took the place of modernist sculpture. The kind of work that Jeffrey was doing that was emerging. So if we had not had that movement toward Inuit sculpture, which of course exists to this day, I think the cultural landscape of the country would be very different.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: It is interesting because I have not seen any kind of an open debate on this at all, and after all these years, it really should happen.

I do not know why I concentrate on 1967 pieces, but there was something about 1967 where the Canada Council really became funded after the Front de Libération de Québec started the mailbox bombing. And that was the year that de Gaulle gave his “Vive Québec Libre” speech, then suddenly the Canada Council money was just flowing like a flood.

Joan Pachner: So is there a conflict between your universal ambitions for art, and an interpretation so local to this place, to this very particular light, these very particular colours, which says, It is all about the Canadian landscape.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Would we say that the art of Florence is all about Florence—I do not think so. Florence happens to be incidental to the great international art of Florence, and the statement that has for humanity.

Joan Pachner: But that is the place that grew it, the soil from which it comes.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I know, but from an artist's point of view that is the result. It is a gift to humanity. I do not see a political position with great art from this particular period. There is some art, not all, from the period of the Abstract Expressionists, that are gifts to humanity, and it doesn't matter whether the CIA was behind it or not.

James Fox: But it is very easy just to re-read retrospectively the nature of art in the past, and to say what Michelangelo was doing in Florence was just actually about humanity. Florence was one state that was warring with many other Italian states. What a lot of the artists in Florence were doing was very political, it was about the identity of the state. Michelangelo's David was a great symbol of Florentine national identity. Those identities have dissolved into the past, so we can appropriate and celebrate David as a universal symbol of humanity. Whereas at the time it was not considered that, and it was not intended as that.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I have tended because of that to consider myself as an artist historian of art history. I do not deny anything that you are saying. I think there is a different value judgment—and the same thing goes with the Cold War issues—between the perspective of an art historian, and that of the artist historian of art. The emphasis for the artist is what is alive and well in this art, and not what is dead and gone.

Frances Stonor Saunders: Alright, you make a very important point about contexts, whether it's Canadian art, Cold War or whatever context. The art can be viewed, and it is very useful in many ways to view it in the context or the circumstance in which it's produced, but it cannot be reduced to those circumstances.

And what you seem to be articulating, both in words and in your work, is the idea of some kind of code, almost like a 'songline',¹ a codified chain of transmission which stands outside of the official canon of the way in which art history is made.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: When we look at this beautiful light of Florence, say in a Leonardo painting, the truth is that none of us could stomach Florence in those years. The bodies were stacked like cord wood in the streets. The garbage and sewage ran in the gutters. The smell would have been just absolutely overwhelming to a modern person. But we do not perceive any of that in that wonderful painting that has that beautiful golden red glow.

So it is separating the value of the art from all of the other political things. As an artist if I listen to a great Bach piece, I do not think what was going on politically at this particular point. I am looking for the art within it.

That is an artist's approach to art, which is a little bit different. It does not mean that it is right or wrong. It is just that coding that I have perceived for originality, that artists pass to each other. This is quite independent even of the political stance the artist takes, or any other thing that they might have dedicated their lives to.

1 By singing the songs in the appropriate sequence, Indigenous [Australian] people could navigate vast distances, ... through the deserts of Australia's interior. The continent of Australia contains an extensive system of songlines, some of which are of a few kilometres, whilst others traverse hundreds of kilometres...
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Songline> (April 20, 2015)

The judgement is, does that de Kooning work, or doesn't that de Kooning work? Not, is it an icon of de Kooning, but, is it a working de Kooning? There are not that many working de Koonings, but there are a few. When you look at it from that point of view, then not every de Kooning is good enough to be valuable from an artist's point of view.

Frances Stonor Saunders: There is one definition of great art—I cannot remember who came up with it—which is, “Great art is the art that makes the artist think about what they can do next.”

Jenni Pace Presnell: Jeffrey, what part of your perspective of the Cold War is informed by being Canadian?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Fear, great fear, is what I remember, from the 1950s—this great fear all the time. Our elementary school was out in the country, and they still used these great air raid sirens in the city, but they reached to all the way out to us. So we were adjacent to it all in London, Ontario, which was in the industrial belt. So when the Cuban missile crisis occurred, we actually felt there was no chance to survive.

Heather Goldman: Jeffrey, do you think being out here 1970s gave you a frontier spirit, being more individualized and isolated. Is this still in an environment that encourages your art?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I love the weather out here, even though most people might hate it, and it was raining a lot in those years, and it never bothered me.

I know the only two places in Canada where there were nuclear weapons was in North Bay, Ontario and in Comox, BC.² So we knew we were on Dr. Strangelove's map. I really was very conscious of the likely targeting plans aimed toward little Hornby Island.

James Fox: I think that academics should be aware of any essentialism, of trying to say there is a 'Canadianess' of art, or an 'Englishness' of art, or 'feminine' kind of art.

But I think that probably the reality is, people will probably never see a Rubinoff sculpture outside of Canada. And apart from the pieces in London Ontario, they will have to travel to this particular place in Canada to see them. So we cannot completely exclude that geographical location from the experience of this sculpture.

Karun Koernig: I think there is a difference between small 'c' geographic Canadian art and large 'C' nationalist Canadian Art. The idea of the landscape and nature as being so much a part of the Canadian identity, the rugged isolationism, the individualism of the West, does that really influence the art? Is it enough of a category that needs to be attached to the work to understand it better, or is it just an incidental?

² Comox is a town 20 km by air or water from Hornby Island (50 km by land), and which hosts Canadian Forces Base Comox.

Maria Tippett: I do not think Canadians have a copyright on the landscape. It is prominent in the history of Scandinavian art. And if you go to Munich and look at the artists of the Blaue Reiter, such Gabriele Münter, who were very interested in the Bavarian landscape. So Canadians grasp at what they can get, to differentiate themselves from the Americans.

DIALOGUE SESSION 3

James Fox: The question for this dialogue is: “How important is the sculpture of David Smith to understanding Rubinoff’s development as an artist?”

Jeffrey admits that he owes a huge amount to the American sculptor David Smith.

Indeed, his Series One works look very similar in many ways to those Cubi sculptures from the 1960s.

What is the nature of that relationship between the two artists? Why did Rubinoff look to Smith, rather than other sculptors?

What did he learn from him? And are there any other sculptors to whom we might try and draw comparisons?

So this isn’t, I suppose, just a question about Smith alone, it is also a question about artistic influence and where artists jump off from.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: The David Smith in the University of California Los Angeles sculpture garden is probably the strongest piece he ever did. When I wanted to actually reconnect with art history I used that piece. Because that piece, in my mind, was not only his best piece, but it is a piece that left all of his colleagues behind by a great distance. So that was one aspect of Smith as a point of departure.

But there is another thing about Smith that works for me that is probably not easily seen. The knowledge that he did not have a market allowed him to move from series to series, and experiment, and close a series. He did not have a dealer over his shoulder saying, I cannot sell that, do not give me that. Because he did not have a market, or had a very, very small market, he had a certain freedom to be able to move on from series to series. What I think makes my work unusual is that it moves on from series to series.

It is not an evident thing, because so many artists get branded. So they just keep doing variations of what they had done in the past. And that is a subtle difference that I think I learned from David Smith, to recognize that if you are only going to have a very small market, then you now have a tremendous amount of freedom to keep evolving.

Joan Pachner: The question that I posed was about the fields of David Smith in Bolton's Landing. What did you know, and when did you know it?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I've never been to Bolton Landing, but I have said that my handbook for David Smith was written by David Smith himself. It is *David Smith by David Smith*, published in 1969, and I bought it at that time.

An artist can look through a photograph and see what the other artist sees. I really believe that. If I did not believe it, I really would not be making art right now, because I think I see things that Michelangelo saw, that Rodin saw, that Leonardo saw. Different painters see, and they've taught me to see through their eyes as well. So that is when I saw the landscape. And a lot of Smith's

fields look imperfect, like the way my little field looked when I had overcrowded it, but I think I could see the way he was seeing those particular pieces. Since he photographed them himself, as I photograph my own work, I really felt that I was looking through his eyes at that work.

Karun Koernig: Jeffrey, I know you had gone through a period of not making art before starting again in 1980. Was there a particular connection to the time period when you started up again?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Well, I was not making art in the traditional way of looking at the art world, and the market itself, as my world. There were a number of other artists who did this. Michael Heizer went out into the desert and started creating this great cityscape out in the desert.

Then there was James Turrell out in the middle of the desert who is still working on *Roden Crater*. He's dedicated his life to that and it is probably his masterwork. Walter de Maria did *The Lightning Field*.

Karun Koernig: So you were aware of these projects at the time that you started working on sculpture again.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Yes, but I decided that I would take a very different approach because of this connection to art history. I wanted to test art history, rather than move on from it, or reject it

because that is what those artists did. They became very reclusive, very singular.

I somehow wanted to test art history to see whether or not I had the ability to actually deal with it, because I had never really dealt with it before. It was always a thing to learn from, use, and then reject. That was just the way avant-gardism worked. We really did not have any right to do it, I do not think; we were too young to actually understand the art history that we were rejecting.

Barry Phipps: Not being a Smith expert, I am interested in the relationship Smith had with his own sculpture park.

Joan Pachner: Well it was not a sculpture park. Smith lived at Bolton Landing, which was an 86-acre former farm that he had purchased, with a shack. He bought it in the 1930s and his wife, sculptor Dorothy Dehner, went up with him every summer.

They lived in Brooklyn in a rented apartment, and they would always give up the rental, pack everything in the car, and go upstate to Bolton Landing. In 1940 they decided to move there permanently, and for a couple of reasons. One reason was financial; it did not cost much to live up there. Even though they did not have any running water or electricity, they could farm, and poor Dorothy Dehner was pretty intrepid because those winters are brutal in the Adirondacks.

So when he went up to Bolton, he started putting work outside in a field. First in the late 1950s, and more intensively in the 1960s. Basically he would do it because they were too big to hang out in the studio. He would sometimes gather them in groups before

they would go for exhibitions. Later on, because in fact they did not sell, he would put them on bases and then just populate the fields. He was living alone because, of course, wives couldn't live with him after short periods of time. So it became his laboratory.

Just like how Jeffrey says he moves from work to work and became conscious of the series, he photographed his work because there was no one else to photograph it. In the process of photographing it, he naturally became its primary interpreter.

Barry Phipps: What about other people? I mean, obviously, he would receive visitors.

Joan Pachner: Yes, lots. He would have Clement Greenberg come in; Pollock would come; Helen Frankenthaler would come in; Motherwell would come; Alexander Liberman would come.

One thing that I feel is very different from Jeffrey, is that David Smith did maintain his connections to the New York art world. While Smith was isolated in many ways, he would talk at Bennington Centre for the Arts, which was not that far. I mean, everything's far from Hornby.

He had a running correspondence with many friends in the city, and he would go down to see shows. Jeffrey cannot do that, and I think you've chosen not to do that, so that gives his endeavour a much different trajectory.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: This is the Abstract Expressionist school itself. There was something about staying connected to New York as a lively thing, not just a market thing.

Joan Pachner: It was a community.

James Fox: Jeffrey, obviously, is very precise about his siting of the sculptures. Once you put them in place, you rarely move them. Was David Smith similarly strict about his positioning of his sculptures?

Joan Pachner: No, he would move them around. Sometimes he would take them down to the town dock and arrange them. People would watch. It would be like theatre in Bolton Landing: Okay, let's go and watch this weird sculptor. He just works at the dock and takes pictures. Okay, there is nothing better to do.

There was only one work that was considered 'permanent', in quotes. That was the *Tower of Winds*, and that was down by the pond, but otherwise, no. Things might come and go, and they would be moved around. He would reconsider their location, although moving them was a huge effort.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: That reminds me of when I would keep all the work all in a smaller area so that they could be lifted and moved. Because of the wetness of the fields, you could not otherwise get to them in the winter. That was so that they were available for

shows, the shows that really never came. But they were available. So I was probably on five or six acres, too. Gradually it just fills up, and you have no more space.

Joan Pachner: Smith actually put his in rows, so the siting of Jeffrey's work in general is much closer to Storm King than it is to the fields of David Smith.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Yes, but all of that is after 1998. As soon I moved them out of the four, five or six acres, I knew they were not going to be moved again—when the siting 'locks in.' But I knew that, and I purposefully did not move them because it said, Goodbye to New York.

Mark Breeze: David Smith's work evolved and changed a great deal, and it is interesting that you were so inspired by his '69 book *David Smith on David Smith*. Do you feel that that is the fixed point, and that is what you have taken, or were you very much actively trying to keep up with the dialogue of how he was being interpreted and how he was re-evaluated?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: The problem was that there had never been a retrospective show until 1982 at the Hirshhorn Museum. Betty and I were in New York dealing with dealers and we went down specifically, and spent that afternoon with the work. There were several pieces that I got to see that I had never seen before.

Some that were not in the 1969 book. So of the total collection of the Cubi series, which is about 20 pieces, I had actually seen four.

One that I really wanted to see was one that was in Dallas, and that one happened to have been in that show, which I was really happy with.

So did I stay tracking it? Yes, as much as I possibly could. I finally saw one at the Jerusalem museum in 1993. It was the David Smith at the Jerusalem museum. That was what really mattered.

James Fox: How great or wide an influence did David Smith have on Jeffrey's generation? Were there a number of sculptors who were trying to pick up where David Smith left off?

Joan Pachner: Actually it is an interesting question, because I actually have been thinking a fair amount about why in 1970 Jeffrey decided to focus on David Smith and not more land art, or conceptual art, or scatter pieces, and why he settled on David Smith.

You could think about Mark De Suvero, who was very affected by David Smith. But there are not as many as you might think. David Smith's influence peters out right around the time that Jeffrey became focused on it, which is something that interests me.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I was a painter when I went to graduate school, but the graduate school was headed by a sculptor. I was surrounded by sculptors, which I had never been around before.

When I went to undergraduate school, and discovered studio courses, which Canada did not have, it was as if I had been raised left-handed, but I was really right-handed.

The discovery that I actually am an artist, and this is not just a hobby or something that I was born with, but it is actually something that is very real in history, was greatly liberating.

I was greatly liberated as a painter, but the truth was that I was still being raised left-handed because there was no sculpture there.

Once I discovered sculpture, my first pieces were multimedia. They were laminated plywood and sometimes found objects and other things like that.

Those were my first sculptures.

Some of them were really quite successful in and of themselves. But one night I started cutting steel. With the sparks and the life of the material, it just became absolutely alive to me underneath my hands, and I said, "I am home. I have finally, finally come home."

It was all in that moment. It was revelatory to me.

Since then it has always been steel, and working on steel. The touch of it, the feel of it, the smell of it, the sight of it, all of those processes of steel itself have been my lifeblood as an artist, and for David Smith it was the same.

Joan Pachner: I also have another question for Jeffrey: Why choose David Smith's Cubi series?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I felt that that series was the strongest move on his part to resolve the issue of his work flattening out.

If one accepted David Smith as a great three-dimensional painter, then we could have ended it there, but David Smith himself would have had to accept himself as a great three-dimensional painter.

He was as irked by that criticism of his work, which obviously flattened out in two-dimensions—as I would expect him to be.

So it is not until the Cubi series that he seriously starts to work that out.

Even though I was totally aware of David Smith, as an avant-gardist I had to reject anything that he had done, saying, Look at what I have done. Look at that, that is really original.

My coming back to David Smith is coming back to art history itself. To test art history itself for a creative run. The art world that I wanted to be so much a part of in the 1960s, was dead to me by the 1970s.

So therefore it had to become far more internal, and to me it was this test of art history. It could have been a total failure. If I hadn't crossed these lines, I would have gone on and stayed a successful capitalist because it was already in my hands. Once I completed this third piece of the first series and crossed this line into originality, I was as lost in the work, as I was when I discovered steel itself.

As you can see, the creative run happened. So I have no argument with that, and I did the right thing.

Karun Koernig: My question is, after the first three pieces, did you ever go back to David Smith for any inspiration? Was there any further influence on some of the later series—perhaps in your thinking?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: My goal was to get self-generating work.

The initial pieces grow from David Smith.

These are ‘career breakers’ from an art world point of view, and are an acknowledgement of growth from that origin.

However, from a point of view of art making, they are opposite to ‘career breaking’; they are critical, as they moved step by step by step.

So after the third piece of the first series, I knew I was onto something, in that I was past David Smith. But I was not past him for what I owed him, I was past him for where he had gone.

We have to remember that he died at 59, and I am 69. So I have outlived him by 10 years.

So we do not know what he might have done between age 59 and 69, and how much he might have progressed in this particular direction.

Half, maybe even two thirds of his work, is not as strong as I would like it to have been in resolving the question of whether they are beautiful three-dimensional paintings.

Even though they are stainless steel, few of them really do make it to the 360-degree round, and he said that he was looking at this goal.

The culmination, in my mind, is the piece that is in the University of California Los Angeles sculpture garden. So I look at Smith's work as an end point. Probably were Smith still alive, I would have destroyed those first pieces of mine.

I would have just buried them because they would have remained studies. But these are stepping stones into history, from my point of view, and therefore are worth preserving.

DIALOGUE SESSION 4

James Fox: Let's begin this session with my first question and that is: "Is Jeffrey Rubinoff a Cold War artist?" Many of you probably have read Jeffrey's essay about being born in the shadow of the end game. He was born in 1945 at a crucial early moment in the Cold War. Your favourite film, I think, is Doctor Strangelove. You have a fascination with the military industrial complex. You talk about it a lot, and you have taken up residence in a region that is filled with draft dodgers. Indeed, this community in British Columbia seems in some ways a product of what was happening politically at the time.

So are we right therefore to call Jeffrey Rubinoff a Cold War artist? Or a political artist? If so, what are his perspectives on the Cold War, and how do those views differ from other artists of his generation?

And I suppose the broader question is, Why has the Cold War had this huge impact, this huge cultural footprint if you like, over the years?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I do not know that I would determine that I am a Cold War artist. What I have said is that the role of the artist is to witness existence itself, and so issues that arise to challenge existence itself are the business of the artist.

If the artist is a witness, then he also has to be a witness to those things that actually threaten it.

I pointed out in my paper “Existential Realities of Post Agriculture,” the amount of armaments that still exist could in fact precipitate something close to a nuclear winter, if not a nuclear winter itself. And there is a history of how we have arrived here.

I have also pointed out in that paper that we were also on the verge of another threat to our total existence, and that is transgenic engineering. That is unless we bring it under some form of control to curb the run-a-way development that we see with genetically modified organisms.

So am I a Cold War artist? I would think that other people are going to have to determine that. Am I concerned with very core questions of existence itself? Yes, that is the role of the artist from my point of view. We would like to pretend that the Cold War was resolved in some way or another. But instead of being resolved, it has simply been put on a back burner.

James Fox: Can I just ask one question to you before we open this up to the field? Do you feel that what you are doing here in your art, through presenting these ideas, is in any way political?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: No, I cannot see it as political. I see it as looking for the legacy of humanity. I cannot help that some people might interpret it that way. But it is something that seems to over-reach politics itself, which is divisive. I would like to see the legacy of humanity as a generally agreed statement.

Frances Stonor-Saunders: I think about the Cold War in the context of where we are. I see a place that seems to be almost disconcertingly remote from the concerns of the world. I am loving being here, but I am sort of undone by it at the same time, because I do not quite know how to respond to the fact that the walls that I am used to encountering in a social and political context do not seem to be here. And I know that is an illusion, but it is a happy one to be living for a brief while.

The thing that I ask myself most, in relationship to Jeffrey and the work he has done here, is the question that was asked of us during the Cold War. If artists paint about the Cold War, can they be interpreted in some way as reflecting concerns, or addressing concerns about the Cold War, or was it that they just happened to be painting in the Cold War?

And what happened to many artists was that they came under enormous pressure, or their work did, even if they did not, from the temptation to launder it for ideological purposes.

Now, my question to you would be, what has your experience been as somebody who has not had to make awkward decisions with regard to that relationship to institutions and government and the art market, because you have effectively withdrawn from it?

What are you making your artistic decisions in relation to, if not that kind of context?

You lived through it, but you are not really relating to it, or are you escaping it? I just wanted to press you a little bit on this idea of what it is to be an artist during the Cold War, when you have the ability and the privilege to withdraw almost totally from the conditions of it.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: My definition of art is an act of will in accord with a mature conscience. And it came about after the first series, or during the first series, and really what it was about was, how does an artist measure his own work?

The artist knows that his conscience is based on what he knows about his own work. I wanted that definition to be based on something really internal to art, and something that I read when I was nineteen that had a profound effect on me.

It was an article that was essentially an extrapolation of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* by Simone de Beauvoir, in which she was dealing with the question of the trains leaving Paris and going to Auschwitz.

And she used them because the example is that the infrastructure goes all the way down to the most common man being in collusion with the machinery of murder. And so this article was very clear, the people running the trains went to church every Sunday. They had a morality. They had moral certainty, and yet at the same time, they could mechanically get up everyday and keep those trains running and keep them oiled, and keep them steamed, and keep them fuelled, and they knew exactly what they were doing.

Her point was that to resist became an obligation of conscience, and this is really important because what de Beauvoir did, and what the Cold War does, is to separate morality from conscience. And this is a very, very important thing. Heidegger's view of conscience is a voice that simply tells you what you cannot do. Therefore in a sense, the struggle is to overcome that voice, which of course makes the perfect Nazi—which he became.

So de Beauvoir had a very different point of view, which I have carried with me ever since. She said that existence itself is based on acts of individual conscience, and that is very different than

individual acts of conscience that would just simply isolate conscience as a fragmented thing.

You can see how this was an extrapolation from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* because it is about choice, and she places the responsibility on the individual, and views that as existence itself.

So when I extrapolated that to the artist and that will in accordance with a mature conscience, it also spread out my thinking on what the artist's role is in the world.

The artist's role in the world as I see is, is to be a witness to existence. And therefore, if the artist can adapt or adopt that idea of 'an act of will in accordance with a mature conscience' internally for his own work, then he also has to adopt it or adapt it for the consciousness of the world itself.

So many of the insights that grew out of the work were based on the question of, how do you cope with the potential for a nuclear winter? How do you cope with these things which are outside of the history of civilization?

It has been very interesting to me how people associate morality with conscience. I have separated them out very clearly, and have done so since I was nineteen. This was really important because for example in Frances's book, *The Cultural Cold War*, what they are looking at is a reflection of their morality, not the question of their conscience.

And what interests me is this question of the individual conscience.

I agreed with de Beauvoir so strongly, and it so profoundly affected me for my life. Her idea was that your existence itself is bound to your acts of individual conscience.

Then it takes the concept of existence as centerpiece of the issue of art itself. The aspect of existence itself and how art is a manifestation of the witness of existence itself.

And so if you look at it that is a very profound statement of what art actually is.

This goes beyond the essence of the Cold War. Most of the aspects of the Cold War discussed in Frances's book are up until about 1955.

But I have taken my analysis up to 1959 with Herman Kahn's *On Thermonuclear War*, which was a best-seller throughout the political world and was read on both sides. There we really see the split between morality and conscience, and this is where it is most difficult for people to go. Kahn lays out a self-conscious statement of how to decide on mega-death, and how to trade mega-death, if it becomes transactional.

All of the policy of deterrence from that point on is retained in Herman Kahn's concept of how to avoid mutually assured destruction (MAD), which is so easy for everyone to hate as an idea.

But MAD is not the way deterrence actually operates politically now. It operates on the basis of how to bring nuclear war to a standstill, in case it accidentally starts. After all, if it accidentally starts, then you are certainly going to go to total destruction.

Frances Stonor Saunders: The thing that I find fascinating about this is that you are clearly very engaged with the problems, ambiguities and moral issues of conscience, and of consciousness. And yet it seems to me you have deliberately withdrawn by having very little contact with other humans. Your message is a humanistic

one, and your work is about humanity. Maybe I have this wrong, but I see you as being in intense contemplation and thought for over thirty years. So the difficulty for the artist is, of course, how can you be committed, but also part of a social contract in which that engagement can help to advance questions of morality and conscience? Have you had to resist the impulse to just rush off to New York or Vancouver and say, Listen, I need to be heard? Or have you been happy to just be having this conversation internally?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: When I began, I would have thought that history influenced art and that was the way I began. Then with the third piece of Series One, I made my transition into the value of art history itself, because the challenge here was whether or not art history can be the starting point of a great creative run. Then what happened was that the ideas started to flow from the work, not the other way around.

I looked at the work in a very Hegelian way, as an argument for history. Those pieces were my arguments. Each one was an argument for the progression of history. But what happened was a total surprise to me when the insights started to flow the other way.

They followed the work, therefore building the work first was most important in order to mine the ideas. Now, I call them ‘insights’, because my commitment and my argument to history are the pieces themselves. The insights seem to have been some strange gift that came back from the work, that was totally unexpected.

Peter Clarke: It seems to me that we must distinguish more sharply than we have done between two things. One is the Cold

War, and the other is the nuclear age, and the whole problem of nuclear deterrence. We have been speaking hitherto very largely as though those are two synonyms for the same thing. But they are not.

1945 was the year in which the actual explosion of nuclear weapons over Japan brought to an end the Second World War. So we enter the nuclear age. Where does the Cold War come into this?

The earliest mark that we have for the Cold War was Winston Churchill's speech at Fulton, Missouri in 1946, where he says, from the Baltic to the Adriatic, an iron curtain is descending upon Europe. The idea of a Cold War between two ideologically defined blocs in the world then becomes a dominating issue.

But it is not actually then when we start to depend on nuclear deterrence, because only one side has the nuclear weapons—at least for a few years, until the Soviet Union acquires them by the early 1950s. So it is only by the 1950s that we then move into what we think of as the classic Cold War period, where we have a divided world, and an ideological and territorial conflict on the one side, overlaid by a nuclear standoff between two fully armed superpowers or alliances.

And it is worth bearing that in mind, that Jeffrey's consciousness of the Cold War is essentially a product of the late 1950s and 1960s, when we were in an either-or situation. Where you have to choose which side you are on here, and it is a choice which is an ideological one.

This, it seems, is a distinction we should bear in mind when focusing then, particularly on the issue of how far Jeffrey Rubinoff's work is a product of the Cold War. If it is a product

of the Cold War, I would suggest it was of that classic era of the 1950s and 1960s.

Frances Stonor Saunders: I would question the idea of this divisibility between the two.

I mean, it seems to me that the entire dialogue and tension between different discourses and conversations during the Cold War, was determined to an extraordinarily intimate and uncomfortable degree by the presence of the bomb.

I am not going to propose a psychoanalytic interpretation of Jackson Pollock's work, but there is a lot to be said for the idea that these knotted, frantic lines that were right out to the edge and beyond the canvas could in some way be a response to the dropping of the bomb.

I do think that they are much more directly connected, and I think it is possible to be having thoughts and ideas about the Cold War that are absolutely entangled with a fear of, or an anxiety about the nuclear threat.

This marks such a sort of a seminal moment. What can you do with art after Hiroshima? What can you do once you have dropped the bomb? Where can art go and what can it tell you? What can it offer humanity? Do you retreat to the ivory tower and go back to the model of the artist, of sort of indulging in a soft self-probing? Or do you get out there? Can you do both at the same time? Can you withdraw and still be making a moral and conscientious statement about humanity?

And that is the thing that is curious to me. And it seems to me that this place asks this question very directly.

Karun Koernig: I had a conversation with Jeffrey in 2010, in which I asked the question of efficacy. So the question was, do you not have to give a little, and rationalize a little, and compromise a little in order to be effective?

What Jeffrey said is, first act in accord with your conscience. That is the first thing you need to get right; if you do not get that right, then you do not get anything else right.

I always thought that was quite a purist response to that question. Because my argument was that compromises are often needed to move your agenda forward.

Jeffrey's work is far removed from political statements, and far removed from any kind of direct activism that so many artists are really involved in. I found your work interesting because it was saying, These negative issues are all there, but in the face of it, what is still worthwhile? I always felt that your work expresses a desire to value life, as opposed to dwelling on its potential disintegration.

Joan Pachner: I just wanted to bring up the connection that Jeffrey feels to Abstract Expressionist artists. Those artists were trying to operate totally outside of those polarities between social realism, or things that linked you directly to current events, and cultures that were outside our own and might be a source of insight to enable them to move forward, by going back to something else. Very often that something else was an idealized world.

Jeffrey seems to have found that idealized world here. So he got to actually live it, rather than just to intellectualize it, which was highly unusual.

James Fox: I have a question for Peter Clarke and David Wallace and Maria Tippett. As scholars who had a career during the Cold War, did you feel that the Cold War in any way influenced your intellectual development?

David Wallace: My first real direct exposure to the Cold War was actually at White Horse in Canada when I went there in the 1980s, because the 24-hour nuclear bomber deterrence was flying out of White Horse.

And we heard them taking off and landing in the middle of the night, and that was really spooky. I had not had an experience like that before.

But I was born in 1945 as well, and I was deeply influenced by it. So here is the first issue therefore: Do I separate Cold War and nuclear deterrence? For me, the real thing was the nuclear deterrence, and the thought of the nuclear bomb. I did not think of it at that time as a Cold War thing.

For me, theoretical physics was my escapism, and I did that actually to get away from the reality of the world, in part. It is actually rather ironic, because the area that I worked in on my PhD was supervised by Peter Higgs, of the Higgs particles. So I was in sub-nuclear physics, and I was a child of nuclear physics, which was responsible for the bomb that I thought I was escaping.

So does this lead to any insight? Perhaps nuclear deterrence and mutually assured destruction was actually one of the shapers of the more general ideas that Jeffrey has had, in the way that transgenic engineering has become another example of the shaper of his ideas.

Maria Tippett: In the 1960s I lived in Berlin for three years, and certainly was aware of the Cold War. I spent my weekends in East Berlin as most of my friends were in there, which prompted me to do my first degree in Russian art. I then worked in Moscow in the late 1960s and early 1970s in two art collections.

So the Cold War certainly influenced me. Being a cultural historian, it influenced the way I work, in many ways outside of the art history tradition.

Peter Clarke: I would just briefly say, relating again to something that Jeffrey says, “I got the Cuban Missile Crisis for my 17th birthday present.” I think anybody who lived through the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 will have an abiding memory of that week which was the moment when we were closest to falling off the nuclear precipice. I think of that being a searing event defining a generation.

Karun Koernig: I felt very acutely aware of the cold war mainly through culture, and mainly through entertainment and the atmosphere that I just absorbed in the 1980s and 1990s. But I do not know how that necessarily influenced me. I would say that a lot of artists would take current events and political events as the subject matter of their work. You could call them Cold War artists, or anti-war artists, or peace artists, or environmental artists, because they addressed politics as part of their career. But I do not know what utility those labels would have necessarily in general.

To an art historian maybe they do, but I wouldn't view Jeffrey's work as being the product of a time period. I do think that it responds to a more general desire to come to terms with it.

I think that there is something generative to Jeffrey's work. His energy comes from the realities he is a witness to, but the energy cannot stay there, cannot be bottled in that space of fear. I do not get a sense of fear from his work. I do not have a sense of the Cuban Missile Crisis when I walk through the sculpture park.

I have a sense of hope. I do have a sense that there are foreboding elements, strange elements, interesting juxtapositions, but I do not get a sense of hopelessness and fear, quite the opposite.

David Wallace: I think we have just become inured to the cold war somehow; it is impacting us all the time, and we cease to be sensitive to it, generally. Even those of us, well most of us, clearly not Jeffrey, but most of us brought up in those days somehow now feel comfortable. It did not happen; we stopped thinking about it.

James Fox: And Jeffrey, do you want people to see this park as an optimistic place, as a place about hope?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: It is about the assertion of existence, so it is meant to be very positive in that. If there is an alternative, then the bleakness is just simply around every corner.

This concept that my engagement comes from the work itself — which is the reverse of the way that I looked at it before— relies

first on the work maturing. When we began this park, I kept those ideas, I admit, essentially with myself.

We hadn't planned the building yet, and the park could have been anything, but Karun felt that the ideas would be a value to his generation. How the forums came about was that Karun came in November the year before we put a shovel in the ground, and visited the work, which he had never seen before, and he seemed to be very in-tune with the work. Then on my tours I talked about different ideas, not very many, just enough to deal with the work.

So he said, "Oh, will you sit down and talk about your ideas?" and for two days I just talked, and for two days he transcribed.

And then what he did is he translated that into what we call our 'insights', the issues that would be subject of conversation in these forums. And so if Karun had not valued them, they probably would have been just laid aside, because other than my daughter Leba's friends, I did not think this generation would be interested in them.

James Fox: Does anyone here who lives on the island have anything to say about the political identity here? I know many came here from the United States during Vietnam, and there are a lot of people in this part of Canada who crossed the border as a result of Vietnam and the Cold War.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: The designer of this building, Michael McNamara, is one, and his contribution is this building, and housing and employment all over this island.

Vaughn Neville: There are lots of people that came here. It was kind of a 'back to the land' movement.

James Fox: But did you feel when you came up here that it was an escape from political realities?

Vaughn Neville: It is a total escape, and I find the art making that way too. I can just get so emerged, that everything else falls away.

James Fox: Was it an escape for you as well, Jeffrey?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: No, I always thought of it as quite different. I saw it as my point of contact. I was really aware that when I came here, the Voodoo Squadron was here. They carried the Genie missile. They would take off in the middle of the night, and they would match the bombers who were going to the fail-safe position.

So they are all moving in the fail-safe on both sides to the moment of confrontation. They would come in on both sides to the moment of confrontation, circling in their areas. The purpose of the nuclear-tipped Genie missiles was to shoot down Russian invaders. In the middle of the night you heard the roar, as they took off going to their fail-safe position every night. So I was very conscious of the Voodoo Squadron. Of course they denied that there were any nuclear missiles on the base. But I was a student pilot then, and all over the base there were nuclear warning signs.

Joan Pachner: I just wanted to bring the conversation back to Frances's original question of "What is the point of contact between the subject matter and the art?" You have talked so much about David Smith and steel, the military industrial complex, and its history in warfare. Is there a thread of connection terms of the material?

Frances Stonor Saunders: I think what is really intriguing that has come up from the things you have been saying is this idea, as Ezra Pound said, "Artists are the antennae of the race..." The idea was that the artist is a precursor to history, that they produce a history rather than being a product of history. So if there was something that might move us on to the question of meaning, I wonder if it is somewhere in that area?

Karun Koernig: Do you see artists who are not antennae in advance of cultural or political reality, but perhaps more reflecting the current reality?

Frances Stonor Saunders: I think Warhol was in total response mode. He was actually kind of brilliant, because he told us what we already knew, but in ways that were so inescapably vulgar and obvious that it produced a whole new set of insights. You can produce insights on something you already know.

I envy artists and I pity them at the same time, because they have no rules other than those they make up for themselves. On the other hand, they have to live by the rules that they set for themselves. To spend 30 years working in a studio on your own,

with very little external validation, must be its own kind of Via Dolorosa. I think we shouldn't idealize it too much.

I think these are all interesting arguments about whether the artist should be given any different treatment to normal creatures like us? Should the artist be elevated to some kind of seer or prophet, or should we not expect of them any more than we do of our economists?

I hope the answer would be that artists are there for a very good reason, which is that art yields truths that nothing else can, and that is why we all insist on it. In one way or another, we all still want it. Even in the most repressive societies, art has a way, like water, of finding its way out.

DIALOGUE SESSION 5

James Fox: That is actually a very good segue into the question of meaning itself. The short question that I have set is: “What are the meanings of Rubinoff’s work? And where do they come from?”

And the reason for posing that second question is that since the advent of Post-Modernism, scholars are no longer certain about the origins of artistic meaning, and deep meaning in general.

Typically, they presumed that the artist created meaning, and we then just received it. That whole idea of unidirectional meaning has been challenged. How many meanings are there? Countless meanings for every different person who sees something? But at the same time, Jeffrey seems to be someone who is very intent on controlling that meaning. He knows what his work is about. He doesn’t want that message to be lost. So how do we negotiate our way through this issue?

Do the meanings reside in the objects only? Or are those meanings instead made by the people who visit them, and therefore there are countless different meanings?

Barry Phipps: Is there a distinction to be drawn between meaning and response? It is one thing to say that this work means something, but it is another to say, I respond to it in this way.

James Fox: How far does meaning come, from the art historians who later on try to do an interpretation of it as a Hegelian product of society?

Peter Clarke: I mean, we can all, to some extent, just play with the words here. I would make a distinction between the context of creation, where we would say that the meaning is the meaning that the artists intend, and the context of reception, where the meaning may be that which is picked up by the observers. Are we really saying—oh no, that is quite wrong, it cannot have that meaning for them, because the term ‘meaning’ is restricted to the intentions of the artist in the first place—are we really saying that?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I’ve taken hundreds of people on artist-accompanied tours with small groups of people, and I know that it is very difficult for them.

Most people are not aware of sculpture at all. They have passed it by, they have maybe seen it in a mall, they have seen it maybe in museums, but they always walk by.

So I try to bring people to the meaning of sculpture to me, on those tours, and what I see. And I have to say that, quite frankly, I am amazed by how people who have had no interest in sculpture before, maybe even no interest in art before, respond with a very, very strong connection.

So I know that I can do that personally, and Karun is going to take over the tours this year, so hopefully he’ll be able to communicate that. It is possible that we can keep going with an oral history, but you are doing the written history, and hopefully people will actu-

ally read it. The idea of having the sculpture park, and having all of our material available, was so anyone who is actually interested can actually sit down with these little books we are publishing now. So hopefully we are able to communicate the context of the work, so that people can grow into it however they want to grow into it.

Jenni Pace-Presnell: We've talked over the years about Post-Modernism. I would like to bring the examples of Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Claes Oldenburg into this discussion. I keep thinking that you still do allow room for individual experience in the development of meaning, for either the visitor in the future, or the young artist who comes here, and maybe over time absorbs your insights and then applies them in some way. I think that you do have some sort of kinship, or at least some sort of allowance for Jasper Johns' view that the real content lies within the individual.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I would say that that is pretty true. I think that in that group it is really unfair that Rauschenberg took advantage of being a Castelli artist³ and probably claimed to be a pop artist. But he really sat on the Abstract Expressionist side of things. It was another way of selling this new wave of meaningless work.

³ "In 1957, he opened the Leo Castelli Gallery in a townhouse at 4 E. 77th Street between Madison and Fifth Avenues in New York City. From the mid-1960s through the 1970s, the gallery was perhaps the most prominent commercial venue for art in the world. Initially the gallery showcased European Surrealism, Wassily Kandinsky, and other European artists. However the gallery also exhibited American Abstract Expressionism. Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Cy Twombly, Friedel Dzubas, and Norman Bluhm were some artists who were included in group shows. In 1958, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns joined the gallery, signaling a turning away from Abstract Expressionism, towards Pop Art, Minimalism and Conceptual Art. From the early 1960s through the late 70s, Frank Stella, Larry Poons, Lee Bontecou, James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Cy Twombly, Ronald Davis, Ed Ruscha, Salvatore Scarpitta, Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, Lawrence Weiner and Joseph Kosuth joined the stable of Castelli artists."
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Castelli Accessed March 25, 2015.

‘Fast food art’ is what I call it, when it is the kind of show that you dash into, take it in in five seconds and say, Well, I did that, and go down to the next gallery, to take in the ‘fast food’.

And then you have about as much satisfaction after doing that as you do after eating at McDonald’s. So it is the McDonald’s of art, but it was the way the American art market was going to go.

But Rauschenberg crosses a line here, and I’ve never really looked at him as a pop artist. He was an incredible printmaker for one thing, and his printmaking is absolutely outstanding. But the fast food aspect of it, I think that is a shame, because art loses something as fast food.

David Wallace: I keep having to go back to the background that I come from. For me, if you talk about the meaning of something, it starts in the head.

I think about some of the great new ideas that have come out in theoretical physics. The great theoretical physicists have a model of the world in their head which only they have access to, but they can see connections and insights. They can then articulate those through a process of a ‘social construction’, to use post-modern language. I do not believe the end result is a social construct, but the emergence and acceptance of these ideas is a form of social construct, because scientists argue like hell before something is accepted.

So the meaning—the new theory—therefore, which is created, emerges in this way. And I wonder if there is a parallel actually, with the way that art forms become accepted. If we go back to the Impressionists, they were clearly beyond any appeal for most

people when they first came on the scene, and yet now we look at them as a great form of truth and experience for us.

So I do see parallels. Meaning starts with the individual, and then if it has a wider, more universal relevance, it establishes itself as a new form of thinking, a way of expression accepted by others.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: David, I am going to ask you a question. Suppose the science is commodified so that the forces of technology take over a scientific concept. They take it somewhere that is nowhere near the values of the originator of the thought. Suppose then most of the value of your scientific work is based on its commodity value—has that been adopted? Is it on the shelf? Can I go and buy it in a bottle?—Suppose that was the way it was valued.

My criticism is that commodification becomes the end in itself—not the evolution of knowledge, but rather its tradable value establishes whether it is good or bad. And that is what started to happen in the 1960s art market.

I actually had a dealer say to me—I won't say who, I shouldn't say who, because he was really a very senior dealer—"He's no good, he doesn't sell."

And you know, we are not talking about some small dealer, we are talking about a real influence in the art world. So that was his opinion of this artist's work; it was no good because it did not sell.

So the parallel to this commodification of art in the 1960s would be as though the only value to science is whether somebody can say, Wow, look at what science did for me today.

David Wallace: I completely agree with you in that. I started in this free world of theoretical physics, whose only aim was to understand things further for their own right. This was a form of escapism for me.

But laterally in my career, I did work collaboratively with people in the area of parallel computing. I mean, I made a living working with industry people, but we were not driven by purely utilitarian motives. The work itself had to be, but we had to have a curiosity, as well, about it. However, there is a fulfillment to be gained as well, by doing something that people find useful.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Absolutely. I've been part of capitalism myself, and I've been trying to translate it now into the values that I have now, so I do not disagree. But what happened in art, is that the commodification of it in the 1960s became the only measure of its value.

Mark Breeze: Jeffrey, about how much do you actively seek objective responses to your work, as a way for you to negotiate the meanings of your work? Have you ever thought that the forum is a mode of that? When you came here in the 1970s, did you think about bringing reviewers out and encouraging viewers, or other artists, to come to engage in a dialogue with them about your work?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: After the commodification is in its totality by the mid-1960s, and certainly evident in the early 1970s, I looked at that approach as really hopeless. I actually talked with

a reviewer, who was a Princeton art historian, who had stopped doing reviews anymore, because he saw that it was so corrupt. So in the 1970s, I looked at the art world as really hopeless. In the 1980s I had hoped it had turned, and that is when I started going back to New York.

So many things are cyclical in markets, so I hoped that they would return to a set of values that I could identify with. What I found in the 1980s, and even in the 1990s, is that commodification had so established itself that there was no way into the market for somebody like me, neither in the values that I have, nor in the work that I do. So finally I just abandoned New York by 1998.

Maria Tippett: As you know, Jeffrey, Jack Shadbolt, who was the leading artist in British Columbia, had a summer cottage on Hornby. Did he come and look at your work?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Absolutely. We had a very interesting conversation.

Maria Tippett: Now as a viewer, did he contribute anything to your work?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: No, we were running counter at that point. He was running on the idea that art was anywhere and anything. And I was arguing that no, there was a history of art, where there were things that were passed down from artist to artist.

And then out of nowhere he said, “Define art.”

And I dropped my definition of art as *an act of will in accord with a mature conscience*, and his mouth dropped.

And he thought for a little while, and he said, “You know, big art encourages big ideas.”

And that was his last comment.

Heather Goldman: Jeffrey, could you say something about the impact of listening to music while working on sculpture? You speak a lot about counterpoint, and the park hosts a string quartet that plays amongst the sculptures. The music is a different type of meaning, and certainly an amazing experience.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: In the early years, when I was in the process of trying to bring the art together in the design stage, Bach’s B minor Mass was on endlessly. I would just play it endlessly. There is very different music that went with different series, but the Bach B minor Mass was definitely one of those pieces of music.

Heather Goldman: Here?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Yes, in the little farmhouse that once stood here. In later series, I have Schoenberg on when I am working, and Schoenberg works for me, and the pieces that I am working

on now. I just stay on one musician until the piece starts to come together one way or another. Although, I'll often start with Bach again, and finish with a Schoenberg song, because it somehow or another it adjusts my mind to the counterpoint that I am trying to find.

Karun Koernig: I often found that when Jeffrey takes people on tour, he doesn't so much tell them what the meaning of the sculpture is. He tells them his thoughts, as they arose as he was doing the work, and his history. He gives them his context, and there are lots of hints at what the work means. And if one takes the time to read the material on the website before the tour, those hints would be very clear statements. But Jeffrey never really says, This is what my sculpture means to me, and it should mean this to you, too.

Jeffrey encourages people to come back to the sculpture as they change, and mature, and grow. So as you come to it again and again, you have new insights, and new meanings are generated.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I agree. When I take people around the park, most know nothing about sculpture. So it is a complexity on its own, to try to introduce it to them in a way that doesn't bury them.

So my idea is that if they want to find any more meaning from the writings, or any of those other things, they can voluntarily do it.

I have found people, during our openings, just total strangers sitting down lost in the papers and, you know they just sit down to read and concentrate on the papers. So we have left a path

for anyone to grow with this, if they want to grow with it, but I certainly do not try to dictate that.

It is just pointless, because then they get lost, not even seeing the fundamentals of the value of sculpture.

DIALOGUE SESSION 6

James Fox: So this question, I suppose, is the broadest question of them all, but also one of the most inescapable, because Jeffrey is an artist, but also a man of ideas, a man of many ideas in many different fields. So, this raises one of these perennial questions that art historians and academics have to answer, namely, “What is the relationship between artists’ ideas and their work? Do you have to understand their ideas to understand their art?” There is the old conundrum of Wagner and his political beliefs, versus Wagner the artist. I am not comparing Jeffrey to Wagner, obviously. But Jeffrey does have lots of ideas, and it would be useful to discuss the connections between what he does in the park as an artist, and what he expresses as ideas.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: There is really only one thing that I try to concentrate on at the beginning of the tours, and that is the relationship between aural and visual counterpoint. I would say that it is the key that I use on the tours, to introduce people to sculpture so that it becomes less of an obscure foreign object to look at. And so that is the only idea that I feel is absolutely necessary in order to begin to understand, not only my sculpture, but sculpture itself.

James Fox: I have always found it fascinating that Jeffrey is someone who has read widely. He has read a lot of philosophy; he loves to talk about the German idealists. He has ideas about the age of agriculture, and transgenic engineering, and he is extremely well-informed about 20th century politics. Yet on the

sculpture tours, he really only discusses the works formally, about how they been sited, and how the different forms change over the series. I've always found that fascinating.

Peter Clarke: Do we need to know about Rubinoff's ideas to appreciate his work? There two answers, the first one following on from what both of you have just said.

If we simply want to appreciate the works of sculpture that Jeffrey has produced, we do not need an apparatus of formal interpretation; the works should speak for themselves.

They are the message—the message isn't something that we then translate into words, in order to make sense of the works of art. So in the sense of simple 'appreciation', we do not need ideas for that.

There is another level on which you could talk about ideas, namely, what gave the artist the idea for a particular work. That is something important, but I am not competent to deal with it.

However, Jeffrey has ideas in another sense, ideas about the world, and about the role of art within it, which is why the forum was started, and why it is an ongoing enterprise.

At the beginning of Jeffrey's presentation to the 2012 Forum, "Existential Realities of Post Agriculture," it starts with six aphorisms:

"I was born in the shadow of the endgame," to which we've already referred.

"I am an artist"—self-evidently true.

“Art is an act of will in accord with a mature conscience.” Again, Jeffrey has already referred to that in relation to Simone de Beauvoir, and her statements about the importance of the artist responding in this way.

“There can be no resignation,” he says.

“The artist is witness to existence itself” refers to the art giving an expression in an unmediated way, or unmediated by words.

“Art is the celebration,” and that is the coda to this set of aphorisms.

As Jeffrey admits here, he was guilty of self-plagiarism, saying, “and so ended the 2011 presentation.” And it begins the 2012 presentation.

Is this because Jeffrey was so idle he thought, They’ll never notice if I just trot the same stuff out all over again?

Or is it not rather more likely, that he has given a great deal of thought to the formulation of those aphorisms, each of them packed with meaning and insight, which we ought to unpack in some way?

So what I would like to focus on is Jeffrey’s concentration on the role of the artist himself, and its relation to his concept of society.

Firstly, why should these appear in an exposition of his own thinking entitled “Existential Realities of Post Agriculture?” Where does agriculture come in to this?

Initially I might say, when James Fox, Maria Tippett, and myself all joined the forum in 2011, I think we were all slightly baffled by the emphasis on the Age of Agriculture and the significance

that it had. And it has taken me some time to unpack these meanings. And you can read about it for yourselves in Jeffrey's own words, but let me just give my interpretation of what is essential for Jeffrey.

Historically—and by historically we mean not just in terms of recorded history, but pre-history as well, which can only be reconstituted through the archaeological evidence—the beginning of the Age of Agriculture, where agriculture became the way in which society was organized to produce its resources, is of fundamental significance. That is because with the advent of agriculture, social relations become territorial. To protect your own crops, and to protect your own land, you need warriors.

So you have the beginnings of the militaristic organization of society, perhaps the only sort of society that we are generally familiar with.

And what Jeffrey is saying, is that the Age of Agriculture, in this very long-term sense, is of fundamental importance in that way, because it legitimates the role of the military.

Now he is arguing, of course, against a conventional belief, Well, mankind has always had wars, haven't we? Maybe on smaller scale in the past... No, says Jeffrey.

And that is where the cave paintings, especially those that date back 35,000 years, become so centrally significant to Jeffrey's understanding of history and the world.

Because Jeffrey says, You look at those cave paintings—you have wonderful, artistic images. So you had artists. And what do they show? Or what do not they show? What they do not show, is war, got it?

The artist predates the warrior. A society, which on available evidence, Jeffrey argues, was not based on, as Hobbes describes it, a war “where every man is enemy to every man...and the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” No, says Jeffrey, before the advent of agriculture provided the logic and necessity for continued warfare, we have a different sort of society, which privileged the place of the artist.

And I think what he suggests is that the artist retained a privileged place within society, as the voice of conscience. The activity of being an artist is, in that sense, in itself, a protest against this militaristic model of society.

And this, I suggest, is why Jeffrey feels so strongly about the realities of modern warfare on this gross industrial scale that led into the Nuclear Age. In this context, too, his view is that the role of the artist is not to engage in politics as some side activity. The role of the artist is to do his or her own work, in accordance with what Jeffrey calls a mature conscience, and that in itself is what the artist can contribute.

Now that is a thumbnail sketch of some of the thinking of Jeffrey Rubinoff. Obviously it is grossly incomplete, and I hope it doesn't do violence to any of Jeffrey's central insights. It is what I would take from Jeffrey's work as being what really ties together his life as an artist, but one who is situated within a world in which he feels social responsibilities, which he sums up in terms of the appeal to conscience.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I cannot say anything better than that; that was wonderful Peter. Thank you. That is an excellent description.

Karun Koernig: One of the things that I found quite startling, was the confirmation at last year’s forum that Dr. Arther Ferrill gave, that there indeed was this change in art from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic Age. Dr. Ferrill, who is an expert in ancient warfare, did a presentation on warfare in the Neolithic Age—the beginning of the Age of Agriculture.

He did not confirm whether war or agriculture came first, but they did come together, in his opinion. What he said of Palaeolithic art, was that the “...art of the Paleolithic period is just very different from that of the Neolithic. I looked at lot of Paleolithic art, hoping to find some evidence of warfare, but I did not find anything.”⁴ So this is an expert in this field, who has looked at lot more Palaeolithic art than Jeffrey presented to us in his 2010 Forum presentation “Art Beyond War,” in which he also noted the absence of the depiction of war.

So I would support Peter’s argument, that while you can come to the park and be introduced the sculpture simply by learning how to look at it, you get a lot more out of the work through learning about how the artist’s thinking evolved, and what the work has done to inform that thinking. So it indeed enriches the experience, but is not necessary to enjoy the work, or to receive a kind of knowledge from it. As we have had these debates in the past, people have moved from one side of this debate to the other. But I think it would be wrong to completely divorce Jeffrey’s ideas from the sculpture itself.

Mark Breeze: I am interested in the ownership of your work, because you specifically sign all your works in a very readable way.

4 Koernig, Karun M, (ed) Arther Ferrill and David Lawless. *Art As a Source of Knowledge: Beyond Rationalization : Proceedings of the 2013 Company of Ideas Forum of the Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park*, 2014. Print. 48.

You have called the park The Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park, not the 2750 Shingle Spit Road Sculpture Park, so there is an implicit ownership there, but also a statement about you as a person and your history.

I wonder whether is it important to understand more of your personal history as well as your ideas?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I have included that in a previous forum paper I gave, titled “In the Shadow of the Endgame,” so part of my personal history is there.

Mark Breeze: And do you think that is important for people, ideally, to know about it?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Well, I was never sure, I work in a strange way.

I start always at the beginning. The beauty, to me, of the way I ended up working, is that when you are done a piece you are back to zero. The canvas is cleared, and you are beginning all over again.

And so what I do on each piece is, I go back to the very beginning again, and then bring myself up to where I am.

And so I have done the same thing with these forums, go back to the beginning, just as starting with Palaeolithic art, and then moving to post-agriculture. So you cannot get to post-agriculture if you do not deal with Palaeolithic art.

If you start with Neolithic art, you would say, Hey, that warfare was already built in.

And so each paper to me is starting over again, and what I purposefully did from one paper to the other, was to add continuities, the way that I do in the sculpture. That gives my work continuity, and that is the way that I like my writing to be, as well.

David Wallace: I have two questions from what you've said. First question, how would you know when your work on a sculpture is complete?

Second question, you said that you then "start again." Now my own instinct would have been that a work is never complete, and that you would say, Look, I have done as much on that as I can. If I want to take my ideas forward, I want to start again and use a slightly different vehicle—but it is in a path, it is not a clean sheet, it is not a starting again.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: This is what makes art different than craft. With craft, you will never reach a moment of perfection; by definition, it can always be improved.

The way that I perceived art—and I can only speak for myself on this one, but I like to think that other artists do perceive the same thing—is that perfection would be ridiculous. Perfection would be the end of any evolution of art, that is, perfection as the sense of completion, which is what you were hinting at.

So what does the artist do in terms of perfection? And this is what makes my perception so different—he has a moment of perfec-

tion. Now I know that moment of perfection, when it enters the piece, even in the most initial drawing.

It enters the piece, when the piece is capable of being art in the drawing stage, and that means there is a lot of rejection. But when the art enters the piece—by that I mean the potential for the moment of perfection—that is all one gains as an artist, not the perfection itself, because that would be the end of evolution.

This is the difference between craft and art. For me, once the artist knows that the art enters the piece, which it will do usually in the initial stages, it becomes the obligation of the artist to complete it. And so one would say, Well, you've had your moment of perfection, why do you even bother doing it? But that moment of perfection is the obligation to actually make the complete statement.

When I look at work from other artists—good examples are Michelangelo's slave pieces, or Michelangelo's drawings—you see that parts of them are missing. I do not know how many people will stand in front of his slave pieces and say, Oh, he never got to finish this. But I have a different perception of that.

I have a perception that there was a point where there was this moment of perfection, which those slave pieces have, and that brings it to its state of being. And that other artists can see that. Artists can see through the eyes of other artists, and that is part of this concept of 'an act of will in accord with a mature conscience'.

For artists, they know whether or not they completed it, even if everybody thinks that this is the greatest painting or sculpture in the world. And it is bullshit, because they never finish it.

I have seen many works of art that way from many people. So, part of the commodification is to sell their name, and not this moment of perfection.

The moment of perfection then finishes that piece. When I say it completes the piece, I mean that I can look at a work, like two-thirds of a drawing of Michelangelo's, and know that that is what he meant, that this work is complete, and nothing more is needed.

Now why is it complete?

Because the artist knows that nothing more can be added to this that will ever improve it.

So that is what makes a great work of art to me—when I look at it, and nothing more can be added to it to improve it. You could throw more paint on the canvas, you could do more of this or that, but none of that will actually improve that moment of perfection.

Barry Phipps: Well, actually, this is quite dangerous, because I am going to put David on the spot. So we have had some assertions about the role of the artist, and these assertions, perhaps not in this context, are often made in contrast to scientists. So in light of what we've heard, what do you think the role of the scientist is? And do you philosophize about that role?

David Wallace: When I was a practicing scientist, I never philosophized about the role of the scientist. I just wanted to 'do'. For example, I used quantum mechanics and relativity quantum field theory, but I never thought about the foundations of quantum mechanics, never mind going into philosophy. I did not even

think about the fundamentals. The ability to do, to calculate, to predict, was what drove me.

So I am ill-equipped to answer your questions. So, in terms of the role of the scientist, I do think that science, even in this utilitarian age, has to have the confidence to articulate itself as part of the culture of the world that we live in.

The creative drive of scientists deserves support in the same way that the creative drive of artists deserves support. It is very interesting actually, that even in this utilitarian age, it is often the individual donor in support of science who actually has more vision about what they are doing than the research councils, who are looking for you to articulate the potential impact of what you are going to be doing.

We are required now to indicate what was, or is, the value of our research, if we want money for past or future work. That is part of the culture of science today—which individual philanthropic giving actually enables us to escape from. It is very interesting that in that debate, we are asked to say what is the positive value, but we are never asked to say what are the potential dangers and pitfalls. This really underlines the concerns that Jeffrey has about, initially nuclear weapons, and now transgenic engineering.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Could we quote you on that David? Because that was a very critical statement.

Francis Stonor Saunders: One question I have for David, which I think comes right back to what we have been talking about. Could, for example, the Higgs Boson have been found by some-

body who been living on Hornby Island for 30 years? To what degree is it important to be a part of the scientific culture that you describe?

David Wallace: Firstly, Peter Higgs did not discover the particle, rather, he hypothesized its existence in his theory. He did it in isolation, but funnily enough, he came from a background which was different from the mainstream of the area in which he made the prediction.

In fact, it is fascinating. He wanted to go into this area of practical physics theory, for his PhD. He was advised at King's College London not to do it, because it was too difficult to make an impact in the field—so do not always believe the advice of your PhD supervisor. So he came into it from a different field, in which he had picked up ideas that were transferable into the area of physics he became interested in.

But your question was, could it have been thought about in isolation on Hornby Island. I suppose—provided you were connected, and had the training. But I think the idea that one could come up with these things in isolation from everything would be very unusual. But Higgs came in from a different angle, with a different background.

Francis Stonor Saunders: No, I did not mean in total isolation, but just not as part of the scientific culture—some lines of transmission. Could one have these intuitions, or what we might call prophetic predictions?

David Wallace: No, he just came from outside of the field in which he was making his prediction, and he took insights from outside of that field.

Karun Koernig: I think that one of the things that I had right away, when I first got here, was this sense that Jeffrey lived his life in a very ‘total’ way. Not in a totalitarian sense, but in a very ‘boundary-less’ sense. It was in the way the space was organized—the views here are a good example. But also it really seems like the boundaries between concepts, that are usually kept separate, are not meaningful to you.

That you meld from material, to welding, to the Age of Agriculture, to evolution, certain forms, fossils, to all kinds of ideas that are seemingly unrelated, but for you they represent part of your historical context.

So can you appreciate the work of an artist who approaches his life and his work in that way, without knowing some of the context? Is it valid to just simply approach it in an optical fashion? It was always my sense right from the beginning, that that was not possible.

Joan Pachner: Actually it is interesting, because when I take people around the museum—I am an educator at the Museum of Modern Art oftentimes—and when I take people to see abstract paintings, I tell them that, without some sense of the ideas, they are actually knowing as little as they know about the work of Dutch 17th Century art.

But they are more comfortable with the work of Dutch 17th Century art, because they think they know something about it, because they recognize the objects. But I explain to them that they know nothing about the meaning.

That what art historians do, is teach us what the work actually means. It is very often at odds with what it looks like. And the same thing is true with abstract art. There is a lot of meaning there, when you approach it. What is helpful about learning about it is, that you have to learn about the meaning. Just looking at the shape of a Rothko does not tell you anything about meaning, and I think, to some degree, something of that is true with Jeffrey's work. That when a visitor comes in, sees it, brings his own response, yes, all that is very true, but otherwise it is kind of inert.

Karun Koernig: I do not deny that you can get pleasure, or pain, or anything from simply viewing or experiencing artwork. I knew nothing about Rothko, and then seeing it was an incredible experience, and I really did not have any background. But I do not know if pleasure or pain is meaning.

Joan Pachner: I think that it is helpful for visitors to understand that what they are seeing, is only what they are seeing. It is essentially the same concept, that a visitor might think they know more about the 17th Century Dutch painting, because you 'know' what you are seeing. But in fact, what you are seeing is almost nothing. It is as skin deep as simply seeing an abstract work.

Francis Stonor Saunders: We tend to think of meaning, certainly post-enlightenment, as the positive space. So we do not look so much in the negative space. The absence of meaning is its own meaning. It is like Nietzsche was saying, that history is a malady, a disease, such that we can be obsessed with always moving along a path, with the expectation that some meaning will be yielded. And actually, I thought it was interesting what Jeffrey was saying about perfection, which, I wonder if he feels is something separate from perfectibility. Because there is a sense that the artist, as in Jeffrey's definition, is optimistic about perfectibility. There is the possibility of the perfectibility of the world, of cleaning up the mess of our wars and everything else that we leave behind us.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: I think that the example that is left behind by those works of art that do have a moment of perfection, is a statement of action. It is a positive statement of action, and an assertion of that perfectibility. But I do not think that perfectibility should ever, ever be self-consciously sought. Because when the art enters the work, it just enters the work, and from that point on, it has a life of its own. And from that point on, it is what drives the artist to complete the work. So I would say perfectibility is not on his mind.

Perfectibility though, is impossible with evolution in itself. So this is an anomaly within evolution, where there is part of ourselves that can see this. And here there are number of things that I see as questions for the genome, as to the different things that all people share throughout the world, like the sense of the sacred.

Before we begin to change the genome, we had better start understanding what some of these larger commonalities mean in terms of natural history. The genetic hieroglyphs are sitting there waiting

to be interpreted as to what determines them, because if we alter the genome, we do not know what else we are altering with it.

We may cure bladder cancer, but we may have lost our conscience. Nobody knows. So it is approaching the genome from this much larger sense of understanding it in terms of natural history—of four billion years of evolution, and a culmination of where we are now.

Where we actually have the brains, and the kind of technology to actually bring about an identification of the genome itself. And yet, it is on the verge of being altered on a basis of ‘big pharma’, and on the basis of a five-year planning horizon that all capitalists have. They have to have this timeline, so they will delve into something in order to turn the profit in five years.

I am not even criticizing them for doing so, I am criticizing all of the people who are cultivating ignorance of the genome and the meaning of it, and not themselves participating in the entire action about it.

So what does that have to do with perfectibility? Perhaps you have to have that ability of the moment of perfection to have a perception of it. Perhaps it is very particular among artists, and among people who can see it, to understand that something lives within us on the question of perfection itself.

David Wallace: I find it quite difficult coming to terms with this idea of perfection. A moment of perfection, I can understand—reaching a point and saying, Okay, I am satisfied with this work.

We put together an exhibition on string theory and organized it; it was great. We were allowed into the vault of the Henry Moore

Foundation—my God, what an experience. And we pulled out these sheets where he was developing his ideas.

And it was clear that in each of these little sketches, he was saying, I have taken this as far as I can; I want to try something else. My question is, in your development of an idea for a piece, is there some point where you sense that you are actually not going to reach a moment of perfection?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Absolutely.

David Wallace: And you destroyed a piece.

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Absolutely, yes. The more adept that I became at computer modelling, the more rejection there was, because it is so much easier to throw things out. But you are throwing out time if you are stuck on something, and you are never going to get there. You have an obligation to that moment of perfection. And that is what I wanted to do, because I had the freedom of doing it, in developing all of this work.

Maria Tippett: Jeffrey, you say that you work in a strange way; you begin with a sketch, then it goes into the computer. Then you have this new hardware, so you could make it three-dimensional. Could you just for a moment speak on that?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: It is hard to explain, but it has to be fully modelled. What I have found is that, since I have this ability, there is absolutely no excuse not to. Because you can look at a model as though you are looking through a glass floor, and it has to be a complete composition when you look at it.

Whereas when you are doing it in a studio, you can only anticipate that.

I know that you can crawl under any one of my pieces and take a photograph and get a complete composition. But here, there is more perfection to it. I think the work has become able to be more complex. This is one of the aspects of the evolution of the work that is moving one area of complexity to a higher level of complexity. That is certainly my way of looking at human evolution.

James Fox: When I think of looking at Jeffrey's work, I do not think so much of perfection, but I think of resolution.

What's so interesting about this series is that you always begin with the problem, and then gradually, over the course of the series, you resolve that problem.

There is a great sense of satisfaction as you move from one to the other.

But I think that this is an issue that obviously you are fascinated with, Jeffrey, this idea of art as a source of knowledge. And it clearly is a source of knowledge, but I think it is more than that; I think it is knowledge, but it is a different kind of knowledge.

It is not a knowledge that can necessarily be expressed in any other way.

It is not the kind of knowledge that can necessarily be reduced to words, and I think that is what makes art so important. We think through looking. We think through experience. We think through feeling, rather than necessarily through a rational series of words and language. And I think that is what makes, for me, this sculpture park, and art in general, such a thrilling and intellectually challenging experience.

Barry Phipps: It is what the Egyptians would have called 'haptic knowledge'—the way we understand the world through our nervous system, or through the ends of our fingertips. Which is mediated through narratives through the brain.

Elizabeth Wallace: James is using words like 'resolution,' which makes me think of composers and music, and how they know when a piece is complete. I mean, some do not, they just keep things going on their narrative, but some also do. Do you think it is similar?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Very, very similar. There is a difference between visual counterpoint and aural counterpoint, because I think it is the initial stage of comprehending what is going on within my work. In music, the way that I use the term is as 'countermelody.' So there is a melody in one direction, and another melody that is sometimes reversed, or turned on a loop. But they are independent voices.

So when I use the word ‘counterpoint’, I will use it from a musical point of view, of looking for these voices. But I perceive there to be the limits to counterpoint in music, which I describe on tours of the work.

When we look at a piece of my sculpture, you will see how counterpoint works, both internally within the piece, and externally within this environment.

So then counterpoint in music and sculpture can clearly be seen to be very different things.

Joan Pachner: I am interested in impulsive beginning and the realization of working with the obdurate materials, and whether that early on—before you started using the computer—involved you having to make calculations, or did you just do an intuitive kind of engineering?

Did your background with building have anything to do with it? Did that inform your ability to construct your own work?

What calculation was necessary, and did you change the composition as you went along?

Jeffrey Rubinoff: Of course, working in construction, I learned how to handle materials. Handling materials is absolute, whether you are working in a Studebaker plant as David Smith did, or on sculpture.

However, I find it to be a bad judgment of the art, when somebody says, He can really handle materials. How many times have

you heard that—many times. Does that mean the art is any good? No, it means that you can really handle materials.

In terms of composition, Series One was modelled with child's blocks. I saw the art enter it in the model, and that is what I wanted from those pieces. I knew full well that the slavish work was to come in making volumes out of this two-dimensional stainless steel plate. That had to be done with much obsession, before the final work could be put together—which had to be done spontaneously. Those pieces were meant purposefully to move from the obsession of doing the individual parts, to being able to finish the piece all on its own. To just put it together that way.

I was an action painter when I think I was doing my best painting. And so starting from zero, and watching the action unfold was very important to me. So the spontaneity in the work at the end was very critical to me. I thought then that I needed it that way.

This begins to change when the work becomes more dangerous.

The second series begins with a very simple sketch. Most people would think it was garbage, but it was coded to me, as to where the piece might go.

When the art enters the piece I say, Okay, I will start that.

I still wanted the spontaneity at the end of the piece, but by then it was a little more locked in, because we had those joints that were going to hold it in place. Those I did not try to specify, so that you could actually place them in situ, and three out of four of them still articulate. But once the angles were correct, then the moment of perfection happened, which completed the piece, and there was not any reason to change it after that.

By the third series, I was dealing with straight plates, which were guillotines. So handling them alone in the studio was a very dangerous life, because if they slipped and let go, they would kill me.

So I had to know more about where those pieces were going. I ended up modelling them with mat-board, so I knew how to lift the piece at the end.

That went on through the fourth series.

In the fifth, the spheres were added, and I had another problem all together. I had these spheres as an aesthetic issue, and I needed the spontaneity of the rest of the pieces in order to make the composition work. So there would be just a rough sketch, starting from the spheres. But in those drawings, I knew how those spheres would actually affect the rest of the composition.

Then I started drawing more elaborately, looking for things more elaborately, as the work progressed into the exchange with the Burgess Shale. So as the metaphor moved towards the Cambrian explosion, more drawings were done, and more modelling was done.

One of the first pieces that I was able to model completely within a computer took a long time. It was done on an old Intel 486-powered computer, with a program that would take you up to a point and then crash. The 'crashability' of this particular program was terrible, but the drawing qualities were absolutely superb, so I stuck it out.

So I hope I answered the question.

Joan Pachner: Yes, that was excellent.

Peter Clarke: I will just say that we have worked this year from 'meaning', to 'the meaning of meaning'.

But I suggest we leave to next year, 'the meaning of meaning of meaning'.

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