



**Artists Documentation Program**

**Video Interview Transcript**

**RICO WEBER**

**(ARTIST'S ASSISTANT TO JEAN TINGUELY)**

**MARCH 13, 1997**

**Interviewed by:**

**Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Founding Director,  
Artists Documentation Program, and  
Chief Conservator, The Menil Collection**

**Video: Laurie McDonald | Total Run Time: 01:11:45**

**Location: The Menil Collection**

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## About the Artists Documentation Program

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, artists have experimented with an unprecedented range of new materials and technologies. The conceptual concerns underlying much of contemporary art render its conservation more complex than simply arresting physical change. As such, the artist's voice is essential to future conservation and presentation of his or her work.

In 1990, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded a grant to the Menil Collection for Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, then Chief Conservator, to establish the Artists Documentation Program (ADP). Since that time, the ADP has recorded artists speaking candidly with conservators in front of their works. These engaging and informative interviews capture artists' attitudes toward the aging of their art and those aspects of its preservation that are of paramount importance to them.

The ADP has recorded interviews with such important artists as Frank Stella, Jasper Johns, and Cy Twombly. Originally designed for use by conservators and scholars at the Menil, the ADP has begun to appeal to a broader audience outside the Menil, and the collection has grown to include interviews from two partner institutions: the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art, Harvard Art Museums. In 2009, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded a grant to the Menil Collection to establish the ADP Archive, formalizing the multi-institutional partnership and making ADP interviews more widely available to researchers.

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**[Speakers (in order of appearance): Rico Weber, Artist's Assistant to Jean Tinguely; Carol Mancusi-Ungaro, Chief Conservator, The Menil Collection]**

**[00:00:44]**

CM-U: Today is March 13, 1997, and I am here with Rico Weber, who worked with Jean Tinguely as an assistant for many years.

CM-U: How many years did you work with him?

Rico Weber: I don't know. I started in '66.

CM-U: In '66?

Rico Weber: In '66, yes.

CM-U: You met him...

Rico Weber: I met him in Stockholm when I was doing the *Hon [en katedral (She – A Cathedral)*, 1966] with Jean and Niki. So I meet both. I meet Jean and Niki together. For me, it's hard to divide.

CM-U: So it was – right.

Rico Weber: I was always between...

CM-U: With the two of them.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: So – but weren't you in New York earlier in 1960 when he did that – the *Homage to New York*?

Rico Weber: No. No.

CM-U: Oh, you were not?

Rico Weber: No.

CM-U: Oh, I misunderstood that.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: So, '66...

Rico Weber: No, I missed that part. That was really, I think, one of the greatest time which Jean and Niki had.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Rico Weber: When they was all doing this self-destruction things.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Rico Weber: No, I missed that.

CM-U: I was reading about the piece, *Hommage a New York* [*Homage to New York*, 1960], that they did in the garden at MOMA, and they just blew it up...

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: ...in twenty minutes. That must have been quite shocking.

(laughter)

CM-U: In New York anyway.

Rico Weber: Yes. It was.

CM-U: So you started in '66 and continued to work with him...

Rico Weber: Yeah. Till the death.

CM-U: ...until he died?

Rico Weber: So, last, maybe eight years, no more. Only I was helping to put up a show sometimes. Because I start to do my own work, so...

CM-U: And you are a sculptor also?

Rico Weber: Ah, something between. I do reliefs and walls.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Rico Weber: Mm-hum.

**[00:02:14]**

CM-U: Where did you meet Jean?

Rico Weber: I was a hippie in Stockholm. And I was working in the restaurant of the museum as a cook and dishwasher and everything.

CM-U: This is the Museum of Modern Art [Moderna Museet, Stockholm]?

Rico Weber: Yes. And then my boss, he said, “Oh, there’s a Swiss guy which is come and having a show. Do you know him? It’s Tinguely.” And so that stuck *Heureka* [1963-64], because this was the things which was making Jean really known in Switzerland, and he did the *Heureka*. So he was maybe – people was laughing at them, but they was remembered a crazy machine. And I was seeing that show, and I was, yeah, quite fallen in love with that piece. And...

CM-U: So – okay, so these were – what kind of pieces did you say these were?

Rico Weber: *Heureka*.

CM-U: The *Heureka*, right.

Rico Weber: It was just the really – the first really big one he made.

CM-U: Okay.

Rico Weber: And she is in Zurich now, and it’s really a very good piece.

CM-U: So, anyway, so how did you actually start...

Rico Weber: And then I just – I was asking Jean because I was living in Stockholm for about two years, and I was speaking Swedish. And so I asked, just asked him if he need some help for translation or something like this. I can do – after my job in the restaurant, I can help. Work for him. And so I start with him. And then after a week or so, he get to the man of the business [sounds like] and said, yeah, he need me.

CM-U: So what were you doing with him?

Rico Weber: I changed the job.

**[00:03:54]**

- CM-U: What would you do with him?
- Rico Weber: Yeah, we was starting to build the *Hon*. This is also a work together with Niki and Ultvedt...
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: ...and so I was just doing everything.
- CM-U: Finding pieces as well?
- Rico Weber: First we went to junkyards, and then we have to build the whole construction of the *Hon*. And, wait, that was the really worst work with glue. You know, we have to heat up the glue, and then we put some sheets in, and take it out, and smooth it out, and put it on. It was like a \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible].
- CM-U: Did he tend to get pieces that he needed at the time? I mean, get parts that he needed at the time? Or did he have sort of a collection of pieces that he put together?
- Rico Weber: No, I think he – he travels a lot with stuff. He always have stuff with him, which he has an idea to do something with, and then he always get to the junkyard.
- CM-U: Where – in every town, he'd just go to the junkyard? And some people go to the library, or to the flea market...
- Rico Weber: Yeah. Yeah. So...
- CM-U: ...and he'd go to the junkyard.
- Rico Weber: ...just – yeah, sure.
- CM-U: So everything had to be used. Old to begin with.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. But the first, first things is go to the junkyard, find some pieces, and then I think, after the pieces, he find he was creating the machines.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: Because he had the pieces which he had for a long time, and just put it somewhere and wait for five years, and – that's how you get it.

- CM-U: That's so amazing. Did he make drawings?
- Rico Weber: The most drawings he made is when he was explaining.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Rico Weber: So he was talking, and say, "Okay, you know, I have a machine in my mind..." and just go like (pretends to draw in air), until it looked like this, and then the drawing comes out. But in the beginning, he didn't make very much drawing.
- CM-U: So the drawings were really to explain what he was going to make to the donor...
- Rico Weber: Yeah. Then he start to make drawings when he was working in the head [*Le Cyclop*, 1970], you know, in Milly-la-Forêt. So he was explaining how he want the pieces. So he make a kind of plan to show us how – or to remember where the piece have to go.
- [00:06:23]**
- CM-U: Okay. Let's see. So then after – so you would travel with him, then, to these different cities?
- Rico Weber: Yeah. So – yeah, I was always free, I think. In Stockholm – I stood in Stockholm. Then he gave me a call and said, "If you want to go to Canada, come to Paris; you can help us. But there is no money. It is only the ticket." And so I said yes. Just go to Canada.
- CM-U: Go to do it. Is that when you did the piece in Montreal [Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely, *Fantastic Paradise (Paradis Fantastique)*, 1967]?
- Rico Weber: Yes. And then I was there, and we go to Canada, and so I make some money. And then I went to New York, and I was just staying by myself. And then Jean – I was sending him a letter to his place. And so Jean, he just called once. I, I, well, I ran out of money, and then I called Jean. He said, "No, no, stay, stay until it's ready [sounds like]." \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible], you have to feed Rico. So I'd be back, and so we want to make – you have to save the money for the ticket. So, glad he was feeding me and giving me some work.
- CM-U: (laughs) Tough times, right? Yeah.

- Rico Weber: Yeah. No, no, this was really good.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- Rico Weber: But it also I was free.
- CM-U: Yeah.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. I was still you know, like a hippie. Just do some work for get some money and do my own stuff – yeah, traveling a lot and hanging around.
- CM-U: So did you have – in the course of your time with him, did you have conversations about some of the earlier works that he made? I mean, are you familiar with some of the earlier works, or is it mainly starting in '66 on that you feel...
- Rico Weber: No, he was a lot...
- CM-U: ...that you have a sense...
- Rico Weber: ...talking about *Hommage a New York* because this was really a main piece.
- CM-U: It was a main. I think it was his first trip to America. I think that was his first trip to New – yeah, I think that was his first trip to New York, in 1960.
- Rico Weber: Yeah, I think. Yes. Yeah. And we was talking about it because we was making in – oh, when was that, '69 or '70, when we make the *Victoria* [*La Vittoria*, 1970]...
- CM-U: Yes.
- Rico Weber: ...in the Dome. So we was talking about that time when he was doing the *End of the World* [*Study for an End of the World No. 2*, 1962]...
- CM-U: In Nevada?
- Rico Weber: ...in Nevada, yes.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: And so, yeah, just getting ideas, and looking at pictures, and so on. It was really fun.



**[00:08:55]**

CM-U: Did he ever – did you ever have – and this is one more general question I wanted to ask you. He knew – I know he met Yves Klein and worked with him in the fifties, mid-fifties.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: And they – I've seen the theater that they did in Gelsenkirchen, where Tinguely did some of the walls.

Rico Weber: Yes.

CM-U: Inside the theater.

Rico Weber: Yes.

CM-U: Did he ever talk about Klein to you?

Rico Weber: Oh, sure.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Rico Weber: Sure. I think Klein to Jean [sounds like], that was his favorite thing in art. He was a lot talking about Klein.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Rico Weber: Yeah, I think they was very good together because they're – Klein, he has also a kind of crazy mind and crazy ideas. I think they was very well together.

CM-U: The *School of Sensibility*, or whatever that – air and light?

Rico Weber: Yeah, I think this is craziness...

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Rico Weber: ...which is – in a good way. And I mean, all the machine, they did the rotation plate, which is exploring time. It was just a crazy piece. And it's really – it's very strong.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Rico Weber: And it's so simple. I mean, it's just a blue piece and a motor. But it's really – it's very strong.

CM-U: It's beautiful. Yeah. Color. Obviously we don't have – we have very few pieces of color in this collection. But he used color, on and off, I guess, through the years, depending...

Rico Weber: Yeah, he got more colorful – I think he was, in that time (points to *Baluba*, 1964, The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of the artist). This was, I think, from the beginning until '65, something like this, he was using a lot of color. And then he gets into the black period, and then in the later work he gets into more color.

CM-U: Back into color? Yeah.

Rico Weber: I think in the – yeah, in the mid-sixties, '69, '66, start with the black until about mid-seventies.

CM-U: Uh-huh.

Rico Weber: And then he got used to more color, and let me think, in the eighties, I think, he start with the scales.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Rico Weber: Scary pieces (laughs).

CM-U: They're very different, aren't they?

Rico Weber: Yeah.

**[00:11:11]**

CM-U: Well, some of the things I'm going to ask you as we look the pieces – because it's something that concerns us thirty years later, looking at them...

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: ...are questions about the speed at which they should go, and the sound. Now I know you may not have – you won't have memory of the ones that you didn't work on, but if you have any comments about how you think Jean

would have reacted to how these – how fast these are going now. Because we have no record of that. We have no way of knowing that.

Rico Weber: Yeah but it's very simple because the speed is directed by the motor, which is on the piece.

CM-U: Yeah.

Rico Weber: And it's the speed.

CM-U: But the problem is that some of – we've always had the impression that these motors were old to begin with.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: He bought them in junkyards. So they may not have been operating...

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: ...at the perfect RPM that the motor was made for. So sometimes when you replace a motor with the same RPM, I feel like it's going much faster than it in fact may have.

Rico Weber: Yeah. You have to castrate...

(laughter)

Rico Weber: ...to \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible] them slower.

CM-U: Well, we have thought about doing something...

Rico Weber: Yeah, you did it (points to work on shelf).

CM-U: We did it. We did it. Okay. I think it's time for us to look at some of these. And the sound, I say, is another thing. Because in our *M.O.N.S.T.R.E.* [Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely, *M.O.N.S.T.R.E.*, 1964, The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of the artists] piece, for example, the motor – the old, original motor would crank. I mean, it just made a lot of noise.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

- CM-U: As this thing moved, you know, the motor would also make noise. But then when we had to replace the motor...
- Rico Weber: It doesn't make it?
- CM-U: ...it was quiet. So we did sort of bang around a little bit.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. But, I mean, does this happen? It's like a car. If you have a car, you have to replace things.
- CM-U: But how would Jean Tinguely have done that? Felt about that?
- Rico Weber: Uh, sometimes he was kind of, you know, he was for conservation, but also he is very self-destruction. I think he – most of the things that make that, they break down, like this one (points to *Le Patin No. 5*, 1960). I mean, this cannot hold forever. So there is only the time this, till the little wire is rubbed through. And this is a way it's – everything is a kind of self-construction [sounds like], and then you get the problem of what to do. But I think he is very happy that somebody is keep taking care of his machine.
- CM-U: Would he do the repairs? Or that's what he would ask you to do? Or other assistants?
- Rico Weber: Umm, sometimes he – but he was not really interested in restoring.
- CM-U: Right.
- Rico Weber: I mean, just do new stuff and forget about the old.
- CM-U: Right. I should tell you, though, that this interview is part of a series of interviews that I've done...
- Rico Weber: Uh-huh.
- CM-U: ...with artists about the aging of their works.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: And the whole idea started in my mind when I met Jean Tinguely.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.

- CM-U: He came here in 1987 for the opening of the museum.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: This museum. And during that time, I spent some time talking to him. His son, Milan, was with him as well.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: And this question came up about, you know, your machines, and their aging, and the speed, and sound, and this sort of thing. And I would like very much at some point to have a film of you with these machines, and having you react to it. And he thought it was an interesting idea, but he wasn't, as you say, all that interested in the work.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: But he understood the problem.
- Rico Weber: Yeah, sure.
- CM-U: And then it took a couple of years for the program to start, and to get the money, and to get it all worked out. And we were just at the point of getting ready to do an interview when he suddenly died. And so it never happened. So that was one reason why I am so happy that you agreed to do it.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: But I've always credited him with this whole series...
- Rico Weber: Um-hum. Um-hum.
- CM-U: ...that has to do with working with artists. Okay. Let's start looking at each piece. Okay?
- Rico Weber: Okay.
- [00:15:02]**
- CM-U: Let's start with this one. This is called *Le Patin* [No. 5, 1960, The Menil Collection, Houston]. The Skate.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: And it was made in 1960. It was purchased and came into the collection much later. And there are a couple of interesting problems that we had with it. One is that this is one of the few pieces that has a completely detachable piece. We actually have it glued down because we had it on exhibition. But it's a completely loose...

Rico Weber: \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible]. Yeah.

CM-U: ...it's just a loose piece.

Rico Weber: It's maybe for the sound.

CM-U: For the sound?

Rico Weber: Maybe this makes...

CM-U: Oh, I hadn't thought about that.

Rico Weber: That may be – I don't know, but if it is loose on it, maybe the machine makes some rotation and there is just some sound.

CM-U: Well, because we had it on exhibition, and we were afraid that someone might take it...

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: ...we secured it down. But I'm going to take this off, and I'm just going to leave it there. And the earliest photograph just shows it like that. And then we're going to turn it on.

Rico Weber: Um-hum. That's a beautiful piece.

CM-U: It is a beautiful piece.

Rico Weber: I really like this \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible]. Because it's so simple. It's – I mean, it's not looking for – it's not a real machine. It's just something like which moves.

CM-U: Where would he – where was he when he was making these, do you know? 1960. He was in Paris.

- Rico Weber: Impasse Ronsin.
- CM-U: Where was he?
- Rico Weber: Impasse Ronsin.
- CM-U: Oh, that's right. That's – on that – his studio.
- Rico Weber: This was close to the – Brancusi had a studio at the same place.
- CM-U: Brancusi. Right. Where the Centre Georges Pompidou is now?
- Rico Weber: Yeah, this was a place with different studios. And one of the studios belongs to Brancusi. So, Jean, he was a neighbor of Brancusi for – I don't know, for two, three years.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Rico Weber: Just before he died, I think.
- CM-U: That must have been a good experience for him.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. There are some photographs. I have a friend. He collects all the newspapers and art papers with articles about Jean or his surrroundment [sounds like]. And then he find an article about Brancusi, and you have all the things focused on Brancusi, and there is a wall, and a window, and is sticking something out from Jean's machines.
- (laughter)
- CM-U: From his machines. I wonder if Brancusi ever photographed some of those machines? I mean, he did such wonderful photographs of his own art.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: I wonder if he did it. I never thought to... Um, the motor was broken on this at one point, and so it had to be replaced. But let's plug it in...
- Rico Weber: Yeah.

- CM-U: ...and see what happens. We're going to use the plug here in the floor. Do we need to move this out, Laurie, or is it okay just the way (plugs in sculpture)...
- CM-U: Of course, you know, there's only a matter of time before this is going to break.
- Rico Weber: Yeah, here. This one. The wire. Or then, till this goes through.
- CM-U: We weren't even sure if this was actually – let's see, do you want to come stand over here?
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: We weren't even sure if this was supposed to actually go off the edge, or just go up to the edge.
- Rico Weber: No, no, I think it's off.
- CM-U: It goes off?
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: And, see, this just sits here.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum. It's a beautiful piece.
- CM-U: Isn't it wonderful?
- Rico Weber: It's really.
- CM-U: Unless this was attached somewhere. Every picture we have of it, it was just...
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: Have you seen other pieces where something is just loose like this?
- Rico Weber: No. But that's the one.
- CM-U: Okay.



**[00:19:00]**

CM-U: When we exhibit this, because we don't like to have it on constantly...

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: ...we use a foot pedal.

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: How do you think Tinguely would feel about that?

Rico Weber: Oh, I think they did it in Basel. I mean, he knows the program about conservation. Don't ask him. Just do it.

CM-U: (laughs) He would have to – he would just accept it because...

Rico Weber: No, I think – yeah. You cannot do both, you cannot conserve something and keep it the original way when this is made to destroy it themselves. So you will just have to slow it down.

CM-U: That's what we felt.

Rico Weber: Hm.

CM-U: And then we also, I mean we would just...

Rico Weber: But I mean – I would, even though maybe just a timer.

CM-U: We did that with one piece. With the next piece. When we first opened, we had it just on a timer, so it was on at specific times.

Rico Weber: Because I think also when you have different things. If you have it on a timer, so you can describe to people, "These things is going every ten minutes, for some minutes, or for some times," and then people, they got used to it. But if you make it a switch with the timer, so they stand on, and then it's not working because the timer is off. So they just go and step on the things.

CM-U: Yeah.

Rico Weber: So I would do everything, like computerized switches. The pieces are just there, and people cannot do anything.

- CM-U: That makes sense. It just keeps people...
- Rico Weber: The best things to do. It's not really in Jean's ways, but if people plays with these things, so you can really turn them over. You just go and kick and kick, it takes speed, and then it goes over...
- CM-U: It goes right over.
- Rico Weber: And then it's just a game. I mean, this was very funny, like when Jean, he was alive, and we had the show, people could do this because we was there to restore.
- CM-U: Right. But it is different now.
- Rico Weber: Uh-huh. Yeah, this is different, yeah.
- CM-U: This is wonderful. It really is one of our best. We love it.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum. And then \_\_\_\_\_ [phrase inaudible]
- CM-U: That's true. That's true. Okay. Let's see what else I want to ask you about this. Okay.
- CM-U: Let's move on to the next one, which is the radio piece.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum. So we change this?
- CM-U: Yeah. Let me take the cord off. Okay. Let you put it here. Okay. (moves sculpture to pedestal)
- [00:21:49]**
- CM-U: (plugs in radio piece, which begins moving) [*WNYR No. 5 (Radio Sculpture)*, 1962, The Menil Collection, Houston]
- Rico Weber: (chuckles)
- CM-U: It has a radio going on.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. That's a program.
- CM-U: It's so great.

- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: He made a series of these. Lots of these radios, right?
- Rico Weber: Yes.
- CM-U: And he had them – they would just pick up whatever frequency – I mean, he didn't...
- Rico Weber: No. As far as I know, he made – *Radio Stockholm*, for example. So he'd pick up the main station from the city he was, and then maybe this is also the station...
- CM-U: It doesn't matter, though? It's just whatever was picked up?
- Rico Weber: I think you can find out what is – this is radio...
- CM-U: This is just – it says *Tinguely No. 5*. It was made in '62.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. So he just make a radio. But then I know he has particular radio with just the station on. But then it says mostly the name, like Radio – I don't know. Tokyo Radio. Stockholm...
- CM-U: Yeah, this one is called WNYR.
- Rico Weber: Yeah, and maybe it's this, the station is on. One of those stations.
- CM-U: But the station that must have been on when he put it on the first time, or something. I guess.
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: Because I heard stories that – well, the first time they heard this, John Kennedy was speaking on the radio.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: The first time this was turned on. It was a lot of static.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.

- CM-U: And I suppose that would make sense. 'Cause this was made in '62, when he was still alive.
- Rico Weber: Oh, yeah. Maybe.
- CM-U: So maybe this was made – what we had to do in terms of restoring it was, we had to replace the radio tubes.
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: Because it was no longer taking any sound.
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: We also did one other major change, which is putting this – the Plexiglas – on it.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum. Yeah.
- CM-U: Can you see the Plexiglas, Laurie? Are you – there you go. Right here.
- Rico Weber: No, this is – I mean, this is still a change you cannot even see it if you don't know it.
- CM-U: That was our feeling. And the reason why we did it is, we were showing it at...
- Rico Weber: Somebody can stick their finger inside.
- CM-U: Exactly. Exactly. So we were worried about that. Have you seen other radio pieces where that's been done? Or other pieces that have been put...
- Rico Weber: Hmm. But mostly he did. In the Museum of Fine Art, they have one [*Radio Drawing*, 1963, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Alexander Iolas] which is behind the Plexi. And he did the Plexi.
- CM-U: Oh, he made the Plexi?
- Rico Weber: Yeah, he made the Plexi.
- CM-U: Okay. So this would definitely be in keeping, then, with his...

- Rico Weber: So I think this is perfect in his spirits.
- CM-U: Okay.
- Rico Weber: Because he has a tremendous sense for safety. And he was doing crazy stuff, but always he was thinking where can get people hurt; and he was making a protection of things.
- CM-U: Huh.
- Rico Weber: He had tremendous – and we never have really an accident in 25 years, in which I was working for him
- CM-U: Wow! So he...
- Rico Weber: So he felt, one, “I get \_\_\_\_\_ [phrase inaudible].” But that is just junk \_\_\_\_\_ [phrase inaudible]. It is not really an accident. And he really have us doing big construction, and crazy stuff.
- CM-U: So he would be very attentive? He’d be watching...
- Rico Weber: He was really, really thinking – first things was security from him. And he always – in Europe, I know, when he came from the States, he bring some gloves to work. So he was thinking, crazy man. So he is like, “We are real men. We work with our hand, no gloves.” But then we find out, and you weld, and so you get burned, and – no, he was really giving a lot of attention for safety work and...
- CM-U: So he brought the protective gloves back from New York, and then you all had to use them?
- Rico Weber: Um-hum. Um-hum.
- CM-U: Hmm. Well, good. I’m glad, because that was a solution we thought still kept the look of the piece, but protected it...
- Rico Weber: No, I think it is very well done. You cannot even see this. I was thinking this was original.

**[00:26:16]**

- CM-U: Okay. Let me see what else I wanted to ask you about this. This was actually purchased from Iolas. The dealer, Alexander Iolas, who gave Jean early exhibitions.
- Rico Weber: Yes. Yeah. He was a great man.
- CM-U: This was purchased from him in '63.
- Rico Weber: Uh-huh.
- CM-U: It has been said that he felt very strongly that the pieces needed to always be in movement, and that in fact the only thing really permanent was the idea of something moving, anyway.
- Rico Weber: Uh-huh.
- CM-U: Have you see exhibitions of his work where they are not moving? And what was the response...
- Rico Weber: No, I didn't see. But I know, I think in Amsterdam, they have pieces, which are not moving.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: And that's it. I mean, its...
- CM-U: Would Tinguely feel that that would be silly to even display something?
- Rico Weber: I think this was in the time when Tinguely still was alive. But there is also a program, either you keep the piece, and you can do it once at a time to show – when this is TV or something like this; or you let them go, and then it just breaks down.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: Because there are some of the pieces, I think, just not – you cannot restore them.
- CM-U: Hmm. It's a dilemma.
- Rico Weber: They are not really – yeah, I mean, this one is a program. How you find the exactly wire and things like this. But this will break, then I don't know. And

not very far because the iron himself is very – if you start to bend them, this will break.

CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: So it's really – it's too rotten.

CM-U: It's a dilemma.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

**[00:27:55]**

CM-U: Let's talk about this one, which is called *Viridiana* [1963, The Menil Collection, Houston].

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: And I don't know why it's called that, but I'm sure it's explained somewhere. Hopefully. Do you have any insight on that?

Rico Weber: No.

CM-U: Okay. 1964.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: And...

Rico Weber: This is not – it's not the film from Buñuel made, *Viridiana*, at that time?

CM-U: Oh, I don't know. Buñuel film?

Rico Weber: This is a film from Buñuel which is called *Viridiana*. And that's...

CM-U: It probably is then.

Rico Weber: Yeah. That's might be in the same time.

CM-U: Okay.

Rico Weber: And maybe he saw it, and he was impressed.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Rico Weber: It was a really good film

CM-U: It's a really good piece.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: This would have been painted? These parts would have been found, and then painted black, I gather?

Rico Weber: Yes.

CM-U: Right?

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: Okay.

Rico Weber: This must be one of the first black ones. When you said sixty...

CM-U: I'm pretty sure it is '66. Let me just confirm that. Oh we have '63. I mean, I said '64. It's '63.

Rico Weber: Yeah. So it was one of the first pieces.

CM-U: One of the very first of the black ones.

Rico Weber: Really black. We paint black.

CM-U: That's all we know. We don't have much about it.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: The motor fell off at one point.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: And so we had to resecure that.

Rico Weber: Secure it. Yeah.



- CM-U: You can see that. But that's really all we've done. We've never repainted it or – when Tinguely was alive, did he ever have occasion to have to repaint something?
- Rico Weber: Oh, sure. I mean, this was when we was doing a show. Just go, instead of clean the dust away, we just take some spray and go and...
- CM-U: Spray? And did it have to be matte...
- Rico Weber: Matte. Always a matte.
- CM-U: Always matte? And he would just spray them?
- Rico Weber: Yeah. This was the way to clean.
- CM-U: Good. Okay. Well, that's helpful to know. And was it just commercial – just a spray can that you bought in the hardware store?
- Rico Weber: It's the – yeah, it is of the – the matte things you buy in spray can, for iron stuff. And the biggest one, that we was painting with blackboard paint.
- CM-U: Blackboard paint.
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: Chalk. Like the blackboard chalk paint? You mean, the things you draw on? The board you draw on?
- Rico Weber: Yeah. Yeah.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Rico Weber: Because it's a nice, flat...
- CM-U: It is.
- Rico Weber: ...black...
- CM-U: In fact, it has kind of, almost a silvery sheen, it's so flat.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: Oh, okay. Well, that's helpful to know. So it would certainly be in the spirit of Tinguely to repaint these if it were necessary?

Rico Weber: Yeah. You can do it, I think.

CM-U: Okay.

Rico Weber: I would not do to – I like this one. Like, this is okay. If it is too new...

CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: ...I mean, when this was a show, they was running, and then you didn't see it somewhat, because it gets used. But if you really keep them as, like, stable, and not really running, just from time to time, I would not do too much restoring. You know, black paint.

CM-U: I think our instinct would be never to do anything to repaint it. I was just thinking – what occurred to me is, if something happened, and it were damaged. If it fell over, and it were on loan or something...

Rico Weber: Sure.

CM-U: ...and we had to touch in...

Rico Weber: Yeah. Sure.

CM-U: ...you know, it might be something that we might need to do.

**[00:31:05]**

CM-U: This pedestal would have been Tinguely, too? Or someone else would have made this? But this has sand in it to weight this down.

Rico Weber: Yeah, sure. I think this is perfect, because we did these things...

CM-U: You made these as well?

Rico Weber: Yeah. Yeah.

CM-U: Yeah. Okay.

Rico Weber: Just fill it in with sand, or put some junk in it to...

CM-U: Look at the back. Let's turn this around a little bit.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: I just want to show you.

Rico Weber: Yeah, it's to fill in the sand.

CM-U: You see the door? This looks like something he would do?

Rico Weber: Yeah. Not so perfect.

CM-U: Oh, so this isn't Tinguely?

Rico Weber: I don't know. But, I mean, I don't know where the piece comes from.

CM-U: Yeah.

Rico Weber: But this can be, they had a show, and then...

CM-U: I see.

Rico Weber: ...he said, just said he, "I want the base," and to – and then just do it like in the show.

CM-U: And just leave it.

Rico Weber: But I think this is perfect

CM-U: Okay. Good. Okay, let's turn it around, and let's turn it on. All right now. Be careful because...

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: ...it's a little wobbly. Okay. (plugs in sculpture and lets it run for a while) How does it seem to you?

Rico Weber: It looks good.

CM-U: It's noisy, yeah.

Rico Weber: Oh, it's okay. It's a nice piece.

CM-U: Yeah, it is a nice piece. And it seems to be the way it should be.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: Well, good.

Rico Weber: You know what you can do? Is Jim Love, he knows a guy, which can weld some bronze, bronzes [sounds like] around here. And then this will not go further.

CM-U: To weld some bronze around here to protect the metal from eroding further?

Rico Weber: Yes. Yes.

CM-U: Because that would be the problem. If it eroded more, it could come right off.

Rico Weber: Yeah. This was the problem – this was certainly just like this before. And just from the rotating, this – and if you put just some bronze on it, then it stops; and you just can replace the bronze.

CM-U: And you would weld that on, as opposed to screwing it?

Rico Weber: Yeah, you have to...

CM-U: You have to weld...

Rico Weber: ...you have to solve – it's, it's – yeah, with a welding stick, you just go around. I cannot do it, but Jim, he has a guy that can do it.

CM-U: Okay. That's great to know. That's a very good idea.

Rico Weber: Those are the things which I would do.

CM-U: Because it would keep it from eroding further.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: That's a very good idea. That's a very good idea. Anything else that you would recommend?

Rico Weber: No.

CM-U: Okay. This looks like some kind of pipe, water pipe or something, that was then welded on there?

Rico Weber: Oh no, this is the construction iron.

CM-U: The construction iron?

Rico Weber: Yeah. You are needing construction...

CM-U: Iron. Rebar, or whatever. Yeah. Okay. We can move this one over here. All right. Okay.

**[00:34:39]**

CM-U: And now I want to ask you about this one [*Untitled*, 1966-67, The Menil Collection, Houston]. Let's put it – let's just put it on the floor, I think.

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: Okay. Okay, now this is the one that we virtually know absolutely nothing about. Nothing. We don't know the date.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: We don't know where it was made. It was something that was found – recently found in our storage. Certainly looked like a Tinguely. So anything you can tell us about this...

Rico Weber: It's good to find things like this. I would like to find something like this...

CM-U: (laughing) It is good to find things like this.

Rico Weber: ...in myself.

CM-U: You're right. It's very nice to find things like this. This is not in my basement.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: Do you remember this piece?

- Rico Weber: Not really, but I remember at the time – this was about the end ‘66 or ’70 when he start with a piece like this. And then in ’68, he make a piece which has only one stick which goes like this. And they was called the matraque. And this was when there was the revolution in Paris with the students. So all the policemen goes around with the matraques. Just like playing like this, and then...
- CM-U: Oh, the sticks, you mean?
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: The maulsticks.
- Rico Weber: Yes.
- CM-U: Oh. Now what are they called?
- Rico Weber: Matraque.
- CM-U: Okay.
- Rico Weber: It’s like a baseball...
- CM-U: Right. I know what you mean.
- Rico Weber: \_\_\_\_\_ [phrase inaudible]
- CM-U: I know exactly what you mean.
- Rico Weber: It’s more handy.
- CM-U: Right. And so this was...
- Rico Weber: This is from this time.
- CM-U: This is from what time?
- Rico Weber: Because they have all the same movements and the same – and he, he did quite a lot of pieces in the same spirit.
- CM-U: Okay. So we’re thinking ’66, ’67.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: Before '68?

Rico Weber: Yeah, I think, or – yeah, late '66 or...

CM-U: Okay. And this material is...

Rico Weber: Is just \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible]. It is just, you know, cardboard.

CM-U: Cardboard? Or, wood.

Rico Weber: Yeah, the wood...

CM-U: Wood.

Rico Weber: ...the wood, which – it's the wood, you know, it's... It's not this...

CM-U: It's the pressboard, painted [sounds like].

Rico Weber: Yeah, pressboard, yeah.

CM-U: Pressboard. Right. But metal on the bottom. Everything else is metal except for that.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: But that would have been the original piece, you think?

Rico Weber: Sure. Sure.

CM-U: Yeah.

**[00:37:10]**

CM-U: Okay, let's plug it in. We've never done this, so...

Rico Weber: Um-hum. So let's see what's happened. (plugs in machine) And he did some with rounds, you know, instead of that \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible].

CM-U: With discs?

- Rico Weber: Yeah. Just a big O-rings. They are all the same principle. Perfect.
- CM-U: It's wonderful, isn't it? Because it hasn't been used or turned on for thirty years, it's in prime condition.
- Rico Weber: Brand new.
- CM-U: Okay. (unplugs machine) How did he name his pieces? Do you know? How did he give titles to them?
- Rico Weber: Hmm. Sometimes he had the title...
- CM-U: He just...
- Rico Weber: ...and, no, there was mostly was a reason.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: Or he just, like a balance, or like \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible], just something which is in the piece.
- CM-U: Okay.
- Rico Weber: But, I mean, I think he had always either an idea--first the title, and then he make the machine--or then he put the name on the machine when we was working on.
- CM-U: It would be interesting – I think someone is doing a catalogue raisonné of his work.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. You...
- CM-U: Or has that already been done?
- Rico Weber: Yes. You don't have it? The – from Bischofberger [C. Bischofberger. *Jean Tinguely: Catalogue Raisonné: Sculpture and Reliefs, 1954-68* (Zurich, 1982)]?
- CM-U: We must have it, but this is not in it. Because they didn't know we had it, because we didn't know we had it.



Rico Weber: Uh-huh. Ah, yes. But there are certainly things in it. You have the catalogue here?

CM-U: Yes.

Rico Weber: So we can see afterwards, yeah.

CM-U: We can look later. I'm sure we do. I just – it's been a while since I...

CM-U: What about oiling these motors? Or oil residue that comes from motors?

Rico Weber: Yeah, the most, they have – they are made to run. Everything is...

CM-U: They are sealed, so you don't need to oil them?

Rico Weber: No.

CM-U: Uh-huh. The reason why I ask is because of the next piece that I want to look at, which is one of the *Balubas*. So let's put this one back. Okay. All right.

**[00:40:11]**

CM-U: This piece is part of the *Baluba* series [*Baluba*, 1964, The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of the artist].

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: And the reason why I was asking you about name is, what – where did he get – what is *Baluba*?

Rico Weber: *Baluba*. This was, I think, in Africa there was a warrior. There was black warriors, and they was – they have a lot of feathers, and they was making war dances and things like this (jumps up and down). And the name comes from this.

CM-U: Ahh.

Rico Weber: It's a black tribe, I think, in the Congo.

CM-U: And so all the – and all the *Baluba* pieces do have feathers.

Rico Weber: Yeah. Yes.

CM-U: Yeah. Ah, right.

Rico Weber: And that the movement is like (makes dancing motion)...

CM-U: Like dance movement?

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: We had a problem with this one. Well, let's plug it in first and watch it.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: Now there is a piece missing. I mean, it's not missing. It's detached. It's this. And you see the wire broke.

Rico Weber: Yeah. But I think this is just a spare for this one.

CM-U: Yeah, it goes right here. It goes right here.

Rico Weber: Oh, it goes here?

CM-U: No, in the back. Back here.

Rico Weber: Okay. So just put it back. Okay.

CM-U: Okay.

Rico Weber: Next time you have to replace the wire because it is too short [sounds like].

CM-U: It's too old. I know. Well, we may replace it. I just – let's see. (turns on machine)

Rico Weber: It's a beautiful piece.

CM-U: The actual speed, though, Rico, we have this on a rheostat.

Rico Weber: Yes.

CM-U: The actual speed, which I'll do very quickly, is this. Okay.

Rico Weber: It's quite...

CM-U: Do you want step aside so – just in case.

Rico Weber: Oh. Yeah. Yeah. Sure. But, I mean, if you go \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible], you can go run it two hours and then you have everything on the floor.

CM-U: But you think that...

Rico Weber: But this is the...

CM-U: ...that was the speed?

Rico Weber: This was the speed, yeah. It's the speed of the motor. That's all.

CM-U: And so Jean would just plug it in...

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: ...and let it go for a while, and then...

Rico Weber: No. He just – he made it, and he was not really worrying about how long...

CM-U: Why don't you stand over here?

Rico Weber: ...how long a piece holds. So he was just interested in that his idea worked. And if it worked, then just okay.

CM-U: So if it fell apart...

Rico Weber: It just fell apart.

CM-U: We do have different issues that we have to deal with, don't we, if we want to keep them?

Rico Weber: So, I would say, okay – he'd kill me maybe...

CM-U: Go. Say – say what you – go – this is...

Rico Weber: But I think I would slow it down.

CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: It's only because you have so much vibration in here. And only the vibration can break the piece just right here, and then you get also tore up the things. Okay, he put some bronze here, you know.

CM-U: Um-hum.

Rico Weber: And therefore, the sticks is not so true [sounds like], but – and also, I think, for the motor, because they are quite small, and this is quite heavy, all to put this \_\_\_\_\_ [phrase inaudible]. I would put it on the...

CM-U: Put it on the lower.

Rico Weber: ...on the lower.

CM-U: Okay.

**[00:43:43]**

CM-U: Um, the other – do you think – I mean, I have other questions. Do you think he brought the – did he go to the Congo? He must have gone to Africa and seen these dancers. Or did he just read about them?

Rico Weber: I think it was in a movie or...

CM-U: A movie?

Rico Weber: ...or the news. You know, before the TV, there was in the movie, if you go to the movie, you have had news for one week, or...

CM-U: Oh, a newsreel like? Yeah.

Rico Weber: And I think this came from there.

CM-U: So the materials would have been European or American, not African?

Rico Weber: Oh, sure. He was in that time...

CM-U: He never...

Rico Weber: He never was in Africa.

- CM-U: Okay. At one point in the history of this piece, there was tape put around this. It was tape not unlike our packing tape. I can show you some
- Rico Weber: Um-hum. On the *clochette* [bell]?
- CM-U: On the bell.
- Rico Weber: Maybe somebody...
- CM-U: Look (holds up black-and-white photograph).
- Rico Weber: Yeah. But this is, I think they made it because – some guards may have put this...
- CM-U: Guards? Or...
- Rico Weber: Yeah like, do you know, this was too noisy, so somebody put...
- CM-U: So you don't think it was Jean Tinguely?
- Rico Weber: No. No, no, no. When he put bells on, he wanted to...
- CM-U: Do you want a picture of this, Laurie? If maybe you can see it.
- Laurie: Actually, I got it.
- CM-U: With the tape, I wanted to show you what it looked like.
- Laurie: Let me just get one more of those, since you have it.
- CM-U: Oh, I see. That's right. It's right here.
- Laurie: Got it.
- CM-U: So that was our thought, that it was not...
- Rico Weber: Yeah. Because, Jean, he – if he wants noise, so he...
- CM-U: He wants noise. He wouldn't...
- Rico Weber: No, he would not – a bell which not makes noise, it would not make sense.

CM-U: That's right. And it was on the bell.

Rico Weber: Hmm.

CM-U: That's what – right. Okay. Let's put it on again just once more. It's so good. Okay.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: Okay. Why don't you stand over there? Yeah.

Rico Weber: Okay. (turns on machine)

CM-U: I think it just – slow it down.

Rico Weber: I mean, this speed would be perfect.

CM-U: What? This speed.

Rico Weber: I wonder if...

CM-U: This speed now?

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: That's terrific. It's really – it's – is there anything you would do that we haven't done to preserve it?

Rico Weber: No.

CM-U: Okay. Okay.

Rico Weber: Just look at the coils, if they are still good. Yeah, they still are. So sometime if the motor is no more working, so you have to replace this...

CM-U: What is this?

Rico Weber: This is a coil.

CM-U: Show this to the camera.

Rico Weber: It's coil like you have in the drills. The machines. It's to make to run the motor. To give the contact...

CM-U: Oh, I see.

Rico Weber: ...and just replace this piece. And then somebody is losing this piece – it is just a block of wood.

CM-U: Great. It's wonderful.

Rico Weber: Yeah, it's a good piece.

**[00:47:17]**

CM-U: Okay. Now let's move on to this one that you know very well [*Fountain*, 1969, The Menil Collection, Houston].

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: This is the one that you made when you came...

Rico Weber: Yeah, we made in, in '70?

CM-U: Sixty-nine.

Rico Weber: Sixty-nine?

CM-U: The show...

Rico Weber: For the machine show ["The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age," Museum of Modern Art, New York, November 27, 1968-February 9, 1969 / University of St. Thomas, Houston, March 25-May 18, 1969]?

CM-U: Yep. The machine show at MoMA.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: And then, after the venue in New York, it came to Houston.

Rico Weber: Yes.

CM-U: And you came with it. Right?

Rico Weber: Yes, I am remembering.

CM-U: And Jean Tinguely was here.

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: And the two of you...

Rico Weber: Was this for...

CM-U: ...made this here. Right?

Rico Weber: Yes.

CM-U: And where did you get the parts? Are these parts you brought with you, or did you get them here?

Rico Weber: No, no. We, we went to the junkyards. Different junkyards. And just pick up whatever we find.

CM-U: And then what about welding and all that sort of thing? You did that...

Rico Weber: We did that in the building...

CM-U: At Rice [Rice University Institute for the Arts, Rice Museum]?

Rico Weber: ...in the – at Rice, yes. I think I have some photographs of it.

CM-U: Do you?

Rico Weber: Yeah. Somewhere.

CM-U: There was actually a film made, I think, of you making it. A very short film [*Jean Tinguely in Motion*, 1969].

Rico Weber: That was not François [de Menil]?

CM-U: It may have been François who made it.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: Made the film. Well, we're not going to turn the water on...



Rico Weber: No.

CM-U: ...but we could plug it in...

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: ...just for you to get a look. Maybe you ought to look it over first and...

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: We sent it on loan...

Rico Weber: No, no, this was not very much run, I think. This is...

CM-U: I'm sorry. There was not...

Rico Weber: It just was not very much working, I think. Yeah, just we turn it on and look what has happened.

CM-U: Okay.

Rico Weber: Where is the switch? Has the motor been replaced once?

CM-U: The motor has been replaced. And, because we sent it on loan in 1979 to MOCA in Los Angeles – or '81, or something – and Jim Love replaced – worked on it.

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: And I think the motor has been replaced, and some of the other – oh, and there's something else I wanted to ask you. In our photographs of this...

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: ...there is no record of this ring being on it. The hose goes in here. We are thinking this may have been a later addition.

Rico Weber: Yes.

CM-U: Does this look characteristically Tinguely?

Rico Weber: I don't know. But this must be a reason because I think this is – the hose goes through here, and if this is loose, it gets stuck here, and it can be stopped here. These are the point – it have to stay. I just would leave it.

CM-U: But I think this was added later.

Rico Weber: Yeah, sure. It's only tape.

CM-U: Yeah. Right. So you didn't do this? This was put on later?

Rico Weber: I think so, yeah.

CM-U: I think so, too, because there was some...

Rico Weber: It looks good.

CM-U: So you'd just leave it?

Rico Weber: Yeah, I would leave it, yeah.

CM-U: That's exactly why they did it. I'm sure the hose got in contact with this.

Rico Weber: Yeah. Yeah. The only thing which I would do is paint the motor black.

CM-U: Paint the motor. You're right. Didn't paint the motor.

Rico Weber: And this stuff.

CM-U: Paint everything black?

Rico Weber: Yeah. Here also. I think this is redone, too, because I am sure he was just fixing the light on here.

CM-U: Yeah. Let me just check. Now here are some photographs of it working.

Rico Weber: Um-hum. Yup.

CM-U: This is the way it looked at the barn [Rice University] when you made it.

Rico Weber: Um-hum. Yes.

CM-U: And how long would it take for you to make something like this?

Rico Weber: Oh, two, three days.

CM-U: Two or three days?

Rico Weber: Right.

CM-U: And two or three days of looking for parts? Or no?

Rico Weber: Oh, the looking for parts is, you know, \_\_\_\_\_ [phrase inaudible] and you bring all the junk, and...

CM-U: This is at Mrs. de Menil's house.

Rico Weber: Yes.

CM-U: Oh, and this is the same picture with the water coming out.

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: And there's one other picture that's wonderful.

Rico Weber: By night.

CM-U: You remember. Is that right?

Rico Weber: Yeah, that's good.

CM-U: Is that the way it is? No? Yeah?

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: Where was this taken? Do you remember that? At her house, again?

Rico Weber: I think so. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Yeah.

CM-U: So after the show, you took it out to the house?

Rico Weber: Yeah. We was bringing this. I think this was not even in the show, this piece.

CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: We brought it right away to her...

- CM-U: Oh, to her house, right away?
- Rico Weber: Yes. Yeah. That's what I have in memory.
- CM-U: Maybe it was out in front of the museum during the show. No? No, because you wouldn't be here then when it went to her house. I'll have to ask her.
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: What was – the motor was replaced. Other parts were replaced.
- Rico Weber: I think this one. This is not really Tinguely (touches electrical box near light). This is for safety.
- CM-U: So how would that originally have been?
- Rico Weber: I think this was just put some here, or – I don't know. Because I am sure, when he – when we was doing this, so this would be paint everything black.
- CM-U: You would not have had a box?
- Rico Weber: No, just paint it black.
- CM-U: Yeah. Okay. Well, we may do this very soon, while you're still here.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- [00:52:52]**
- [inaudible background voices]
- Rico Weber: (adjusts belts on *Fountain*) Yeah, something is not really good.
- CM-U: What?
- Rico Weber: A belt came off.
- CM-U: What came off?
- Rico Weber: The belt. (turns on machine) It looks okay.
- CM-U: But now this would have been...

Rico Weber: This one has to be...

CM-U: Would this have been here?

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: Where – is there another one that goes off the top? I thought the spray goes off the top.

Rico Weber: Yeah. But there is not – the thing's that here, goes up here. And this has to be retouched here. Otherwise it is just...

CM-U: Well, is that something we can do while you're here?

Rico Weber: Sure.

CM-U: Good. So we'll get...

Rico Weber: Just buy stuff like this and put one here.

CM-U: All right. We'll go to a store and get what you need.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: And then maybe we should get some black paint and think about painting it, too.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: So does this need to be painted also, I guess?

Rico Weber: Yeah. I don't know. It's...

CM-U: Maybe that's new, too.

Rico Weber: No, no, this was – but it is – as you know, it's from the water. It's the...

CM-U: Yeah.

Rico Weber: ...it's the calcium from the water.

CM-U: Oh, that's just part of the life of it.

Rico Weber: So it depends on if you want it brand new or...

CM-U: No.

Rico Weber: I would leave it like this.

CM-U: No, we don't. No. Good. Well, that's what...

Rico Weber: But then also I would replace all the belts. They're bad. This one will break pretty soon – he has some – you see?

CM-U: Well, maybe we can do that while you're here.

Rico Weber: But this is easy. Yeah.

CM-U: Maybe we can get the belts.

Rico Weber: You know what I suggest? I finish first in the Museum of Fine Arts...

CM-U: All right.

Rico Weber: And then I come here. Because I...

CM-U: And when would that be, that you would come here?

Rico Weber: Next week, some day.

CM-U: See, unfortunately, I'm not going to be here next week. But we'll talk about it.

Rico Weber: Okay.

CM-U: We may be able to arrange that anyway.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: But I would like – it would be very good for you to get this in the proper order.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: Now what about the sound and the speed? That all seems...

- Rico Weber: That's okay.
- CM-U: Okay. So let's record that a little bit more, since we are going to be changing the belts. I want to be sure...
- Rico Weber: Yeah. So what I would do – this is just belts you find in the store, which sells...
- CM-U: In a hardware store like...
- Rico Weber: Yeah. And there's just the size. Just take the belt with them and buy a new one. I would replace everything because they are quite dried out.
- CM-U: Okay. And then you need a clamp to go there.
- Rico Weber: And then a clamp for here. That's all I see now.
- CM-U: Do you have any memory of making this with him? Any stories or memories?
- Rico Weber: Yeah. I think this is when he – he had an accident, and then he was hit in his face somewhere. And then it was the first time he was growing a beard. And then he kept the moustache. It's the big change in his life.
- (laughter)
- CM-U: That was a big moment. Let's plug it – would you plug it back in?
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: Let's have it on film a little bit more.
- Rico Weber: (plugs in machine and hose falls to floor) Yep.
- CM-U: Okay.
- [a few inaudible comments while the machine is running]
- CM-U: Okay.
- [00:57:59]**
- CM-U: Then the last piece is this one.

Rico Weber: This one. (laughs)

CM-U: What? Is there something else you want to say about that?

Rico Weber: No.

CM-U: Are you sure?

Rico Weber: No, I don't...

CM-U: This one – let me move the chair out so you can \_\_\_\_\_ [phrase inaudible] was made a year earlier, in 1968, and was given to the Menil Collection just about the time we moved over here in this building. We've never operated it, and there are missing parts. These wheels...

Rico Weber: Yeah, they go here.

CM-U: Yeah. Right.

Rico Weber: They're just broken.

CM-U: Right. Is that something that you think you might be able to...

Rico Weber: To restore?

CM-U: Yeah.

Rico Weber: Oh, sure. No problem.

CM-U: Because it would be nice. And it's also a fountain piece.

Rico Weber: Yeah

CM-U: But look at...

Rico Weber: I mean, I am almost sure this runs. If you plug it in, this runs. Or else, it blows up, because the – but this was really in a junkyard.

CM-U: This wasn't – this was left outside. There's a photograph of it in Paris.

Rico Weber: Yeah. But this is...



CM-U: That's when it was new.

Rico Weber: This is before. Yeah, this is when it was new. That's Lalanne's dog.

CM-U: Whose dog?

Rico Weber: Lalanne.

CM-U: Who's Lalanne?

Rico Weber: They were French artists, Lalanne.

CM-U: Oh, yeah.

Rico Weber: That's the dog of them.

CM-U: Sculpture, right? Does he do – he does the animals?

Rico Weber: Yeah, he does – yeah, yeah.

CM-U: I've seen them. They're wonderful. Okay. So what would be involved here, though? I mean, this would have to be...

Rico Weber: No, this, just put it back. This is here. You can see it's broken here.

CM-U: Why don't you come around the side.

Rico Weber: This is here.

CM-U: Yeah. That needs rewelded, or a new one?

Rico Weber: Yeah. No, no, just put a piece of iron in here, and weld it together. And the other one is broken here. The other one was here.

CM-U: Now is your...

Rico Weber: No, I think that they was trying to pull it over and move it, and then it just break off.

CM-U: Um-hum. I see the belt is completely broken.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

- CM-U: This is a major, major job, I think, with this one.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. Just sand it down. I would go to a place which sands stuff, and just sand it down. Get rid of the rust, and paint it black.
- CM-U: What about this. Is this stuff – can you buy this hose in a store?
- Rico Weber: Sure. Sure. Get some black hose. Because they was painted black. They were red. But I would look for the same diameter. Just buy some new hose. That's the way we do always when – in Fribourg we have to repaint every five years. We have to replace the hoses.
- CM-U: Every five years, you just tend to replace them?
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: Just to be safe? Uh-huh.
- Rico Weber: Oh, they get used, and sun, and water, and ice, and...
- CM-U: This is wonderful. What do you think happens here? The wheels – does this go back and forth?
- Rico Weber: This goes just like here (turns wheel). And then the one is going...
- CM-U: The water is going that way.
- Rico Weber: But this is always like – one goes – just one thing...
- CM-U: One shoots...
- Rico Weber: ...and this goes like this.
- CM-U: So one's a spray, which is what the disc is...
- Rico Weber: Yeah, and the other one is like...
- CM-U: I see. And that's just a straight shot.
- Rico Weber: Yes. Yeah.

- CM-U: Is it always that way with these? Is there always one that straight and one that...
- Rico Weber: Ah, mostly. Most of them are two there. There one is straight, and one goes like this.
- CM-U: Oh, and see, on that one, it's a kind of sprinkler that goes around.
- Rico Weber: Yeah. Or, here, he doesn't – sometimes he goes like this.
- CM-U: Oh, he turns the nozzles \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible] spray. Well, that's interesting. Do that again. Let's see what that looks like. I think it would be wonderful to have it worked on.
- Rico Weber: What I'm wondering is, in the photograph, is these things lined up like here.
- CM-U: You means it's not...
- Rico Weber: So, what I think, this was bent. These have to go up. You see.
- CM-U: Oh, you're right.
- Rico Weber: This goes like this. And this have – so I think this was fallen down...
- CM-U: Wait. Wait a minute. Wait a minute.
- Rico Weber: Yeah, this goes like this.
- CM-U: The arc goes like that. It goes off the arc. You're right. It goes that way.
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: So you think it just – well, how did that happen?
- Rico Weber: Yeah, I think this was just bent. Yeah, it is – you can see the welding. No, it's not the welding. But I think this was just fall down, or laid down on this side, and the whole thing was turned down. 'Cause this is twist.
- [01:03:08]**
- CM-U: Well, this is a major restoration, Rico. I think we are going to have to take – bring you back another time when you can spend a much longer time here.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: But I think it would be wonderful to get this going again.

Rico Weber: Yeah. Yeah, I can do it when I next time comes.

CM-U: Yeah. We...

Rico Weber: When I go to Niki [de Saint Phalle] on the way.

CM-U: Will you be coming to see Niki again?

Rico Weber: I think in six weeks or something. So I just hang on a week.

CM-U: That would be great. To do something like that. Because this will take some time.

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: Yeah. And I need to have a place for you to be able to weld.

Rico Weber: Um-hum. But what I would do right away, find a place which sand – sand the piece down. Not too rough, but just get rid of all the rust.

CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: And then what you can do, this is something like – I don't know how you say it. It's a paint you put this in, and then this make – metalize...

CM-U: I know what you're saying. It's like you put zinc oxide...

Rico Weber: Yeah, it's like chroming, but it's black. And it's metalizing the – over two days sometime. It is really the best protection against rust. And they did it in Fribourg.

CM-U: They did it in Fribourg?

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: Was Tinguely still alive when they...

Rico Weber: Yeah.

- CM-U: Oh, they did?
- Rico Weber: Yeah.
- CM-U: And he would just dip it in, and have this coating put...
- Rico Weber: Yeah, you just – and then it's really a good rust protection. It's good for the rust. And they, they did it with *Paradis Fantastique* [Niki de Saint Phalle and Jean Tinguely, *Fantastic Paradise (Paradis Fantastique)*, 1967], and it just takes – this was holding for about 25 years.
- CM-U: Hmm. Is the new Tinguely Museum in Fribourg?
- Rico Weber: No, in Basel.
- CM-U: It's in Basel?
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: What do you think of that?
- Rico Weber: I think it's great.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: For me, it's a little bit stuffy. It's too much stuff in it, but...
- CM-U: There's too much in it? Too many objects in it?
- Rico Weber: But I like it a lot.
- CM-U: Uh-huh.
- Rico Weber: And it's the best way to conserve the Tinguely pieces.
- CM-U: Is everything indoors?
- Rico Weber: They have some – they have a fountain outside, and two – and I think a \_\_\_\_\_ [word inaudible] is outside, and two or three things are – not really. The fountain is outside, but then they have some – like a gangway which you can go round, and it's a roof on it, but it's outside.

CM-U: Hmm. Were those plans – were there plans to make a museum while he was still alive?

Rico Weber: Hmm.

CM-U: You don't know?

Rico Weber: No, I don't want to know.

CM-U: Oh, you don't want to know? Okay. Fine. All right.

Rico Weber: That's political stuff.

CM-U: Okay. I didn't know I was asking a political question. Okay. So you think that we could focus on redoing this at some point?

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: So the first thing is to sandblast it, and then to coat it?

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: Okay. It's nice. It's really good.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: It would be good to get it back in shape.

Rico Weber: Oh, yeah.

CM-U: You know, it would be wonderful to get it back in shape.

Rico Weber: Put it out here.

CM-U: That's what I – that's what we thought.

Rico Weber: This is (points toward window)...

CM-U: We thought it would be wonderful right here.

Rico Weber: ...put it somewhere.

- CM-U: Right opposite Conservation.
- Rico Weber: Cut some off of the trees, and...
- (laughter)
- CM-U: Is there anything else you'd like to say?
- Rico Weber: Yeah. Then in time maybe Jim can just look for a motor which have the same speed and the same power.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: And I think to – just to get close to them because I think it is almost impossible to find a similar one.
- CM-U: Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: But just find a motor with the same power, and which is not too different. But something like this will be good.
- CM-U: Um-hum. Um-hum.
- Rico Weber: And then I don't know – do you find this here (picks up belt), or should I bring some stuff?
- CM-U: Maybe you should bring it from Europe, I was thinking.
- Rico Weber: Um-hum.
- CM-U: I don't know. Is there something about the size or the...
- Rico Weber: No, they are regular stuff. It's just – I know where I can find it in Switzerland, but I don't – and I think you can get it here if you have a belt store.
- CM-U: I wouldn't have a problem with your – well, we can see. I can first try here.
- Rico Weber: What I would suggest, I would try here first.
- CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: Then you have it here. Because otherwise, you know, if something breaks...

CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: ...you have to call Switzerland and that is just...

CM-U: Right. So we'll try to get it here first, and the belts for that one, too, because we need to replace them as well.

Rico Weber: Well, this is easy to find. You could just go to a belt store. They have all different – and this is just ordinary sizes, which is out. They have, I'm going to say, the standards.

CM-U: Uh-huh. Standard sizes?

Rico Weber: Yeah.

CM-U: Um-hum. Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to say about working with Tinguely, or restoring pieces, or...

Rico Weber: Oh, right now, I don't know. (laughs)

CM-U: Okay. Well, thank you. I appreciate your doing it.

Rico Weber: You're welcome. Yeah, and here, I think, you can do something more. So give this to Jim. He has a guy which can put a tube, a bronze tube...

CM-U: A washer?

Rico Weber: No, inside. Drill this off. Make the hole bigger, and put a bronze tube in it.

CM-U: Oh, I see what you're saying.

Rico Weber: So then it don't rub iron on iron. Here is iron, too. I put some – I don't know. Oh, this is – I think it has almost never run, this one.

CM-U: This way?

Rico Weber: No.

CM-U: Well, I can see where this is bent. This, you know. I think you're right.



Rico Weber: Yeah, this is...

CM-U: They put it down on its side.

Rico Weber: They put it down on this side, and then the...

CM-U: It was brought in...

Rico Weber: ...the reel broke off, and then the whole weight was on those, and it just go down until it stands on here. Okay.

CM-U: Okay. Well, thank you.

Rico Weber: You are welcome.

CM-U: All right. We're finished. It'd be great to get this working, wouldn't it? I think it would be wonderful to have them both...

Rico Weber: Sure. This is easy. Yeah.

CM-U: I think it would be fantastic to have them both.

Rico Weber: And this is easy. I mean, this is nothing. Only the color is not new.

CM-U: The color, well. But if it got blasted, and then the parts replaced, then we'll paint the whole – paint it all, as you said. I think it would be really interesting if you were willing to come do that...

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: ...for us to work with you in doing it.

Rico Weber: Okay.

CM-U: So we would have some record here...

Rico Weber: Uh-huh.

CM-U: ...as to how you went about doing it.

Rico Weber: Sure.

CM-U: It would be really important to do.

Rico Weber: So what I would do first is find out where you can find – sand the piece.

CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: But you really have to get, maybe be somebody with them. Not they go too rough, you know.

CM-U: Right.

Rico Weber: Just give it a clean and...

CM-U: We can do that. We have some very good people here.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: We have someone we work with who is very good.

Rico Weber: Um-hum.

CM-U: We can do that.

Rico Weber: And then put this paint with it, and it's...

CM-U: Okay. Okay. Thank you. We're finished.

Rico Weber: Okay.

**[END RECORDING]**