

Interview with Narcisa Hirsch by Lynne Sachs

August, 2008, Buenos Aires

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, that's good.

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:02:20].

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:02:24].

Here I am, and I am also an experimental filmmaker from Argentina. I thought that was great, that somebody... That was in the '70s and nobody had heard about experimental film in Argentina. And then he said, "Ah, you come from Argentina, where they stole my film," and he closed the door on me and he never spoke to me again. He was very rude. Very rude.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, he said the same thing to me. "Oh, you come from Argentina, where they stole my films."

Narcisa Hirsch:

My films, yeah.

Narcisa Hirsch:

This was like 35 years later later and...

Narcisa Hirsch:

Maybe your friend... Your boss.

Lynne Sachs:

Well, I actually looked up something about... Do you know Howard Guttenplan?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yeah, sure.

Lynne Sachs:

Well, I know him because I've done screenings at Millennium. And on his website he writes about you.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Really?

Lynne Sachs:

Yes.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Now you mean-

Lynne Sachs:

Well, he writes that you have one of his films.

Narcisa Hirsch:

I have one, yes.

Lynne Sachs:

Yes. And that it's in your collection. But I write about film some, and I am just been involved in that world for 20 years or so. And my daughter's name is Maya, if that means anything. Not just because of Maya Deren, but it's not a coincidence. But how did you get involved? What was the first moment when you said cinema could be something that you could use to express yourself?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Originally, I come from painting.

Lynne Sachs:

So do I.

Narcisa Hirsch:

I'm a visual artist and I come from painting. And at some point in my life in Argentina, painting in a way, had died. I mean, this was the '60s and we had here a place called Instituto Di Tella who had a guru called Jorge Romero Brest, who was very important and a kind of an art critic, philosopher. Very conceptual and very good, really very good. Everybody feared him a lot.

Lynne Sachs:

That's important.

Narcisa Hirsch:

That's important. And he had decreed that then art had died. I mean, an art as we knew it had died, painting had died, painting on what you call it, on the easel had died.

I didn't have a very happy marriage with painting, so I was in for something else. And then at the time, we did what was then called Happenings, which was very... I mean, it was well-known in New York. It all comes from there. It really all came from New York and eventually from California. And so we started out doing different Happenings and there was one big Happening called La Marabunta. Marabunta is the name for an ant who exists in South America, and they come by the millions and wherever they go, they eat up whatever they can get is what they see.

And that Happening called La Marabunta was a big skeleton, a female skeleton, six meters long, which we did in our studio. We had a friend who was studying medicine, and she would bring us the bones and we would sort of reproduce the bones in a larger scale. And so we made this huge woman's skeleton, and we dressed it with food. On the skull they were like five or six dozens of bananas, like...

Lynne Sachs:

Who was that... Maybe pre-

Narcisa Hirsch:

Arcimboldo?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Arcimboldo.

Lynne Sachs:

Yes. Yes.

Narcisa Hirsch:

In a way it's like an Arcimboldo, and not painted, but in real, in life.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Interactive, too.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes. And inside, and then was the whole body was covered with food, food that all the friends made, like cakes and fruit and everything was eatable. And inside she was empty. And in the skull she had those small parrots. They're very, very small. And inside her belly, she had live pigeons, which we painted in fluorescent light. I mean, these were the times, we did-

Lynne Sachs:

It's fantastic.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Everybody did these kind of things. So this is, to come back to cinema, I mean, at that point I needed somebody to document the Marabunta, and I found somebody who said, "Well, there's so-and-so, and he has a camera, a 16 millimeter camera, and he can do the filming." And he did that. And then we sat down, when it was finished to cut it, we did the editing.

And then we sort of started, I say we because we were three, we were a group of three. One woman friend and one man friend. And so we did the editing of that. And one of the woman friends that was with me at the time was a photographer. So I had a 16 millimeter camera, which we had in our family to film the usual family events, and which my husband had bought, I don't know, in New York, I suppose. No, in Germany, I think it was.

Lynne Sachs:

A Bolex?

Narcisa Hirsch:

A Bolex. And so that's how it started. And then I went over to... When I was in New York, and people would say, "Well, this is the mecca of experimental cinema, and you have to look at things." I had a niece of mine who's then studying art history. She said, "Well, if you are interested in experimental cinema, you have to go today or tomorrow to the MoMA. And they are screening something called Wavelength by Michael Snow."

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, yes.

Narcisa Hirsch:

And I went to see, and I sat down by myself in the cinema at the MoMA, and the first 10 minutes were like, I thought-

Lynne Sachs:

Excruciating.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes, absolutely. And people got up and would make noises and shout, et cetera. And then suddenly, in the back of my mind, I remember that she had said, "No, it's going to last 45 minutes." So then I relaxed because then I said, "It's not going to last forever. It will be finished at some time."

Lynne Sachs:

It might be a Happening where it lasts for three days and you're... It's jail, right.

Narcisa Hirsch:

So that was the beginning. And then I started filming in 16 millimeters, and that became too expensive, and then Super 8 came up and it was easy to get in Argentina. And then there was a group of people with whom I filmed and who were also filming in Super 8, but everybody was on his or her own. I mean, everybody would do her or his film, but we would be screening things together. And so we started off in very odd places, very underground places, but underground was in at the time. So that was all right. And nobody ever came. It was like five or six people coming to see the screening. And then the Goethe-Institut got interested in us through Marie Louise Alemann, Marie Louise was the other friend who was in the one of the groups-

Speaker 5:

[Foreign language 00:10:41].

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:10:43]. That was somebody?

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:10:44].

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:10:44].

So that was the beginning.

Lynne Sachs:

I have a question because I thought of Carolee Schneemann. Did you see her?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes, I met Carolee Schneemann, and at some point I stayed in New York for a while. I rented a flat, and one of my [inaudible 00:11:09] here, and I rented a flat in New York, and I said, "I'm going to buy a small cinematheque." So somebody, I had a friend, Leopoldo Maler, an Argentine, who was then living in New York, and he was a friend of Carolee Schneemann, and he introduced me to her, and I bought Fuses at the time.

Lynne Sachs:

I was wondering, because when I saw your films, I thought that... I didn't necessarily think they had been influenced by her, but that it was a voice that spoke about feminism in a way that embraced the body. And so much about feminism at that time went in two directions: Okay, we erase the body, or we show that we can embrace it and celebrate it, and we don't mind showing ourselves nude-

Narcisa Hirsch:

Nude-

Lynne Sachs:

Because we are interested in the beauty of all human beings and that kind of thing. But other women went in different directions. So I mean, to me, one of the films I brought you was definitely influenced by her work. Did you hear about her scroll piece where she pulled the...

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes, I heard about-

Lynne Sachs:

Was that influential to you? Yeah.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes, I heard about that. I didn't know her that... I wasn't very close to her, but the first film I ever bought was Fuses.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh.

Narcisa Hirsch:

And I don't have that many films. How many do I have?

Narcisa Hirsch:

You also have Scar Tissue.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, that came later.

Lynne Sachs:

Is that her film? No, I've never seen that.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Scar Tissue is...

Narcisa Hirsch:

It's a very good short film.

Lynne Sachs:

It's not Schneemann?

Narcisa Hirsch:

No, it's not Schneemann.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Scar Tissue?

Narcisa Hirsch:

It's not Schneemann. It's Su Friedrich.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Who [inaudible 00:12:57].

Narcisa Hirsch:

No, that came much later. Su Friedrich is another generation.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah, I like Su's films a great deal also. So you own one of her films?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yeah, I have two by her.

Lynne Sachs:

I'll tell her that I met you.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes, yes.

Lynne Sachs:

I mean, I don't talk to her all the time, but I might write her an email when I go home today. Yeah. Because her films have been important to me also.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes. Then at the time, what happened? Well, I went to the Millennium and Howard Guttenplan gave me a list of filmmakers that I could meet or sort of contact if I... And that was Brakhage, I spoke to Brakhage. I bought, I think one or two films by Brakhage, and I never met... I met him afterwards. I met him when we went to Toronto, but at the time, I didn't meet him because he wasn't living there anyway. Well, I bought several things and then there was... How was this man called who did In Search of the Miraculous, who was a part of the entourage of Andy Warhol with the Italian...

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, gosh.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Italian last name.

Lynne Sachs:

Don't know.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, I'll remember it now, or we can go up and have a look at it. Anyway, this is how it started. And then from 16 millimeter, I went over to Super 8 and well, that lasted until Super 8 died, which was in the '80s.

Lynne Sachs:

And it has a new life now, maybe.

Narcisa Hirsch:

It has a new life now. It's coming back. In a way I was angry yesterday, not with this poor boy who was doing whatever he wants to do, but suddenly I was sitting up on Saturday afternoon trying to see if the films, these Super 8 films were all right, and then there was a splicer that was no good, and I didn't have a splicer anymore, and I was suddenly sitting there trying to restore my old Super 8 films. While I really don't want to do that anymore. I mean, I want to do other things. I want to go ahead and not do the work that maybe other people should do if they're interested.

Narcisa Hirsch:

I'll volunteer to do that. That's my thing.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Your thing.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah. Paula knows exactly what to do.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes? No, well, that will be good. Fine.

Narcisa Hirsch:

I even talked to [inaudible 00:15:31] about this, but yeah, I went to New York to... I have a master's in film preservation, and my thesis was on experimental film preservation.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Really?

Narcisa Hirsch:

I want to work with experimental film.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Oh, well, that's fantastic.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Back to her.

Lynne Sachs:

Okay.

Narcisa Hirsch:

No, that's very important for us. Very important.

And then while Super 8 had died and video was coming up, and then I thought, well, my thing wasn't video, so I didn't take a video up. I went back to, I did a feature film in 16 millimeters, which I hadn't done ever really with a script and professional actors and all that. And I wasn't very happy about that. I thought it wasn't my thing.

So I left that, and then eventually I started writing more than filming. I started writing, and now I'm sort of recycling all the material, all the footage I have. And I don't think I need to, even if I want to make a film, I don't think I need to film anymore because everything is already filmed.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, I love... Yeah. And you have this palette. It's like you have the colors, and-

Narcisa Hirsch:

I mean, I can add maybe something to what I'm doing now if I need it, but most of it I have, and I'm now working on a kind of autobiographical film where I want to do two parallel lives, one in images and one in text. So one would be a written life, written in a book, and the other would be in images and would be film.

Lynne Sachs:

When you look at those images that you created 20 or 30, 30 years ago, 40, what do you see of yourself in those images?

Narcisa Hirsch:

What do I see of myself? Well, it's all very, as you know, it's all very autobiographic. What was generally done is that unless you did something very conceptual, I don't know what, let's say the film, The Flicker, do you remember The Flicker?

Lynne Sachs:

Yes.

Narcisa Hirsch:

In the States? Well, that was very conceptual, but the other films were all about sort of the daily life.

Lynne Sachs:

Daily, mm-hmm. And also-

Narcisa Hirsch:

They were nice long film lasts about five hours. The one he did lately, we saw that two years ago.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, right. Images of Beauty, something like that.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Something, very long title.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah. But when you look at those, what about the way that you shot? Would you shoot that way today? Do you feel an affinity for the eye that, not just the images of yourself, but the way you looked at the world then?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes. Oh, yes. No, definitely. I mean, work-wise or professionally speaking, it was a very happy time. We could film, or I always had a camera. It was a small camera, always had a camera with me, so one could film wherever one went and one was free, not to go like filmmakers who would have to have a whole bunch of people going with him and have a script. I never had a script. I always just went out and filmed. And then I did the editing, the cutting myself and the sound, putting the sound to it also.

Lynne Sachs:

That's why writing a script and doing the feature wasn't very fun?

Narcisa Hirsch:

No, it wasn't my thing. I mean, there are others who did scripts eventually. We then met a German filmmaker called Werner Nekes who came-

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah, I know his films.

Narcisa Hirsch:

From the Goethe-Institut, was a very good filmmaker, and he would work with scripts and sort of very disciplined in a way, what he wanted to do. He was very experimental and needed to measure the frames and then go forward and backward. But that was not so much what we did or what I did anyway.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah.

Narcisa Hirsch:

And we were a group of people like six or seven, and then we would sort of exchange, we would act for each other and lend equipment to each other and in that sense we would sort of appear together. They're now trying to write a book about that. They're all coming back to that. It's archeology, really.

Lynne Sachs:

But I thought there was a side to your films that was also ethnographic. There was an interest in culture outside of the city and in the landscape, and then the ways people lived, that was also outside-

Narcisa Hirsch:

No, I don't think so.

Lynne Sachs:

No, not at all?

Narcisa Hirsch:

No.

Lynne Sachs:

No.

Narcisa Hirsch:

No. I think it was a pure visual affair, and I would pick up just any old theme or any old subject that would sort of come... I would come across and then pursue that.

Lynne Sachs:

Right.

Narcisa Hirsch:

But it wasn't-

Lynne Sachs:

Did you travel with your camera?

Narcisa Hirsch:

It was never political.

Lynne Sachs:

No, I didn't mean political.

Narcisa Hirsch:

It was never social.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, no. Mm-hmm.

Narcisa Hirsch:

I mean, it was trying to... It was for me in a way, I think it was like the happy life after painting, it really... The movement meant a lot to me. And I suddenly felt that I could paint with film and that the movement, and that was... It went well with me in that sense.

Lynne Sachs:

Right.

Narcisa Hirsch:

But I could be filming this kitchen as much as Patagonia, where I live, we have a farm, so it would be the same.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, I see. Because it seemed like you were observing both the interior and the world as you experienced it, as you were moving through it.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, I used a lot... I had a studio at the time where I worked, and I used the studio as a location, as a scenery a lot.

Lynne Sachs:

Windows, a lot of doorways and windows?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yeah. Well, the interiors. It was the interiors that it seemed I didn't need to go out so much. I could film inside. And I did that a lot. And there are many films where there studio appears.

Lynne Sachs:

Mm-hmm.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Then I was very influenced also by this Michael Snow who had done a film, which I hadn't seen, but apparently where he has a fixed camera and onto... He films onto a bookcase, and his voice says what one sees in the bookcase. And I did something similar by the fixed camera onto a wall where there were photographs. But instead of telling the public what they saw, I would tell them what they didn't see.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, I like that.

Narcisa Hirsch:

So I did like... It was as... In a way the same but a little further in a way.

Lynne Sachs:

What about John Cage? Were you influenced by his work?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Not much because I'm not such a music person. I mean, he was part of the '60s scene, obviously, but our filming started in the '70s. And at that time, I had met Steve Reich in New York, and so I did a film with one of his pieces of music, and that is the one I'm going to screen at the MALBA.

Lynne Sachs:

What is the-

Narcisa Hirsch:

It's called Come Out And Show Them.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh, I love that. I mean, I know that by heart.

Narcisa Hirsch:

You know it?

Lynne Sachs:

You made a film with that sound?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes. I made a film.

Lynne Sachs:

I know that very well. That piece.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, you can-

Lynne Sachs:

And the story of it.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes, and the story. Well, maybe you can tell me something a little bit more.

Lynne Sachs:

Do you know the background of the-

Narcisa Hirsch:

That he went into a prison and made a recording of one of the prisoners, that he had to say, "I had to, like, open the bruise up-"

Lynne Sachs:

Do you know the piece? He heard on the radio...

Narcisa Hirsch:

I think that film that I have a Super 8 version and a 16 millimeter version. And if you like, I'll show you the Super 8, because I've seen... This is strange because I saw it last night. I screened it to myself last night. I hadn't seen it for like 20 years-

Lynne Sachs:

That'd be nice to see it on... I'd love to see it.

Narcisa Hirsch:

So that comes back suddenly.

Narcisa Hirsch:

I can give her a copy, too.

Narcisa Hirsch:

And you have a DVD?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yeah.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes.

Lynne Sachs:

It's one of my favorite sound pieces in the world, that piece.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yeah. And it was very typical for that time, for the '60s. And then in a way, I mean, the '60s and the '70s was very different to the '80s and the '90s. And when all the avant-garde suddenly collapsed, because this happened all over the world, it wasn't only that suddenly we had no more Super 8, we suddenly had no more avant-garde.

And so at the time when I started filming, it was a political statement. Even if I only filmed these three apples, it was a political statement. And you were either in favor of that or you were against it.

Lynne Sachs:

Why was it a political statement?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Because suddenly art had turned into something entirely different where people would go to the shows and then they would find, instead of pictures hanging on the wall, they would find that it was a Happening taking place, and they wouldn't understand what was going on and they would come and say, "This is not art. And my 5-year-old child can do better than what we see on the screen, on what is being shown." So that was a political statement, and people were either against it or in favor of it. It wasn't that you could be on both sides. And nowadays everybody is sort of happy with what is happening. Whatever is happening is all right.

At the time, it wasn't. And so there was a lot of... We had continuous fights. It was the battlefields all over. And inside the family, there would be discussions about what one was doing. The husbands would be against their wives. I had a husband who would say, "One can't see a thing in whatever you do, it's no good at all," and so forth. Well, there was a lot of... It was ideology.

Lynne Sachs:

I feel like I wanted to ask one more thing than we can... But we've talked about New York because that's what we're familiar with. But what about making those kind of films in Argentina in the '70s, was it... How was it? How would you describe that?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, it was, as I said, it was just going out filming and because we felt like it, we didn't think about it a lot. I was probably the only one who could travel and see something else, and that this was going on in different countries also. But the others were people from Argentina, from Buenos Aires, most poor, fairly poor so they didn't have the means. But we would go out and everybody would do his or her film, and then we would screen it and there was a screen, and it was getting some old place where we could put our projector, and then there would be friends coming in.

Lynne Sachs:

But was it done-

Narcisa Hirsch:

And friends would be 12 or 20, maybe. Until the time when the Goethe-Institut, as I said, sort of took notice of us and they would say, "Well come over and we'll do sort of an... Institutionalize you." And so we had a catalog or we had somebody who would sort of announce. But we have never ever had a critic of the films. Ever. So it was completely off Broadway, whatever that means in Buenos Aires. It was never... After we finished filming, we were very well known in a very small elite. I mean, we were world-famous for 50 people. Maybe.

Lynne Sachs:

Okay. I have two more questions.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Hopefully,

Lynne Sachs:

Just for the record, could you say the names of the people who were the Argentine experimental filmmakers of that time?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes. Well, the one who belonged to my group was Marie Louise Alemann, she was a photographer. Then there was Claudio Caldini.

Lynne Sachs:

I saw his films.

Narcisa Hirsch:

He's still around and still doing something eventually. There was a Juan José Mugni who is in Uruguay and working for the Cinemateca Uruguaya. Then there was Horacio Vallereggi who's not filming anymore, he went into Italy and then he came back. He's living in Buenos Aires now. I don't see him much. And Juan Villola who died, and he got run over by a car somewhere.

Narcisa Hirsch:

And Laura and Jorge?

Narcisa Hirsch:

And Laura and Jorge Honik didn't belong to my group, but they were also filmmakers as a couple, Laura and Jorge Honik, who lived in the South in Bariloche and their brother Alberto Honik, or who also did experimental films. And then there were others in Buenos Aires, Estaba Hugo Arias, a young man who did films by himself. He didn't belong to anybody. And then there's this Silvestre Byrón who was also around, but they wouldn't belong to it. We were really a group.

Lynne Sachs:

Did you have a name for your group at all?

Narcisa Hirsch:

No.

Lynne Sachs:

No?

Narcisa Hirsch:

No. But we were the ones who, we went together to the Goethe-Institut, and we would appear as a group. But we were very few. And then there is Marta Minujín who also did films, experimental films at the time, I think in the '60s.

Lynne Sachs:

Were there any of you who were considered threatening to the government or anybody that the government stopped in the '70s during the difficult times?

Narcisa Hirsch:

I think that what we did was so radical in a way. Radical because it had no political content. And I think that possibly the military were checking what we were doing. But since they couldn't understand what it said, because there was no obvious... No message, and we belonged to different strata... Social. And we were people, I was a very bourgeois lady who lived with my husband and my three children in more or less a good neighborhood. Others would be living, I don't know, wherever and in poor quarters. And so we didn't fit into any group that could be marked as being either for the government or against the government. Much less if you saw the films, because nobody couldn't make any of that or say that that would be political.

Lynne Sachs:

Because in some society-

Narcisa Hirsch:

We went by. But I mean, before all that happened, I did things on the street and I was... I mean, the police showed up a lot. And I didn't get into jail because, I don't know, they didn't want me. But the things I did, I would be sort of gathering people on the street by giving away apples first, and then small babies, like dolls. And that was shortly before this whole thing of... It was the moment when it was strongest, the political action here with the military against the guerrilla was strongest. So I have... That also, it was filmed, I don't think... Maybe Carolee Schneemann was there, because I did one of those where I gave away the little dolls. I did it in New York. And I think Carolee was one of the people who documented it.

Lynne Sachs:

Oh.

Narcisa Hirsch:

I don't remember very well, but it was Leopoldo Maler and I think it was Carolee Schneemann. But that was in the '70s.

Lynne Sachs:

It sounds like... I am a little familiar with Valie Export.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes.

Lynne Sachs:

It sounds like one of her... I mean that period and that kind of in the street and physical and that kind of thing.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Giving away things.

Lynne Sachs:

Giving away things. Like how to talk about commodification without being involved with it.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yeah. Well, it was also the time of the Living Theater, and it was at the... The little dolls, these were these tiny celluloid dolls, very tiny, very cheap ones that your children have, the toys. And I would give them, I had 500 of them lying on the floor. And I would give them away and would say to the people, I did this in New York and in London also, and say, "Have a baby." And that was strange because it was the dolls and I would say, "Have a baby."

Lynne Sachs:

Have a baby. That's interesting.

Narcisa Hirsch:

So have it, you know, I give it to you.

Lynne Sachs:

Yeah.

Narcisa Hirsch:

And I did this in Buenos Aires in New York and in London. And it was an entirely different Happening in three cities. Completely different.

Lynne Sachs:

Interesting. Well, thank you for talking.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Do you have documentation for the three of them?

Narcisa Hirsch:

For the three of them?

Lynne Sachs:

For the actions.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes. There's a film of the three events.

Narcisa Hirsch:

In Buenos Aires.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Buenos Aires and New York and London. In London it was strange because people in Britain, they're polite.

Lynne Sachs:

Famously.

Narcisa Hirsch:

They're polite. And so I was standing there giving away my babies, and I would say, "Have a baby." And elderly ladies would come by and say, "My age, why should I have a baby?" But very friendly, always very friendly. Nobody was eager to have anything. But they would ask me and they would be interested. They would be interested. In New York nobody was interested. But absolutely nobody was interested because also I sort of collided with another manifestation of the lettuce pickers from California.

Lynne Sachs:

Caesar Chavez? Something like that.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Something or other who were saying boycott lettuce.

Lynne Sachs:

That was Caesar Chavez.

Narcisa Hirsch:

I was saying, "Have a baby." And these were with posters and banners thing, "Boycott lettuce." So people wouldn't understand what it was all about. Why the babies and the boycott lettuce-

Lynne Sachs:

Because they wanted there to be... Something you were trying to convince them to do or not to do.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Yes. And they didn't want to be bothered. They really didn't want to be bothered. They were not interested. They were rushing by, they were all in a hurry. They didn't sort of even look at me. But also, they wouldn't say anything like, "Go away," or, "Leave me alone." They wouldn't do that, but they would just not be interested.

And in Argentina, I did it in the middle of town in Corrientes and Florida and people would be pushing each other to get...

Lynne Sachs:

A doll.

Narcisa Hirsch:

A baby. They went away in five seconds.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Marabunta.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Marabunta. And they would step on the dolls and they would carry away the pieces, the broken pieces of the doll. And then the police came, and it is in a film too. And they said, "You can't stay here, go away." And I said, "Why should I go away? I'm not doing anything." And he said, "Look at what you're doing." And there was immediately a political discussion among the public. They were fighting. It was the day when they brought these corpses back from Trelew, remember? That day, that day we did that. And so everything was in flames. And well, that was Buenos Aires.

Lynne Sachs:

You told me you have three kids, and I don't know if you have nieces or nephews or grandchildren, but how would you tell my girls what a Happening is?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, nowadays it's called an installation. I mean, it's more or less the same. A Happening was something that would be contrary to just an exhibition. When you have an exhibition of paintings and you have the paintings hanging on the wall, and you show your paintings and you invite people to come and see your paintings. And then everybody comes and says, "Hello," and says how nice and they have a glass of wine and that's called a vernissage.

When Happenings started, it was against that. People didn't want that anymore. They wanted something that the public could participate, not just look at and stand in front and not be passive, in a way. So the Happenings was something that involved the public too. You had to cooperate. So when we gave away apples, green apples, and so people had to accept that and say something to that. And that's called a Happening.

In terms of Jorge Romero Brest, this guru that I told you about, said art was before about representation, and then it became presentation. It was... Before it was... Art became a situation. Not just something isolated from the public, but something that involved... And it became a situation which included also the public. That would be more or less the difference.

Lynne Sachs:

Perfect.

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:40:38]. And when we did the Marabunta, I said, "I need somebody to document this. Do you have a filmmaker?" And says, "Yes, I have one. Raymundo." We didn't know him. While we filmed and we did the editing together, we never knew... We never spoke about politics. I never knew that he was so involved.

Narcisa Hirsch:

What year was this?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Huh?

Narcisa Hirsch:

What year was...

Narcisa Hirsch:

That's '67. October '67 was-

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, I think, yeah, that he became more and more involved in politics a little bit afterwards.

Lynne Sachs:

Can you repeat who we're talking about? Because I just turned on the camera.

Narcisa Hirsch:

Oh, Raymundo Gleyzer. He was one of the desaparecidos filmmakers. Well, he actually had an American producer. The money for his films came from Bill Susman. Bill Susman was a producer. He was very, very progressive and liberal. I think he was in the Spanish Civil War in the Abraham Lincoln Brigades, I think.

Audio:

Come out to show them.

[Inaudible 00:46:34].

Narcisa Hirsch:

[inaudible 00:50:29] 12 children at the time, 12 children.

Speaker 7:

[Foreign language 00:50:55].

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:50:55].

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:51:06].

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:52:29].

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:52:29]. I like [inaudible 00:58:08].

Lynne Sachs:

That was beautiful. Would you just say the name of the film once more, of that film.

Narcisa Hirsch:

[Foreign language 00:59:50].

Lynne Sachs:

In English?

Narcisa Hirsch:

The Summer-

Lynne Sachs:

Oh. The... okay. Thank you. Summer of 1973. It was beautiful, I loved it. Didn't you think so, Maya? Wasn't it gorgeous?

Narcisa Hirsch:

Well, these are the series of diaries. There are quite a bit of them, but I've never sort of put any sound to it.

Lynne Sachs:

It doesn't need sound.

Narcisa Hirsch:

It doesn't need sound. I don't think so.

Lynne Sachs:

I loved that.