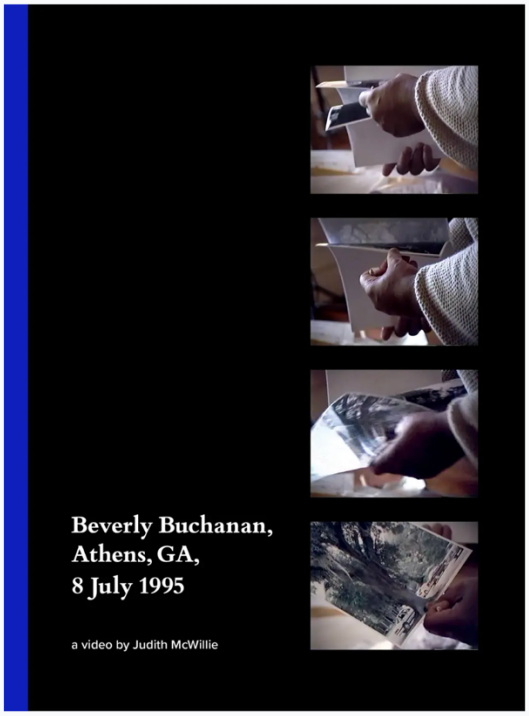
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Beverly Buchanan, Athens, GA, 8 July 1995: A Video by Judith McWillie

The book offers a poetic meditation on the art of interviewing and transcribing as forms of study and scholarship.

By Alice Centamore



Beverly Buchanan, Athens, GA, 8 July 1995, edited by artists Mo Costello and Katz Tepper, shows how relationality and attunement can guide the task of taking in and understanding someone else's work. The publication follows the asynchronous encounters of the lives and projects of Mary Lou Furcron (b. 1912; d. 2008), Beverly Buchanan (b. 1940; d. 2015), and Judith McWillie (b. 1946). The introductory and anchoring essay, authored by Tepper, is followed by a careful image-and-text transcription of the low-resolution, two-hour long documentary interview between Buchanan and McWillie, which gives the book its title. The book also features illustrations of Buchanan's artworks and texts, and archival materials from McWillie's video interview with Furcron alongside her present-day reflections on her videography. Each section of the book reveals the three artists' overlapping trajectories and their placed-based artmaking practices, tethered to the land and communities of Georgia.

Furcron was a community-educated architect, gardener, and maker who built a home from foraged materials in the middle of a lush forest in the rural community of Vesta. Buchanan devoted her life to documenting the racialized and classed condition of the built environment, land, and landscape in the US South through sculpture, photography, and writing. McWillie has been recording overlooked aesthetic practices and the disappearance of Black cultural spaces

through an informal archival project of interviews with artists, including Buchanan and Furcron, that spans more than 150 videos.

The book demonstrates, through visual and literary translation, what happens when prolonged attention, devotion, and care touch the work of an artist. The publication adapts the taped conversation between Buchanan and McWillie—catalyzed by their mutual admiration for Furcron—through a generous selection of video stills accompanied by a transcription. The editors separated the two-hour recording into ten scenes, each named after the rooms, objects, and gestures that McWillie's camera focused on, such as "The Garden," "The Desk," "The Chair," and "The Hand." In each scene, an introductory editorial text prefaces the transcription, which is interspersed with stills set on a black background. The back and forth between their devotion to Furcron and McWillie's interest in Buchanan's work makes it hard to determine whether the video Beverly Buchanan, Athens, GA, 8 July 1995 is about Buchanan or the two artists' shared love of and experiences with Furcron. Refusing to prioritize any single subject and thriving on the ambiguity of multiplicity, the book offers a poetic meditation on the art of interviewing and transcribing as forms of study and scholarship.

In the video Beverly Buchanan, Athens, GA, 8 July 1995, the camera's eye makes up for what language fails to cover. McWillie adopts an unconventional approach to oral history recording, refusing to essentialize the artist's work. The two interlocutors' stories about Furcron and their discussion of Buchanan's artworks are woven into close-ups of the home's interior and exterior, the birds and the bottle tree populating the garden, the artist's relationships to friends and neighbors, and the signs of usage on the surface of Buchanan's leather armchair. The environmental and social matter, the land and the community where Buchanan existed are the frames through which McWillie relates and makes sense of her sprawling subject. McWillie's lens not only brings attention to the atmospheric and relational elements that contribute to her subject's fullness, but it also shows what can happen when the animacy of matter and space is given room to exist alongside spoken words.

In response to McWillie's methodology, the editors of Beverly Buchanan, Athens, GA, 8 July 1995 have embraced the meticulous task of transcribing as an experiment in history writing and as an homage. Costello and Tepper—operating as a duo of artists offering a tribute to a trio of fellow artists—play with the two-dimensional and sequential book form to respond to the textural interplay of the video's moving sequences and sounds. McWillie and Buchanan's affinity and emotions are reflected in the transcription's typography, capitalization choices, and blank spaces, while the editors' choices of video stills reveal the centers of attention and attachments the camera sustains. Transcription as practiced in this book is no longer a careful act of listening, or a search beyond the limits of language, but an embodied practice of relating. It reveals how subjects inhabit forms, like interviews and transcripts, while also reflecting on how these forms inhabit the subjects that dwell in them.

Alice Centamore is a New York-based researcher, editor, and occasional translator whose work explores material and literary articulations of queer communal life through poetry, prose, and experimental forms.