

# Max Rothman Interview with Peter Page

January 17,  
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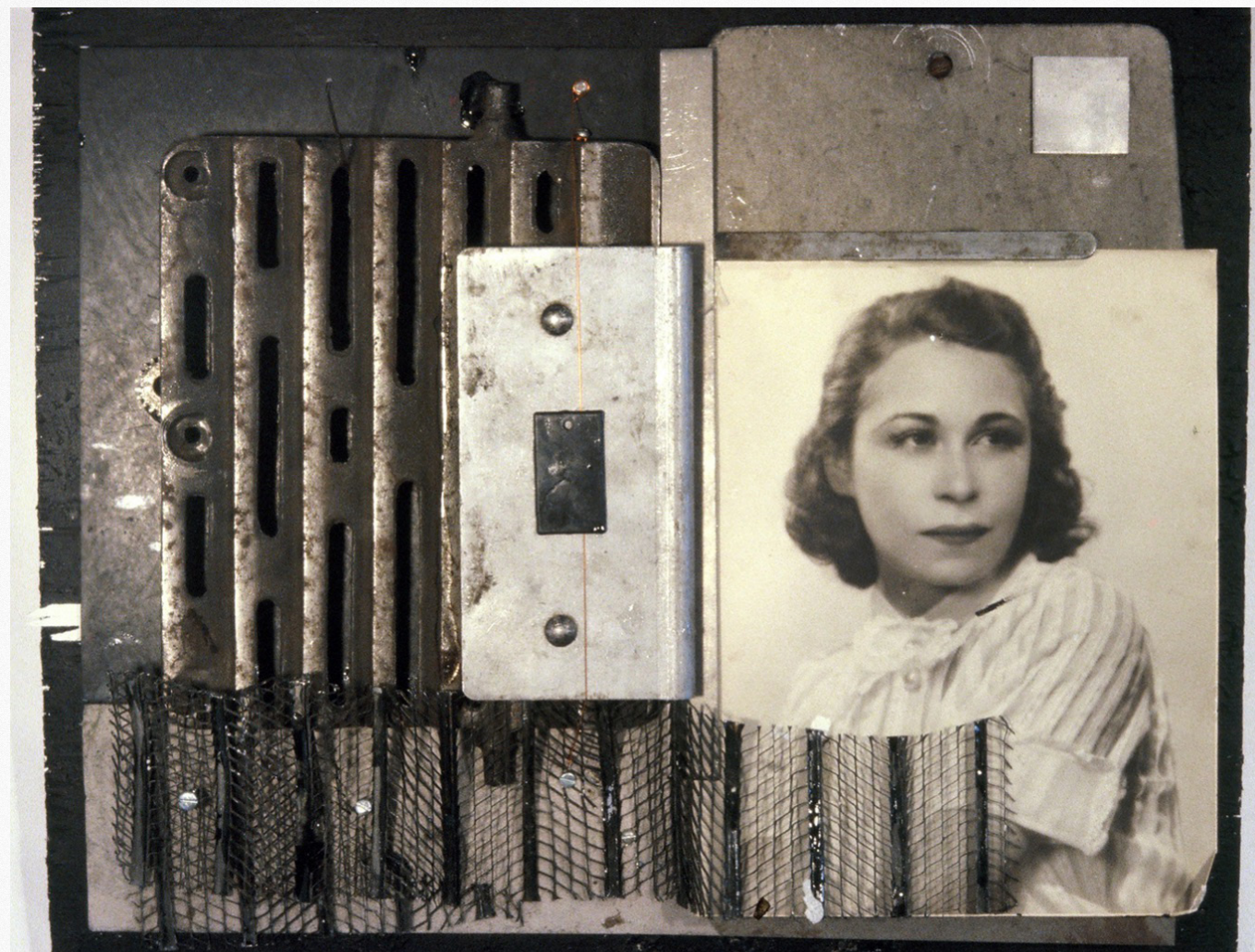
## “What’s your academic label?”

**MAX:** What kind of artist are you, what’s your academic label?

**PETER:** If I had to describe myself, I would say that I am an In-Outsider.

**MAX:** In-Outsider, what the hell is that?

**PETER:** As we all know, an artist’s work, especially for some one who is unknown, needs to be categorized. The industry likes to classify people and this is what I came up with.



Peter Page, “The Selma Shoe Manufacturing Company,” Assemblage 1979

**MAX:** I understand the “outsider” artist part but what does the “in” mean?

**PETER:** I went to various art schools and studied in extended ways. I never fit into a matriculated world and found that I preferred to establish my own curriculum. So, I set up a custom course schedule according to classes and programs

that were being offered at various institutions.

**MAX:** What were these classes and when was this?

**PETER:** Mostly in the late 1970’s / early 1980’s. The classes were primarily fine art photography and cinema but I was also keeping one foot in the degree door so I was taking prerequisites

at Pratt Institute.

**MAX:** How did Assemblage come into the picture?

**PETER:** When I was at Pratt and going through its fine arts foundation program, it seemed like everything was about drawing and painting. I came to Pratt with quite a lot of fine art photography experience that included several portfolios and completed courses under my belt. I knew my medium of preference was photography. Drawing and painting were never a consideration and I was terrible at it. My peers in most classes drew very well and realizing the futility of my skills, I decided to try something else. One day, instead of drawing my assignment I built a wall supported assemblage.

**MAX:** How was that received?

**PETER:** I brought it into class on a Monday morning. The class was called Form

and Space and the instructor was named Professor Beerman.

With him it was customary for the students to place assignments on their desks and sit quietly while he walked around and commented or not. He came to my desk and stood there looking. Then he said; “You like that?” I replied “Yes” he said, “You think it’s pretty good?” I replied “Yes” then he said “Well, make 10 more.” And from then on, I have been building



Professor Herbert Beerman



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Peter Page, Lunch Project New York City, 1983

assemblages and making 10 more. I guess it was received well enough.

**MAX:** So, if Professor Beerman hadn't encouraged you, we might not be having this conversation?

**PETER:** Possibly.

**MAX:** You still have not explained the definition of an "in-outsider" artist.

**PETER:** Its someone who came up in academia and is also self-taught.

That encouragement from Professor Beerman was important and pivotal but it did not go any further with him or any of my other instructors. Their focus was not on my interests it was on their programs. It was up to me to shape the work on my own.

**MAX:** And you continued fine art photography?

**PETER:** Yes, and I perused it obsessively incorporating studies at Pratt and at number of other institutions, as

well as studying in Europe. There was no single institution or place where I felt complete. I created my own agenda and schedule. Since 1979 I have always worked in at least 2 mediums.

**MAX:** Did you get a degree from Pratt or anywhere else?

**PETER:** Since no single place offered what I was seeking, and I really had no view beyond my immediate pursuits, a degree from anywhere seemed impractical.

**MAX:** Give me an example of one of your custom schedules.

**PETER:** Ok, in 1979 - Fall Semester

- Pratt Institute - foundation courses and Fine Art Photography;

- Columbia University - Art History;

- Hunter College - Films of Hitchcock and Bergman and at the Donnell Library for the History of Cinema.

- International Center of Photography - Criticism,

and a master lecture series;

My schedule altered from one semester to the next through 1981 when the money ran out. After that I was on a reduced class schedule for the next three years while working.

**MAX:** Some might say that you were all over the place and didn't accomplish anything.

**PETER:** Maybe they are right. But those are people that I probably will not be doing much interacting with.

**MAX:** What would you say was your single greatest educational influence as a young artist?

**PETER:** Growing up in New York City. The city is a place of unlimited culture that includes the entire spectrum of art, architecture, design, engineering, and of course the huge diversity of people and cultures. It is constantly evolving and I took full advantage in experiencing what it had to offer.