PATTY SICULAR: ...into the camera.
CREW: Mm-hm.

SICULAR: I’m so nervous, I’m not very good at this.

SALVATORE MOLTISANTI: Everybody’s nervous, don’t worry.

CREW: Ok so we’re rolling, and action.

SICULAR: Welcome, hi, my name is Patty Sicular, I’m with the Ford Model Agency, and we’re collaborating with Professor Karen Cannell from Fashion Institute of Technology. We’re archiving the history of fashion, beauty, and Ford models. Today is May 28th, 2010. We’re in New York City and we’re so honored, we’re going to be interviewing Gian Paolo Barbieri, and our guest interviewer is Salvatore Moltisanti. So I’m going to give it over to Salvatore and to Gian Paolo. Thank you.

MOLTISANTI: Thank you so much for this wonderful welcome from Patty Sicular who works for Ford Models, and we are here doing a series of interviews for the historical archives of the FIT institute, the Fashion Institute of Technology, [01:00] under the supervision of Karen Cannell from FIT. This series of interviews will, are important historical documents, and this evening in particular we have the honor of interviewing one of the most important photographers in
our history not only Italian but also world-wide, Gian Paolo Barbieri. Hello.

GIAN PAOLO BARBIERI: Hello. Hello, and thank you.

MOLTISANTI: How are you? Thank you for having us here at your home in New York, we are in the Olympic Towers in, on Fifth Avenue in New York City. Thank you so much for your availability and your time and for --

BARBIERI: Thank you.

MOLTISANTI: As you know, everyone knows you, and one of the questions everyone always asks you is your experience as a child. How, what brought you to have this kind of profession in seeing beauty, in seeing fashion, in seeing good taste, and these specific things like, [02:00] that you seem to understand in your childhood, your relationship with fabrics that starts all the way back with your family.

BARBIERI: Well, it’s possible that my father’s profession helped me a great deal. My father was a fabrics wholesaler. And so I remember that when I was young he would bring me around, he made me choose colors, he told me, “What other colors would you put together with this color? Or would you combine silk, cotton,” anyway he gave me these experiences. In any case I had an opportunity to get to know all these fabrics. So I know what Georgette is, I know [cannatè?], moirè, voile, and the rest. Because of this, in fashion it has been crucial
for me also knowing about the material itself. The fabric. It has been very, very important.

MOLTISANTI: You have always been known as someone who knows fabric. We can talk about years when there were noble fabrics but also non-noble fabrics, which responded in a different way, something which is very --

BARBIERI: Definitely, because I’m talking about the postwar period, and in that time there was [cascame?]. [03:00] This was a fabric made with non-noble strands, basically the strands had an inferior twist of for example 2000 turns. So a good fabric always had a very high twist and this made the fabric sing. This fabric made with cascame was very, had a much lower quality. But it fell very well on the body. It wasn’t used very much because it deteriorated quickly, especially around the knees, I’m talking about men’s suits, or at the elbows. These are the fabrics that Armani used to make jackets fall better, to give the jackets structure. Because you have to remember that back then fabric was never thrown away. When an overcoat or a jacket was used, and you couldn’t see the front anymore, it was turned [04:00] and remade and resewed in another way, so it was like new again.

MOLTISANTI: (inaudible)

BARBIERI: Yeah, this was this post-war period.
MOLTISANTI: So, already as a kid you have a knowledge that we could compare to the relationship between an instrument maker and wood.

BARBIERI: Yeah.

MOLTISANTI: Or marble and a sculptor. You had a knowledge of the material that you would then photograph in your studio (inaudible)

BARBIERI: Definitely, I perfectly understood what fabrics were used in different clothing, whether it was angled or straight, if it flowed well on the body. So for me what kind of, I don’t know, for example if we talk about [Badam Violè?] who certainly wasn’t in my time but who used angled fabrics, so the piece fell very well and I understand that perfectly. Then you have to be careful with the lights because there are some- I’ve had some clients that, let’s say, wanted to see the quality of the fabric in the piece but most importantly the color in black and white. [05:00] For example once Ferrecci made a collection, he used four different shades of black, from [basic fabric?] to velvet to silk. And he wanted to see these differences in the photographs. And so this is extremely difficult because it’s a trick of light. And how when you work with fur. The fur had to be alive, so it had to shine and the light had to be perfect. Because if the fur
didn’t shine, basically the client would reject the photograph.

MOLTISANTI: So these lights and shadows, everything came from your knowledge of fabric (inaudible).

BARBIERI: From what the fabric is like, definitely.

MOLTISANTI: (inaudible) Obviously there is an image of the photographer who has this great, you could say, artisanal knowledge of the materials he worked with, and then, how does your experience compare with the culture of the models of that era. What did they know about these tricks of the relationship with that which was their sort of artisanality?

[06:00]

BARBIERI: The models of that time were completely, they had a great amount of culture, let’s say. A model at that time knew how to dress, to do makeup, do her hair, how to walk the runway, and they discussed their work with the photographer. It’s not, not like now. I would say that at the base of all this there was a lot of culture. A lot of determination.

For example I remember Eva Maelstrom. We worked together. Hers was one of the most beautiful bodies in the world and she knew how to use it magnificently on the runway, also Isa Stoppi so to say had a tremendous amount of class, a wonderful way of moving. So basically when these models
walked the runway it helped me enormously. The photograph was already 50 per cent done by them.

MOLTISANTI: Obviously, in your relationship with models, this is something that the models all speak of highly when they talk about you. [07:00] You did so much to help them express themselves as well as possible, and in the best conditions for them. How did you get these amazing results? What happened between you and these models? This result, these historical images that you created of these people? You’re famous for some historical images of Audrey Hepburn, for example. And --

BARBIERI: Well, maybe it comes from the education I received, from the respect that I have always had, to have them there in front of me. If it was a celebrity or a model, sometimes I remember in order to convince them to get a photo just to help them, I would get down on my knees in front of them to make myself smaller and then ask them, for example in this case with Hepburn, if the light worked for her, if I had done anything wrong, to not hesitate to tell me. And Audrey I remember was incredibly polite and totally shocked me once because we were working in Valentino’s atelier and [08:00] we had put up a white backdrop, and there was a (inaudible) that you could ruin with heels. And she pulls out these little slippers from her purse and says, “Look, Barbieri, I brought
slippers from home so I won’t ruin the white backdrop.” I was shocked. And this was what all the top models were like, Sophia Loren was also fantastic because when I did lights for Sophia I remember she had, she has these cheekbones so the lights had to be pretty high, otherwise it creates holes. So when I put the lights up high I said, “Sophia, tell me if the light is ok for you or if you want it even high--” “Higher! Higher,” she said. I remember Sharon Stone so to say, since she doesn't have Sophia’s cheekbones, needs a much flatter light. And this makes it all worth it. But this all depends a lot on your knowledge of how to use saturation, I would say on your training, but to me, I’ve always found huge help in these topics also from [09:00] art, cinema.

MOLTISANTI: Theater in this case is also (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BARBIERI: Theater yes, I went to the theater almost every night, I had the opportunity to work with Visconti, with some great people, I worked with Mastroianni. I have to say that theater has been essential also because of the set design. Because it helped me learn about prospective. Theater and painting and cinema have given me a great deal. I think that this is one of the most important cultures for a photographer.
MOLTISANTI: I know that you love the music of silence and this is something that has had a huge impact in my life as well as a musician. Silence has an enormous and beautiful importance.

BARBIERI: Definitely.

MOLTISANTI: If you could share a little with us, just this: how much silence and sounds have contributed also to your photos.

BARBIERI: In this it depends on the work and the model, so to say. Because if we had to work on a [10:00] rock piece, so to, we would put on some rock. But if there was a tension of, a lot more intense, between the, for example we had to work for a beauty magazine and the model had to express herself with her entire soul, her beauty, and basically we would either put on no music or some classical music on a low volume. Vangelis surprised me a lot when he saw some of my photos from the Seychelles, portraits of some people from the Seychelles, and he made a special composition for me. He called it Silent Portraits.

MOLTISANTI: Beautiful name, very beautiful. Then there was this huge explosion of fashion in the world, and you worked with all the greats, Valentino, [Senogan?], Armani, Versace, what, what can you say about this experience, which was an
incredible (overlapping audio; inaudible) in the world of fashion.

BARBIERI: Yes, because I started in Paris, I was an assistant to [Tom Cublin?] for a month, so [11:00] for high French fashion. When I returned to Italy I started to work, this was in the ‘70s, in ‘72 Italian fashion took off. And I remember that we were with Ferré, with Armani, with these, Versace, who was also just starting out, and everyone said, “Let’s try to do here what they’re doing in France, to make an Italian prêt-à-porter. But let’s not sell ourselves too much with certain production styles, let’s try to make a great Italian product.” And that’s what they did. And what I, basically I took on all the publicity for these Italian designers that appeared. I did Valentino’s first ads. And I basically created the portfolio because they, first they did the photographs in a disorganized way. Like, they put Valentino’s name, the name of the [12:00] sponsor, in different pages. I said, “Valentino, why don’t you reorganize, why don’t you put everything together and make a real portfolio, so it’s more...”, and this is what I did, and that was the first experience that Valentino had in publicity and I made the famous seed, the famous desert photos, because he was inspired by art, by the, I would say, by the Arabic lifestyle.
MOLTISANTI: And how much of the creativity of the great designers is attributable to the results of the photos? Because these --

BARBIERI: It’s a tandem. I think they help me, I help them. This was always very important and it still is. The photography is hugely important for a designer. When a designer has a good photographs, they then have a good critical reception and good sales. [13:00]

MOLTISANTI: Is there this results-oriented view in knowing what you see, to see, to know what to bring out in the photo?

BARBIERI: Exactly. In knowing what to bring out. Yes. The most important thing is to make the creativity visible and to show the style of the designer. Because each designer has their own way of seeing fashion in the world. Versace was glamour, Valentino was elegance, and so on. Armani was classic bourgeois and so on, no? Each had their effect on the market and you had to clarify their vision because otherwise you watered down their creativity. Their images. Because if you were more important than them, you had to be in tandem. You had to maintain a great balance. Otherwise you would jump out as a photographer instead of them as the designer. It is important that there be a balance in this relationship.
MOLTISANTI: In the course of your career, the moments that gave you the biggest sort of surprises, you’re so happy and pleased [14:00] to have reached these landmark moments, like certainly your work with Audrey Hepburn, moments in which you said, “I am the happiest man in the world,”, or something like that. If you are willing to share, we don’t want to pry, but yeah, I don’t know, are there any that you wish to...

BARBIERI: Oh I have been extremely satisfied, I have never looked for, I have never been ambitious. I was satisfied like an artisan that makes a product, when the product left my hands I was happy even if I didn’t receive the payment for example, I never asked for money, never said for example, “What is the budget? OK that works for me,” or something like that in this case. Then I have had great satisfaction, one of the biggest was with Diana Vreeland who was the chief editor of Vogue America, who made me, wanted me to come work in America for nine consecutive months, but I said no because I was too, how can I put it, at that time, shy. [15:00] (laughs) So I never said yes. But I worked with her a lot in Italy.

MOLTISANTI: When you say shy, clearly you and her were fairly intimate, that your masterpiece came out of it.

BARBIERI: Sure, definitely.
MOLTISANTI: Your capacity to penetrate into... Now you have this gorgeous show, exhibit, Exotica. How did you come to be doing this? This new interest in outlining this new vision of the world that surrounds you in these images in Exotica?

BARBIERI: Well, it kind of happened in a way, it’s not, the world of fashion started to be somewhat limited for me, especially working in Italy. It all moved to Paris, London, New York. So I dedicated myself to traveling and I made my first book which is called Tahiti Tattoos by taking trips to Polynesia. This was a work opportunity [16:00] made possible by Vogue France. I was photographing evening wear and at a certain point there were these dancers, and one of them was tattooed on a large section of their body. So I did a portrait. When I got back to Europe with this portrait, I was stunned because I would look at it and say, how strange this art is, I had never seen it before. So I called the press office there in Tahiti which, that I had stayed in touch with, and I asked them, “Are there other boys or girls that get these tattoos?” And they told me yes. so I undertook more or less 10 trips to create this book Tahiti Tattoos, and I did Tahiti which was published by Taschen in Germany in six languages. Then Taschen gave me the opportunity to work on a sea trilogy, and I did [17:00] these three books, one on Tahiti, another on Madagascar which is an
island in the Indian Ocean, and the third was Equator which, basically it was the islands of Seychelles. And at this point I began this exploration of the exotic.

MOLTISANTI: Returning to today. The change in photography, in the technological process of photography, we have arrived at the digital world, how have you found these new technologies? What do you see...

BARBIERI: Well, I would say they are two totally separate worlds. The analog is still poetry say, it’s a soul. The digital meanwhile is pure technology. I would say that today the people who use Photoshop to retouch are actually more important than the people who do the actual photography. Because in my opinion this is no longer photography like we used to mean, [18:00] with the merits of analogical photography. They are two completely different worlds. But I see with great pleasure that the great photographers are still using film, are using analog because it’s a totally different world, a completely different story. They are two totally different things. Whether I would do good work with a digital camera, certainly you would see good, there would be great possibilities. But I don’t see, I see a flattening, I see a very unified field. The photographer doesn’t jump out anymore. There isn’t a hand, there isn’t a quality, Everything becomes totally flattened. There isn’t any soul.
MOLTISANTI: This isn’t this kind of artisanal, it’s like a different world, this...

BARBIERI: Exactly.

MOLTISANTI: It has been a great pleasure for me to hear your, here these introspections, your point of view on this world you are surrounded by. And these connections between art, music, sounds and non-sounds, silence which is more sound [19:00] even than music itself. It’s an honor to have you here with us this evening. Thank you so much (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BARBIERI: Thank you so much. Thanks, thank you.

MOLTISANTI: Thank you.

BARBIERI: Thank you. Thank you.

(Break in audio)

MOLTISANTI: ... era. Throw away the first role, then with the second role he managed to capture all the beauty of the soul. It was crazy. (inaudible) I think, you are filming already?

SICULAR: I think that was Eva Maelstrom.

MOLTISANTI: Because I think this is a good moment to

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

SICULAR: Is that Eva?

BARBIERI: This is Eva.

SICULAR: Eva, I know.
BARBIERI: Eva.

SICULAR: But she has such a beautiful face!

BARBIERI: (laughs) I don’t have Eva in face here. Wait. This is the first publicity from Milan. [Donna Mitchell?].

SICULAR: Donna Mitchell. She was with Ford.

BARBIERI: Diana Vreeland, the letter.

SICULAR: Did you speak to her? Her granddaughter is doing a documentary on Diana Vreeland. Her granddaughter lives in Paris. Have you been speaking to her? Lisa.

BARBIERI: Ah, yes, [20:00] yes. Wait a second? Wait. Here, this is the Valentino ad.

CREW: But you have to translate this, because I think he didn’t got that. What you were asking.

SICULAR: Me? Oh.

MOLTISANTTI: This (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

SICULAR: Has he been in touch with Lisa Vreeland about, she’s doing --

CREW: She’s the granddaughter of...?

SICULAR: She’s married to the grandson of Diana Vreeland who’s doing...

BARBIERI: She’s married?

MOLTISANTTI: It’s the grandchild, the...

SICULAR: Lisa Vreeland?

MOLTISANTTI: Lisa Vreeland...
SICULAR: Is married to Diana Vreeland’s grandson.

BARBIERI: Ah no no no, I don’t know her.

MOLTISANTI: She’s married to the grandson of (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

SICULAR: She’s writing a book and doing a documentary on Diana Vreeland.

MOLTISANTI: She’s writing a book, a book, a documentary about the story of the grandmother.

SICULAR: Have they been in touch? She lives in Paris.

(inaudible)

BARBIERI: This was... (inaudible)

MOLTISANTI: She lives in Paris. You don’t know each other?

I don’t think they know each other.

BARBIERI: No, I don’t know.

SICULAR: Does he want to be in touch with her? (inaudible)

BARBIERI: This was [Possudan?]. The camel (inaudible).

MOLTISANTI: No.

BARBIERI: (laughs) Yes. The camel (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

SICULAR: Look at that camel, isn’t it great?

BARBIERI: Everything (inaudible) for me. Here nearby [21:00] is a hanger that we wanted to move to, and the camel went up and down because below they said “20 dollars, 20 dollars more.” Down, up, down. (laughs)
SICULAR: (laughs) Did you know beforehand, did he know beforehand the camel was going to be there?

MOLTISANTI: How was it that the camel was there, was it ordered for the show...?

BARBIERI: Because I asked (inaudible) so I asked for a camel (laughs).

MOLTISANTI: That was (inaudible).

BARBIERI: And at a certain point they call me and say, “The camel is in the sky, the camel is in the sky.” But I wasn’t ready to take the photo yet.

MOLTISANTI: So while you were preparing the camel went up and down...

BARBIERI: Yeah, the camel went up and down. What should I show you? There’s so much. This is another model from Ford, I am sure of it. I cut down a tree (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

SICULAR: Did he have a quintessential beauty that he loved? Whether it was blond or brunette, did he have a quintessential beauty that he loved?

BARBIERI: How do you...

MOLTISANTI: She wants to know (inaudible), if there’s a quintessential form of beauty among, for example the blond beauty or the brunette beauty, something that you preferred [22:00] or that you returned to over and over.
BARBIERI: No, like I said, I found that each model had their own personality. Not they seem all a bit cookie cutter. I don’t know how to explain it. I find that at that time blonds had a great personality and brunettes the same, there wasn’t this huge, how should I say it, flattening. Each had their, for me it was the same. Isa Stoppi was blond and so to say, if you looked at her, you were stunned by how beautiful she was. She didn’t have two eyes, she had two lakes. For example. I don’t know. Then, I don’t know, Alberta Tiburzi was a Mediterranean beauty. She looked like [Namaniami?], she was, like, sanguine. So each had their own personality. I found this very beautiful, at that time. Many Italian models came here from Italy to America to work at that time. I’m talking about the ’60s, ’70s.

MOLTISANTI: (inaudible) [23:00]

BARBIERI: [Gerry Cavanza?].

SICULAR: Did he choose his models or did the magazines or the clients?

MOLTISANTI: And in choosing the models, did you do that or the clients, the magazines that (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BARBIERI: Well, it came from me or from whatever the market offered in that moment, because a lot of them traveled, they weren’t ever in Milan. I was, I was always cut out of the
conversation in high fashion because all of the models were in Paris, in New York. When they passed through Milan I used them. This is why some, many of the top models never worked with me. See, this is reference to art, this is [David Hockney?]. No, sorry. Hopper. This is Hopper. This is David Hockney. This is The Man Under the Pool.

SICULAR: *Man Under the Pool.*

BARBIERI: For me the culture of cinema and the culture of painting have been incredibly important. We mentioned, this is German [24:00] expressionism, deutsche expressionism. [Grosz?], Otto Dix, something. This is an homage to the cinema, this is a remake of a Lana Turner film, that, *The Bad and the Beautiful,* where she has a hysterical breakdown while driving a car. This is the famous Casablanca.

SICULAR: *Casablanca.* Yes.

BARBIERI: This is an homage to cinema for Valentino. This is the famous [Macellaia?] taken from a painting by [Caraccio?] from fourteen I think, sixteen hundred. *To Catch a Thief,* by Hitchcock. Here you go. Hitchcock.

SICULAR: *The Birds.*

BARBIERI: This was an extremely difficult photo to do because without retouching and without Photoshop, just using flash and a continuous light to obtain these visual tricks without retouching [25:00] was not easy.
MOLTISANTI: This was for Gianni Versace.

BARBIERI: This was for Gianni Versace, yeah. And the set that falls down, slide until it’s in front of me. It was from a film called, a Lana Turner film, *Obsession*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. She was on the set in the veranda, the set falls down and slides, and the director’s camera keeps rolling and gets the set falling on her and then Lana Turner’s sticking out from the middle of it. (laughs) And I made this photo in reference to the film. This was in Venezuela.

SICULAR: The colors are so beautiful.

BARBIERI: The first women’s collection from Armani. Laura Alvarez, she was in Ford? [26:00]  

SICULAR: I didn’t work with her, but boy, she looks great there.

BARBIERI: This was Valentino.

SICULAR: This looks like the church in --

BARBIERI: In the church, yes. Si.

SICULAR: In Nice. In Nice, it looks like the Russian Orthodox church a little bit.

BARBIERI: This is Ferrè.

SICULAR: That’s beautiful.

BARBIERI: [Vicini?], shoes. But Bellucci.

SICULAR: Wow, that’s a great picture.
BARBIERI: Yeah.

SICULAR: And [Perushka?].

BARBIERI: Gilbert and George. The painter. (laughs) Funny. They do a nude, in their paintings. I asked them, why don’t you do a nude for me? [27:00] They say, “No, only in paintings.” This was the ad that, Valentino’s first advertisement. In the desert.

SICULAR: Does he prefer shooting on location or in a controlled studio? Could you ask?

MOLTISANTI: What’s your preferred environment for shooting, in the studio, or...?

BARBIERI: Both. Because my prerogative is what others have told me. Physically it is what I have taken out of it, the model from the background of white in the studio, but I have made her live in the context of the set design. So outside more than in the studio, but you’re building something. Not just the photo with a white or a black or a gray background.

MOLTISANTI: So this theatrical effect (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BARBIERI: Exactly. In this case cinema has helped me enormously. [28:00]

SICULAR: Did he always like working with the same team? Like hair and makeup and stylist, or did he...?
MOLTISANTI: When working with a team of makeup etc, did you always have the same team with you or did they vary (overlapping dialogue, inaudible).

BARBIERI: No, they varied. But I preferred working with a team. Here in America I worked very well with Pablo, Pablo from [Arden?]. In Italy with [Andochiesa?]. For the dressers, there was [Galliano?], [Eric Allen]?  

SICULAR: Eric Allen. 

BARBIERI: Eric Allen. In Italy Dina and [Aldo Coppola?]. They was great. This is Seychelles, this is Venezuela. Let’s see if there’s... This, homage... The first campaign of Dolce and Gabbana. 

SICULAR: Wow. 

BARBIERI: [Marpessa?]. 

SICULAR: She was so beautiful. Look at that face. [29:00] Do you prefer color or black and white? I love this picture. 

BARBIERI: Uh, black and white. This Saint Laurent. 

SICULAR: That’s gorgeous. 

BARBIERI: An homage to [Bressaï?]. 

SICULAR: Yes, yes. 

BARBIERI: Bressaï did the prostitutes at night time in the alleys of Paris. Here look, for hair, Dina. You have to, after there’s the nylon thread...
MOLTISANTI: Oh. I hadn’t imagined that. It’s really like theater. In fact no...

BARBIERI: The first Versace photo. See how there’s, there’s already the glamour. Let’s see if I have the one of Bellucci.

SICULAR: How did, um --

BARBIERI: This is Alberta Tiburzi, in Valentino. [30:00] One campaign of Valentino.

MOLTISANTI: Yes anyway with all your knowledge about fabrics, this is like (inaudible), it’s incredible.

BARBIERI: Wait let’s see if I can find it.

SICULAR: I like that camel.

BARBIERI: Ah.

MOLTISANTI: These, these (laughs).

BARBIERI: This is the trip in Sudan with French Vogue. This photo has become historical. Let’s see if I can find... ah, the Bellucci nude. How beautiful she was.

MOLTISANTI: God she was beautiful. In this case the effect of the hair, this (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) it almost seems like there is this gravity in this photo.

BARBIERI: Aldo Coppola. [31:00]

MOLTISANTI: I can’t figure out how (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).
BARBIERI: Two fans. You need two, one in front, for the veil and the hair.

MOLTISANTI: And one behind.

BARBIERI: And one behind to blow them upwards. [Senò?] in ‘70. I said his name, I can’t remember the hair dresser, his name was Eric Allen, the dresser, Eric Allen. He put some cardboard, a cardboard support, then he put the toupée, and this made the head bigger. Isa Stoppi. Me, at 18.

MOLTISANTI: Wow.

SICULAR: Wow. Hot! Heat? Hot?

MOLTISANTI: Hot, uh.

CREW: Cool.

MOLTISANTI: Coo... (laughs) [32:00]

BARBIERI: These were (inaudible). Ah, Nureyev. (inaudible)

SICULAR: (overlapping audio; inaudible) Wow.


MOLTISANTI: Roberto Bolle was I guess one of the few dancers you photographed, together with Nureyev --

BARBIERI: I also photographed Nureyev, Bolle, and then I photographed, I can’t remember --

MOLTISANTI: But because you, you photographed Nureyev, you photographed Roberto Bolle, the approach...
BARBIERI: No it was different because, with Roberto Bolle we wanted to do, we wanted him in action, while with Nureyev we just did two portraits. This was in... This is Ewan McGregor. [33:00] Ah, Dolce and Gabbana. Christopher Lambert, Castellitto. He’s a great director in Italy. Tina Turner in Versace.

MOLTISANTI: [Stefano?].

BARBIERI: Donatella.

MOLTISANTI: This is also Man in the Water, no?

BARBIERI: Yeah. This is that same conversation I always had with David Hockney. The End of the World. Perushka with, these I did for Interview. Ferrè, Ferrè.

SICULAR: Does he feel surprised that, from the time that he started photography [34:00] and prints are becoming such an important piece of art, as part of the art world. How does he...

MOLTISANTI: Thinking about this historical evolution of photography, from when you started to today, what is your own idea about what photography has become in the world of art and has entered into the museums, how it has really been accepted as art, while when you started it was still in a period when there wasn’t this image of photography yet.

BARBIERI: No and in fact we worked, actually I threw away --
MOLTISANTI: You’re one of the people who did that, who made the world of art.

BARBIERI: Yes, true. I regret throwing away so many negatives (laughs). Because at that time there wasn’t this, like, culture of photography. Photography has taken root little by little. I have to say that it was born, the history of photography as a commercial thing and a conservation of images, here in New York already in the ‘30s and ‘40s. Then it slowly started in Europe as well. Now it has exploded. Now it is as established as painting. [35:00] (inaudible)

MOLTISANTI: These, these lights, these...

BARBIERI: These are continuous lights. Basically it’s a double exposure, a double exposure. I follow the movement of the model with a light in my hand. This is the the last, first and last piece that Balenciaga did, since synthetics came out. And he said, “Fashion is finished, I won’t make clothes anymore,” and he closed the business, and this is the last synthetic clothing that Balenciaga made.

MOLTISANTI: Right. This is... transparent. You can see the body but, it shows through. Is this from a double exposure...?

BARBIERI: Double exposure because she got up, and after you can see the effect. It’s like here- I followed the feet. And this is about [36:00] painting, it dances, it did the...
MOLTISANTI: Yes yes yes.

SICULAR: When he did his photographs did he art direct or was there an art director with him?

BARBIERI: No art director.

SICULAR: You did. So it was your vision.

BARBIERI: I did.

SICULAR: Your vision.

BARBIERI: This is Easter Island, this is Madagascar.

Madagascar.

MOLTISANTI: Wow.


SICULAR: I love Tahiti.

BARBIERI: I also redid the first film Wall, from 1926, silent, which was filmed in Tahiti. It was the first movie filmed in Polynesia. The first movie made in Polynesia in ’26. Not ’26, ’27, not sure, I don’t remember the date exactly.

Tattoo. [37:00]

SICULAR: They’re beautiful.

MOLTISANTI: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) The skin that speaks. This is (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

SICULAR: This is your tattoo. Which island did you get your tattoo?

BARBIERI: This man he made for me.

SICULAR: Which island?
BARBIERI: Papeete.

SICULAR: Papeete? I love Papeete. That’s great.

BARBIERI: This man made.

SICULAR: Yeah, it’s great.

BARBIERI: (laughs) The last night I ask him, please. He was with me [Papeloni Papeloni?] and he thought about the money. No, all I could see were the tattoos. So before I left I had to get one done myself...

SICULAR: Is it the net?

BARBIERI: This is the rock in La Digue Island in Seychelles. That rock is beautiful. This is Seychelles.

MOLTISANTI: Tartaruga.

SICULAR: I’ve been to almost all the places you’ve been to, Madagascar, Réunion, Seychelles.

BARBIERI: Seychelles --

SICULAR: Tahiti.

BARBIERI: Madagascar I stayed three months, enough for to shoot the picture. [38:00] Look at the kids, how beautiful.

SICULAR: Cute, look at that face.

BARBIERI: Tortoise. This is the Aldabra giant tortoise. Still in Seychelles.

MOLTISANTI: And which set, how, how, how --

BARBIERI: I dug a hole.

MOLTISANTI: Eh.
BARBIERI: I was in the hole. And my assistant gave it salad.

And she wanted...

MOLTISANTI: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

BARBIERI: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) it’s kind of a dinosaur. So the tortoise isn’t flat. This way it’s dynamic.

MOLTISANTI: Yes, yes. I’ve never seen such a [dynamic?] photo.

SICULAR: Does you get as much plea-...

BARBIERI: Tortoise. (all laugh)

SICULAR: Did Eric Allen do the makeup? The hair?

BARBIERI: There was somebody there holding lettuce.

SICULAR: You’re gonna pay with lettuce.

BARBIERI: Lettuce.

SICULAR: Look at that, with the octopus.

MOLTISANTI: Wow.

BARBIERI: The octopus is more beautiful than a scarf.

SICULAR: Where is this?

BARBIERI: Uh, Seychelles. [39:00]

SICULAR: Seychelles?

MOLTISANTI: With the curtain, eh.
BARBIERI: Look this.

MOLTISANTI: But do you beat the octopus like they do

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

BARBIERI: Yes yes yes. It took days to do this.

MOLTISANTI: And this is still in the hole, the hole effect?

You do (inaudible).

BARBIERI: Yeah. He was taller than me, I was shorter. But

anyway to do a photo like this you need to wait for hours and

hours. (overlapping audio; inaudible)

SICULAR: When Eileen was still working at the agency, can you

ask if she would ever call to say, “Oh, you should try this

model or that model,” or did that go through the editors?

MOLTISANTI: The relationship between an agency like ford,

Eileen Ford for example, and you the photographer, was it

direct or was there always...?

BARBIERI: No there was an Italian intermediary, it was, I think

[Riccardo Guy?].

MOLTISANTI: [Riccardo?] (overlapping audio; inaudible)

SICULAR: OK.

BARBIERI: I see was Guy. Riccardo Guy.

SICULAR: Riccardo Guy.

BARBIERI: In the time. Or [Beatrice?].

SICULAR: Beatrice.

BARBIERI: Or...
SICULAR: [Lorenzo Padini?]?

BARBIERI: Lorenzo. Enough. Enough. [40:00] (laughs)

MOLTISANTI: There’s so much.

BARBIERI: This is just one idea of my work because I shoot a lot.

SICULAR: I know, you have so many different books.

BARBIERI: Uh, 10 minimum.

SICULAR: Wow.

BARBIERI: 10.

SICULAR: And you had as much pleasure shooting things like the tattoos or the turtles as with the fashion. And beauty.

BARBIERI: No, now I like a lot to go in trip and to have possibility to shoot outside, people and natural things.

SICULAR: Have you ever shot in Mexico?

BARBIERI: Just catalogue, not for landscaping, or something.

SICULAR: Would you be interested in going there maybe, and doing something?

BARBIERI: Now I am interested to go in Sicily.

SICULAR: Sicily. Ah!

BARBIERI: Because Sicily is fantastic.

MOLTISANTI: I love Sicily.

SICULAR: He has that gorgeous house there.
MOLTISANTI: I am Sicilian from the southern point of Ibla which is the largest UNESCO center in the world. The widest site in the world [41:00] (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BARBIERI: Of course, Iblaic. Iblaic culture.

MOLTISANTI: Yes, the Hyblaean Mountains, etc.

BARBIERI: Of course. No, I have, I have everything ready to go in Sicily to do the book, but I’m waiting on the sponsor.

MOLTISANTI: When, we have these interesting things now at the end of June, July, I do, I have some New York friends that come down there and we do these event, in front of a (inaudible) in different spots around there. It’s exclusive, so you’re not allowed to enter, just in this case, I’m Sicilian, I hold everything... If you --

BARBIERI: Ok we’ll stay in touch because if I do the book, maybe...

MOLTISANTI: But if you want to come as a guest, in this case our guest, uh, I...

BARBIERI: Right, right, in that case.

MOLTISANTI: On the 28th of June various New Yorkers will arrive, only a few, not a lot, anyway.

BARBIERI: Right right.

MOLTISANTI: (inaudible) And I can take you around for a week and show you Sicily.

BARBIERI: Fantastic.
MOLTISANTI: We have different chefs, lunch and dinner, each time a different chef.

BARBIERI: Fantastic.

MOLTISANTI: It’s a unique experience, really.

BARBIERI: Great. In Sicily --

SICULAR: This is like the Chanel picture.

BARBIERI: It’s one of my favorite places. Ah this is the letter that Saint Laurent wrote me when he used this photo for a perfume. The first perfume, [42:00] the first perfume of Saint Laurent.

SICULAR: Anna Anderson.

BARBIERI: Anna Anderson. Look at the (inaudible). Pat Cleveland.

MOLTISANTI: Can you tell me, how, what is watercolor, how --

BARBIERI: Color that I have mixed with the, like here for example, I made a little bed of plastic and I inserted water based colors and oil based colors, in a way so that they don’t mix together. Red remained red, violet remained violet. And by pushing the plastic, I obtained the effect I wanted.

MOLTISANTI: So the dimensions are [43:00] just from the plastic. (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

BARBIERI: Yes, exactly. Here though, it’s, I created these colors to be the same as the clothing and then I put in the
water. Because the pool was raised about the ground. Raised above the ground in a way so that I could put the light under and I didn’t have reflections, look.

MOLTISANTI: Mm-mm. So the light comes from underneath? The water.

BARBIERI: It’s coming from underneath. This way I don’t have a shadow.

MOLTISANTI: It’s incredible how the body looks dry, completely, it looks like (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

BARBIERI: I had done Bellucci in the water, gorgeous nude. It’s not...

SICULAR: Was it difficult when he was working trying to get people, giving art direction if they didn’t all speak the same language on the set, it’s so international.

MOLTISANTI: On the set, at the workplace, the communication between the various members of the set, with the international set with the question of language, different languages. Did you ever have difficulty... [44:00]

BARBIERI: No.

MOLTISANTI: It was, was it...

BARBIERI: No, no. Because --

SICULAR: I remember this shot.

BARBIERI: No no, we never had any problems.

SICULAR: That looks like Dayle Haddon. It is Dayle Haddon.
BARBIERI: This is the [Santa Margarita?]. Here. South Africa.

Lolita. Snack. (laughs)

MOLTISANTI: Wow.

SICULAR: Where is this? Which country?

BARBIERI: This I was in Madagascar.

MOLTISANTI: (cellphone vibrates) This is something, just a connection here, we do these concerts in Ibla every summer.

SICULAR: Beautiful.

MOLTISANTI: It’s an evening to collect funds for a mission in Madagascar.

BARBIERI: Ah.

MOLTISANTI: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

BARBIERI: [Yeah I always did?] photos in, for benefits.

MOLTISANTI: Fundraisers.

BARBIERI: For the children, for disea--

MOLTISANTI: We do, we build wells, pumps, we send pumps to pull up water, to purify the water.

BARBIERI: Madagascar is terrible. There is nothing in Madagascar. It’s horrific.

MOLTISANTI: This concert will be on the 11th of July this year. I know that, to put together some money for Madagascar.

BARBIERI: Can you give me some water?

MOLTISANTI: Off the records, this is something I (inaudible)
END OF AUDIO FILE