

## REMEMBERING BOB RAYMOND

JED SPEARE



*Bob Raymond.* Photo credit: Marilyn Arsem, Skowhegan, Maine, 2011.

When Bob Raymond unexpectedly died this past February, Mobius, the arts organization and its resident Artists Group lost its most dedicated member, and devoted friend and colleague. He was close to his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In the months since then I have learned more about him and come to understand in a wider context the origins and beneficence of his actions. Learning more about a younger Bob through his older friends threw me back into considering some of the countercultural values that were manifest then. The word "access" came to mind and began to prevail as the foundation of a contemporary, ideological sharing of resources. "Access to tools," and "public access," were catchwords understood both in their broadest, met-

aphorical sense as well as their reference to specific arenas. Remembering the spirit of those times and the axiomatic emergence of these terms, I began to see Bob as a young man inspired and guided by the openness of their values. It was also the dawn of electronic arts and media connectivity, for the access we assume and understand in a different way as essential now, began with the actions and advocacy of people like Bob.

Creating access and connectivity with resources also forged a mindset of collaboration with and crossing over of media disciplines. Although Bob is widely known as a photographer, his own work was "intermedia," combining video, sound, installation, and performance. Bob collaborated frequently with members of the Mobius Artists Group and as recently as August 2011, he participated in a multimedia performance of John Cage's Variations VIII at its original site, the Skowhegan School of Art in Maine.

In his early professional life, as the Assistant Director of Boston Film and Video Foundation, he worked for an organization that provided equipment and studio time for film and video artists doing independent productions. Later, working on a much larger scale with cable television was a natural shift, when local program origination was mandated to cable company providers. Cable access was a new avenue for resources, production and distribution and Bob served in many capacities both designing entire facilities as well as managing the full scope of regional field production work.

In the time not taken up by the demands of his job and responsibilities, Bob photographed almost every single event produced at or by Mobius and the Mobius Artists Group for nearly thirty years. The archive of images he carefully built and indexed numbered over 15,000 35 millimeter slide images and over 10,000 digital images. These photos were also made with specific limits that Bob had imposed on himself in an effort to be discreet: that a photo would never be taken with the assist of a flash, despite often very low light performance conditions; and that a photo would also not be taken if he thought the performer or audience would hear or be distracted by the sounding click of the shutter. Over the years, Bob acquired a refined sense of anticipating the critical moments of a performance. Viewing these photographs takes one well beyond the realm of documentation and into the strata of fine art.

Mobius, like other artist-run organizations that were formed in the seventies and have survived, along with some that have not, has also become part of an awareness concerning the importance of preserving the archives of the activities of that era. What comes across as a singular distinction of Bob Raymond's photographic archive is to note that this is a comprehensive body of work of a single artist documenting Mobius for thirty years. I cannot imagine anyone else with as long a record of commitment to one organization as his. The numbers, years, quality, and commitment is a towering achievement that will become more and more apparent as his photographs come to light. At the time of his death, Bob and Mobius were in discussions with Tufts University for the transfer of their archives to that institution. This will happen soon and be made accessible to a broader public.

Death is very mysterious but also very vivid. It is something we have no reckoning of until we are faced with it. For me, all of the myths, legends, beliefs, practices, and spirits must have some veracity, or they would not have withstood the test of time. I think about this now because I wonder where Bob's spirit is. I have felt that he is absent but not gone, and that his work will remain with us for a long time as a reminder of his presence, generosity, kindness, and creativity.

--Jed Speare,  
*Mobius Artists Group,*  
*Director, Mobius*

**Bob Raymond** was a photographer, videographer and intermedia artist who had been documenting experimental artwork in and around Mobius, Inc., in Boston, MA (USA) since the early 1980's. He was a longtime member of the Mobius Artists Group and created video works, performances and collaborated on installation artworks. His academic background was in both Anthropology and Communication Theory. He worked professionally for over 20 years in the television industry. His exhibition of photographs, entitled "this moment: missives from another world", took place in the Summer of 2009, at Studio Soto in Boston. His photos will soon be at Tufts University as part of the Mobius archive, and a book of his photos will be published next year by Mobius.

**Jed Speare** is an artist working in a variety of media and settings. He has presented sound, video, performance and multidisciplinary work, locally, nationally, and internationally for over thirty years. In 2008, Wire magazine called him "*a pioneer of multimedia presentation.*" He is the creator of the record album, *Cable Car Soundscapes* (1982) on Smithsonian Folkways Records, and a double album, *Sound Works 1982-1987* (2008) on Family Vineyard records. He became a member of the Mobius Artists Group in 1995, and has been the Director or Co-Director of Mobius for most of the years since. He is also currently active as a founding member of the New England Forum for Acoustic Ecology, the New England Phonographers Union, and the Mobius Quartet.

For a view of some of some of Bob Raymond's photographs, go to: <http://www.moeboyd.net/> and to read a Tribute to Bob Raymond, with comments, go to: <http://mobius.org/news/tribute-bob-raymond-april-21-1952-february-27-2012>.