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Oral history interview with Guerrilla Girls  
Zora Neale Hurston and Agnes Martin, 2008  
May 17

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally recorded interview with Guerrilla Girls Zora Neale Hurston and Agnes Martin on May 17, 2008. The interview took place at Independent Curators International offices in New York, New York, and was conducted by Judith Olch Richards for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Guerrilla Girls Zora Neale Hurston and Agnes Martin and Judith Olch Richards have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing Zora Neale Hurston and Agnes Martin, Guerrilla Girls, at iCI's [Independent Curators International] offices, 799 Broadway in New York, on May 17, 2008, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc number one.

Okay. I'd like to ask each of you individually, and the first time you speak, give your name so the person who's transcribing will know - you don't have to continue because your voices are distinctive - how you first heard about the Guerrilla Girls and ended up being - how you were recruited, how you became part of this organization. So we can start with Zora.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON: You know, I find it difficult to remember how I was recruited.

MS. RICHARDS: And approximately the year.

MS. HURSTON: Now you're going to make it really, really hard. I believe it was '86. It could've been '85, and it was right after or during the time that a major exhibition was happening at the Clocktower ["Guerrilla Girls Review the Whitney." The Clocktower, New York City, 1987].

MS. RICHARDS: So that's near the founding - beginning?

MS. HURSTON: It wasn't so late, and there was a great deal of excitement putting that show up. It was fabulous meeting all those people. Some of them I knew already but had no idea that they were members of that group. So it was a great beginning. But I can't remember when I first got initiated into postering, which was one of our major activities.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember who - how it came to be that you even worked with them at all, before you, maybe, considered yourself a member?

MS. HURSTON: Well, many of them knew me because of my activities with a feminist magazine, and so that sort of led to two or three members knowing me, but how they proposed me, I have no idea.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember their Guerrilla Girl names?

MS. HURSTON: No.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MS. HURSTON: No. I could hardly remember my own Guerrilla Girl name. [They laugh.] So I can't remember their - we needed a chart here, then we could see. But, no, I don't remember. I was a member of two or three strongly feminist organizations at the time. So it was -

MS. RICHARDS: What are the names of those?

MS. HURSTON: Let me see now, *Heresies Magazine* Collective, from about 1980 when I joined; Fantastic Women in the Arts, a reading/discussion group in the 1990s; and a short-lived black female artists group.

There were many, many organizations of women then, and I don't know whether they still - you know, whether there still are women artist groups, but that was such a needy time. I mean, we really needed to get on it, because we were being treated so badly.

MS. RICHARDS: Agnes, how about you?

AGNES MARTIN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Can you talk about your very, very beginning with the Guerrilla Girls?

MS. MARTIN: I received a postcard in the mail asking if I was interested in being a member of the Guerrilla Girls, and I think the first postcard was very early on. I can't - maybe early - oh, maybe '85, '86. I didn't know who it was from, and I thought, well - my life was very, very busy at that time and I said, "Oh, I just can't do this." But then maybe it was four years later, I received another one [laughs] with a phone number, and I called and I said, "Yes, I am interested." And so that's how I was initiated.

MS. RICHARDS: And you phoned the number and then -

MS. MARTIN: I phoned the number and they said, "Well, we're meeting and please come to the meeting," and so I went and -

MS. RICHARDS: They gave you an address?

MS. MARTIN: They gave me an address.

MS. RICHARDS: But not a - the name of a person who lived there?

MS. MARTIN: No. No, they - oh, no, actually, they did, but then - no, no, they didn't. They just said, "Come to this address," and I just went. And I knew a lot of people there just from being in the art world. [Martin and Hurston laugh.]

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: A lot of people. And then - well - so then I knew who called me, but was - you know, they were disguising their voice and everything, so it was really funny.

MS. RICHARDS: So staying with you for a moment -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - what was that first meeting like?

MS. MARTIN: I walked in - it was very charged because it was over a poster idea, and I thought, "Oh, what am I getting myself into to," [laughs] because it was - sometimes it would get a little - you know, people were challenged and they were very passionate about their beliefs. And so I thought, "Oh, this is a really interesting dialogue," and it got - you know, it went to a place where you had to really start questioning what we wanted to put out there in the world.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: About how many people attended that first meeting?

MS. MARTIN: Maybe - well, this is - I came in the middle of a poster project, so maybe there were 15 women.

MS. RICHARDS: And so how long did it - you kept going to meetings. How did it develop--eventually you had an assignment, or you chose what to do? How did that evolve?

MS. MARTIN: That did that evolve, too? There was actually a - the first assignment was about the poster, but then there was also the assignment of going out and there was - thinking about a billboard, and then, also, I think it was a photo shoot.

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. MARTIN: And so that was probably one of the first things.

MS. RICHARDS: What do you mean, "thinking about a photo shoot"?

MS. MARTIN: No, we were requested to - actually, were you part of that?

MS. HURSTON: I was -

MS. MARTIN: I think so.

MS. HURSTON: I was in a lot of photo shoots.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, a lot of photo shoots.

MS. HURSTON: Where we always wore gorilla masks.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] We wore the masks, and it was a photo shoot for a fashion magazine. Oh, for *Vogue*.

MS. HURSTON: *Vogue*. It was for *Vogue*.

MS. RICHARDS: So did it take you a number of meetings before you felt comfortable enough to speak, or did you - were you able to dive right in?

MS. MARTIN: I seemed to be comfortable enough, but I didn't - because of a lot of personal reasons and some other activities - I had been involved with another group, another collective, an artist collective. I was just spreading myself out way too thin, so I ended up, I think after a few years, not participating as much, but being supportive.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay. Well, we'll come back to that.

MS. MARTIN: Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Zora, how was your first experience of meetings, and did you - what was the meeting like? What was the tone of the conversation? Can you kind of recreate in your mind how you felt and what was happening at that meeting?

MS. HURSTON: I took it - being a member - as a chance to, kind of, temper the discussions in many cases, because the membership was mostly white, and I had had strong leadership positions in other white organizations where it was just different. You were -

MS. RICHARDS: Guerrilla Girls was different or this other's?

MS. HURSTON: Other organizations were different in that there would be a real rigid pecking order and a whole lot of things like that, you know. But in the Guerrilla Girls, there were other points of view that had to come out, and I felt free to voice them. When I did, everyone always listened, and it changed the tenor of what went into the posters and what went into conversations, because they could count on me to, you know, really blast out, "Whoa, this or that hasn't been addressed. It's not just that women are not in the art world. It's the nuances between who is in the art world and who isn't, and it's not just male and female. It's color and it's social status and a whole lot of other things." I felt that the conversation was the freest I've ever had in any organization, and I was a member of many of them, *Heresies Magazine* [Collective] and others.

So it was just unusual, you know, to be able to have a voice that mattered. Nobody was going to write it down, and it wasn't going to get published that way, but it was a new perspective. And I was not the only black member, by any means, but, yes, I brought just another tinge to the discussion.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And so how did it evolve, what you ended up doing, what your role was, or at least what it began as?

MS. HURSTON: I was very busy at the time - as I always am - but I enjoyed going out and postering, although my husband didn't think it was such a great idea.

MS. RICHARDS: Because of the danger, or because of the -

MS. HURSTON: Just because it was late at night [laughs] and I had to go to work the next day, but everybody had to suffer. You know, I mean, we had to do what we had to do. Doing research was great fun, and just the freedom to talk about things - because, as a member of other groups at exactly the same time, there was a prissiness to them. You know, it was pecking order and what you said and how you couldn't give a real truth-telling description of something and have it resonate in certain kinds of straightlaced groups. So with the Girls, they absorbed it, and they counted on various members to pull up the truth every now and then, really know. So in postering, we were always trying to get the smartest, neatest, tightest, critical voice in there, and something would be almost ready to go into print, and then just one word from somebody else would make it even better, you know. So that was really good.

MS. RICHARDS: And ultimately, you just decided it was done and you - it was ready?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, people - everybody just - there was so much yelling and screaming. It was so much conversation, so hot and so heated, and because nobody was going to get anything out of this, you could do it. It was really anonymous. Anonymity is a tool -

MS. RICHARDS: Your role and part was research and - ?

MS. HURSTON: No, more critique than research.

MS. RICHARDS: And postering?

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And how many years were you an active member?

MS. HURSTON: Probably 10 or more.

MS. RICHARDS: And Agnes, how many years were you a member?

MS. MARTIN: I wasn't a member that long. It was only, I would say, a few years, or a couple years at the most.

MS. RICHARDS: That's a long time. [Laughs.]

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, but not 10 years.

MS. RICHARDS: Did the group, and how the meetings were, and the kind of projects they undertook change during the years that you were involved? Was that part of the time when the focus shifted a little bit away from the art world to wider issues or what was going on then?

MS. MARTIN: It was - it became wider issues, I think, when I - do you remember? It's so long ago, but there were some other issues that were brought up that were more outside of the art world, just -

MS. RICHARDS: Were you -

MS. MARTIN: - beginning.

MS. RICHARDS: - one of the Girls who was very - where did you stand? I think there might've been a difference -

MS. MARTIN: I -

MS. RICHARDS: - of opinion on the question of whether the art world still needed your undivided attention or if broader feminist or cultural issues should be addressed.

MS. MARTIN: Well, gee. I think - well, it was still about the art world, and just at the time, I was in another group. A member of the other G group. [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: What was that?

MS. MARTIN: It was called Godzilla.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. HURSTON: We all appreciated that group.

MS. RICHARDS: I'll ask you more about that in a minute.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: We've talked about that in previous sessions a little bit.

MS. MARTIN: They have? A little bit?

MS. RICHARDS: So during the two or three years you were a member of the Guerrilla Girls, most of the time, you were also a member of Godzilla?

MS. MARTIN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And Godzilla was a group of -

MS. MARTIN: Asian-American artists.

MS. RICHARDS: And did it start in any way as a response to the Guerrilla Girls?

MS. MARTIN: No.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you feel it was totally -

MS. MARTIN: It was quite different. It was a group of men and women artists, curators, writers, filmmakers, but it was a group - it started out as a group of - a very small group, actually, of networking, just being able to know what other Asian Americans did at the time. And it was a forum to get together, see each other's work, talk about things out in the world - in the art world or wherever, but it was - you know, what was happening in the museums. And so it was a little different than the Guerrilla Girls because it wasn't all - it wasn't so much about women. You know, it was -

MS. RICHARDS: So no one would've left the Guerrilla Girls to join Godzilla, because it didn't feel that issues important to Asian women artists were being addressed in the Guerrilla Girls? It wasn't something of that sort.

MS. MARTIN: Well, there were issues of race brought up in the Guerrilla Girls, but the forum was a little different - it was - with Godzilla, in my opinion, it was just - oh, I don't know. I just lost my train of thought.

MS. RICHARDS: It sounds -

MS. HURSTON: I think -

MS. RICHARDS: It sounds like you're saying that Guerrilla Girls had a social mission and Godzilla was more for a personal support system, in a way.

MS. MARTIN: In a way. I mean, for me, that's how I - I mean everybody saw it from a different viewpoint, but because there were members in the group that were more political than I was, you know, it was -

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: - it was much - I entered it in a different - you know, of connecting with people.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were a Guerrilla Girl, as an Asian artist, did you find opportunities to, as Zora said, point out something that only you would see, that you could comment on something that wasn't being -

MS. MARTIN: I did, but I wasn't one of the more vocal people in the group, I would say. You know, I would say - if there was a poster or if there was a - and we're going over what the poster said, then I could comment on that, but usually there were women in the group that were very much more vocal than me and that had a really strong stance of what they thought, and, I mean, that's when I walked into the first - the first few meetings were very--

MS. HURSTON: Intense.

MS. MARTIN: - intense.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: And I, you know, as being a new member, I didn't know what to say, except for if I saw something on a poster, a word or two that I felt, you know, I wanted to make a comment, then I would. And then sometimes the - what was the dialogue on the poster would somehow shift. It was then a discussion of what - how we thought maybe it would be stronger as far as some - a way of communicating something.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: Would you say that, Zora?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. I think that there was an absence of a real Asian contribution. There was another Asian, a Chinese member, who was pretty much silenced by a couple of the strong Guerrilla Girl leaders, and she was extremely smart and extremely able, and she quit. She more or less said, "I don't need this. Let me out of here," and left. So that -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: - was a problem. If you wanted to be -

MS. RICHARDS: Was that discussed by the group -

MS. HURSTON: I think that this person -

MS. RICHARDS: - the perceived problem?

MS. HURSTON: - who is still a great friend of mine said, "I don't have to take this, and I'm not going to, and I'm out of here." And she had been really, really the person who did the graphics and whatnot. And, you know, she just left. She just said, "I'm gone."

MS. RICHARDS: Was there any issue - I've heard a discussion of certain people who took ownership, you might - who devoted themselves to a certain aspect, like graphic design.

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: And there might've been a competition.

MS. HURSTON: There was a competition, and she said, "I don't need this. This is ridiculous. You can't win against these people, and I'm out of here. I just won't do it." So they lost a very strong person there who - you know, they lost her. They couldn't dislodge me. I didn't give a damn about what they did.

MS. RICHARDS: You're saying they couldn't dislodge you. In other words, you felt there was an underlying desire to?

MS. HURSTON: I don't know whether they had the nerve to think that way.

MS. RICHARDS: Or you felt provoked and -

MS. HURSTON: No. There were an overbearing couple and everybody knew it and it divided people. We tried all sorts of things to work it out and it just -

MS. RICHARDS: Even though there wasn't supposed to be a leader?

MS. HURSTON: That's right.

MS. RICHARDS: There was a de facto, kind of?

MS. HURSTON: Right. There was an ownership problem, and it was diffused greatly by [GuerrillaGirls]Broadband and by some of the younger groups, but Broadband was able to establish itself as distinctly different, so that they didn't have to confront the founding leadership.

MS. RICHARDS: That's coming up to 2000 - the early part of the century.

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: But going back to your 10 years, was around '85 to '95?

MS. HURSTON: Let's see. Maybe about '92, '93. It was a long time, and I would still go to things, so it's kind of hard to say there was an abrupt end.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: But postering stopped - all kinds of activities stopped because SoHo became such a commercial/nightlife center - it changed.

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: You couldn't poster anymore. All the old loft buildings were now fancy-dancy places. Then there were no streets where there were walls where you could go and slap stuff up. You were scared. You couldn't do it. You know, people were walking the neighborhood at all hours of the night.

MS. RICHARDS: Property values?

MS. HURSTON: And property values.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: So that was difficult, so postering was no more. Slapping wonderful stickers on the windows of galleries - there was one called White Bread, which was because it meant all white artists inside. Really wonderful.

MS. RICHARDS: So during the later years of your active participation -

MS. HURSTON: It got harder.

MS. RICHARDS: - what were you involved in?

MS. HURSTON: Well, it's - let's go back to what were some of the other problems -

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. HURSTON: - and then maybe I can tell you what I was involved in.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: I was always involved in the critical thinking about what the posters were going to be about, but another thing that became a divisive happening, and you may not know this so much, was that we were traveling everywhere. And I remember going to Europe with Girls, and there was always a gig somewhere in the country and people were going. And so there became a kind of an underlying thing of, you know, how to get to this one, how to get to that one, who's going to get to go, and there was a lot of anger about some people always getting trips.

MS. RICHARDS: Favoritism?

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm [affirmative], getting the good gigs and whatever. So, you know, that was a bit of a problem.

MS. RICHARDS: Conversations were - awkward conversation about who was the best speaker or performer?

MS. HURSTON: I don't know whether that was it. Some people thought they were the best. [Laughs.]

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: And some people thought they were the best. So it was tricky.

MS. RICHARDS: So that was a divisive -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: And how did it work financially when you did the gigs? I mean they were -

MS. HURSTON: Your flight was paid, your room was paid, and your everything was paid.

MS. RICHARDS: So it was -

MS. HURSTON: You just had to arrange time.

MS. RICHARDS: So it was fun because you -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - enjoyed performing and you felt proud to represent Guerrilla Girls -

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you also earn any income yourself from it?

MS. HURSTON: No. No, you didn't. You just got to go. No, you didn't earn - it was - I don't think there was any pay, as far as I know. I think that there would've been conversations about it, because some people said, "Well, I can't afford to leave my job." But I don't think that anybody ever - I hope they didn't ever actually get paid for their time. I don't think so.

MS. MARTIN: I don't think there was.

MS. MARTIN: So there was "who kept" the posters, and there was -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: You mean who kept the inventory?

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]



MS. MARTIN: Yes, where they were kept and -

MS. RICHARDS: Was money an issue, divisive or otherwise?

MS. HURSTON: Money's always an issue, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Money's always an issue, and it was an issue then, and there was a lot of conversation about who was controlling the money and where was it going and blah, blah, blah. That's the politics of membership in any group. Any kind of group that I can ever think of is under the fist of a few and the ire of a ton. [Laughs.]

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Human nature.

MS. HURSTON: It is. The thing that was so great about the Girls was, by being anonymous, I never understood how anybody could be quiet in a meeting and not just go for it. And I always tried to listen and then say something that was going to change somebody's mind. And not be afraid to talk, but, you know, in the case of the other Asian girl, she just couldn't put up with that. She just said, "I don't have to teach people. I'm out of here." You know, so they lost a great member who couldn't stand hardball and -

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: - some people, because the two people at the top were so busy covering their privileges or whatever, their feeling that they owned it, and it was bad. You didn't need to own it.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, that -

MS. HURSTON: You just needed to participate.

MS. MARTIN: I think that's sort of what, you know -

MS. HURSTON: Did you feel that?

MS. MARTIN: It ended, you know, after a while, just kind of drove me away. I just said the tension between the few people, the - kind of the leaders -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: - became so intense for me that I just thought -

MS. HURSTON: Never mind.

MS. MARTIN: - that's okay. [Laughs.] I mean, I didn't need to have that in my life.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: And I found that about other collectives after a while. Then it becomes - and I just felt like, as an artist, I really wanted to be able to focus on my own work and my own family and, you know, my survival as an artist or whatever I needed to do in life. And so my days of being in a collective for - you know, after a few years, I just gave all of that up.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you ever do any performances or gigs?

MS. MARTIN: No, that was not - I was there for any kind of mailing or anything like that, but I -

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: - never considered myself a performer, so I wasn't one of the competitors, as far as, like, who did what best or anything like that. I just loved -

MS. RICHARDS: Did you ever wear the gorilla mask?

MS. MARTIN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And when was that? What circumstances?

MS. MARTIN: Just at some events and for the -

MS. HURSTON: Photo shoot.

MS. MARTIN: - photo shoot.

MS. HURSTON: Photo shoots, yeah.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, for photo shoots wore it.

MS. HURSTON: I tried to recognize arms and fingers [laughs] and stuff like that because you couldn't really tell who was there.

MS. RICHARDS: You wore the mask and you did -

MS. HURSTON: We wore masks and we did -

MS. RICHARDS: - gigs?

MS. HURSTON: Oh, gosh, yeah. I'm in lots of the pictures.

MS. MARTIN: She was in a lot of them, and - but, you know, I was one of the quieter ones in there, though I also tried to do some recruiting of other Asian Americans. And they - I brought, actually, a few - a couple people - a few people to the meetings, but it was one of those really intense ones and they said, "Forget that" -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

The great writer, did you bring her?

MS. MARTIN: Yes.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, I was so disappointed when she didn't come back. I said, "Oh, God, this is terrible."

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, she -

MS. HURSTON: She said no.

MS. MARTIN: No.

MS. HURSTON: I was so upset.

MS. MARTIN: And then there was another performer -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah.

MS. MARTIN: - who actually - she did come back once.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: And - but then after the second or third time -

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. MARTIN: - time, she just said, "Forget this." It was a really intense moment, though. I don't know if all the meetings were like that, and usually - but -

MS. RICHARDS: All the meetings for you weren't that way? You said at the beginning they were more intense than later?

MS. MARTIN: Well, sometimes they seemed to be more civil. It would kind of go back and forth. So -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. It could be civil.

MS. MARTIN: So -

MS. HURSTON: It got worse. It got worse - but at the beginning, when that first Asian artist was there, it was much more civil.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: And then it began to get less civil.

MS. RICHARDS: What were the concepts that you were dealing with, Zora, that you remember at any - let's say

toward the beginning, the subject matter, and then how did that evolve?

MS. HURSTON: One of the great posters - something about being a woman, and it had a whole list of things, and I remember tweaking one of the things and that just nipped it. It was great. It was - your ability to add to something that a couple of people had been working on, and -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: - people would pair off and work on various posters, and then bring the ideas to the group, and then the group would look at them and we sometimes, depending on whose house, we would, you know, write down the things and go over them and try to make them as succinct and snappy as possible, because people would see them on the street in black and white, and we were in competition with that other artist from California who did the big face portraits. Do you remember seeing them on the street? He did big heads of people. I can't remember what his name was. And so we were all - you know, public posting of a sort, not a lot, but that guy went on and on and on. He did a great one of [President Ronald] Reagan.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, I can't remember his name.

MS. HURSTON: He was fabulous. And so - and he just did it with no words, just the pictures.

MS. RICHARDS: Political?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. And so we were spurred to make the posters as tight as they could be. If there was something about women in the army, then it - you had to get the angle. You had to get the angle! It was so important to be able to brainstorm. That is what was -

MS. MARTIN: That was the best part for me -

MS. HURSTON: That was the best part.

MS. MARTIN: - was the brainstorming of everybody's ideas kind of coalescing and then coming up with something. I love the wit of what came out of those discussions.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: - that sort of kept me there for a while, but, you know, towards the back, there's quite a bit because I pulled that out again.

MS. RICHARDS: Looking at the *Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls* [New York: Harper Collins, 1995], were you - either of you--members when there was the show at the Palladium ["The Night the Palladium Apologized." 1985] I've heard about?

MS. HURSTON: I missed that. I was not a member at the time.

MS. MARTIN: I think it was early.

MS. RICHARDS: So you talked about recruiting. What was the scenario? What prompted recruiting? Were you free at any time?

MS. MARTIN: They wanted more Asian artists or, you know, writers or -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: - they wanted to have so - that were women of color, you know, to join.

MS. RICHARDS: So even though there was a resistance to new ideas in some - or competition--on the other hand, there was an interest in bringing in new voices?

MS. MARTIN: Yes.

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And did the group evolve much during the time, Agnes, you were a member? I mean, how much of a rotation or a turnover -

MS. MARTIN: There were a few new members, but -

MS. RICHARDS: Just a few in three years that you were a member?

MS. MARTIN: Well, I was so sporadic in my -

MS. RICHARDS: Oh.

MS. MARTIN: - you know, my attendance, so I [laughs] - you know, that I don't know exactly. But so I would see new people and not. Maybe you went to the meetings more often.

MS. HURSTON: I never missed a meeting if I could help it.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: What about the social aspect of the meeting? I've heard the fact there were - there was food, there was the social - the networking; there was a - the other kind of nurturing or nourishing -

MS. HURSTON: It had to be that way -

MS. RICHARDS: - environment for artists.

MS. HURSTON: - because you were taking time when you didn't really have time, and you were coming after work, and I can't remember how we got food, but maybe, you know, we -

MS. MARTIN: Sometimes we'd all bring something.

MS. HURSTON: We'd all bring something. Something. Somehow or other, we had to nurture each other as we sat there, dead-tired, trying to work another job in the evening, and it would not be the time when you were going to have to go off and do another thing. You know, so the postering would be on another night. It was really hard work.

MS. RICHARDS: How often did you meet?

MS. HURSTON: Oh, God. Do you remember?

MS. MARTIN: It was like every couple of weeks - couple weeks.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, every two or three weeks.

MS. RICHARDS: Often?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. We met a lot, and -

MS. RICHARDS: And did you always meet in the same place?

MS. HURSTON: No. No, we had to switch, because who could stand- you know, whose family could stand having all these women sitting around and -

MS. MARTIN: And disappear. [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. Oh, dear, right. It was a lot.

MS. MARTIN: And I had another group, so I - you know, I had those meetings at my home. So the group became so big - I could remember one night where there were, like, over 50 people that came.

MS. RICHARDS: Not to the - to the Guerrilla Girls? No.

MS. MARTIN: No. To this -

MS. HURSTON: To that other group, yeah.

MS. MARTIN: To the other group, and I just said - after that, I said, "No, we've got to find, like, a public forum." This was like it was impossible.

MS. HURSTON: Right. Well, the Girls have given parties over the years where old Girls or people who had dropped out, you know, would come back, and it would be a huge number of people. [They laugh.] It would be a huge number of people, which was good because I think that the benefit of the Girls was that there were so many of us over a period of time that no matter what the clashes were, it was just valuable to have had all those voices. Not every voice was valuable, but most of them were, and just their being members was a help. And sometimes you got some deadwood in there. I can remember one or two people who just sat there and didn't do anything, you know, but most of the time not.

MS. RICHARDS: At what point and how did you decide your Guerrilla Girl name?

MS. HURSTON: I honestly don't remember, because I never remembered my name in the first place. But I was trying to honor a very strong woman and Zora Neale Hurston was just really, really strong, and, of course, she had just been rediscovered by Alice Walker. So it was very important to try to add those little things, because black writers and black artists had always had great trouble breaking through, and still do. There's more segregation in the art world now than there was ever. It's completely segregated, still is, always was, and seems it always will be. And the Girls would've talked about that more if it had been a more open leadership, but it wasn't. That's my opinion.

MS. RICHARDS: What about - well, let me pause and go back to Agnes. About your name, how did that happen?

MS. MARTIN: I'm not sure. [Laughs] I mean, for a long time, I was just a GG number - a number, you know. So -

MS. HURSTON: Oh, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And then you chose a name?

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: And do you remember why you chose Agnes Martin?

MS. MARTIN: I just like her spirit, you know, that she - it's - she's - her artwork is more spiritual, and I like that aspect of it. So that's why I chose it.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you - oh, I was going to go back to you, either of you, but probably start with Zora. At what point - why did the subject of the posters and the billboards move a little bit away from the art world to a broader feminist agenda?

MS. HURSTON: That's a really good question. I'm not sure when that happened.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember projects you did that were a little -

MS. HURSTON: No. I would've been one of those people who would want it to stay with the art world. That we began to talk about the army and women in the army and the services and things like that, trying to think of other, out--of-the-art-world things, I was not as interested in doing that, because as artists - artists always know about what's going on worldwide. But it seemed to me what was needed was some real work in the art world, and we didn't do it. We didn't finish it. We got off the path and we did not - we didn't nail them. We didn't nail it.

MS. RICHARDS: There were some revisiting, maybe, when you were no longer a member -

MS. HURSTON: Possibly.

MS. RICHARDS: - recounts, you know, how many women are in the -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - Metropolitan Museum [of Art, New York City], how many women -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - in certain galleries.

MS. HURSTON: No.

MS. RICHARDS: That wasn't when you were a member?

MS. HURSTON: No. No. I don't - well, maybe it was.

MS. MARTIN: Well, that was early on -

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. MARTIN: That was the earliest.

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah, but I mean the recounts.

MS. HURSTON: Well, they might have done that. I really don't know. I didn't keep up with it. I actually now am a member of a group that selects outstanding candidates to get certain awards and to live in a certain place, and it's a blind look. And when it's a blind vote and you don't know who's male and who's female, and when you get

the names, there are more women than there are men. And then at the end, where the people are going to get together, the women are going to be mad if there are not enough men there. So we actually have to bring in people - males who get lower scores. So, in my opinion, in a blind thing by male and female artists, judges will choose - without knowing who's male and female - the best artists will be women. And so this whole male art world skew is biased.

MS. MARTIN: Well, that's interesting.

MS. HURSTON: It is bullshit, as far as I'm concerned, because I'm on a committee which really looks at them blind, chooses blind, and then has to, because these people are going to be thrown together -

MS. MARTIN: You have to make it -

MS. HURSTON: - have to throw out good women in order to put in some men to make the women who are going to be there happy. Duh.

MS. RICHARDS: [Laughs] Interesting.

MS. HURSTON: So -

MS. MARTIN: That's -

MS. HURSTON: - it's not a level playing -

MS. RICHARDS: I think it happens the same in college enrollment.

MS. HURSTON: Well, this is sort of like that. It's very much like that.

MS. RICHARDS: What were the gigs like, and did they change during the time, the response of the audience or your performance? Can you talk about your - that part of your experience?

MS. HURSTON: Oh, the gigs were great. It was fun to wear the mask.

MS. RICHARDS: And do you do them by yourselves or with a partner?

MS. HURSTON: We usually did them with two to three, and there could be more, but usually you couldn't afford to pay - you know, they couldn't afford to pay for too many, unless it was in New York City; then you could have a lot.

I mean, some of these photo shoots in the Guerrilla Girl magazines or books were done with lots of people because they were done in New York. But if it was elsewhere, maybe there were Guerrilla Girls in other states and you would only have to send one, and then there'd be already two, and so then there would be three.

It was wonderful to be on the stage because the people in the audience knew the works of the Guerrilla Girls or knew about them; the masks were hysterical, and the women were delighted with our slide shows. We had conversation things that we talked about, and we threw the bananas out into the audience, and it was just a high.

MS. RICHARDS: Was there a script, so that each performance more or less covered the same territory?

MS. HURSTON: No. You know, we all had something that we could talk about, and there would just be hoots and hollers and applause and questions.

MS. RICHARDS: Was this from the very beginning?

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: - earlier Guerrilla Girls had some tough time at the beginning, I think.

MS. HURSTON: I think that they may have, but, I mean, you got audiences who were just dying to hear us. They wanted to hear it. And the audiences would be men and women, but - and I don't know what the guys thought, but the women were, "Yeah, right on."

MS. RICHARDS: And you showed images of the posters?

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] We talked about the posters. Well, they always wanted to know - because Guerrilla Girls were anonymous, they wanted to know, "What'd you do and how'd you do it and what" - you know, so you could show the posters and discuss them. And you could talk about -

MS. RICHARDS: How did you decide on the topic?

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: - what was the research -

MS. HURSTON: Right. Yeah, all of that.

MS. RICHARDS: Why did you pick those galleries to critique?

MS. HURSTON: Yes, audiences knew, and they were very helpful. There would always be people afterward who would give you more information to use.

MS. RICHARDS: And did new work come out of those experiences?

MS. HURSTON: Sure, absolutely.

MS. RICHARDS: Girls who did the gigs would bring the experiences to meetings -

MS. HURSTON: I remember distinctly going to Germany and having this rapt audience, because Germany was really in bad shape and treated their female artists really badly. And then we took all their information, took it back and thought about it a lot, you know, and wondered what we could do and how we could add to what we were doing to broaden it to include both in the United States and abroad.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there projects focused on European countries?

MS. HURSTON: You know what, it was toward the end of my tenure there. So -

MS. RICHARDS: There was -

MS. HURSTON: - I'm not sure. I think so.

MS. RICHARDS: There was something in the Venice Biennale when the Guerrilla Girls had an installation.

MS. HURSTON: But that was after the "new/old leadership" had taken over command from the larger group.

MS. RICHARDS: There was some survey of European artists.

MS. HURSTON: I'm sure that they pulled that up and did it, because that would've been a great opportunity, and they would've been -

MS. MARTIN: What year was that?

MS. HURSTON: - smart enough to do that.

MS. MARTIN: That was just 2005.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. Well, that's way late. The very well-known artists who were members of the Guerrilla Girls were long gone in '05.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: All of this activity happened in the '80s and the '90s, and so anything that's later than that, you wiped out the cream of the art world who were members of the Guerrilla Girls.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] What -

MS. MARTIN: I'm just trying to remember when I was there. I think it was, like, '90.

MS. HURSTON: Ninety, yeah. In the '80s and the '90s, and it began to dissipate by the by '98.

MS. RICHARDS: Would you say that was a kind of a natural evolution of a -

MS. HURSTON: Of a group.

MS. HURSTON: Wouldn't you say? Yes, I think so.

MS. RICHARDS: And that they had to change so much and eventually it was going to disintegrate.

MS. HURSTON: Right. Right. Right. And the ones who are there now are trying, but it's not the same. You know, it's just not the same. It's nice, but it doesn't have the energy or the power that it did.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: Were you recruiting at times because you wanted younger members as well as -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, we wanted younger members, because many of us believed in younger members and that they had different things that they wanted to do. And that was good. I mean, I don't know what they're doing, but whatever it is they're doing, do it. You know, I'm glad.

MS. RICHARDS: How did you feel about the anonymity of your work as a Guerrilla Girl in terms of the fact that people in the art world might not know that you had produced less because they didn't know what you were doing with the rest of your time, or if the Guerrilla Girls work impacted on your own personal work but you couldn't talk about that, or how it will be in the future when people - when your biography's examined? At any point, how does anonymity work, and is it a problem?

MS. HURSTON: No, I don't think it's a problem. I'm pretty outspoken in my work, and in historical terms, when you look back at some of the women painters from the 14th and 15th century, we don't know what they did, you know, but you could see, I think, in looking at my work, that I was always critical about this thing, that thing, and the other thing. So I don't feel that I need the Girls to have anything to do with my work. My work was always going to be what it was, because being a black woman in the art world is like, you know, it's really, really hard. I integrated a black male artist group, and that was the hardest thing I ever did. Being a Girl was a piece of cake compared.

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: [Laughs] And what about you, Agnes?

MS. MARTIN: I really just like meeting the other - being in a group with the, you know, with other artists that were women. I - and I don't think it really affected my personal work at all. I feel like - or it was just - for me, it was another activity, and I mean, you always - whatever you do in life, it sort of makes its way into something that affects you one way or another. But as far as, like, the actual - you know, it might make you think about something else or alter your way of thinking a little bit and go, "Oh, yeah. Well, never thought about that before," you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: And I really - that's what I really like my connection with the Guerrilla Girls, is that you - you know, you learn something from it, but I - as far as the art world, I am - myself, you know; I just continue doing. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: And it's okay if nobody ever knows that you were a Guerrilla Girl? It's okay?

MS. MARTIN: It's okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: I wavered back and forth, and I finally said that, no, because -

MS. RICHARDS: No, they shouldn't reveal it?

MS. HURSTON: That they're not going to reveal it, right.

MS. RICHARDS: This was a question, I understand, that was put to everyone -

MS. MARTIN: Yes.

MS. HURSTON: And to everyone -

MS. RICHARDS: - when the archive moved to the Getty [J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA]?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, right. And I was willing to reveal it, because I said, "Who cares?" But then I was convinced by some Girls that it's just - you know, if they're not going to say they were in it, then I don't want to say that I was in it if the group doesn't. So I said no.



MS. RICHARDS: Because the group wouldn't sound as important because it looked or sounded like you were self-aggrandizing?

MS. HURSTON: Yes, right. Right. So I said, if they're not going to be in it, I'm not going to be in it. And that was the end of that. It's kind of self - it's sort of rewarding yourself for having done something good to say, "I did that," you know.

MS. MARTIN: Well, I didn't do all the work that you did or everybody else did, you know. And so I just didn't feel that it was, like, one of - like, the key members to say that, "Oh, yeah, I want my name mentioned," when I didn't do that much. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah. What is your - and why did you end up - why did you phase out your involvement, Zora?

MS. HURSTON: I didn't have as much time, and I was not enchanted with the top-down way things were going. I just didn't like it.

MS. RICHARDS: Which wasn't that way when you first joined?

MS. HURSTON: No. No. No. And I think that the moment had passed when we all had time to do it, and so it was left to those people who were, you know, pushing sort of - I don't know. It's not like they pushed us out, but I think there was a tiredness thing. I just said, "I don't feel like doing this anymore. I can't do it. I can't keep doing it."

MS. RICHARDS: Do you think that you felt that the projects weren't as effective, weren't making the impact that they had been, and that was dispiriting? And set aside the leadership structure -

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: - issue. Because the world had changed, or not?

MS. HURSTON: It's funny. I mean, there could be a whole new Guerrilla Girls movement, but I wouldn't understand - right now I couldn't think what it would encompass, because things are bad, but I would have to be in a group to figure out exactly why are they bad. Possibly the time had passed when you could really do something about what was going on, you know. Maybe - maybe that was it.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you -

MS. MARTIN: Maybe there's another way that someone else, you know -

MS. HURSTON: Could do it, yeah.

MS. MARTIN: Someone younger that has -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah.

MS. MARTIN: - the energy to -

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. MARTIN: - because I think to put anything -

MS. HURSTON: Age has got something to do with that.

MS. MARTIN: - so successful as the Girls were at the time, it really takes so much time and energy to do that.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah.

MS. MARTIN: And the world's changed a lot. There's just not -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: I don't - maybe there'll be something on MySpace or Facebook or something, you know. That seems to be what a lot of - younger people, you know, they really spend a lot of time there.

MS. RICHARDS: But way back when you, in '92 or '93, when you left, it was still viable to do printed material as propaganda or handbills or pass things out.

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you feel that their success - that there was some noticeable change that had been, or change of consciousness that the Guerrilla Girls' activities, up till then, had created, that dulled the urgency?

MS. HURSTON: I think that people heard us a lot. I think we made our mark, and in a way, we may have just become performance artists and not - we hadn't - in my mind - what was happening was there were two people who were so intent on being the personal group that they sacrificed the Guerrilla Girls.

MS. RICHARDS: What do you mean "personal" -

MS. HURSTON: I don't think there was postering anymore. So without posters, with just doing gigs, and talking about how the posters were, and what the posters were about was not the same as the activity of thinking up the words, deciding how to disseminate them, and having them exist and having them meaningful. For instance, the Metropolitan Museum poster, which was a big, long, narrow poster with - who's the artist?

MS. RICHARDS: [Jean Auguste Dominique] Ingres.

MS. HURSTON: Yes, Ingres.

MS. MARTIN: The Odalisque [*The Grand Odalisque*, 1899].

MS. HURSTON: Yes, the Odalisque. And that is a fabulous visual, and what it says - whatever it was that it says is a fabulous saying. Those things live on, and as long as they can be brought forward--but how many new things can you deal with? The art world now is still a boys' land, but is there any, you know - well, I'd like to take a crack at a Jeff Koons balloon thing, but I don't have time anymore. I'm an old lady.

MS. RICHARDS: I'm going to change discs.

[END MD 01.]

MS. RICHARDS: This is disc two, Zora Neale Hurston and Agnes Martin, May 17 [2008].

So when we just - before we changed discs, we were talking about the change and the fact that the power, the impact, seemed to decline when you weren't doing posters anymore. And we know that happened because of the change in SoHo. And you were just focusing on gigs, and that's outside New York.

So was there a conversation about the fact that if it was going to - since New York, in a way, is the center of the art world, or makes a lot of noise, and could - in terms of issues being talked about, was there a conversation about, "Well, what can we do, since we can't poster anymore in SoHo and galleries aren't just in one place? What can we do as a visible activity in New York because just doing gigs outside is rehashing the past? It's educating a new generation, but it's not grabbing the consciousness of artists and dealers here. We don't know what's going on at the University of Massachusetts or Des Moines or" -

MS. HURSTON: I think that we could have a discussion about what can anyone do now to combat television, the web, and that sort of thing, and I'm not -

MS. RICHARDS: But in the early '90s or the mid-'90s, that's -

MS. HURSTON: In the mid-'90s, there was a question, because you couldn't - it was slipping away, and I think we were hoping that Broadband would do it.

MS. RICHARDS: So Broadband was founded in the mid-'90s?

MS. HURSTON: I think so, yeah.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: I didn't realize it was so early.

MS. HURSTON: It was - we tried to get young people to come. I can remember rooms full of really prominent women with rooms full of really cute people just out of grad school. [Laughs.] And trying to get them to want to do something about what was going on in the art world. And I would just go to those meetings because they would invite old Girls to come. And when was that? That would've been in the mid-'90s. I think it was '95, like that, or maybe '93. I don't know. And it would come to nothing; because I wasn't going to go to meetings all the time, so I never knew what happened. You know, I really don't know. I wasn't active anymore.

MS. MARTIN: I -

MS. RICHARDS: Well, how much conversation was there in an effort to -

MS. HURSTON: To get -

MS. RICHARDS: - get something to happen?

MS. HURSTON: Right. And I think we didn't - nobody has time. It's hard.

MS. MARTIN: I went to one of those where they invited old Girls back, and there were some young Girls.

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. MARTIN: But it was just a gathering, and we talked about a few things, but I don't know what happened because I wasn't around.

MS. RICHARDS: When you think about the years you were an active participant, what contribution do you feel most proud of that you made as a member?

MS. MARTIN: As a member? A few comments on posters that I got to contribute to. I had fun actually doing the photo shoot thing, you know, a couple of those things, and you know, I contributed in a small way, but I never felt that I can contribute that much because of - I mean when I was joining, I told you about the, you know, the dynamics in the meetings, and there was definitely a group - a small group of highly vocal people that I - you know, it was hard to get your voice in there at all, but I felt like I was able to contribute in a small way, so that's fine.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And also recruiting other -

MS. MARTIN: Yes, I tried, [laughs] not with that much luck, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Because they would have the same experience as you did?

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, they had the same experience or they - especially the writer who came. She just was - she thought, "Oh, well," you know. It wasn't something for her.

MS. RICHARDS: I thought it was fundamental that the members were - at the beginning, when you were dealing with the art world--that the members were artists -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - because they knew the experience personally of being an artist -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - in this situation. So how would a writer fit? How would a writer feel as passionate about taking on art world issues? I know they could contribute in terms of text and language, but how would they be as rooted in the purpose and the mission if they weren't compatriot?

MS. HURSTON: Well, that's a good point, and that may have been what held that person back, but I think she was also amazed at the hotness of the conversation that day, and it was particularly hot because a leading member of the GGs dropped out of the group that night and never came back, so that made it an unusually vociferous argument.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] At the very beginning, I thought they were all visual artists.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] They were mostly.

MS. RICHARDS: And could you - it seems to me that it would undermine the passion and the energy a bit to have new members who weren't visual artists.

MS. HURSTON: You know, I wonder if -

MS. RICHARDS: I don't know.

MS. HURSTON: - if a great art historian could have been, you know--say, a woman art historian who cared could've brought something?

MS. RICHARDS: There were no art historians?

MS. HURSTON: I'm not remembering any.

MS. MARTIN: Well, there were academics and not -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, there were some academics, but not a flat-out non-practicing artist - art historian, unless I'm crazy.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. HURSTON: But I can think of one or two who could've been, like, associates or something -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - who would - who might have offered more critical thinking in the postering. But postering was over.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: And when I've heard people speak, it was one of the most exciting, fun -

MS. HURSTON: It was indeed most exciting.

MS. RICHARDS: The brainstorming, the coming up with ideas, the counting, the whole endeavor -

MS. HURSTON: Right, and then the doing it.

MS. RICHARDS: - was very exciting.

MS. HURSTON: I mean, you actually went out with a bucket of glue -

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: - and you plopped them up on the wall, and they stayed there, and it was wonderful.

MS. RICHARDS: And an element of danger sounds like it was a positive.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, it was scary - exciting.

MS. MARTIN: Well, and it was fun to see them up.

MS. HURSTON: They got attention and -

MS. MARTIN: And people would see them and comment on them. So it was sort of like our secret.

MS. RICHARDS: So when you were a member, Zora, did the Girls decide to do non-art world projects, and did you just not get involved in that, or were there two different projects going on at once and you'd say, "Okay, I don't care about that as much. I care about this, and I'll focus on the other thing."

MS. HURSTON: I don't remember that. I don't remember that there were not, you know, specifically -

MS. RICHARDS: Maybe it's later years they're doing Hollywood. They were doing other issues that were feminist issues, and even not - even just racial issues and not feminist issues that were taken up.

MS. HURSTON: I really don't remember. I mean, maybe I just wasn't a part of it by that time -

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: - you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Both of you are an old Girl? Do you consider your - I mean do you -

MS. HURSTON: Oh, I'm an old Girl.

MS. MARTIN: Old Girl.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, I'm an old Girl.

MS. RICHARDS: So you experienced being on the sidelines, but you also experienced the divisions that gradually led to the breakup of the group?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: And could you each share your perspective on why that happened and how it happened, from your own knowledge, which may or may not be -

MS. MARTIN: I didn't know if it was part of the - because I - all of us - well, a number of us, anyway, were included, you know, on a lot of the communication. I mean, that's how I knew about it, and -

MS. RICHARDS: So there was an effort by the group, both factions -

MS. MARTIN: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: - to keep everybody informed?

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. MARTIN: And I think I didn't really want to participate in it, like, which group, because there were two ways of thinking about it and, sort of, two factions, and I just listened, but I didn't really comment one way or the other. I just knew about it and I tried to stay very neutral.

MS. RICHARDS: Was your comment sought, or you were just kept informed?

MS. MARTIN: I was kept informed, and, well, a couple occasions - well, as far as, like, the archive and that sort of thing, then they would seek - they were seeking an opinion or even disclosing names, you know, for the museum - for the archive. But other than that, it was just to let us know what was going on, and sometimes you could - I noticed that some members would sway one way or the other.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah.

MS. MARTIN: Isn't that right?

MS. RICHARDS: In terms of taking sides?

MS. MARTIN: Sides.

MS. RICHARDS: And Zora, what was your perspective on it?

MS. HURSTON: I remember a string of meetings in--I think it was in the late '90s--where some of the strongest members felt that it was not useful to go to meetings, that there were two people who were going to make the final decisions no matter what you said, and that did it. We heard that several times. That was the discussion with, maybe, one of those people in the room and the other one somewhere else, and it would be a couple of people saying, "I don't think this is going to work. I don't think this is going to work." You know, no matter what we say, those two are going to get together anyway. So anything else that we do - and it was a feeling of despair and sort of like, "Oh, well, you know." And eventually we stopped coming.

MS. RICHARDS: It was inevitable -

MS. HURSTON: It was just inevitable. There were two who were going to do it their way, and they felt that they owned it. And we just said, "Oh, well."

MS. RICHARDS: And there was - I guess Gertrude [Stein] led the effort to create Broadband, but, Agnes, you were saying that Broadband - or both of you - was started well before this division, so that it was kind of an offshoot that existed while the Guerrilla Girls were still active.

MS. HURSTON: No, it started -

MS. RICHARDS: I thought it was started when the split happened.

MS. HURSTON: It started about when the split was beginning to happen. We said, "Well, come on, let's get some new people in here who won't be under the thumb of - you know, they'll be doing something different. Let's have an offshoot." And it was the offshoot that was really good, and they have not been tainted by any of that other stuff, because there was no reason why that forum wouldn't take the place of postering. And that was our idea, was that that forum could be the online poster. And so that the breakup involved the other two - I don't even

know whether they ever made posters again or whether all they did was gigs.

MS. RICHARDS: And gigs that focused on the work of the past.

MS. HURSTON: Right, gigs and -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: - fighting to have the ownership of the name as their invention, which was horrible.

MS. RICHARDS: There were projects that focused on women directors, billboards in Hollywood. That was all before the break?

MS. HURSTON: No, that was the break.

MS. RICHARDS: So they -

MS. HURSTON: That would've been those people, yeah, because one was there and one was here.

MS. RICHARDS: I see.

MS. HURSTON: And so that one would've done that information, in which none of us knew anything about or cared about.

MS. RICHARDS: And there was an offshoot that was focused on the theater?

MS. MARTIN: There was the - was that part of the Broadband? No?

MS. HURSTON: No, I don't know the theater group. Did it ever happen really?

MS. MARTIN: I don't know. I just know that the - I thought there was -

MS. HURSTON: I knew we thought there should have been.

MS. MARTIN: I thought that was part of Broadband, that it was more of a performance -

MS. HURSTON: - but, you know, it might not have worked so well because it might not have been so necessary. I mean in dance and theater, women do fairly well.

MS. RICHARDS: Compared to men?

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: None of them do really well, but -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, but, I mean, you know, it's -

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: They kind of -

MS. HURSTON: They kind of, you know, are reaching out. I mean, even female movie stars are doing some directing and stuff like that. It's a little bit rare, but they are. They're sort of not right for a GG action, you know, because they're doing it with their own wit. In the art world, it's different, because there's no money that flows into the coffers of women. Women are at the very bottom, and we are the most - you know - I can't say it too many times.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: We're the strongest. The work is accepted as being really good, and we're not going to get over the bias against women artists, not right now.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were a Guerrilla Girl - I just want to talk about the finance for a moment again. There was income being made to support - there were fees earned through the gigs to support the posters and -

MS. HURSTON: Travel.

MS. RICHARDS: - travel. Well, the gigs paid the travel.

MS. HURSTON: Sometimes. Right.

MS. RICHARDS: But there was net cash to go into the Guerrilla Girls account.

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: To pay for the -

MS. MARTIN: For the posters.

MS. RICHARDS: - posters and ad billboards and whatever you were doing.

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Did one person handle the money?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, and apparently it didn't work out so well. [Laughs] I can't go into it. I have no evidence of it, but there was some - you know, some mishandling of the money, but did that matter in the long run? I don't think so. I mean, there was just mishandling of the money.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there ever paid assistants, secretaries, bookkeepers, anything like that?

MS. HURSTON: There might've been something. I mean, you had to pay printers, but -

MS. RICHARDS: No, I meant -

MS. MARTIN: Like a -

MS. RICHARDS: - people who would need to know who was who.

MS. HURSTON: No, I hope not. I don't think so, not in my time.

MS. RICHARDS: And do you think that money - I understand there was some division of feelings when some of the books were published, whether they should be published or they shouldn't, whether the - if they were published and what they should say.

MS. HURSTON: They were published by two people and -

MS. RICHARDS: Did that money -

MS. HURSTON: - and - yes, and the writing was done by two people, and the whole - as if they owned all that material, and my picture is in so many of these, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: And -

MS. HURSTON: And -

MS. RICHARDS: - permission wasn't requested?

MS. HURSTON: No, no, no. No, no. Everything in the book was done by them.

MS. RICHARDS: And the earnings from those publications?

MS. HURSTON: Went to them, as far as I know.

MS. MARTIN: I didn't know if it went back into the fund. I don't know if, at that time - I don't know.

MS. HURSTON: I have never known. I think they said, "Well, we spent it. We did all the time doing it, so it's ours." That's a deal breaker, though. You know, it's very heartbreaking to see something that had been a collaboration taken over by two people, who said, "Okay, let's do this by ourselves."

MS. RICHARDS: Do you think the collaboration, the Guerrilla Girls collaboration, is linked, in a way, as one of the early artist collaboratives that are so much - so much an important part of the art world now and is growing and growing? So many things are collaborations these days--I mean, not that it's more than individual artists working, but - Whitney Biennial [Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City] - any focus on - especially new media. Most of the artists are working in collectives and collaboratives.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: I can't understand that, because we were quite a big collective. I don't know of any big collectives that worked so well.

MS. RICHARDS: How many were there in terms of - 15 or 20 at once?

MS. HURSTON: There were even more - yeah, and that's more than can work on -

MS. RICHARDS: - but I'm thinking about the fact that collectives have, kind of, come to our awareness, and artists have thought about working collectively the last 10 or 15 years, I guess.

MS. HURSTON: Yes, of course.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: Beyond just Gilbert & George.

MS. HURSTON: They were performance artists.

MS. RICHARDS: But there are more and more collectives, and it's interesting to think that the Guerrilla Girls were there, artists together creating work, what you actually might - artists today might call artworks. Guerrilla Girls called it propaganda or whatever.

MS. HURSTON: Actions.

MS. RICHARDS: Actions.

MS. MARTIN: Actions, yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: They consider that artwork -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - and at the time when you were a member, did you think about that these could be considered artworks?

MS. HURSTON: I think we didn't. We saw it as guerrilla warfare. We saw it as warfare.

MS. MARTIN: That's a - yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: Political action?

MS. MARTIN: Political.

MS. HURSTON: It was political action and we were doing more specific things than, say, *Heresies Magazine* or some of the other great feminist movements.

MS. MARTIN: It was a way of doing some conscious-raising or something.

MS. HURSTON: Right, consciousness.

MS. MARTIN: You know, it's just like you see it on the street, and then, even though, you know, you don't stop to look at it, you are aware of it, and it can change a way that people think about something or think a little differently. So -

MS. RICHARDS: Well, now artist groups do exactly the same thing.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: That's good. But, now, I don't know what they do.

MS. MARTIN: But I don't think - yeah, I don't think the group got together - the Guerrilla Girls did not get together and say, "Oh, well, look. We are making this artwork," you know.

MS. RICHARDS: But do you think the two people who now run Guerrilla Girls, Inc., possibly think of it as an art project, the two of them?

MS. HURSTON: It's their life. This is all they do.



MS. RICHARDS: So -

MS. MARTIN: And the rest of us have sort of moved on.

MS. RICHARDS: - that's a big part of their -

MS. MARTIN: I think the rest of us have sort of moved on for doing other things. So -

MS. RICHARDS: When you look back, either of you, do you think - I might've asked you this, but do you think that your activities as a Guerrilla Girl affected your work, your own work as an artist?

MS. HURSTON: No. It was a nice outlet. I don't think it did. I value the friendships that I made with those women. I valued that I got to express some of the things that I'd learned, you know, as a young artist going through art school and being surrounded by male artists who just - you know, they erase you.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were involved, were you conscious and was there any sort of any kind of collaborative spirit with the other artist collaboratives, political action groups like Act Up and other AIDS - in the late '80s, early '90s, there were other groups active in New York and elsewhere.

MS. MARTIN: WAC [Women's Action Coalition].

MS. HURSTON: WAC was after us, and WAC was so blah it wasn't funny.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: I went to one or two things, and I said, "They don't have a clue."

No. We were the stars. The Guerrilla Girls were smart. It was something that was really needed. It hit the spot, and it should go down in history as a really smart group, but it died. We need critical analysis for why, and need originals. You know, there's a whole list of things that need to be looked at to figure out why things like that do die, what other kinds of movements die, and what replaces them, and I'm at the point now where I can't see what has replaced the Guerrilla Girls. I can't see it, but the need is still there.

I mean, I read the [*New York Times*]. I see who gets reviewed. I see who gets bought. I see the garbage that is, you know, sitting on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum, Mr. Koons. And I'm just, like, appalled and I can't believe it. It's like, you're kidding. I remember when I first saw his work, I said, "You're kidding." And if I were doing something now, it would be to make a whole bunch of nice shiny balloons and -

MS. MARTIN: I love that.

MS. HURSTON: - pop 'em. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Do you recall a specific project that you researched, and actually either of you, that you counted women in galleries or women in museums or any of the subjects that -

MS. HURSTON: Oh, we made a poster with all the women's names, and -

MS. RICHARDS: All which women's names?

MS. HURSTON: Women artists. We -

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: - tried to put as many in as we could.

MS. MARTIN: Maybe it's in here.

MS. HURSTON: I changed the meaning of one of the important posters.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, I thought that was good.

MS. RICHARDS: Read the title of the one you're talking about for the microphone.

MS. MARTIN: Oh, this one.

MS. HURSTON: "Guerrilla Girls Identities Exposed."

MS. MARTIN: That was -

MS. HURSTON: - it was such a wonderful poster.

MS. RICHARDS: And how many names are listed there?

MS. HURSTON: It's a huge of list of names -

MS. RICHARDS: Several hundred.

MS. HURSTON: - of really wonderful artists, and they were thrilled.

MS. RICHARDS: None of whom were Guerrilla Girls?

MS. HURSTON: [Laughs.]

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: I won't say that none of them, but it was -

MS. MARTIN: It was sort of a mixture.

MS. HURSTON: - so many women, and it was really wonderful, and they were so thrilled.

MS. RICHARDS: They--the women--to be included?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. I was on that photo shoot. That was really great.

MS. RICHARDS: And which one is that?

MS. HURSTON: It was out of the Botanical Gardens, the gorilla. [Laughs.]

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: And who were the men?

MS. HURSTON: I don't know. Some guys we hired, I guess.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh.

MS. HURSTON: Okay, let's see. "Do Women Have to be Naked to Get into the Met?" [1989]. That was a real hit.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: "Relax, Senator Helms, the Art World is Your Kind of Place" [1989].

MS. MARTIN: There was the one with - the billboard with the fig leaf. I really - that was -

MS. RICHARDS: That was while you were -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: "The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist."

MS. MARTIN: Oh, I love that one.

MS. HURSTON: That's one of the best. "Working without the pressure of success, not having to be in shows with men, having escape from the art world in your four freelance jobs, knowing your career might pick up after you're 80." [Laughs.] That's my hope.

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: "Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make, it will be feminist, not being stuck in a tenured teaching position, seeing your ideas live on in the work of others, having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood, not having to choke on those big cigars or paint in Italian suits, having more time to work after your mate dumps you for someone younger, being included in revised versions of art history, not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius, getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit." That was a beauty and that was in 1988.

MS. RICHARDS: This book that you're holding, Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls -

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: - when was that published? Was it published while you were a Guerrilla Girl?

MS. HURSTON: It was published after we had stopped -

MS. MARTIN: After.

MS. HURSTON: - meeting, and first edition, 1995. So this was after the split.

MS. RICHARDS: So it took all the way till 2000 for the final legal split, I think. So there was five years in limbo -

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - where there wasn't much going on? Were the gigs continued by the two Guerrilla Girls who became Guerrilla Girls, Inc.?

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: And during those five years, this was published, and the other book was published?

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: So what would you have done to - if you hadn't published this book you're holding, that documents all these posters, you said you - maybe - I don't know. Were you glad that this book was published, and it was just the way it was done that was disturbing?

MS. HURSTON: I'm so glad that this was published. It was the way it was published - it was done by them in secret together, with no consultations, as far as I know, with any of the other old Girls.

MS. RICHARDS: So what was the best thing, the brainstorming and the communal action -

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: - aspect of the Guerrilla Girls was -

MS. HURSTON: - abandoned for this -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - because it took these people to put it together, but in order to do that, they had to use all these pictures of us, the group, doing things that we did together. And it was nice, but it was done without telling anybody.

MS. MARTIN: With - yeah.

MS. HURSTON: You know, and they saw a chance to receive the money for it.

MS. RICHARDS: Was there a viewpoint - did that precipitate a lawsuit? I mean was there legal action -

MS. HURSTON: I believe by some of the original old GGs.

MS. RICHARDS: And by the two?

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: I mean, was there something actionable about that? I guess I'm trying to say. Or were there just hurt feelings?

MS. HURSTON: I'm not sure what it was. There was some kind of action after that, but I wasn't really a part of it. When -

MS. MARTIN: I don't know if it was part of this, though, right?

MS. HURSTON: - the top member - the third powerful Girl -

MS. RICHARDS: That was Gertrude?

MS. HURSTON: I forget her GG name.

MS. RICHARDS: Gertrude started Broadband.

MS. HURSTON: Yes, that's Gertrude.

MS. MARTIN: Gertrude.

MS. HURSTON: In Brooklyn?

MS. MARTIN: Right.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, okay. She's the one who sued the two, I believe, and a settlement was made.

MS. RICHARDS: On behalf of - kind of like a class action, on behalf of -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, and I went -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: - to some of those meetings with the lawyers, but I really wasn't able to do much, because I wasn't a deep part of it. But she had tried to be a part of this, and the renegade girls just didn't want any part of her. And this is a really strong person that they went up against. So it was unfortunate, because that one person represented all the rest of us, and we got taken down. But I actually love this book. It's just how the gigs were done.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: The other book is a different case, the book that came out later, which is a kind of an alternative art history. What's it called?

MS. HURSTON: I don't remember.

MS. RICHARDS: That's a different story, because it's a whole text that the other two wrote.

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: This is a compilation, just pulling together all of your work.

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: - documenting it.

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: That goes off in a different direction.

MS. HURSTON: Right, and half of this money should go into some Guerrilla Girl fund, whether -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: - it does or not, I don't know. I doubt it.

MS. MARTIN: I don't know.

MS. RICHARDS: Was there ever a conversation - when you said that, it makes me think of a Guerrilla Girl fund, which could, for example, support old Girls in need?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, or something.

MS. RICHARDS: Or launch a new generation of Guerrilla Girls.

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: That was -

MS. HURSTON: Or aid Broadband, or any other thing, other than just the interest of those two -

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: - should go to there, but whether that happened or not, I have not a clue. So, yeah, I have a copy of this and I really love it, because these are my words. The first thing in this, "Relax, Senator Helms, the Art World is Your Kind of Place," is my - is my contribution. "The number of blacks at an art opening is about the same as at one of your garden parties, Mr. Helms," and I invented that and they said, oh! [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Perfect, yeah. Do you think that - well, in the future, if the GuerrillaGirlsBroadband - if anyone wanted to update this, wanted to use this material, it's -

MS. HURSTON: Copyrighted.

MS. RICHARDS: - it's copyrighted by the Guerrilla Girls, Inc., now, so that nobody else could access -

MS. HURSTON: I don't know.

MS. RICHARDS: If you wanted to take this idea and -

MS. HURSTON: I don't know. I honestly don't know. I guess I could call -

MS. MARTIN: I'm not close to that. You would have to call -

MS. HURSTON: - that third person and find out. She would know.

MS. RICHARDS: It sounds like an interesting thesis to do the statistics to update to see if any of these -

MS. HURSTON: And it should be part of your information. It should be, right.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

What kind of recognition, public recognition, was there personally, or in general, [of] the Guerrilla Girls' contribution? I think someone said they got an award in Washington [D.C.] at one point.

MS. HURSTON: They've gotten awards and they've gotten all sorts of things.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you ever participate in any of those award ceremonies or award -

MS. HURSTON: No, I've never participated in any of them, and I have personally seen one of the two girls who claimed to be GGs now be in a gig with no mask, and then later go in front of the audience with the mask, wearing what she had on. And I've said, "That girl really wants to let everybody know who she is."

MS. MARTIN: Well, there are a few that do - I mean, a few, maybe more than a few.

MS. HURSTON: Maybe more. Mm.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, just by the conversations -

MS. HURSTON: About who's telling and who's not telling.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: It seems to be fairly secret, though.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, I think in general, it's still secret.

MS. RICHARDS: It seems to be - in general, if you ask people in the art world -

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: - most people who you think would be knowledgeable don't know who's who.

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And as one Guerrilla Girl said, the person everyone thought was a Guerrilla Girl, Marsha Tucker, wasn't.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: So I think the secrets - the anonymity has been maintained to -

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - perhaps an amazing degree.

MS. HURSTON: I might be pleased when one or two of them are outed who were really wonderful. Some of them backed out, but I just think there's some real great stars in this group.

MS. RICHARDS: But that contradicts -

MS. HURSTON: I know.

MS. RICHARDS: - your devotion to the anonymity in that -

MS. HURSTON: I'm not that devoted, but I have agreed to not tell, because some of the most outstanding GGs have said they're not going to tell. So I said, "Okay, I'm not either."

MS. RICHARDS: So if an art historian at any point wrote a history of the Guerrilla Girls -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - it would be valuable to know who some of the participants were.

MS. HURSTON: Right. And I'm not sure whether this "even after death" would be okay. I'll check with some of the Girls and get their opinions.

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah. Do you know anything about what's going on at GuerrillaGirlBroadband, and do you ever - if you wanted to throw out an idea, you'd be perfectly free to do it? And do they have physical meetings, or is it all -

MS. HURSTON: I think they do -

MS. RICHARDS: - e-mail?

MS. HURSTON: - and I used to know one GGBroadband member, and she was so sharp and wonderful that I'm sure that if she's still a member - that they do really good things. They did some actions about theater restrooms for women, other actions. Broadband meant using the web and using all kinds of means, but some of them were theater people, too, which were nice.

MS. RICHARDS: I wanted to ask you more - we didn't really touch on too much of what it meant to be an African-American or an Asian-American artist in the group and what one of the other members, Alma Thomas talked about, and I wondered if you have - what your experience was. Were there issues that you brought to the floor that others couldn't? How did you feel about the gorilla mask?

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: Did you recruit other African-American Girls? So those kinds of issues.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: I'm trying to remember who Alma Thomas was. If it's who I think it was, yeah, she had a really strong point of view, but didn't - I think, if it's the same person--didn't offer that much to the group. But it was a hard slog, because white women are not sensitive to what's happening in the black community. It's like the division between Hillary [Clinton] and [Barack] Obama - there's, like, a Hillary syndrome among white women, and that doesn't mean that they're not Obama people. But we don't get it, you know, because they come from - God knows where they come from. They can be just as racist as everybody else and then be surprised that they're racist. So there would be grumbling among one or two. There were some really smart Guerrilla Girls and Alma was one.

MS. RICHARDS: She's an artist about your age, and she's in performance -

MS. HURSTON: Oh, yes. She's brilliant. [Laughs.] She's brilliant, yes. And she could outsmart anybody there, and they just walked right over her, you know, those bad Girls. They just couldn't get how smart she was, and that's stupid.

MS. RICHARDS: She talked about feminist critique -

MS. HURSTON: She knows it.

MS. RICHARDS: - and thinking.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: And that the Guerrilla Girls who were in control were in a kind of an earlier phase of feminist thinking than ought to have been and than she was. And in terms of race.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, their whiteness was such that they didn't always get it. They didn't get it, and they didn't understand that blacks were being put in a completely separate world in the art world, that black male artists and black female artists are completely separated, completely segregated to this day, and they didn't get it.

MS. RICHARDS: And Asian artists have the same kind of disability.

MS. HURSTON: Absolutely the same problem.

MS. MARTIN: Same. Same.

MS. RICHARDS: Exactly.

MS. HURSTON: Same problem.

MS. RICHARDS: Was there -

MS. MARTIN: But I think it's the - it's sort of - I don't want to say that they didn't get it or they're not -

MS. HURSTON: They didn't want to go there. They just didn't want to go there.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah, well -

MS. HURSTON: You know, some members were perfectly happy with tokens, but if the tokens flew away, then so be it.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] They needed some of us.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, right. Yeah.

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs] But -

MS. RICHARDS: Did you -

MS. MARTIN: But we didn't stay. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Were there specific posters or concepts that didn't - that you would've done differently? Can you remember what kind of points you were trying to make, what kind of influence you were trying to exert, so that the project would speak to black - the black community, black artists - black women artists?

MS. HURSTON: It was hard to get my opinions in without critical backup from other artists. I needed some of the artists who were there to - and we would sometimes talk, trying to get it through, and there was just this feeling, "We're not going to get it through. It's just not going to happen." So there's, like, a white block and just two or three little black ants and you can't get it out.

MS. RICHARDS: So, for example, if you open this book and you pick out a - is there a poster theme comment that -

MS. HURSTON: That nails it?

MS. RICHARDS: - that is what - well, you already talked about what you contributed on the Helms poster. That demonstrates the kind of narrowness that you were trying to fight against?

MS. HURSTON: No, but I would hold out the "White Bread" one as a really smart one. The white bread sticker that was stuck on the walls of galleries.

MS. RICHARDS: Now, what was that? Could you talk about that?

MS. HURSTON: It's a slice of white bread.

MS. MARTIN: Oh, it's in there.

MS. HURSTON: It's probably in here, and it's white bread and all you had to do was stick that thing on a wall and it said, "White Bread," and it was done by a very famous black artist who sort of dropped out of the group after a while. Do you know where it is?

MS. RICHARDS: Did it say Guerrilla Girls on it?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, it was a Guerrilla Girls sticker, and it was a beautiful little white bread sticker.

MS. RICHARDS: And all it said was, "White Bread," or it didn't say that; it just depicted -

MS. HURSTON: What else did it say? Here it is. "We sell White Bread."

MS. RICHARDS: "We sell White Bread." I see, "Ingredients: white men, artificial flavorings, preservatives, contains less than the minimum daily requirement white women and non-whites. Public service message from Guerrilla Girls, conscience of the art world." Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: Right, and does it have a date?

MS. RICHARDS: No.

MS. HURSTON: Oh, dear.

MS. RICHARDS: No. "Post office box, all galleries or stores in New York and all they sell is white bread." Hundreds of these peel-off stickers got slapped on gallery windows and doors. So you did research to decide which places to slap them or -

MS. HURSTON: This was done by -

MS. RICHARDS: One woman, one African American -

MS. HURSTON: - fabulous black - famous black artist.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you know her Guerrilla Girl name?

MS. HURSTON: No. I can call her up and ask.

MS. RICHARDS: That's one thing that the archive hopefully has.

MS. HURSTON: She'd be tough.

MS. RICHARDS: There's some record of which - if not which real person, which Guerrilla Girl did that.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, we - I can call her up and ask her. She is very, very smart, and if you're not interviewing her, you're missing a treat.

MS. RICHARDS: I don't know. This is one of the few I've heard of, if not the only one, where only one Guerrilla Girl is associated with it. Therefore, it would be meaningful. Everything is a collective.

MS. HURSTON: But you know what? It just hit me that what we should have insisted on in the meetings was that each of the non-white members come up with a poster idea and insist that it get through. And I never came up with a poster idea that I insisted on, and we could have been asked to do that. And that's what we should have done. Now how come I'm only thinking of that now? That's really stupid.

MS. MARTIN: I don't know. [Laughs.] Let's do one. [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Well, there's Broadband.

MS. HURSTON: We don't care. You know, they couldn't stop us from doing a Guerrilla Girl thing. Could they?

MS. MARTIN: No.

MS. RICHARDS: Well, if they own the copyright to Guerrilla Girls -

MS. HURSTON: Oh, fuck 'em. How could they keep us from doing it?



MS. RICHARDS: I don't know.

MS. HURSTON: Because it's completely anonymous.

MS. RICHARDS: So you're going to start a new Guerrilla Girl action?

MS. HURSTON: No, but we could if we felt like it, if we could think of something that we - if you could think of something that you wanted to say, and I could think of something, and I would run it past a whole [group] of black artists before I put it in there, and then I would say, "Let's do something." And I would get it on the web and it would be up there, a Guerrilla Girl hit. I could do it through Broadband.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: It'd be fun.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: It ain't over till it's over, is it?

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs] Right.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were a Guerrilla Girl, were you aware of other minority artists? Were there Hispanic or Asian or African American or Middle Eastern, whatever, who weren't having their voices heard or who -

MS. HURSTON: Yes, there were. There were Hispanic Guerrilla Girls. But we couldn't get through to the larger issues, and we never made the thing that I just said, which was -

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: - "Each one of you has got to make one poster idea." We never did that.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you think somehow, weirdly, the makeup and the position of the Guerrilla Girls mirrored, unfortunately, the reality of the art world? I mean, even though you were giving a liberal kind of position -

MS. HURSTON: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: - about racism. So it couldn't escape the reality that was -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm [affirmative], which was -

MS. RICHARDS: - came from.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] As women - white women come first. If you're a black woman, you're on the edge here.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: Was there an attitude, "Well, since we're helping the majority of artists, and the majority of artists are white, it's okay"?

MS. HURSTON: Well, I don't know whether that -

MS. MARTIN: No. I don't think they - I don't think -

MS. HURSTON: I don't think they went that far. They thought they were doing themselves a big favor by having us in the group and -

MS. RICHARDS: You thought it was patronizing?

MS. HURSTON: It was tokenism, sure.

MS. RICHARDS: And did you have an opportunity to recruit other artists of color?

MS. HURSTON: Yes. And when we did, and we had an outstanding one, like Alma. The renegade leaders just didn't know what to do with those brains.

MS. RICHARDS: But she stuck it out. She stayed in there awhile.

MS. HURSTON: Oh, she stayed awhile, and she's smarter than a whip, but she couldn't overcome that. She

couldn't. None of us could.

MS. RICHARDS: Why do you suppose that - did it occur to you to start your own group? Would that be effective? Did you -

MS. HURSTON: We did - yes, we had another kind of group that didn't do actions. It was readings on racism. It was wonderful. It got out of hand. It got so big that [laughs] you couldn't - it was scholars.

MS. RICHARDS: So it wasn't an anonymous group at all? It was -

MS. HURSTON: No, it was a bunch of artists and scholars, and that was in the late '90s. It was fabulous. We met at each other's houses.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember what they were called?

MS. HURSTON: Fantastic Women in the Arts, and it had been started by Eunice Lipton, and it got - and Eunice backed out, and it was an enormous group of black and white women who did readings, who did interviews, who did all sorts of things in order to understand racism in the art world. And that included writings and everything else, and it was a lovely, lovely group, but it just got so big. I mean, you'd go there, and there'd be four more people, and you - "Where am I going to put these people?" It got so big that nobody wanted to host it anymore, and that killed it. You couldn't seat them.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were a Guerrilla Girl, though, and you were facing all this frustration, and so was Alma, did you ever think about starting an offshoot of women of color artists to -

MS. MARTIN: There were other groups.

MS. HURSTON: There were other groups.

MS. RICHARDS: --who left the Guerrilla Girls to form another group?

MS. MARTIN: Right.

MS. HURSTON: I think they did and they may have.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember what they were called?

MS. HURSTON: We just got so busy. It got -

MS. MARTIN: Everybody -

MS. HURSTON: - harder and harder to have your job and to do all that stuff at night -

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: - and do your work.

MS. MARTIN: Have a job, do your work, and then -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and meet.

MS. RICHARDS: Have a family.

MS. MARTIN: - have a family -

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. MARTIN: - and then to be involved -

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah.

MS. MARTIN: - complete and to have -

MS. RICHARDS: So it had to be younger women. It had to be women in their 20s -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, right.

MS. RICHARDS: - who could do this, who didn't have some of those things.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] All of us old bags just - it was too much.

MS. MARTIN: Even when I was involved with it, and the other group, too, it just seemed like I had a lot more time. But now, I don't know where my time goes to. [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: I don't have any time, no.

MS. HURSTON: Huh-uh. [Negative.] I look at my diary and I say, "Oh, God." [Laughs.]

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

MS. HURSTON: "I've got to do that," you know.

MS. MARTIN: I don't know what it is with - I mean, you know, the technology is supposed to make your life easier, but it's only made my life more complicated. So I don't know.

MS. RICHARDS: It seems life is much less simple.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. I mean, before e-mail, we had more time. Now you have to go home and read that stuff, and then you have to clean it out.

MS. MARTIN: [Laughs] It's a whole job.

MS. RICHARDS: The Guerrilla Girls would've - e-mail might've made life easier in terms of calling meetings.

MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were a Girl, it was a telephone chain?

MS. HURSTON: Yes. It was exactly a telephone chain.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HURSTON: We would've never gotten away from -

MS. MARTIN: We had a phone tree. So, you know, I'd call five people.

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you tell your family and your close friends what you were doing?

MS. HURSTON: Some people knew, some people, but no, not really.

MS. RICHARDS: I don't mean a lot of people, but -

MS. HURSTON: Yeah. Oh, one or two people knew, but that's because they knew one other person and then they wondered, "Why are you all" -

MS. RICHARDS: "Why are you getting together tonight?"

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, right. Yeah.

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: Is there anything- as we wind this up - anything else that we haven't touched on factually, or in terms of emotional experience, of the Guerrilla Girls you'd want to share?

MS. HURSTON: I think it was, for me, very painful to know that I couldn't be a member anymore, that it was painful for the group that I loved so much to know that we were going to have to give it up, and it was hard. It took some time, and it took some skipping meetings and some whining and stuff like that, and then all of a sudden, there was nothing anymore.

MS. RICHARDS: Because of your personal frustration, or because that's when -

MS. HURSTON: Because you saw you couldn't beat them.

MS. RICHARDS: - you had the meetings dominated?

MS. HURSTON: Yeah, you couldn't beat them. You couldn't out - you couldn't - the energy had gone. The realization that they had stolen the idea and had taken it as what they thought was theirs, and seeing as we were anonymous, we just disappeared. We erased ourselves.

MS. RICHARDS: You could imagine an equally strong pair doing verbal battle and possibly winning, but those two people didn't appear on the scene because, I mean, you could have a - I don't know, an insurrection or -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: There's nothing that literally kept these people in power except their own ability to lead and no one else's interest in challenging - successfully challenging--their leadership, right, because if you had two or three other people -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: - who were equally strong leaders and decided that they had to challenge this for the sake of the preservation of the group, it might've -

MS. MARTIN: I don't know in this group if you could -

MS. HURSTON: It's hard to say. I don't know.

MS. RICHARDS: Well -

MS. MARTIN: But they had such strong personalities.

MS. HURSTON: Yeah.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you think there was an underlying appreciation and respect for their abilities so that there wasn't such an overwhelming dissidence that - well, nobody ended up challenging them enough to overwhelm them and they maintained the leadership?

MS. MARTIN: I don't think every - you know, after a point, no one has that much time to do that.

MS. RICHARDS: Actually, I think you both talked about the fact that the group gradually got older and had less time.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: There was less willingness -

MS. HURSTON: Right.

MS. RICHARDS: - to do that kind of battle.

MS. MARTIN: Right.

MS. HURSTON: Much less.

MS. RICHARDS: You had satisfaction with what you had accomplished, and it didn't matter as you said, Agnes.

MS. HURSTON: Let them go.

MS. MARTIN: It didn't matter.

MS. RICHARDS: It didn't matter.

MS. MARTIN: It didn't matter after that.

MS. RICHARDS: It didn't matter to you. It wasn't worth the struggle.

MS. HURSTON: No.

MS. MARTIN: No, not for me. I mean, my experience, I had - I went in totally optimistic -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: - and because I just, you know, the posters and everything. I just really loved the sense of humor and -

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: - the wit, and I wanted to try to be part of that.

MS. HURSTON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MARTIN: And I tried. But it was - I just felt like I couldn't really get my voice in there any way, and I had other ways that I could do -

MS. HURSTON: That's right.

MS. MARTIN: - do it in a better way. My more quiet way, you know, and I feel like I've been able to do that. So - in a different way. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Well, thank you. Thank you both.

MS. HURSTON: Thank you.

MS. MARTIN: Thank you.

MS. HURSTON: This was good.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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